

## THE BLACK AND TANS

THE BLACK AND TANS:  
BRITISH POLICE  
IN THE FIRST IRISH WAR, 1920-21

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## ABSTRACT

Over ten thousand Britons fought as police in the First Irish War (1920-21). Most of these British police were ex-soldiers, veterans of the Great War and members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), called 'Black and Tans' for their mixed uniforms of dark police green and military khaki. Ex-officers joined a separate force, the Auxiliary Division (ADRIC), a special emergency gendarmerie, heavily armed and organized in military-style companies. Pitted against the guerrillas of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries took many 'reprisals', assassinating Irish republicans and burning their homes and shops. As a consequence, their name became a byword for crime and violence, and the spectre of 'black-and-tannery' has haunted Ireland ever since.

This dissertation uses evidence from both British and Irish archives and from British newspapers to study the British police and their behaviour in the First Irish War. According to legend the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were ex-convicts and psychopaths, hardened by prison and crazed by war. In fact, most of them were quite ordinary men, whose violent and criminal behaviour was a product of circumstance, not character. The British government would not believe that the conflict in Ireland was a war, and relied on the police to suppress the rebel 'murder gang.' Unsited for guerrilla warfare, the RIC was already losing its discipline and committing atrocities before its British reinforcements arrived. British constables lived and worked alongside Irish constables, and followed their example, good or bad. Freed from the sometimes moderate influence of the constabulary's Irish majority, Auxiliaries behaved with even greater licence than Black and Tans. The violence of the British and Irish police was overlooked and even encouraged by the British government, which was anxious to keep up the pretence that Irish revolutionaries were merely terrorists and gangsters.



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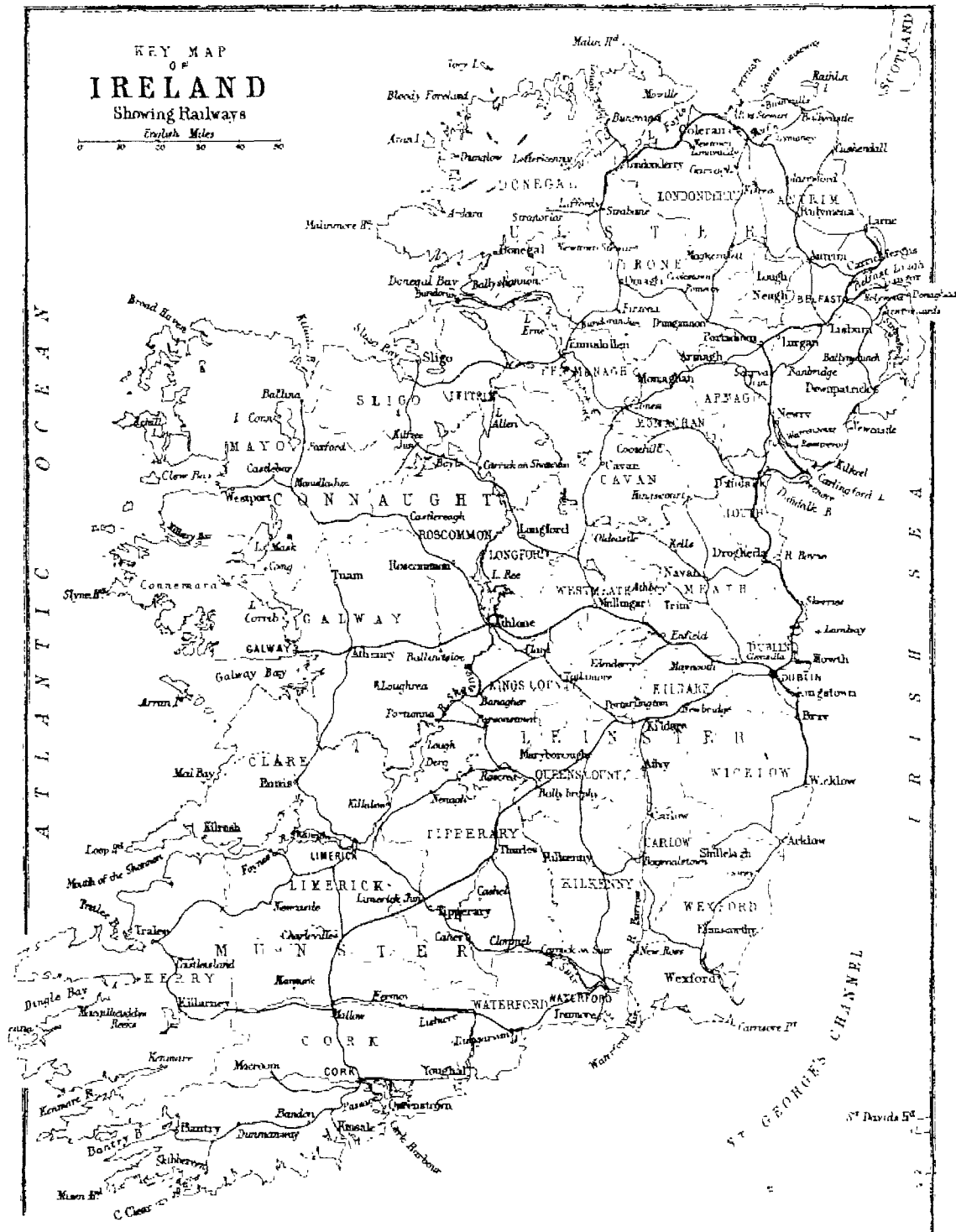
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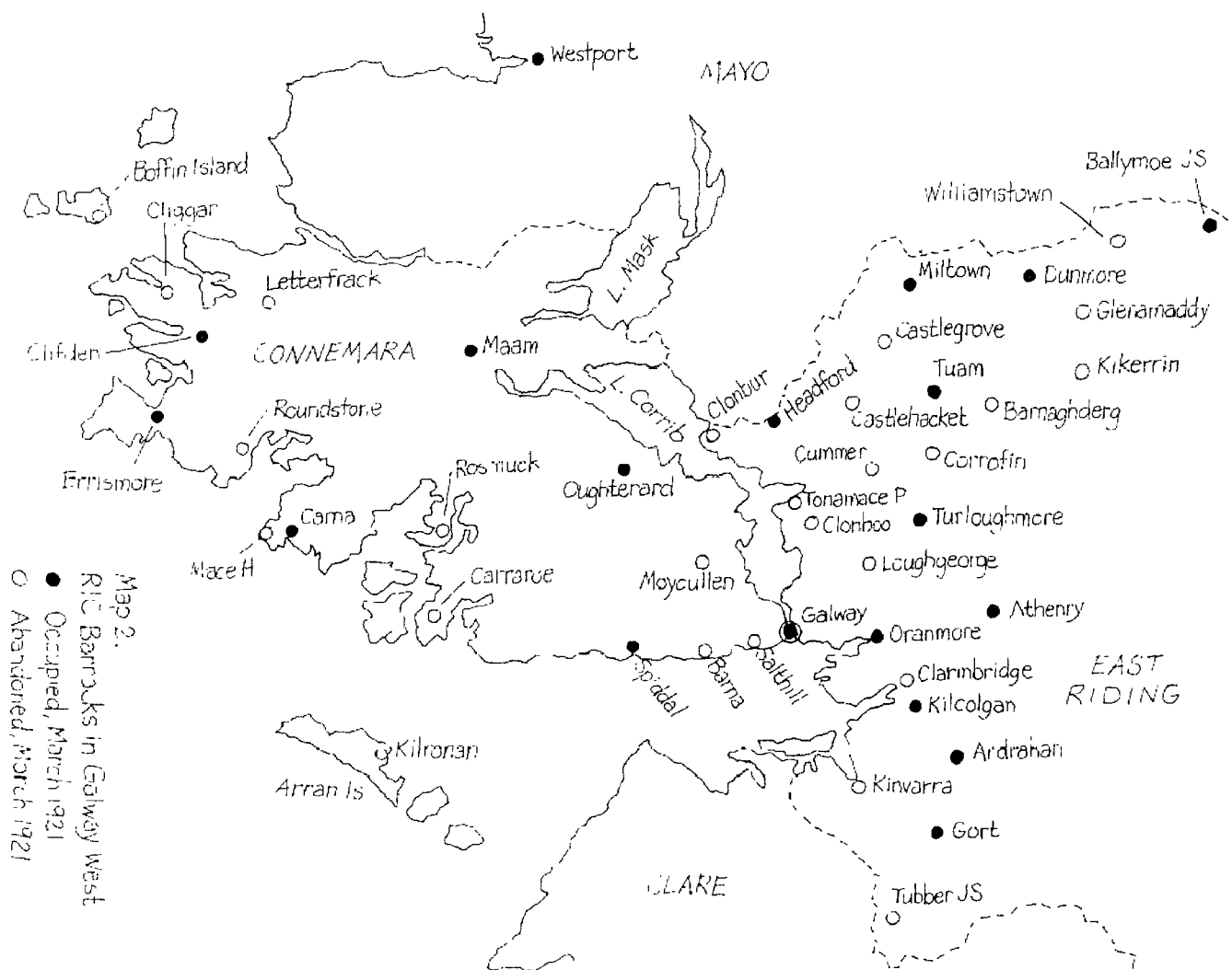
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Map 1. Pre-Revolutionary Ireland



Map 2. RIC Barracks in Galway West, 1920-21



IRELAND, 1920.

"Hullo, what side are you on?" "Justice and Liberty. And you?" "Law and Order."

From yesterday's 'Star'

Figure 1. David Low, "Ireland, 1920," Daily News, 29 September 1920, p. 3.  
'Black and Tan' meets 'Murder Club' in the ruins of Ireland.

## HISTORIONOMICAL NOTE

This is the story of the British police (and their Irish colleagues) in the First Irish War (1920-21). The events of this conflict are described mostly from the police perspective, and one of the goals of this work is to reproduce the mentalities of the police. It therefore uses those anglicized place names that appear in contemporary police reports: King's County for Offaly; Queen's County for Laois, Queenstown for Cobh, Londonderry for Derry, Connaught for Connacht, etc.

The 'First Irish War' is a new term, coined for the nonce. The conflict between the guerrillas and security forces in Ireland between the summers of 1920 and 1921 has at least three names, all of which elide the part played by the police, and their perspective: the Irish War of Independence; the Anglo-Irish War; and the Black and Tan War. It seems improper to speak of a 'Black and Tan War' when the Black and Tans were but a small part of the United Kingdom security forces: in the Royal Irish Constabulary, Irish police outnumbered British by two to one at least, and the paramilitary Auxiliary Division was dwarfed by the Ulster Special Constabulary. Since thousands of Irishmen fought on the 'English' side against their countrymen, it also seems improper to speak of an 'Anglo-Irish War'. Finally, since independence was not achieved, in part because thousands of Irishmen were fighting against its prospect, it seems improper as well to speak of an 'Irish War of Independence'. In addition, it can be argued that the 1920-21 conflict was as much a civil war as the conflict of 1922-23.

Though they were more protracted and less bloody, the wars in Ireland between 1920 and 1923 bore a certain resemblance to their near contemporaries, the Balkan Wars.\* In the First Balkan War, the forces of the Balkan League were united against a common enemy, the Ottoman Empire. In the fall of 1912 the League won a quick series of smashing victories over the Ottomans, and occupied (or liberated) most of Turkey-in-Europe. The war was interrupted by an armistice in December, but the fighting had resumed by the end of January 1913, especially at Adrianople, which fell to the Bulgarians in March. After the signing of the Treaty of London at the end of May, the members of the League fell out over the division of the spoils, and the brief interbellum period ended when the Bulgarians attacked their former allies at the end of June. The Second Balkan War was a disaster for Bulgaria: joined by their former enemies, the Ottomans, and by Rumania, the League made short work of the Bulgarian armies. The fighting was over within a month.

Like the members of the Balkan League, Ireland's republicans were at first united against a common enemy, the British. After a year of low-intensity warfare, the fighting in most of Ireland ended with an armistice, the Truce of July 1921. However, the war soon resumed in the North, where Belfast played a part like Adrianople's, reversed.

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\* During the First Irish War the British were often compared to the Ottomans, and the Black and Tans to the bashibazouks: see Chapter Seven.

(Bashibazouks were Muslim irregulars levied by the Ottoman government to combat the Bulgarian uprising of 1876: in Britain, the 'Bulgarian atrocities agitation' made the bashibazouks a symbol of lawless brutality.)



After the signing of the peace treaty in December, cracks appeared in the Irish republican coalition, and within six months the victors were at war over the shape of the post-war settlement, Free State versus Republic. With some British assistance, the Free State defeated its irredentist enemies, and won the war of 1922-23. As a result, like their Balkan predecessors, the conflicts in Ireland are here described in purely geographical terms, as the First Irish War (1920-21) and the Second Irish War (1922-23).\*

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\* Some readers have objected to my scheme on the grounds that the conflict of 1920-21 was not the first war in Ireland. But over the past three hundred years of Irish history only two other conflicts have been bloody enough to qualify as wars: the Rebellion of 1798 and the Rebellion of 1916. These conflicts are always called 'rebellions' or 'risings': only the conflicts of 1920-21 and 1922-23 are called wars; hence, the First and Second Irish Wars. In addition, I have never heard anybody complain that the First Balkan War of 1912-13 was not the first war fought in the Balkans.

Civil war breaks the bonds of society and of government, or at least suspends the force and effect of them; it gives rise, within the Nation, to two independent parties, who regard each other as enemies and acknowledge no common judge. Of necessity, therefore, these two parties must be regarded as forming thenceforth, for a time at least, two separate bodies politic, two distinct Nations. Although one of the two parties may have been wrong in breaking up the unity of the State and in resisting the lawful authority, still they are none the less divided in fact. Moreover, who is to judge them, and to decide which side is in the wrong and which is in the right? They have no common superior upon earth. They are therefore in the situation of two nations which enter into a dispute and, being unable to agree, have recourse to arms.

That being so, it is perfectly clear that the established laws of war, those principles of humanity, forbearance, truthfulness, and honour, which we have earlier laid down, should be observed on both sides in a civil war. The same reasons which make those laws of obligation between State and State render them equally necessary, and even more so, in the unfortunate event when two determined parties struggle for the possession of their common fatherland. If the sovereign believes himself justified in hanging the prisoners as rebels, the opposite party will retaliate; if he does not strictly observe the capitulations and all the conventions made with his enemies, they will cease to trust his word; if he burns and lays waste the country they will do the same; and the war will become cruel, terrible, and daily more disastrous to the Nation.

EMER DE VATTEL<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations* (1758), trans. Charles G. Fenwick (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints—Henry Dunant Institute, 1983), p. 338.

## INTRODUCTION

### ‘THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE’<sup>1</sup>

During the First Irish War of 1920-21 over ten thousand Britons enlisted in Irish police forces and fought against the rebel Irish Republican Army (IRA). Most of these British police were veterans of the Great War. Ex-soldiers joined the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and were known as ‘Black and Tans’ for their lack of uniform: in the beginning, they wore a mixture of dark police green and military khaki; some of them had only a cap and belt to identify them as policemen. Ex-officers joined a temporary force, the Auxiliary Division (ADRIC): heavily armed and organized in military-style companies, these ‘Auxiliaries’ wore mixed uniforms as well, topped with tam-o-shanter bonnets instead of police caps.<sup>2</sup> During their war year in Ireland, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries committed numerous atrocities, and became notorious for their violence and lack of discipline: as a result, like their comrades buried in France and Flanders, “their name liveth for evermore.” Who were these men? Why did they volunteer for an Irish War, after surviving a World War? What was it like to serve in the police forces and fight the guerrillas? Why did these British police take ‘reprisals’ against helpless prisoners and civilians? Do the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries deserve their terrible reputation?

Answers to these questions will not come easily. Both sides in the First Irish War lied shamelessly: their propaganda was almost as crude as the tales of slaughtered nuns and butchered infants told in the Great War. A classic wartime atrocity story began with news that church bells had been rung in Germany to celebrate the fall of Antwerp on 10 October 1914. As this tale was told and retold in Allied countries, it grew more and more sensational: first, when Antwerp fell, the Germans forced Belgian priests to ring the city’s bells; then, the clergymen refused to ring the bells, and were punished with hard labour. In the final version, ‘the barbaric conquerors of Antwerp punished the

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<sup>1</sup> “Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore.” (Ecclesiasticus 44:14, KJV) The last five words were chosen by Rudyard Kipling for the inscriptions on the Great War Stones in Commonwealth war cemeteries: Geoff Dyer, *The Missing of the Somme* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> There were four police forces involved in the First Irish War: the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP), the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), its Auxiliary Division (ADRIC), and the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC). After their Detective Division was eviscerated by the rebels in 1919, the DMP were mostly non-combatants. There were at least six distinctive types of police in the remaining three forces: Peelers (Irish officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the RIC); Black and Tans (British non-commissioned officers and men of the RIC); Auxiliaries (mostly British temporary cadets of the ADRIC); Temporaries (temporary constables of the RIC and ADRIC); A Specials (full-time Northern Irish members of the USC); and B Specials (part-time Northern Irish members of the USC). Contemporary sources often refer to Black and Tans, Auxiliaries, and Temporaries collectively as Black and Tans, but in order to prevent confusion this custom will not be followed here.

unfortunate Belgian priests for their heroic refusal to ring the church bells by hanging them as living clappers to the bells with their heads down.”<sup>3</sup>

Both sides told similar stories during the First Irish War. During its hearings in Washington, DC, the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland received an affidavit from Bartholomew Buckley of Midleton, county Cork, describing how soldiers of the Cameron Highlanders regiment arrested him and his brother Sean on the morning of 27 August 1920.<sup>4</sup> Later, that evening, the Buckley brothers were put in a truck with a section of ten Camerons under the command of an officer. They were driving to Cork city when the two young men were shot. “We were both handcuffed separately and were sitting on the floor of the lorry,” said Batt.

I was at the rear of the lorry and my brother Sean was at the front, both of us facing in the direction from which we had come. About half a mile outside of town I heard my brother cry out and immediately a sharp revolver shot rang out. The shout from my brother was in all probability occasioned by his seeing his assailant levelling the revolver at him. A second shot followed almost instantly, and I fell in the lorry, shot through the right shoulder.

“I gave no provocation whatsoever for this shot, and my brother gave none either,” the young man insisted. “We were both sitting quite still, and were making no effort to escape, as is alleged by the military.” Sean Buckley died without regaining consciousness, and his wounded brother was hospitalized for over two months.<sup>5</sup>

Other witnesses to the commission do not seem to have read Buckley’s affidavit. Mrs Michael Mohan had seen the soldiers arresting the Buckley brothers in Midleton: “they drove them a short way outside the town, and strapped them together and shot them

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929; new edition, London: Penguin Books, 1960, p. 61. Graves was quoting from Arthur Ponsonby’s *Falsehood in Wartime* (1926).

<sup>4</sup> The American Commission was a non-governmental body sponsored by the liberal American weekly newspaper *The Nation*. The commission held its hearings between November 1920 and January 1921. Its final report is a valuable but problematic source. Though the commission strove to be neutral and impartial, many of its witnesses were committed Irish republicans, and some of their testimony was merely propaganda. Nonetheless, the *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland* contains hundreds of pages of eyewitness reports, including the testimony of four former members of the Royal Irish Constabulary. On the commission itself, see F. M. Carroll, “‘All Standards of Human Conduct’: The American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, 1920-21,” *Éire-Ireland*, 16, no. 4 (1981), pp. 59-74.

<sup>5</sup> Affidavit of Batt. Buckley, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland: Comprising the Complete Testimony, Affidavits and Exhibits Presented before the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland*, transcribed and annotated by Albert Coyle, Official Reporter to the Commission (Washington: The Commission, 1921), p. 768; cf. “Sinn Fein Prisoner Shot Dead,” *The Times*, 30 August 1920, p. 12; “Tragedy in a Lorry,” *Morning Post*, 30 August 1920, p. 5; “Escaping Prisoner Shot,” *Daily Telegraph*, 30 August 1920, p. 12.

The Camerons went on a rampage in Queenstown later that night, wrecking shops and smashing windows in reprisal for a recent ambush at Castlemartyr that left one highlander dead and two wounded: “Outbreak at Queenstown,” *The Times*, 30 August 1920, p. 12; “Queenstown Wrecking,” *Morning Post*, 30 August 1920, p. 5; “Soldiers in Ireland,” *Daily Telegraph*, 30 August 1920, p. 12; the riot is also recalled in the memoirs of Major-General Douglas Wimberley, who was then a captain and adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, Cameron Highlanders (Wimberley MS, Vol. I, IWM, PP/MCR/182).

both,” she testified. “The officer in charge of them said they were trying to escape out of the lorry. But they were handcuffed together and surrounded by thirty soldiers at the time, and they could not possibly escape.”<sup>6</sup> Father James Cotter told the commission that the brothers were “taken to the Cork jail and were strapped back to back. The officer in charge took it into his head to see if one bullet would kill the two men, and shot them, the bullet going through the back of one and through the shoulder of the other.”<sup>7</sup>

While the commission was holding its hearings in Washington, an Auxiliary police patrol was ambushed in county Cork, near the village of Kilmichael on 28 November 1920. After a savage, one-sided battle, fifteen Auxiliaries and one Temporary lay dead, along with three guerrillas. An autopsy later disclosed that some of the police had been shot and beaten to death as they lay wounded: one corpse had “a large compound fracture of the skull through which the brains protruded, this wound was inflicted after death by an axe or some similar heavy weapon.”<sup>8</sup>

The “heavy weapon” in this case was probably the butt-end of a rifle or shotgun, but government and police officials quickly released exaggerated versions of these findings to the British press. Three days after the ambush, the *Times* reported that, “Inspection has revealed that the bodies have nearly all six bullet wounds, and have suffered terrible mutilation, as though they had been hacked with hatchets.”<sup>9</sup> The next day, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that, “The dead and wounded were hacked about the head with axes, shot-guns were fired into their bodies, and they were savagely mutilated.”<sup>10</sup> The first casualty of any war is truth: in Ireland, the truth was often “shot while trying to escape,” or shot in the head and dumped on the side of the road, as a warning to spies and informers. While the conflict was exhaustively documented, these documents are often obscure and unreliable, and the historian’s conjectures, as a result, are more than usually tentative and provisional.

### **A. On a Lonesome Road: Murder and Revenge in County Limerick**

The death of a Black and Tan in the summer of 1920, followed by the killing of two suspects in the fall, provides a good example of the challenges facing historians of the First Irish War. Three Black and Tans were shot and wounded while on patrol in Limerick city on the evening of 24 July 1920. Their misfortune was reported in at least five British newspapers on 26 July 1920. “Three policemen were fired on by armed men on Saturday evening in Upper Henry-street, Limerick, and seriously wounded,” said the

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<sup>6</sup> Testimony of Mrs. Michael Mohan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 688.

<sup>7</sup> Testimony of Rev. Dr. James Cotter, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 88. Initial reports said the Buckley brothers had been “roped together back to back,” but this was denied by the military, and of course, by Bartholomew Buckley himself: “Tragedy in a Lorry,” *Morning Post*, 30 August 1920, p. 5; “Escaping Prisoner Shot,” *Daily Telegraph*, 30 August 1920, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Proceedings of a military court of inquiry [henceforward MCI] (Auxiliaries killed in Kilmichael ambush), 30 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/152.

<sup>9</sup> “Murder Trap,” *The Times*, 1 December 1920, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> “The Macroom Ambush,” *Manchester Guardian*, 2 December 1920, p. 9.

radical *Daily News*, adding only that two of the wounded policemen were brothers named Jones.<sup>11</sup> The liberal *Daily Chronicle* was a little more forthcoming. “An attack on a police patrol is reported from Limerick City,” it said. “Three of the police, two brothers named Jones and Constable Packley, were seriously wounded. They are all ex-soldiers who only lately joined the R.I.C.”<sup>12</sup>

The liberal *Manchester Guardian*, the conservative *Daily Telegraph*, and the reactionary *Morning Post* all printed much fuller reports on this incident. “In Limerick at 4.30 last evening,” said the *Guardian*, “a patrol of armed police were attacked by a large party of armed men, who discharged shots at them. The police returned the fire, with what result is not known.”<sup>13</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* said the constables were walking along Upper Henry-street when “they were fired at from a laneway by a number of men.” This paper also reminded its readers that such incidents were not uncommon in Ireland. “This is not the first time that a police patrol has been fired at in Limerick city in broad daylight,” it said. “It will be remembered that some months ago a police sergeant was shot dead and another seriously wounded, in Mallow-street, and quite recently a detective was shot dead in the bar of the railway hotel in Limerick.”<sup>14</sup>

As the *Daily Telegraph*’s report suggests, there was nothing extraordinary about the shootings in Limerick on 24 July. The skirmish was not even mentioned in the *Times*, possibly because incidents like this had become so commonplace by the summer of 1920. The RIC and the British army had been skirmishing with the IRA since the beginning of the year. In the four weeks between 28 June and 25 July 1920, there were sixty-five separate attacks on the police in Ireland, in which fourteen policemen were killed, twenty-nine were wounded, and forty-two were counted as ‘attacked but not injured.’<sup>15</sup> Eight of the attacks, and three of the deaths, had occurred in county Limerick. However, the shootings in Limerick city on 24 July were more significant than they appeared, for two reasons. Readers of the *Guardian* were informed on Friday, 30 July 1920 that “Constable William Oakley, one of the patrol fired at and wounded on Saturday last in Limerick, died yesterday from abdominal injuries.”<sup>16</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* reported Oakley’s death as well. “Two other members of the patrol who were also wounded are convalescent,” it said.<sup>17</sup> Poor Constable Oakley’s name was never correctly reported in

<sup>11</sup> “Murder Campaign,” *Daily News*, 26 July 1920, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> “Police Chief Shot Dead in Church,” *Daily Chronicle*, 26 July 1920, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> “Police Ambushed in Limerick,” *Manchester Guardian*, 26 July 1920, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> “Police Patrol Fired On,” *Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1920, p. 13; cf. “Limerick Shooting,” *Morning Post*, 26 July 1920, p. 8. Sergeant Kyran Dunphy, RIC and Sergeant Patrick Hearty, RIC were shot in Mallow Street on 19 May 1920: Dunphy was killed, and Hearty died of his wounds on 22 June 1920. Detective Constable John Carroll, RIC was shot and killed in the Railway Hotel on 12 June 1920: Richard Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland 1919-1922* (Dublin: Mercier, 2000), pp. 77-78, 87-88. According to Abbott, the shootings of 25 July took place in Newenham Street, not Upper Henry Street (pp. 104-5).

<sup>15</sup> Weekly reports of outrages against the police [henceforward Outrage Reports], weeks ending 4 July 1920-25 July 1920. Public Record Office, Kew [henceforward PRO], CO 904/148. These figures do not include attacks on the police in Dublin Metropolitan Police Area.

<sup>16</sup> “Wounded Constable’s Death,” *Manchester Guardian*, 30 July 1920, p. 7. Oakley died on Wednesday, 28 July: the *Guardian*’s report was datelined ‘Cork, Thursday’.

<sup>17</sup> “Wounded Constable Dies,” *Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 1920, p. 9.

the English press during his lifetime. On 26 July the *Daily Chronicle* had spelled his name ‘Packley’; the *Guardian* had spelled it ‘Pakley’. Meanwhile, according to the RIC’s General Register, his first name was Walter, not William. The General Register also confirms the first fact that made his death significant: Walter Oakley was an Englishman, from Essex, and one of the first English members of the force to die in the First Irish War. He had worked as a sailor and served as a marine before joining the RIC in June 1920. He was twenty years old. His body was sent back to England on 2 August 1920, and he was buried in West Ham.<sup>18</sup>

Constable Oakley’s death was also significant for its ugly sequel. In the summer of 1920, few guerrillas were ever tried for shooting police constables: only seventeen persons were arrested in connection with the sixty-five attacks on the RIC between 28 June and 25 July.<sup>19</sup> In Oakley’s case, however, two Limerick men were arrested and put on trial, by a military court in Dublin: their names were Patrick Blake and James O’Neill. The circumstances of their arrest, imprisonment, and trial are obscure: in the British press, only the *Manchester Guardian* took an interest in their case. On 20 November 1920, the *Guardian* reported that the court-martial on Blake and O’Neill had resumed on Friday; that “several witnesses were examined to prove an alibi, and at the close of the evidence the Court acquitted the accused men.”<sup>20</sup> What happened next, however, was considered newsworthy even by the *Times*, which printed the following on Monday, 22 November:

Two men, Patrick Blake and James O’Neill who had been acquitted by a Dublin Court-martial of the shooting of Constable Oakley in Limerick last July, were returning home to that city on Saturday night in motor-cars when they were held up by armed and disguised men. One of the men asked if a man named Blake was in either of the cars. Blake’s brother, Michael Blake, answered in the affirmative, and was at once shot dead. He was married and was a demobilized soldier. O’Neill was reported to have escaped, but later his body was found riddled with bullets in a field by the roadside near Pallas.<sup>21</sup>

The *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the Labourite *Daily Herald* also reported the double murder, but nobody followed up the story. The shootings in county Limerick on 20 November were crowded out of the news by shootings in Dublin the next day.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup> Outrage Reports, weeks ending 4 July 1920-25 July 1920, PRO, CO 904/148.

<sup>20</sup> “Acquitted of Murder Charge,” *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1920, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> “Sequel to Court-Martial,” *The Times*, 22 November 1920, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> On the morning of Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920, guerrillas in Dublin killed thirteen men (nine army officers, two Auxiliaries, and two civilians) and wounded five more, one of them fatally. Later, that afternoon, police opened fire on a football crowd at Croke Park, killing seven civilians and fatally wounding five more; another two civilians were trampled to death in the resulting panic. Official reports indicated that another dozen people were hospitalized and fifty were slightly injured. Still later, that evening, the commander and second in command of the IRA’s Dublin Brigade, Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy, were killed by their Auxiliary guards, along with a third man, Conor Clune; elsewhere in the city,

Not much new information has come to light about the murders of Oakley, Blake, and O'Neill in the past eighty years. In 1949 an Irish newspaper, *The Kerryman*, published a collection of articles entitled *Limerick's Fighting Story 1916-21*, wherein Patrick Maloney describes the two shootings. Maloney's beginning is not promising: "A particularly daring attack on three Black-and-Tans was carried out in broad daylight on the twenty-second of June [*sic*], 1920, by a small party of Volunteers of 'E' Company under the command of Lieutenant William Barrett," it says. "The Black-and-Tans were Constables Oakley, E. T. Jones and H. Jones and the attack took place in Henry Street in the heart of the city, with military and R.I.C. Barracks in close proximity all round. Constable Oakley was shot dead and the two others were disarmed."<sup>23</sup>

Maloney's account of Blake and O'Neill's murder is much more detailed. According to this source, the two men's parents travelled to Dublin for the court-martial, along with relatives and a number of defence witnesses. These witnesses "proved conclusively that neither men charged was near the scene of the shooting," and both Blake and O'Neill were found not guilty. At this point, Maloney's article begins to diverge from the report in the *Times*. According to Maloney, the two defendants and their families took an open charabanc from Dublin to Limerick Junction, instead of the train. Suspiciously, the police escorted them to their vehicle, and when they reached Limerick Junction, the police procured a motor-car for Patrick Blake, his father, and his brother Michael, for the drive to Limerick city. At some point along the way, the Blake family stopped their car: Michael gave Patrick his overcoat, and switched seats with his brother.

At this point, Maloney's account becomes almost unrecognizable. As the Blake family car was nearing its destination, "a number of men suddenly jumped from behind a ditch and halted it. Without hesitation one of them approached Michael Blake, then seated on the outside without his overcoat, placed a revolver to his head and shot him dead. They then ordered the driver to proceed." In the meantime, James O'Neill's charabanc had been halted and boarded, "by a party of men who asked for him." O'Neill identified himself, and "despite the pleadings of his almost distracted mother, whom the raiders assured he would come to no harm, he was taken away into the darkness of the

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James Conlan and William Cullinane were shot dead in the street by an Auxiliary patrol. An additional three police were killed elsewhere in Ireland that Sunday, raising the day's death toll to thirty-seven at least, making 21 November 1920 the bloodiest single day of the First Irish War.

On the shootings in the morning, see contemporary news reports, along with James Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday* (London: Four Square, 1962), pp. 121-32; T. Bowden, "Bloody Sunday—A Reappraisal," *European Studies Review*, II, no. 1 (1972), pp. 25-42; Charles Townshend, "Bloody Sunday—Michael Collins Speaks," *European Studies Review*, IX (1979), pp. 377-78. On the shootings in the afternoon, see contemporary news reports, along with David Leeson, "Death in the Afternoon: The Croke Park Massacre, 21 November 1920," *Canadian Journal of History* 38, no. 1 (April 2003): 43-67. On the killing of McKee, Clancy, and Clune, see contemporary news reports, along with Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday*, pp. 140-42; Bowden, "Bloody Sunday," pp. 26-27; Townshend, "Bloody Sunday," p. 383 note 2; Ormonde Winter, *Winter's Tale: An Autobiography* (London: Richards, 1955), pp. 322-23. On the killing of Conlan and Cullinane, see MCI (James Conlan and William Cullinane), 24/30 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/148. On police casualties outside of Dublin, see Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 152-53.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Maloney, "With the Mid-Limerick Brigade Second Battalion," in *Limerick's Fighting Story 1916-21* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1949), pp. 180-81.



night. Mrs. O'Neill was never to see her son alive again, for when his body was found the following morning it was literally cut to pieces by bullets."

Maloney was in no doubt about who had murdered these two men. "It was obvious," he said, that Blake's killers "were British police." "These brutal murders by Black-and-Tans filled the city with gloom, and the double funeral cortege was a sorrowful, yet memorable occasion. Practically the entire population turned out to pay tribute to the dead and to show their sympathy with the bereaved relatives."<sup>24</sup>

However, the picture of these events was muddled even further when the British archives began to open in the 1970s. The information presented in the Limerick county inspector's monthly confidential report to the RIC's inspector general, written on 30 November 1920 contradicts both Maloney's version and the *Times* report:

There were two cases of murder when men named O'Neill and Blake were taken from motor cars between Limerick Junction & Limerick and murdered. As they had just come from Dublin after O'Neill and Blake's brother being acquitted by a Court martial of a charge of murdering a police constable in Limerick it was thought at first that revenge was the motive. An open military enquiry was held and the evidence showed that whilst some witnesses were said to have English Accents, others disputed it and raised a strong presumption that it was done by the I.R.A. as O'Neill had pretended he was a Sinn Feiner whilst in gaol and had by his counsel at the trial openly spoken out against it. Colour is lent to this view by the fact that he was taken out deliberately & shot whilst Blake was not. Blake's brother was killed by shots fired after the car he was in apparently to stop it.<sup>25</sup>

In this case, as in many others, the best and most accessible sources would seem to be the newspapers. Conservative, pro-government papers like the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* reported the shooting of Blake and O'Neill, as well as the Liberal, anti-government *Manchester Guardian*, and their articles corroborate each other, which would ordinarily suggest accuracy. However, in this case, their unanimity is a cause for suspicion rather than confidence. Consider, for example, the fate of Michael Blake. The cars are stopped on the way to Limerick. One of the gunmen asks for Blake. According to the *Times*, "Blake's brother, Michael Blake, answered in the affirmative, and was at once shot dead," "Blake's brother, Michael Blake, answered in the affirmative, and was thereupon shot dead," says the *Guardian*.<sup>26</sup> "Blake's brother, Michael Blake, answered in the affirmative, and was thereupon shot dead," says the *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>27</sup>

These three reports are almost identical, suggesting that all three were based on a common source. It seems likely that initial reports of Oakley's wounding in Limerick city on 24 July 1920 were based on a common source as well: the *Guardian*, *Daily*

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<sup>24</sup> Maloney, "Mid-Limerick Brigade," p. 181.

<sup>25</sup> Monthly Confidential Report of RIC County Inspector [henceforward RIC Reports, CI], Limerick, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>26</sup> "Shot on the Way Home," *Manchester Guardian*, 22 November 1920, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> "Sequel to Court-Martial," *Daily Telegraph*, 22 November 1920, p. 13; note that this report has the same title as the report in *The Times*.

*Chronicle*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Morning Post* all mistakenly refer to Constable “Packley” or “Pakley”, while the *Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* both contain the phrase, “The police returned the fire, with what result is not known.”<sup>28</sup> In both cases, the common source was probably an official press release, and official press releases were based on information provided by the police. As a result, researchers must approach newspaper sources with caution, in cases where the correspondent was not reporting events that he had personally witnessed: quite often, the news was simply the official version of events.

The county inspector’s report is fascinating to read. It is very definite on one point, which contradicts both newspaper reports (which, as we have seen, were likely the official version), and Maloney’s account in *Limerick’s Fighting Story*: while O’Neill was removed from his vehicle and shot, Blake was killed by shots fired after his car. Beyond this, however, the county inspector’s report is indefinite, even evasive. He does not say that the police did not kill Blake and O’Neill. He admits that “it was thought at first that revenge was the motive” for the killings. The following sentence is very strange: he says that “some witnesses were said to have English Accents,” but “others disputed it”. Presumably, he meant that some of the witnesses said the *gunmen* had English accents, and others said they had Irish accents. He then goes on to say that these other witnesses “raised a strong presumption” that Blake and O’Neill had been killed by the IRA, because “O’Neill had pretended he was a Sinn Feiner whilst in gaol and had by his counsel at the trial openly spoken out against it.” Finally, the county inspector writes that “colour is lent to this view” by the fact that O’Neill was taken away and shot, while Blake was killed by shots fired after his car.

However, none of these points absolve the police of responsibility for Blake and O’Neill’s murder. If the police killed Blake and O’Neill, the killers may well have been Irishmen, or a mixed group of Irishmen and Englishmen. It was not impossible that the IRA had killed Blake and O’Neill: both men had served in the British army, and the IRA frequently targeted ex-soldiers for murder and intimidation; furthermore, there is no suggestion anywhere that Blake and O’Neill were themselves Volunteers. However, the suggested motive—that O’Neill had pretended to be a Sinn Feiner and had spoken out against the movement—was preposterous: the IRA killed ex-soldiers because they suspected them of spying and informing, not because they pretended to be republicans.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the different ways that O’Neill and Blake were killed proves nothing, since the county inspector himself says that Blake’s killers were shooting after a fleeing car.

The way the county inspector wrote his report suggests that he knew how implausible it sounded. Most of his report is written in the passive voice, a sure sign that the writer was trying to dodge responsibility for what had happened and what he was saying: the evidence showed certain things, testimony raised a strong presumption, and

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<sup>28</sup> “Police Chief Shot Dead in Church,” *Daily Chronicle*, 26 July 1920, p. 5; “Police Ambushed in Limerick,” *Manchester Guardian*, 26 July 1920, p. 7; “Police Patrol Fired On,” *Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1920, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Jane Leonard, “Getting Them at Last: The IRA and Ex-Servicemen,” in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923* (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1990), pp. 118-29.

colour was lent to this view by certain other things. It is possible that Limerick's county inspector did not himself believe what he was writing.

The problem with Maloney's version is rather different. There seems to be no doubt that Maloney believed his own words—but should we? In Maloney's version, Blake and O'Neill are the victims of a vast conspiracy. In Dublin, they are escorted to their charabanc by the RIC; later, at Limerick Junction, the police provide a car for the Blake family. When the Blake's car is halted, the assassins know exactly where Patrick had been sitting: only the fact that Michael had switched coats and seats with his brother saves Patrick's life. "Thus," concludes Maloney, "the innocent victim of the vengeance intended to be vested upon his brother by the Black-and-Tans was brought to the Limerick County Infirmary by that brother whose place he had taken in death and by his sorrowing father, their clothes soaking with his life's blood."

This, however, is contradicted both by the newspapers, which say the car was stopped by men who asked for someone named Blake, and more importantly by the county inspector's report, which says with unusual conviction that Blake had not been executed, but shot while his car was apparently driving away from its attackers. While Maloney's police conspirators orchestrate an opportunity for murder from across the country, they seem curiously inept when it comes to the murder itself: they cannot distinguish Patrick Blake from his brother, and unlike their comrades who take James O'Neill from his bus, they do not even ask for Patrick Blake by name.

Finally, bullets do not ordinarily cut bodies to pieces. Maloney's account, while based on fact, seems exaggerated and melodramatic. Maloney describes how Michael Blake, "shot through the mouth from which he bled profusely, fell across his brother's knees into the arms of his horror-stricken father." Later, when the killers board the bus looking for James O'Neill, "it is thought that Jimmy had some premonition of their mission and that he wished to spare his mother the sight of bloodshed, for he promptly answered their summons." There are too many details in these passages, especially compared to the brief account that Maloney gives of the shooting of Constable Oakley in Limerick. Maloney's tale, it seems, has grown somewhat in the telling.

## **B. The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries in History**

Since 1921, roughly four generations of historians have written about the First Irish War. The contributors to *Limerick's Fighting Story* were members of the first generation, which was almost all Irish. Many of these authors played active parts in the Second Irish War as well as the First, and their memoirs and histories were often a continuation of these conflicts by other means. Their descriptions of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were vituperative, as a few quotations from *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom* will show. According to Piaras Béaslai, the RIC was an army of occupation disguised as a police force. Its reprisals were "not only authorized but instigated" by the British government, which "pretended that these were cases of their forces 'getting out of

hand' under great provocation." The men who committed these reprisals "were drawn from the criminal classes and the dregs of the population of English cities."<sup>30</sup>

Donal O'Kelly agreed wholeheartedly.

Of the Black and Tans—so called because of their uniform of khaki tunic and black trousers—nothing good can be said. They were recruited from the offscourings of English industrial populations; their individual fighting qualities were not remarkable, but they were past masters of the arts of murder, looting, arson and outrage. In the long run, their infamy recoiled on the heads of the people who had let them loose.<sup>31</sup>

Florence O'Donoghue continued in the same vein. "The Royal Irish Constabulary included the remnant of the original force which had not retired or resigned, and a reinforcement of British jail-birds and down-and-outs who had been hastily recruited into the Force in England when candidates had ceased to offer themselves in Ireland," he said. "As fighting material they were of the poorest type, untrained, indisciplined, and vicious; as policemen it would have been difficult in any country to assemble a more incongruous set of ruffians for police work; but they were not intended for police work; the Royal Irish Constabulary had ceased to be a police force except in name."<sup>32</sup>

Passages like these are the historical equivalent of putting your dead enemy's head on a pike. J R W Goulden, the son of a Peeler, wrote bitterly about the way men like his father were portrayed in the republican version of Irish history.

When the first 'troubles' ended with the signing of the treaty it became fashionable and profitable to take up a pro republican standpoint. Everyone had backed the 'boys' in their fight against the 'peelers' and the 'tans' or so it seemed. The peelers and the tans were cowardly murderers to a man was the accepted line—the boys of course were brave—clean living—clean fighters—no spot to smirch their honour.<sup>33</sup>

Besides their obvious hatred of both Britons and 'West Britons' (i.e. non-nationalists), there was an intriguing element of class prejudice in republican histories as well. Ireland's revolutionary writers were often petit bourgeois,<sup>34</sup> and their contempt for the working-class Black and Tans is clear. However, their feelings toward men of their own class, the ex-officers of the Auxiliary Division, were more ambivalent. Béaslai, for example, said the Auxiliaries "took more of the initiative in the war on Irish nationalism."

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<sup>30</sup> Piaras Béaslai, "The Anglo-Irish War," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom: 1919 to the Truce* (Tralee: The Kerryman, n.d.), pp. 6-9.

<sup>31</sup> Donal O'Kelly, "The Dublin Scene: War Amid the Outward Trappings of Peace," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Florence O'Donoghue, "The Sacking of Cork City by the British," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, p. 130.

<sup>33</sup> J R W Goulden, undated, Trinity College, Dublin [henceforward TCD], Goulden Papers 7381/3.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter Three.

They were stated officially to be composed exclusively of ex-officers of the British Army, but this, like most English official statements about Ireland, was untrue. A considerable proportion of them, but not all, were ex-officers; but the criminal element was also found amongst them. They were a very mixed body containing some fine types and a great very many very low scoundrels. The force was much more formidable than the ordinary Black and Tans, owing to the superior intelligence, energy, and courage of its members.<sup>35</sup>

Interestingly, the son of another policeman, Tom Barry, did not share Béaslai's opinion. Barry served under British officers as an artilleryman in the Great War and later won fame as an IRA guerrilla commander: "the general feeling, even here in Ireland at the time, was that the Black and Tans were the worst," Barry said. "I don't accept that at all. The Black and Tans included good and bad, like every armed force you meet, and quite a number of them were rather decent men."

But the Auxiliaries were something else. There was no excuse for them. Every damned one of them had to have been a commissioned officer and to have served on one or more fronts. They were far worse than the Black and Tans. They were a more efficient body because they had more experience and they were half mad with bloodlust. I've no doubt that there were a few amongst them who could pass as ordinary decent men, but the vast majority of these were the worst that the British produced at any time.<sup>36</sup>

It was Barry who gave the order to finish off the wounded Auxiliaries at Kilmichael on 28 November 1920.

The first generation of historians was followed, briefly, by a second in the late 1950s and 60s. Both Irish and British archives were still closed, and like their contemporaries writing on the Great War,<sup>37</sup> historians of the second generation relied on the first for their source material. As a consequence, their works are of limited value: commenting on Richard Bennett's 1959 book *The Black and Tans*, a later historian wrote, "Very little about Black and Tans, despite its title."<sup>38</sup> In addition, British members of this new generation had a difficult relationship with their partisan Irish sources. These difficulties are perhaps best exemplified by Cathal O'Shannon's damningly faint praise in

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<sup>35</sup> Piaras Béaslai, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, Vol. II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), pp. 27-28.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Griffith and Timothy O'Grady, *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution: An Oral History* (Boulder: Roberts Rinehart, 1999), pp. 154-55.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Allan Moorehead, *Gallipoli* (1956); Leon Woolf, *In Flanders Fields* (1958); Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (1961); Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (1962); Alistair Horne, *The Price of Glory* (1962).

<sup>38</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1977; new edition, Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), p. 304, note L5.

his foreword for Australian journalist Edgar Holt's *Protest in Arms: The Irish Troubles 1916-1923*:

He has been industrious in investigating sources, as his list of books consulted will show, although I feel his reliance on some of these is misplaced. A number of the works listed are less useful than others he has omitted. In matters of opinion I find myself sometimes in agreement, sometimes in disagreement, with him, but like the rest of us he is entitled to these when made in all honesty.<sup>39</sup>

On the subject of the police forces, the most important authors in this intermediate group were probably Richard Hawkins, author of an insightful article on the Royal Irish Constabulary, and James Gleeson, author of *Bloody Sunday*, which includes a brief memoir by an Auxiliary, Bill Munro, along with Gleeson's own memories of the First Irish War. Gleeson, like Barry and Goulden, was the son of a policeman: his father was an RIC sergeant, stationed in Tallow, County Waterford. Just a boy during the First Irish War, Gleeson recalled the sometimes bizarre and violent behaviour of the Black and Tans at the local police station. One constable from the North of Ireland, for example, was a heavy drinker. "One summer afternoon I watched him pull out his bayonet and chase an old man whose son was in the IRA. Fear and the results of alcohol contrived to save the old man, who outran his pursuer."

I watched the same Black and Tan pull out his revolver one day, stop a young draper's assistant and march him into the police barracks. A few minutes afterwards we heard a shot. Then the young draper walked out very pale but very determined-looking. He had been put up against the wall and the Black and Tan, who was good shot, fired at him so that the bullet just missed his head.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, in the 1970s, when Irish and British archives began releasing documents, a third generation of academics followed the first generation of memoirists and the second generation of journalists. Professors and graduate students were attracted initially to the British cabinet's papers, and produced political histories of the First Irish War like D. G. Boyce's *Englishmen and Irish Troubles* (1972), Martin Seedorf's "The Lloyd George Government and the Anglo-Irish War, 1919-21," (1974), and Charles Townshend's classic *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (1975). Townshend also published on the military and secret service history of the conflict, criticizing the work of Tom Bowden, author of *The Breakdown of Public Security: The Case of Ireland 1916-1921 and Palestine 1936-1939* (1977). By the end of the decade, however, this vein of documents had apparently been exhausted. After three decades, *The British Campaign in Ireland* remains the standard

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<sup>39</sup> Cathal O'Shannon, "Foreword," in Edgar Holt, *Protest in Arms: The Irish Troubles 1916-1923* (London: Putnam, 1960), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> James Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday* (London: Four Square, p. 1962), p. 54.

scholarly history of the British counterinsurgency: Michael Hopkinson's recent *The Irish War of Independence* (2002) is more of a complement than a replacement.

Hopkinson's fourth-generation work, however, benefits from the results of recent Irish scholarship, which has concentrated on local and social history instead of national and political history. This new Irish historiography has its origins in a third-generation work, David Fitzpatrick's groundbreaking *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution*, published in 1977. Using a wide variety of sources, Fitzpatrick wrote a social history of county Clare during the Irish revolution, describing the revolution's impact on a spectrum of social and political groups: Forces of the Crown, Protestants and Unionists, Home Rulers, Sinn Feiners, and Volunteers.

Twenty years later, Fitzpatrick was critical of his own achievement: "Today's researcher would probably ask different questions," he wrote, "and might consider my integrated approach to society, economics and politics as being naïvely mechanistic."<sup>41</sup> However, Fitzpatrick's approach has recently been emulated by a new generation of historians, with very rewarding results. Fitzpatrick's own student, Peter Hart, for example, has published an outstanding local study of revolutionary Cork, the cockpit of Ireland (*The I.R.A. & Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (1998)), while Joost Augusteijn has published a 'national' history of the Irish Republican Army by closely studying one county per province (Derry, Wexford, Tipperary, and Mayo) plus Dublin City (*From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (1996)).

Despite their different sources and methods, the second, third and fourth generations of historians share a couple of characteristics in common with the first, and with each other. If the spectre of the Irish Wars haunted the first generation, subsequent conflicts have weighed on the minds of their descendants. The Cypriot Emergency (1955-8) influenced the work of Richard Bennett. "History is notorious for not repeating itself," he said, "but there are interesting parallels between Ireland in 1920 and Cyprus in 1958. In both countries a legitimate movement for self-determination degenerated into gun law, into senseless killing for the sake of killing."<sup>42</sup> Bennett's contemporary C L Mowat compared the Black and Tans to the Congo mercenaries. The anti-war protests of the Vietnam era can be discerned behind D G Boyce's concern with British public opinion, while the parallel with Vietnam is made explicit in Seedorf's dissertation. Fitzpatrick's work on community conflict and the "many sorts of political mind in Ireland" was researched and written during the bloodiest period of the Troubles; twenty years later, Northern Ireland seems to have left its mark on Hart's history of county Cork as well. "Guerrilla war in Cork in 1921 was not primarily an affair of ambushes and round-ups," he writes. "It was terror and counter-terror, murder after murder, death squad against death squad, fed by both sides' desire for revenge."<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, while third- and fourth-generation historians have laid bare the British Government's inner workings, revealed the war's local and partial nature by

<sup>41</sup> David Fitzpatrick, "Preface," in Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, new edition, p. x.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Bennett, *The Black and Tans* (new edition, Barnes & Noble, 1995), p. 111.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 96.

discussing events at the level of individual counties, and unveiled the reality behind the myth of the clean-living, clean-fighting ‘boys’ of the IRA, the British security forces remain obscure figures, anonymous extras in the revolutionary drama. In third- and fourth-generation histories, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries are used as means, not ends. Townshend, for example, was interested in the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries chiefly as examples of the government’s indecisive approach to counterinsurgency. In his view, the government’s reliance on irregular, paramilitary forces to battle the guerrillas was fatal: “the nature and discipline of the R.I.C. were unsuited to the control of armed men in combat situations,” he writes. “It was a frail skin into which to pour the new wine of reinforcements.”<sup>44</sup> Black and Tan reprisals followed inevitably from the government’s acquiescence in “police warfare,” itself the result of its willingness neither to declare war nor to negotiate peace. “To the Cabinet,” he concluded, “the need to avoid measures which might alienate moderate opinion was often of greater importance than the need to adopt measures which would actually have a chance of success.”<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to Townshend’s pragmatic political analysis, Fitzpatrick was interested in the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries chiefly as evidence of the social degradation of the Clare constabulary. “No victims of the Irish Revolution suffered keener humiliation than the police and military forces of the Crown,” he wrote.<sup>46</sup> Before the revolution, the RIC had been respected members of the provincial community. During the revolution, they became the most visible and vulnerable human symbols of the British regime in Ireland. Boycotted by the people and attacked by the guerrillas, the constabulary’s numbers and morale declined until the government rushed in reinforcements of British ex-soldiers. Fitzpatrick drew a detailed and sensitive portrait of these Irish police, caught on the losing side of a war of national liberation. “The racking despair engendered by the revolutionary experience had many manifestations,” he says, “ranging from reprisals against the revolutionists to defection to their camp, from self-pitying withdrawal behind barbed wire to resignation.”<sup>47</sup> The “adventurers from England,” on the other hand, were mere sketches.

Like Fitzpatrick, fourth-generation historians have not shown much interest in the British police. Augusteijn devoted a chapter of his book to the RIC, but only to show how police reactions to the conflict contributed, in some cases, to “the radicalization of the Volunteers” and “the increasing use of violence.” As a consequence, his analysis is general, and makes few distinctions among Peelers, Black and Tans, and Auxiliaries. “Three approaches can be discerned in the reactions of individual policemen to Volunteer pressure,” he says, for example. “They either resigned, stayed but attempted to stay out of trouble, or met violence with violence.”<sup>48</sup> In Hart’s opinion, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were more likely to choose Augusteijn’s third option than their Irish

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<sup>44</sup> Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 203.

<sup>46</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 31.

<sup>48</sup> 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), p. 222.



comrades. “The reprisal movement within the R.I.C.,” he says, “and much of the casual violence that went with it, was largely a creation of non-Irish recruits: the Black and Tans.”<sup>49</sup> After this promising beginning, however, he passes over the Black and Tans in less than two pages, with comparatively few references. Like Augusteijn, Hart has much more to say about the IRA than he does about its enemies.

In fact, over the past three decades, new research has increased our knowledge of almost every feature of the First Irish War, except the British police forces. David Fitzpatrick’s recent pen-portrait of the Black and Tans would not have been out of place in the works of Piaras Béaslai:

The new recruits paid scant respect to their officers, relishing the absence of military discipline and their ready access to weapons and civilian targets. Republican killings and attacks were routinely ‘punished’ by reprisals against alleged accomplices, as raging and often drunken policemen looted shops and pubs, burned houses and particularly creameries, murdered ‘Shinners’, and roamed the roads by night in masked gangs.<sup>50</sup>

### C. Imperial Stormtroopers

If Neil Jordan’s movie *Michael Collins* (1996) is a good indication, then the popular memory of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries has also changed very little since Béaslai’s time. The British police make a few brief but memorable appearances in Jordan’s biopic. First, ominous music accompanies actual newsreel footage. A NEW FORCE OF HIS MAJESTY’S FINEST ARRIVES IN IRELAND, say the title cards, TO RID THE TROUBLED LAND OF ITS BLIGHT OF TERROR. Cut to the yard of Dublin Castle, where an Auxiliary troupe swaggers past the camera. They wear Nazisque leather coats, and cigarettes dangle from their lips. Festooned with ammunition belts and bandoliers, they tote a variety of weapons—British Lee-Enfield rifles and Lewis light machine guns, an American Browning automatic rifle, even a double-barrelled shotgun. Soldiers drill in the background, underlining the lack of discipline and uniformity in the foreground. His Majesty’s finest, indeed.

Soon afterward, this group is driving slowly down a Dublin street, as Dubliners pelt them with garbage and shout: “Black and Tan scum!”

“Fuck’s sake,” snarls an Auxiliary, “we put up with this bollocks every fucking day.” He glares up at a woman in a tenement window. “Stupid Irish cow!”

She replies by throwing a full chamber pot, spattering the ‘Black and Tan scum’ with urine. The furious Auxiliary raises his Lewis gun and rakes the tenement windows with automatic fire. The truck stops and his comrades join in with their rifles. Then, a

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<sup>49</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, p. 81.

<sup>50</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-1939* (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 90-91.

Molotov cocktail hits the vehicle, setting its occupants ablaze. Is this Dublin in 1920 or Derry in 1970? Does it matter?

Later, on the afternoon of Bloody Sunday, the Auxiliaries drive out of the Castle once more, led by a twin-turreted Peerless armoured car, hell-bent on revenge. On their way to the Gaelic football match at Croke Park, they dump the dead body of a tortured suspect in the street. When the convoy reaches the Park, the armoured car smashes through the gate and rolls out onto the pitch.

Play stops. The crowd stares in silence, confused, frightened. Then, a cheeky player kicks the ball over the armoured car, and scores a goal. The tension is broken. The crowd cheers, and the player smiles and waves. A turret swivels. One of the armoured car's two Hotchkiss machine guns takes aim at the footballer, and fires a burst, killing him instantly, punishing his act of symbolic defiance with death. Horrified reactions: then, finally, the British killing machine starts to fire its Hotchkiss guns at the crowd, and the massacre of the innocents begins.

In some ways, my work is a response to this movie's depiction of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries as imperial stormtroopers. When I was a young boy, living in St. Albert, Alberta, one of my neighbours, Mrs. Black, was an Irish immigrant. I used to play with her daughter, Shauna, who told me once that her great-grandfather had been beaten up by Black and Tans. I wasn't sure what she meant by this: despite having an Irish grandmother myself, I knew little of Ireland and its history; if I recall, I thought of soldiers dressed in black, with beige berets—or was it in beige, with black berets? In any case, I soon forgot Shauna Black's great-grandfather, until *Michael Collins* reminded me, twenty years later. Intrigued, I decided to see what historians had written about these men, and found very little. At the time, I was finishing my Master's thesis, and looking for a Doctoral dissertation topic. Aha, thought I: this looks like a job for—me.

Six years later, my research results have been organized into seven chapters. Based on both original research and the findings of third- and fourth-generation historians, Chapter One provides an outline of the conflict over Irish self-government, from the general election of 1885 and the subsequent Home Rule crises to the general election of 1918. This is followed by a brief description of the Irish republican insurgency, from the Declaration of Independence in January 1919 to the passage of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill in August 1920: the day this bill became law—9 August 1920—can be seen as the day the First Irish War began. Following Townshend, this section tries to explain why the Conservative and Unionist-dominated coalition government poured its new Black and Tan wine into the old bottle of the RIC.

The following section describes how this policy created a coalition of Peelers, Black and Tans, and Auxiliaries, as if to mirror the political coalition in Westminster. It also discusses the conditions in which the police forces worked and fought, and introduces the chief of police, Major-General Henry Hugh Tudor, shadowy founder of the ADRI. Chapter Two shows General Tudor's men at work, by providing a narrative of the First Irish War in the West Riding of county Galway, from the summer of 1920 to the Truce of 11 July 1921. During the First Irish War, Galway West was the most disturbed district in the province of Connaught—perhaps the most disturbed outside the South. It was the scene of several notorious and well-documented atrocities, and the resolutions of

its local governments in December 1920 may have helped lengthen the war, by encouraging the British to reject a compromise peace. Historians have overlooked the conflict in Galway West: recently, Michael Hopkinson has written that Galway “took little significant part” in the First Irish War, due to “the remoteness and poverty of the area and its sparse and widely scattered population.”<sup>51</sup> However, the low level of conflict in the riding (compared to say, Cork West), and the historical neglect it has engendered, makes this region ideal for a chapter-length case study.

Chapters on several themes follow, beginning with Chapter Three, which examines the Black and Tans and their place in the popular memory of the First Irish War. According to legend, the ranks of the Black and Tans were filled with “jail-birds and down-and-outs.” In fact, it seems the Black and Tans were quite ordinary men—unemployed British war veterans looking for a new start in life as Irish policemen. In this respect, they were much like the members of Reserve Police Battalion 101—the five hundred Germans who murdered thirty-eight thousand Jews during the Final Solution in Poland, whose crimes have recently been described and analyzed by Christopher Browning.<sup>52</sup>

After discussing some reasons why some Black and Tans broke British law instead of enforcing it, the men of the Auxiliary Division are next examined, in Chapter Four. As members of a temporary force with no long-term prospects, these men were less ordinary than the Black and Tans. Indeed, this ‘corps de luxe’ had its own staff of Temporaries for servants, to let its members live and fight in their accustomed style, as officers. But some of these officers were clearly far from gentlemen, and in some ways they resembled their contemporaries, the Free Corps of revolutionary Germany.

There was a rough division of labour between these two police forces: the Black and Tans were static, defensive troops, the garrisons of local strong points; Auxiliary companies were mobile, offensive units of raiders. However, both forces were fighting blind: their intelligence was poor, and in their battles with guerrilla bands the police were often caught by surprise, ambushed, and beaten. Survivors of these clashes often described their experiences to military courts of inquiry, and their own words lay the foundation for Chapter Five, which examines the police experience of combat.

Their defeats, and the casualties they suffered, were factors that led police to take reprisals against both guerrillas and civilians. These notorious events are discussed in the final two chapters. Using new evidence from official documents, as well as press reports, Chapter Six analyzes reprisals, breaking them down by type, and showing how the level of police violence varied from place to place. Finally, Chapter Seven tries to explain these violent events. The emphasis here on the police in general, rather than the British police in particular, is deliberate, since the evidence makes it clear that Peelers took part in reprisals as well: though their involvement is not a new discovery, historians have

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<sup>51</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), p. 137

<sup>52</sup> Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993). Browning’s book, along with Hart’s, have probably influenced this work more than any others, with the possible exception of A J P Taylor’s *English History 1914-1945* (1965), which has had a marked influence on my writing style, if not my research.

underestimated its extent. Since Peelers were clearly neither hardened criminals nor violent veterans of the Great War, dispositional hypotheses will be set aside, and our explanation will focus on situational factors instead—chiefly, the “worry and molestation” of revolutionary warfare.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> “Petty annoyance is the favourite weapon of the guerrilla, and regular troops are sorely tempted to retaliate in the same coin, to haggle as it were with the hostile gatherings instead of enduring worry and molestation for a season, biding their time until they can strike home.” C E Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice*, 3rd Ed. (1906), Reprint (Lincoln and London: Bison Books, 1996), p. 102.

## CHAPTER ONE

### HARP AND CROWN

#### Coalition Policy and Coalition Policing in Ireland

In the political cartoons of David Low, the Lloyd George coalition government of 1918-22 was often depicted as a two-headed ass—a foolish, chimerical creature, “without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity.”<sup>1</sup> The coalition’s conduct of the First Irish War did much to justify Low’s caricature. Under the sway of its Unionist members, the government pursued an indecisive, double-headed policy that combined limited repression with limited concessions. This policy’s armed implements were hybrids as well. Members of the cabinet were unable (or unwilling) to view the conflict in military terms. “The Irish job,” in Lloyd George’s words, “was a policeman’s job supported by the military and not vice versa.”<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the government primarily relied on its Irish police force, the Royal Irish Constabulary, to defeat the Irish Republican Army.

Unluckily for government policy, the RIC was not up to the job. Though denounced often as an army of occupation, it was a mostly civilian force, unfitted for counterinsurgency. This was clear by the fall of 1919. But instead of replacing the police with soldiers, the government recruited ex-soldiers to work as police. Veterans of the Great War were enlisted to serve as constables in the RIC, and their former officers were enlisted to serve in a special force, the Auxiliary Division. The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, it was hoped, would give the police the strength and skills they needed to re-establish order. This hope was disappointed. Instead, the new paramilitary police fought a cruel, merciless gang war with local guerrilla bands. Arson and murder became common on both sides, and British Liberals and Labourites were scandalized by reports of death squad killings and police riots.

#### I. The Two-Headed Ass

The First Irish War had its roots in the Home Rule Crises of 1886 and 1893. In the general election of 1885, Charles Stewart Parnell’s Irish National League won 85 out of 105 Irish constituencies, and its members held the balance of power in the United Kingdom’s House of Commons.<sup>3</sup> At first, Parnell threw his party’s weight behind Lord Salisbury’s Conservatives in exchange for land reform legislation; then, he made an alliance with W E Gladstone’s Liberals when Gladstone offered Ireland Home Rule.

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<sup>1</sup> David Low, *Low’s Autobiography* (London: Michael Joseph, 1956), pp. 94-96.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, Vol. III: *Ireland 1918-1925*, ed. Keith Middlemas (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> The election of T P O’Connor in Liverpool brought their number up to 86. At this time, there were 670 seats in the House of Commons. Unless otherwise noted, information on election results comes from Chris Cook & John Stevenson, *The Longman Handbook of British History 1714-1987*, 2nd Ed. (London: Longman, 1988), esp. pp. 75-76.

However, Gladstone's Home Rule Bill split the Liberal Party. Liberal Unionists combined with Conservatives against Irish self-government, and the First Home Rule Bill was defeated. Gladstone then called an election in 1886, and lost. Six years later, though, Gladstone's Liberals and their Irish allies won the election of 1892, and the Second Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1893. This passed through the Commons, but was defeated in the House of Lords. Gladstone was ready to call another election, but his colleagues were unwilling to fight a constitutional battle with the Lords over Home Rule. As a result, Gladstone resigned, the Liberals were eventually defeated in 1895, and a coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists governed the United Kingdom for the next ten years. In Ireland, political nationalism declined and cultural nationalism rose. A new generation of Irish men and women embraced new movements like the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, and the Literary Revival. In addition, new nationalist economic and political organizations appeared, such as the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and the separatist Sinn Féin movement.

When the Liberals finally won another general election in 1906, they showed little of the Grand Old Man's enthusiasm for Home Rule. Led at first by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and then by H H Asquith (after April 1908), they took advantage of their massive majority to steer clear of the Irish Question. Then, in 1910, they were caught in the constitutional storm they had avoided in 1893. After the House of Lords rejected the 'People's Budget' in 1909, an election was called in January 1910, and another in December, on the single issue of reforming the Upper House. The government lost its majority in January, and they did not win it back in December: Asquith's Liberals won only 275 out of 670 seats, compared to 273 Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. Once again, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), led since 1900 by John Redmond, held the balance of power in the new Parliament, and the price of their eighty-two votes was a promise of Home Rule. The Liberals first neutered 'Mr Balfour's poodle', the House of Lords, by passing the Parliament Act of 1911, thereby depriving the Lords of its ability to block legislation. The government then kept its promise to the IPP, and introduced its Government of Ireland Bill in April 1912. The bill aroused furious opposition from Conservatives and Unionists: though deprived of their veto, the Lords rejected the bill twice, in January and July 1913, while Northern Irish Protestants organized a private army, the Ulster Volunteer Force, to resist 'Rome Rule' by force.

By the summer of 1914, the Third Home Rule Bill was completing its third circuit through Parliament, and the Lords could no longer prevent its enactment. Led by Andrew Bonar Law, Sir Edward Carson, and Lord Milner, the Conservatives and Unionists demanded Ulster's exclusion from the bill. Redmond's IPP demanded Ulster's inclusion. The UVF had armed itself and was preparing to fight. Irish nationalists were arming Volunteers of their own. One historian has concluded that "at the very end of July war in Ulster seemed certain, and only the outbreak of the war in Europe averted it."<sup>4</sup> But once war broke out in Europe, the government and the opposition agreed to set

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<sup>4</sup> A T Q Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis: Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-14* (London: Faber, 1967), p. 231. On a possible Irish Civil War in 1914, see Alvin Jackson, "British Ireland: What If Home Rule Had Been Enacted in 1912?" in Niall Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London: Papermac, 1998), pp. 219-24.

Irish Home Rule aside. The Government of Ireland Act was assented on 18 September 1914, but suspended for twelve months, or until “such later date (not being later than the end of the present War) as may be fixed by His Majesty by Order in Council.”<sup>5</sup>

The Great War, of course, lasted much longer than twelve months, and by the time it was over the Government of Ireland Act had few supporters left in Parliament. From 1914 to 1916 John Redmond and his party stood by the government and encouraged recruitment in Ireland, hoping that her loyalty and sacrifice would be rewarded at war’s end. This policy split the Irish National Volunteers into two camps: the majority National Volunteers, who supported Redmond, and the minority Irish Volunteers, who swore to resist any move toward partition or conscription, and to work for a “free National Government of Ireland.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916 the Irish Volunteers rose in rebellion and proclaimed an independent Irish Republic.

The Rebellion of 1916 was crushed within a week, but the British government’s heavy-handed response, and in particular its execution of the rebellion’s leaders, alienated Irish nationalists.<sup>7</sup> Their alienation deepened when, in the wake of the rising, negotiations for a new Home Rule settlement ran aground once more on the reef of Ulster: nationalists would not agree to partition, but Unionists would agree to nothing less. This failure finally discredited the IPP.<sup>8</sup> In 1917, the Redmondites lost four by-elections to Sinn Féin, led by Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith.<sup>9</sup> Sinn Féin’s momentum increased in the spring of 1918. In the midst of Germany’s final offensive on the Western Front, the British government announced its intention to extend compulsory service to Ireland. In response, Irish nationalists pledged themselves “to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal.”<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, the crisis passed, and conscription was not imposed on Ireland, but the political damage was done. When a general election was held in December 1918, a month after the Armistice, Sinn Féin swept Ireland, winning seventy-three constituencies. Their Unionist opponents won only twenty-five, almost all of them in Ulster and in universities. The IPP won just seven seats.

However, the political situation in Britain had changed as well. Asquith’s Liberal government had lasted only till May 1915, when the resignation of the first sea lord over the misconduct of the Dardanelles campaign, along with a scandal over the shortage of artillery shells on the Western Front, led the prime minister to form a Liberal-dominated

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<sup>5</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 65, cols. 991, 1017.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War I and Partition* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> The future leader of the republican movement, Eamon de Valera, was among those condemned to death for his part in the rebellion, but the sentence was commuted, in part because he was an American by birth, and in part because the military authorities had been advised that de Valera “was not very important and was unlikely to make any trouble in the future”: Max Caulfield, *The Easter Rebellion* (Boulder: Roberts Rinehart, 1995), p. 288.

<sup>8</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, pp. 144-52; D G Boyce, “How to Settle the Irish Question: Lloyd George and Ireland 1916-21,” in A J P Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays*, Reprint (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971; Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1994), pp. 137-41.

<sup>9</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, p. 159.

<sup>10</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, p. 221; Boyce, “Lloyd George and Ireland,” pp. 144-45.

coalition with his Unionist opponents. This coalition fell apart in December 1916, when Asquith resigned, and a second coalition was formed, led by David Lloyd George, author of the 1909 ‘People’s Budget.’ Though Lloyd George was a Liberal, he relied heavily on Conservative and Unionist support, in part because Asquith’s resignation had split the Liberal party: some Liberals backed Lloyd George and the new coalition, but the majority followed Asquith into opposition. After the Armistice, Lloyd George and the Unionist leader, Bonar Law, agreed to continue their government of national unity in peacetime. In the Coupon Election of December 1918, while Sinn Fein was routing its opponents in Ireland, Lloyd George’s coalition was routing its own opponents in Britain: the coalition Unionists won 335 seats, and the coalition Liberals 133; together with 10 Labour MPs, this gave the coalition a crushing majority of 478 seats out of 707 in Parliament. Support for Asquith’s Liberals was weak. They won just twenty-eight seats, and as a result, Arthur Henderson’s Labour Party became the official opposition, with sixty-three.

Thus, by the end of 1918, Ireland’s future was doubtful once again. In theory, the Government of Ireland Act would come into force when the war ended. In practice, it was dead. Its enemies dominated the coalition government. Unionist members outnumbered their Liberal partners 5 to 2, and the cabinet was full of men who had led the fight against Home Rule between 1912 and 1914: the Lord Chancellor, F. E. Smith, Viscount Birkenhead; the lord privy seal, Andrew Bonar Law; the lord president, Arthur Balfour; and the first lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long.<sup>11</sup> If nothing else, their presence in cabinet ensured that Ulster’s demands for exclusion would be met. In addition, Lloyd George was no Gladstone: his enthusiasm for Home Rule had always been limited, and he was not willing to risk his premiership over Ireland.<sup>12</sup> Throughout 1919, while the prime minister was preoccupied with peace negotiations in Paris, the Irish Question was left on the back burner. As late as 12 November, in response to a parliamentary question about the Government of Ireland Act, Bonar Law said simply that it would “come into operation on the ratification of the last of the Peace Treaties.”<sup>13</sup> But by November 1919, the site of the struggle had shifted from Westminster to Ireland itself.

### **A. The Irish Insurgency, January 1919 to July 1920**

Curiously, while the First Irish War was formally suspended by the Truce of 11 July 1921, and formally concluded by the Treaty of 6 December 1921, it was never formally declared. An Irish republican insurgency began soon after Sinn Fein’s triumph in the Coupon Election of 1918. Sinn Fein members did not recognize the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: instead, they gave their allegiance to the Republic proclaimed by the rebels of 1916. In their view, Ireland’s 105 elected representatives were not part of the United Kingdom’s House of Commons: they were members of Dáil Eireann, an Irish republican parliament. On 21 January 1919, thirty Sinn Fein MPs met

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), pp. 377-78.

<sup>12</sup> Boyce, “Lloyd George and the Irish Question,” pp. 137, 141-42.

<sup>13</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 121, col. 362.



at the Mansion House in Dublin and adopted a Declaration of Independence, along with an Address to the Free Nations of the World, which predicted that, “the existing state of war, between Ireland and England, can never be ended until Ireland is definitely evacuated by the armed forces of England.”<sup>14</sup> On that same day, a band of rebel Irish Volunteers killed a pair of policemen and stole a shipment of explosives near Soloheadbeg in county Tipperary. Their victims were Constable James McDonnell, age 57, and Constable Patrick O’Connell, age 36.<sup>15</sup>

The republican insurgency heated up slowly: by the year’s end, Irish guerrillas had killed just fifteen (Irish) policemen. But the fighting started simmering in the winter of 1920. On 19 December 1919, the Volunteers laid an ambush for the lord lieutenant, Viscount French, outside his official residence in Dublin’s Phoenix Park. Though this attack was unsuccessful, it provoked a strong reaction from the Irish executive, headquartered in Dublin Castle.<sup>16</sup> Beginning 7 January 1920, the British army was given special powers to combat the insurgents, and the security forces carried out mass arrests of republican leaders.<sup>17</sup> Not long afterward, the government finally started implementing its own plans for the future of Ireland. A new Government of Ireland Bill was introduced on 25 February. Before the Great War, Ulster Unionist opposition had blocked the road to Home Rule. The Fourth Home Rule Bill used partition as a detour. The bill would establish two provincial parliaments: one for a Protestant enclave in the North, and one for the rest of Ireland. In addition, the bill would set up a joint council, appointed by the governments of both North and South. In time (it was hoped), this council would become a single Irish parliament.

Ireland’s revolutionaries were not impressed by this complicated but limited scheme. The guerrillas killed another twelve policemen between 1 January and 31 March 1920, and celebrated Easter by burning hundreds of tax offices and abandoned police barracks; soon afterward, many of their imprisoned leaders began a hunger strike. In the spring of 1920 the Irish executive tried to cool things off. They let the republican hunger

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<sup>14</sup> Maire Comerford, *The First Dail* (Dublin: Joe Clarke, 1969), p. 113.

<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise noted, information about police deaths in the First Irish War comes from Richard Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland 1919-1922* (Dublin: Mercier, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Although part of the United Kingdom, Ireland had a separate administration, known variously as the Irish government, the Irish executive, or simply Dublin Castle. The lord lieutenant (a viceroy, in Dublin) and his chief secretary (a cabinet minister, in London) were the heads of this Irish government. The chief secretary had a deputy minister, the under secretary, who resided in Dublin with his assistant. On the structure of this administration, see Lawrence McBride, *The Greening of Dublin Castle: The Transformation of Bureaucratic and Judicial Personnel in Ireland, 1892-1922* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), pp. 1-37. Most of Dublin Castle’s top civil servants were purged in May 1920 and replaced with Britons like Sir John Anderson and Alfred Cope. On this reform, see John McColgan, *British Policy and the Irish Administration 1920-22* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 1-21. Historians differ over the character of Irish government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Ireland was either a province with colonial attributes, or a colony with provincial attributes; for a brief discussion, see David Fitzpatrick, “Ireland and the Empire,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. III: *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 494-521.

<sup>17</sup> Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 48-59.

strikers out of Dublin's Mountjoy gaol on 14 April, and they took away the military's emergency powers on 3 May.<sup>18</sup>

These concessions dismayed the men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, who felt abandoned and betrayed. To make matters worse, instead of simmering down, the conflict began to boil in the summer of 1920. The guerrillas, now known as the IRA, escalated their campaign against the RIC, attacking its barracks and ambushing its patrols. Twenty-eight members of the police force were killed between 1 April and 30 June: fifty-five were killed between 1 July and 30 September. In most places, IRA supporters increased the pressure with a boycott.<sup>19</sup> Railway workers went on strike, refusing to move trains that carried police or troops bearing arms. Merchants refused to serve police customers. The police and their families were shunned and threatened. Police recruits and servants were attacked and intimidated. Women who were friendly with policemen had their hair cut off. Police property was wrecked and stolen: in some cases, police bicycles were taken away while their owners were in church. Meanwhile, the rebels were building their alternative state. Local governments were acknowledging the Dáil's authority. IRA Volunteers were acting as republican police. Republican courts were adjudicating civil and criminal cases. In many parts of Ireland, the Republic was becoming a reality.

The Irish kettle started whistling in midsummer. In both Britain and Ireland, criminal cases were tried quarterly. The summer assizes were held in Ireland in June and July 1920. The results were disastrous. In a memorandum dated 24 July, the chief secretary for Ireland, Sir Hamar Greenwood, told the cabinet that, "throughout the greater part of Ireland criminal justice can no longer be administered by the ordinary constitutional process of trial by judge and jury."

At the recent assizes the criminal business of many of the counties of the south and west was left undisposed of owing to the non-attendance of jurors and when a jury can be got together even in the clearest cases a conviction is not assured. This is the result of a campaign of intimidation and violence carefully planned and vigorously executed. If the campaign were confined to the intimidation of jurors a remedy might be found in the suspension of trial by jury and the establishment of special tribunals of two or more judges as was done in 1882 but the violence and intimidation extends to all officers concerned in the administration of justice, Clerks of the Crown, Magistrates, Petty Sessions Clerks, Sheriffs, Process-servers and Bailiffs; Courthouses are burnt down and court records are destroyed. The administrative machinery of the Courts has been brought to a standstill.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>19</sup> Boycotts are an Irish invention. Their name comes from Capt. C C Boycott, a land agent in County Mayo. Boycott and his family were ostracized in the autumn of 1880, during the early stages of the Land War (see Chapter Two).

<sup>20</sup> Memo by the Chief Secretary covering a draft bill providing for the immediate extension of the jurisdiction of Court Martial, 25 July, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1682, f. 417.

Like the release of the hunger strikers in the spring, the failure of the summer assizes demoralized the RIC. Most of the crimes that went unpunished had been committed against the police. When it became clear that the guerrillas were above the law, the number of retirements and resignations from the constabulary went up dramatically: 225 constables had resigned and retired in May and June; 783 resigned and retired in July and August.<sup>21</sup> The men who stayed in the force became increasingly bitter and violent. There had been disturbances in Tipperary during the winter, and police death squads had killed a handful of republicans in the spring.<sup>22</sup> Still, in most areas, the RIC's discipline did not crack until July, when the quarter sessions collapsed, and the police began to riot in the streets.

Soon, police reports from the South and West were full of despair and anger. "Murder and outrage are universal," wrote one official.

The loss of life inflicted on Government forces cannot but have a disastrous effect on the morale of the men.

The R.I.C. hitherto have been indomitable & have carried on with fearlessness, courage, & initiative, but recent events point to the breaking point being reached.

This is evidenced by the numerous applications to resign made by men who, having no means of livelihood outside the Force after resignation, have to face the world again to win bread for themselves & their families.

So far as the R.I.C. are concerned in this Riding, they may be considered to have ceased to function. The most they can do is try to defend themselves and their barracks.

It would seem that the time has arrived for the military to supersede the R.I.C. in this Riding.

If action is not speedily taken the R.I.C. will exist only in name.

Further resignations may be expected daily.

The men consider that that they are merely pawns in a political game.<sup>23</sup>

Dublin Castle's outlook was equally pessimistic. At a cabinet conference on 23 July, William Wylie predicted that, "within two months the Irish Police Force as a Police Force would cease to exist." "In two month's time," he said, "fifty per cent of the Police Force would have resigned through terrorism, and the remainder would have to go about in considerable force committing counter outrages. Am [*sic*] Irish policeman either saw white or he saw red; if he saw white he resigned from the Force through terrorism, and if he saw red he committed a counter outrage."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Outrage Reports, April-December 1920, PRO, CO 904/148-49.

<sup>22</sup> Their most prominent victim had been Tomás MacCurtain, lord mayor of Cork and commandant of the IRA's 1st Cork Brigade, shot dead on the night of 19 March.

<sup>23</sup> RIC Reports, CI Cork West, July 1920, PRO, CO 904/112.

<sup>24</sup> Cabinet Conference, 23 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1693, p. 446. Wylie was the Irish Executive's Law Adviser.

However, the failure of the summer assizes did more than demoralize the police. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one of the chief justifications for colonialism was the claim that colonial regimes provided peace and order for indigenous peoples. Colonial powers defined indigenous resistance in legal terms, and treated their indigenous political opponents as criminals. The British counterinsurgency in Ireland was typical of this legalistic approach.<sup>25</sup> In the minds of Unionist ministers like Balfour, Bonar Law, Birkenhead, and Long, the First Irish War was not a war at all. It was not even a rebellion. The rebels of 1916 had at least fought like soldiers: they wore uniforms, and carried weapons openly. The guerrillas of 1919-21 were terrorists, ignorant of lawful arms or martial discipline.<sup>26</sup> The republican insurgency was “murder,” and the Irish Republican Army was a “murder gang.” Walter Long thought the guerrillas were “vile criminals” who “must be exterminated.”<sup>27</sup> The government could not negotiate with terror: “we could not bargain with men who have been guilty of these awful murders,” Long said. “The thing is unthinkable.”<sup>28</sup> Some coalition Liberals held similar views, including Sir Hamar Greenwood and Winston Churchill, the secretary of state for war. In June 1920, Churchill said, “no course is open to the Government but to take every possible measure to break the murder campaign and enforce the authority of the law, while at the same time pressing forward the Home Rule Bill.”<sup>29</sup>

The court system was the foundation of this law-and-order policy, but by the summer of 1920, this foundation was crumbling. At the cabinet meeting of 23 July, Alfred Cope made this point clear: according to the minutes, “he thought that the Sinn Fein courts were doing more harm to the prestige of the British Government than the assassinations.”

The Sinn Fein Courts were working very efficiently, but it must be remembered that the amount of ordinary crime in Ireland was very small. There were only 450 prisoners in the country when they had accommodation for 6,000. Eliminating offences against the Police, there was practically no crime in Ireland at all.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For a theoretical discussion of the legalistic approach to counterinsurgency, see Lucian Pye, “The Roots of Insurgency,” in *Internal War: Problems and Approaches*, ed. Harry Eckstein (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 167-71.

<sup>26</sup> “Merciless villain, peasant, ignorant / of lawful arms or martial discipline! / Pillage and murder are his usual trades: / the slave usurps the glorious name of war!” Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part I, Act IV, Scene 1.

<sup>27</sup> Long to French, 26 December 1919, quoted in John Kandle, *Walter Long, Ireland, and the Union, 1905-1920* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), p. 185.

<sup>28</sup> Long to Middleton, 26 July 1920, quoted in John Kandle, *Ireland and the Federal Solution: The Debate over the United Kingdom Constitution, 1870-1921* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), p. 232.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. IV: *The Stricken World, 1916-1922* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 454. Churchill, of course, was a former Conservative who went back to the fold in 1924, becoming chancellor of the exchequer in the second Baldwin ministry (1924-29).

<sup>30</sup> Cabinet Conference, 23 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1693, f. 451: Cope was assistant under secretary for Ireland.

By 23 July, both Unionists and Liberals agreed that the government's half-hearted policy had failed. At the cabinet meeting that Friday, Sir John Anderson said the government "had either to give way or to go very much further in repression." "The alternatives were, in fact," he said, "the declaration of martial law or some kind of agreement with Sinn Fein."<sup>31</sup> Anderson and his colleagues were sure that the government must give way. "By proclaiming martial law it would be possible to beat the people into insensibility," said Wylie; "but when martial law was taken off—and it must end some time—the feelings of hatred and bitterness would be intensified, and there would be a return to the present state of affairs."<sup>32</sup> The best course of action would be to drop the Government of Ireland Bill in favour of Dominion Home Rule—autonomy for Ireland within the Empire.

## **B. The Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, 9 August 1920**

The prime minister and some coalition Liberals were at least willing to discuss this proposal, but a negotiated settlement was anathema to the coalition Unionists, who clung to their legalistic definition of the conflict. On 24 July Balfour denounced any suggestion of dropping the Government of Ireland Bill: "the Government cannot abandon a measure so elaborate in its structure and so far advanced in its Parliamentary career as the present Home Rule Bill without some discredit," he wrote; "the discredit would amount to disgrace if this course were adopted, not on its merits, but as a concession to those who worked through organised assassination. When it became known as, of course, it would be - that the flag of truce had been sent by the Imperial government to the assassins, - not by the assassins to the Imperial government, - the disgrace would deepen to infamy." In addition, government faith had been pledged, to Northern Unionists in particular. "A parliament has been promised to Ulster," wrote Balfour. "Whether the promise was originally wise or unwise is quite immaterial; it cannot now be withdrawn." The Bill must be regarded as a final settlement: any other position would just encourage the revolutionaries. "If then we let it be understood that our Home Rule Bill is no more than an instalment, we invite further agitation: we give the extremists the occasion they seek; and we shall have before us a long perspective of Home Rule Amendment Bills to which no term can be assigned except that of complete separation."<sup>33</sup>

Balfour's views were seconded by Long. On 25 July, the first lord of the Admiralty warned his cabinet colleagues that, "any hesitation on the part of the Government to proceed with the measure in its present form would be attended with the gravest consequences in Ulster."<sup>34</sup> Even so, Sir John Anderson appealed again for an

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<sup>31</sup> Cabinet Conference, 23 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1693, f. 459: Anderson was under secretary for Ireland—Sir Hamar Greenwood's deputy minister.

<sup>32</sup> Cabinet Conference, 23 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1693, f. 447.

<sup>33</sup> The Future of the Home Rule Bill: Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council, 24 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1683.

<sup>34</sup> Irish Situation: Memorandum by Walter Long, 25 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1688. On this date, Belfast was just beginning to recover from three days of sectarian riots that left eighteen dead and

offer of autonomy within the Empire. “I believe,” he said, “that, if what is commonly described as Dominion Home Rule – with protection for Ulster – could be offered immediately sufficient popular support would be obtained in Ireland to enable the suppression of crime and the re-establishment of law, to be effected by means of the ordinary civil machinery temporarily reinforced.”<sup>35</sup>

The hawks won this debate. Ignoring his under secretary’s “profound misgiving” about its prospects, Greenwood submitted emergency legislation to the cabinet. The Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill would give the Irish executive the power to govern by regulation; to replace the criminal courts with courts martial; to replace coroner’s inquests with military courts of inquiry; and to punish disaffected local governments by withholding their grants of money.<sup>36</sup> On 29 July, the cabinet’s Unionist-dominated Irish Situation Committee recommended “that no person serving under the Irish Government should in any circumstance be permitted to hold communication with Sinn Fein, except on the basis of the Government’s expressed policy, viz: the repression of crime and the determination to carry through the Government of Ireland Bill on its present main lines.”<sup>37</sup> The Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill was approved with a few modifications and amendments on 2 August.<sup>38</sup> It was introduced and given a first reading in the House of Commons the same day.

Three days later, at around 4:00 p.m. on Thursday 5 August, Bonar Law rose to move the first guillotine resolution since the end of war. The second reading debate on the bill would conclude at 11:00 p.m. The committee stage and third reading would begin on the afternoon of Friday 6 August, and conclude by 6:00 p.m. In his speech, the lord privy seal presented the government’s official position on the conflict in Ireland. Dublin Castle needed emergency powers, he said, because peace and order had broken down, threatening the “conditions of civilised society.” The men responsible for this breakdown were common criminals: “the very fact that an attempt is made to describe murder by another name, and to make excuses for it as if it were political action, must demoralise the whole life of any country where such excuses can be made.” These gangsters did not represent the people of Ireland: “the great mass of the Irish people, whatever their political views, however strong their desire for independence, would rejoice if this criminal conspiracy of murder could be put an end to.” The bill would give the police and courts the powers they needed to suppress this “murderous conspiracy,” and allow the government “to give to the Irish people the widest measure of local government which is compatible with our national safety, our national existence, and fairness to other sections in Ireland.”<sup>39</sup>

The guillotine resolution was passed, and the House proceeded to debate the bill in principle. Opposition members pleaded in vain for a more generous policy. Asquith

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over two hundred wounded: Richard Bennett, *The Black and Tans* (London: Edward Hulton, 1959; new edition, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1995), pp. 71-73.

<sup>35</sup> Irish Situation: Note by Sir John Anderson, 25 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1689.

<sup>36</sup> Draft of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill, 25 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/110, CP 1709.

<sup>37</sup> Irish Situation Committee: Note by Mr. Long, 29 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/110, CP 1703.

<sup>38</sup> Cabinet Conclusions, 2 August 1920, PRO, CAB 23/22, f. 79.

<sup>39</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 132, cols. 2691-97.

called on the government to drop its bills for the Restoration of Order and the Government of Ireland, and adopt instead “a large, liberal, and adequate measure of Home Rule on Dominion lines.”<sup>40</sup> In his reply, Lloyd George brushed aside Asquith’s arguments. “I have rarely, in this House, heard a more inadequate or futile contribution towards the solving of a great emergency from a first-rate statesman,” said the prime minister.<sup>41</sup> An Irish dominion was out of the question. It would raise its own army and navy. Its parliament would control Ireland’s ports. Ulster would never agree to be part of a Dominion of Ireland. Proposals of dominion status would just encourage Irish republicans. “Supposing you proposed it,” said Lloyd George, “what would happen? The men who speak on behalf of the majority would repudiate it. They would say, ‘Here they are on the run, press them on, we will get our independent Republic.’ No,” said the Prime Minister. It was idle to talk of an Irish dominion while Sinn Fein held out for an Irish republic.

The authentic representatives of the Irish people demand something which Britain can never concede except as a result of disaster and defeat, and that is secession. We cannot accept it. It would be fatal to the security of the Empire. Until, therefore, Irish opinion accepts the fundamental, indefeasible fact that Britain will never concede those terms, it is futile to attempt to propose alternative schemes for their consideration. They decline to accept the autonomy of Ulster. They decline to accept the authority of the Crown. They decline to accept the defence of the realm. These are three fundamental conditions. What is the use, then, of talking about schemes of self-determination and of Dominion Home Rule until, at any rate, some gleam of sanity is introduced into the minds of those who are responsible for directing the majority of Irish opinion?<sup>42</sup>

Lloyd George was not as uncompromising as his Unionist colleagues, but he was only willing to compromise if the revolutionaries compromised first. “Britain will make sacrifices,” he promised, but “Ireland must also sacrifice extravagant demands and too extravagant ideas.” Until Sinn Fein’s leaders displayed a “gleam of sanity” and accepted Lloyd George’s fundamental conditions, the government would not change its policies. For now, the prime minister was happy to preach to his Conservative and Unionist choir. “Meanwhile,” he concluded, “speaking on behalf of this House of Commons, which is responsible for sending these men [i.e. the police] there to protect life, to establish law, and to maintain the authority of the Empire—which is not a thing to sneer at—an Empire in which I hope to see Ireland a proud partner, I say that it is our duty to see that every device, every resource, every protection is used to prevent these people from being massacred in the performance of their duty.”<sup>43</sup>

The guillotine fell at eleven o’clock, and the bill was read a second time. A Committee of the Whole House considered the Bill for less than six hours on Friday. The

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<sup>40</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 132, col. 2743.

<sup>41</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 132, col. 2744.

<sup>42</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 132, cols. 2753-56.

<sup>43</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 132, col. 2756.

government accepted a harmless opposition amendment, requiring regulations to be laid before the Commons. Chief Secretary Greenwood did not distinguish himself in debate. At one point, he said: “I cannot imagine any House of Lords—either the present House or a reformed House—seriously thwarting the will of the House of Commons on a legislative matter of supreme importance such as this. That is not my reading of history.”<sup>44</sup> Two hours later, an IPP member disrupted the proceedings, refusing to sit down or withdraw from the House, and was finally suspended for disorderly conduct.<sup>45</sup> At six o’clock, the committee reported, and the bill was read a third time. It was introduced in the House of Lords later that evening, and was debated briefly on Monday 9 August. When the Lord Chancellor moved a second reading, a spectator shouted, “If you pass this Bill, you may kill England, not Ireland.”<sup>46</sup> After this brief interruption, the Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill was passed by the Lords, and assented by the King.

## II. ‘Pawns in a Political Game’

The Irish insurgency had begun on 21 January 1919. The British counterinsurgency began in earnest on 9 August 1920. For the next eleven months, the United Kingdom fought a nasty little war with its Irish republican enemies. The British government kept insisting that it was only “suppressing disorder and punishing crime in Ireland,” and kept using the police to support its position.<sup>47</sup> But by the Truce of 11 July 1921 the RIC were police in appearance alone. After eleven months of guerrilla warfare, the constabulary had become an irregular military force, bound by neither military law nor military discipline, and its British reinforcements had played an important part in this transformation.

### A. The Royal Irish Constabulary

If by the summer of 1921 the RIC had become a force of soldiers dressed like police, it had for most of its history been a force of police dressed like soldiers. Most of Ireland’s police forces had been consolidated in 1836, creating an Irish Constabulary.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 132, col. 2859.

<sup>45</sup> This was Joseph Devlin, MP for Belfast/Falls. *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 132, cols. 2911-17.

<sup>46</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 41, col. 1026.

<sup>47</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 44, col. 125.

The government clung so tightly to this fiction that it would not even strike a campaign medal or clasp for its forces. “The gallantry and devotion of the troops and police in Ireland are gratefully recognised both by His Majesty’s Government and the nation,” said Bonar Law, “but it is not considered that a special medal, as suggested in the question, is desirable as a mark of that recognition”: *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 135, col. 199.

<sup>48</sup> 6 William IV Chap. 13 (20 May 1836). On the police in Ireland before 1836, see Tom Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security: The Case of Ireland 1916-1921 and Palestine 1936-1939* (London: SAGE Publications, 1977), pp. 20-26.



The new constabulary took over the police forces of Belfast and Londonderry in 1865 and 1870, and was responsible thereafter for the whole island outside of Dublin, which had its own Metropolitan Police.<sup>49</sup> The force became the ‘Royal’ Irish Constabulary as a reward for its part in the Fenian uprising of 1867. Its headquarters were in Dublin; its chief officers were an inspector general, a deputy inspector general, and three assistant inspector generals, one of whom acted as commandant of the RIC’s training depot at Phoenix Park. Each county had its own force of police, with a county inspector who reported directly to headquarters. Counties were divided into districts, with district inspectors who lived in the principal towns therein. Districts were divided into sub-districts, each with a sergeant and a small force of constables. The police in each sub-district lived in their stations: in larger towns these were specially constructed buildings, but in smaller villages they were just modified houses.<sup>50</sup>

Ordinarily, the RIC comprised about ten thousand officers and men, all of them Irish, most of them Catholic. Irish constables were given six months of training at the depot. (In Edwardian London, on the other hand, Metropolitan Police constables were given just eight weeks of instruction)<sup>51</sup> RIC constables were dressed and drilled like soldiers in a Rifle regiment, and armed with carbines and bayonets, as well as the more usual truncheons and revolvers. Their stations were known as barracks, and their discipline was rigorous. Political surveillance was one of their most important responsibilities. The police were expected to know the sympathies and activities of the people in their sub-districts, and county inspectors submitted monthly reports on political factions in their areas. As a consequence, Irish republicans thought of the Peelers as their most dangerous enemies, and republican leaders denounced the RIC as “England’s janissaries”—a force of traitors and spies.<sup>52</sup>

However, by 1919 the RIC had become “a thoroughly domesticated, civil police force,” despite its militaristic appearance.<sup>53</sup> Decades of internal peace had left the force unready for internal war. There was not much ordinary crime in Ireland, and as a result, the police had been assigned a wide variety of civil service duties: they acted as inspectors of weights and measures, food and drugs, explosives, and agriculture; they collected the census and compiled annual statistics of tillage and livestock; in addition, they sometimes acted as clerks of petty sessions courts.<sup>54</sup> The Edwardian RIC did most

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<sup>49</sup> 28 & 29 Victoria Chap. 70 (29 June 1865); 33 & 34 Victoria Chap. 83 (9 August 1870).

<sup>50</sup> Bowden, *Breakdown of Public Security*, p. 29; “The Royal Irish Constabulary,” PRO, CO 904/168, p. 808.

<sup>51</sup> Raymond Fosdick, *European Police Systems* (New York: The Century, 1915), pp. 219-20. Constables in Glasgow sometimes received only two weeks of training (p. 222).

<sup>52</sup> Speech of Eoin MacNeill, given at a public session of Dáil Éireann, 10 April 1919, quoted in “1919: Royal Irish Constabulary,” Irish Military Archives, Dublin [henceforward IMA], Collins Papers, A/0385/1, pp. 5-8.

<sup>53</sup> W J Lowe and E L Malcolm, “The Domestication of the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1836-1922,” *Irish Economic and Social History*, 19 (1992), p. 32; Brian Griffin, “The Irish Police, 1836-1914: A Social History” (PhD Dissertation: Loyola University of Chicago, 1991), pp. 502-8.

<sup>54</sup> “The Royal Irish Constabulary,” PRO, CO 904/168, p. 808. This list is not exhaustive: see Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance since 1848* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1983), p. 70 for more.

of its work without firearms.<sup>55</sup> One man, Daniel Galvin, joined the constabulary in 1907 and resigned in July 1920. “When I first joined, it was different then,” he recalled. “I did not have any arms then. Of course, they had arms then, but at the same time I never took them out with me on duty, the same as I had to do the last seven or eight months. We had the arms, but they were simply for show purposes.”<sup>56</sup>

The arms they did have were poor. The RIC’s black leather accoutrements and rifle-green uniforms were Victorian. Their revolvers were mostly badges of authority, and their carbines were obsolete cast-offs. In 1905 the British army had adopted a new rifle for both infantry and cavalry, and ten thousand of the cavalry’s old carbines had been handed down to the RIC.<sup>57</sup> After the Rebellion of 1916, constables complained that these weapons were more decorative than useful.<sup>58</sup> Lack of practice made them less useful still: police fired only twenty-one practice rounds each year, using Morris tubes and miniature .22-calibre ammunition; they kept their weapons clean and bright, but let their skills rust away.<sup>59</sup>

Once the guerrilla war began, the force was gradually rearmed with war surplus Lee-Enfield rifles and Mills grenades. Some police were carrying service rifles in the spring of 1920. Others were still carrying carbines in the fall, a situation that may have caused accidents. The carbine could be loaded with the rifle’s Mark VII cartridge, but was designed for the less powerful Mark VI. On 12 March 1920 RIC headquarters warned its officers and men that it was dangerous to mix ammunition.<sup>60</sup> Men also needed training to use their new military weapons. Seven decades later, Constable Crossett remembered how he was almost shot by one of his comrades:

We had to learn to load and unload five cartridges—load, put it down into the magazine, push up the bolt, put your finger over the cartridge, push the bolt up over the cartridge, and then pull the trigger. Jeepers if this fellow, instead of putting the bullet down low enough, and damn it if the bullet didn’t just pass me and stick in the wall behind me, chancy enough. Lots of fellows didn’t know how

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<sup>55</sup> Griffin, “Irish Police,” p. 51.

<sup>56</sup> Testimony of Daniel Galvin, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 425. Another former constable said his arms were for “show purposes mainly”: testimony of John Tangney, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 391.

<sup>57</sup> These were six-shot .303in Lee-Enfield Mark I Magazine Carbines: Ian Skennerton, *The Lee-Enfield Story* (London: Greenhill Books, 1993), pp. 79, 90, 379, 391; *Appendix to the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police* [henceforward *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*], Cd. 7637 (1914), p. 180; John Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: An Oral History* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queens University, 1990), pp. 44, 91. Charles Townshend has mistakenly referred to these weapons as “Martini-Metford” and “Martini-Henry” carbines: Townshend, *British Campaign*, p. 42. Charles Townshend, “The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare, 1916-1921,” *English Historical Review*, 94, no. 371 (1979), p. 324.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Hawkins, “Dublin Castle and the Royal Irish Constabulary (1916-1922),” in Desmond Williams (ed.), *The Irish Struggle 1916-1926*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 174.

<sup>59</sup> *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*, pp. 189-90; Skennerton, *Lee-Enfield Story*, pp. 245-46, 248; Griffin, “Irish Police,” pp. 505-6.

<sup>60</sup> Mark VII Ammunition: RIC Circular D.228/1920, 12 March 1920, PRO, HO 184/125.

to use arms. Some wasn't fit to handle a rifle and go out; they couldn't have protected you, protected themselves.<sup>61</sup>

Four days before the Truce, the RIC was still learning firearm safety. A circular dated 7 July 1921 started with the basics: "Fire arms should always be regarded as loaded, and when picked up, should be opened and examined." It warned police to "keep the finger off the trigger" when loading their revolvers. It ordered them not to carry a loaded rifle with a round in the chamber: "this practice is contrary to all orders and highly dangerous to all concerned." Finally, it suggested that mishaps like Crossett's were common. "All loading and unloading should be carried out in line under the orders and supervision of a Sergeant, Head Constable, or Officer," it said.<sup>62</sup> "The old policemen knew very little about armaments," said Crossett. "In the Barracks I was the only one who really knew much about a revolver or a rifle or anything else, how to load and so on."<sup>63</sup>

To make matters worse, these "old policemen" were numerous. In 1919, the average RIC man was about thirty-five years old, and had been serving for fifteen years. Married men, who made up almost half of the force, were even older: the typical married man was over forty-one years of age, and had been serving for more than twenty-one years.<sup>64</sup> The situation becomes even clearer when we examine a single county's police force. In January 1920 there were 337 constables in the Galway's West Riding.<sup>65</sup> One hundred and twenty-two of them had enlisted when Edward VII was king (between 1901 and 1910), and 50 of them had enlisted when Victoria was queen (before 1901). Their non-commissioned officers were older still. Out of seventy-two sergeants in the riding, only eight had enlisted after 1900. Thirty-eight of them had joined the force before Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, and three of them had joined before her Golden Jubilee in 1887.<sup>66</sup> Middle-aged men like these could not bear the mental and physical stresses of guerrilla warfare. In August 1920, one county inspector wrote about clearing out "the majority of the old useless men who were not pulling their weight against the rebels."<sup>67</sup> Two months later, in October, another county inspector complained about the "apathetic, inert condition of the [County] Force, the older members of which are 'playing for safety,' while the younger men are naturally therefore discouraged, and afraid, not without good reason, that they will be given away."<sup>68</sup>

Hundreds of old policemen were pensioned off during the First Irish War. Constables who completed twenty-five years of service were entitled to retire on half pay; constables who completed thirty years service were entitled to retire on two-thirds

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<sup>61</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 75.

<sup>62</sup> Precautions in the Use of Fire Arms: RIC Circular D.642/1921, 7 July 1921, PRO, HO 184/127.

<sup>63</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 75.

<sup>64</sup> Lowe and Malcolm, "Domestication," 46-47.

<sup>65</sup> Galway was one of three large counties divided into ridings for police purposes: the others were Cork and Tipperary.

<sup>66</sup> RIC Returns by County, 1920, PRO, HO 184/61.

<sup>67</sup> RIC Reports, CI Limerick, August 1920, PRO, CO 904/113

<sup>68</sup> RIC Reports, CI Meath, October 1920, PRO: CO 904/113.

pay.<sup>69</sup> On average, forty-eight constables retired each week during the summer of 1920.<sup>70</sup> The “old useless men” mentioned above had probably completed 20-24 years of service, and were hoping to stay out of trouble until they retired. For example, in January 1920 there were twenty-six constables with at least twenty-five years service in Galway’s East Riding (see Table 1.2): only twelve of these Victorian constables were left by January 1921. On the other hand, there were nineteen men with 20-24 years service in January 1920: not one of them had quit the force by January 1921.<sup>71</sup>

While these older men “played for safety,” hundreds of younger policemen simply gave up their jobs: on average, fifty-two constables applied to resign each week during the summer of 1920. The majority of the resigners were Edwardians like Daniel Galvin. In Galway’s East Riding, for example, seventy-four constables left the county force between January 1920 and January 1921.<sup>72</sup> Forty-one of these men had enlisted between 1900 and 1909. Men who had enlisted during this period were twice as likely to resign as men who had enlisted between 1910 and 1919: 36 per cent of the former left the force between January 1920 and January 1921, compared to just 18 per cent of the latter.<sup>73</sup>

RIC constables resigned for various reasons. Some were demoralized and frustrated. Some were afraid for their lives, or for their families.<sup>74</sup> Some of them objected to their new, more military duties. Daniel Galvin told the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland that he resigned “simply because I did not like the system they have at the present time.” “I was simply only a soldier when I left the police force,” he said. “I had to carry arms and bombs and the like. I had to have my rifle beside me at nights in bed.”<sup>75</sup> Another witness, John Tangney, enlisted in 1918, and resigned in 1920. “I resigned for many reasons,” he said. “The main reason was that there was nothing left for me to do except to leave the military to butcher.” The police, he said, “haven’t very much of their old jobs left to them. The only thing that you had to do as a policeman since 1918 was to lead the military around and point out the men they wanted to get.”<sup>76</sup> Others were dismayed by the brutal behaviour of their comrades. John Caddan enlisted in February 1920, and resigned in September. “I couldn’t stop in such surroundings,” he said. “I didn’t fancy the way they were treating the people... The

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<sup>69</sup> “The Royal Irish Constabulary,” PRO, CO 904/168, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Outrage Reports, April-December 1920, PRO, CO 904/148-49.

<sup>71</sup> At the cabinet conference of 23 July 1920, Chief Secretary Greenwood said that “with regard to the police there were many who were just hanging on for the sake of their pensions, and there were about 2,000 of them due to be pensioned during the course of the next six or twelve months”: Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, III, p. 27; see also testimony of Daniel Crowley, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 389.

<sup>72</sup> One man, Constable Timothy Horan, was killed in an ambush on 30 October 1920.

<sup>73</sup> RIC Returns by County, 1920, PRO HO 184/61; RIC Returns by County, 1921, PRO, HO 184/62.

<sup>74</sup> Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 208, 222, 226-27; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 37; Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 42, 92.

<sup>75</sup> Testimony of Daniel Galvin, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 424-25.

<sup>76</sup> Testimony of John Tangney, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 424-25. Tangney told the Commission that he enlisted in 1915 and served for five years, but according to the Register he enlisted in 1918 and served for two: Constable 69554, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/36.

things they used to be doing, I could take no part in them.”<sup>77</sup> Some policemen even supported the revolutionary cause. Daniel Crowley enlisted in 1917. Later, he told the American Commission that, “I tendered my resignation from the Constabulary because of the misgovernment of the English in Ireland.”<sup>78</sup>

For all these reasons, the RIC began haemorrhaging men in the summer of 1920. On an average week, only seventy-six recruits enlisted in the force to replace the one hundred police who retired and resigned. As a result, the strength of the constabulary declined by almost 1300 men from the start of July to September’s end.<sup>79</sup> These losses were disastrous. The RIC was large for a constabulary, but small for an army. At the beginning of 1920, it included only 9276 non-commissioned officers and men.<sup>80</sup> Out of this number, 997 were tied up in Belfast, and another 281 at the Phoenix Park depot. Less than eight thousand police were left to garrison the rest of Ireland, scattered across the island in about thirteen hundred small detachments.<sup>81</sup> Many RIC stations were too weak to defend themselves against the guerrillas. At the end of 1913, 87 per cent of the RIC’s barracks held fewer than ten policemen. 41 per cent held fewer than five.<sup>82</sup>

On 8 November 1919 the force was ordered to close as many stations as necessary to bring the remainder up to a minimum of six men.<sup>83</sup> This minimum was later doubled, and more barracks were abandoned to reinforce the rest. Even more barracks were closed by the wastage of men in the summer of 1920: thirteen hundred men were enough to man one hundred stations. We can see the results in Galway’s West Riding (See Table 1.1 and Map). At the end of 1913 the county force occupied fifty-six stations, including thirteen stations with only four men, and one with less than four. By January 1920 ten of these small stations had been closed, and the total number was down to forty-six. By March 1921, twenty-eight of these forty-six had been abandoned, and the county force held just eighteen stations—less than a third of the prewar number.<sup>84</sup>

These closures alleviated one symptom, but aggravated another. The police in their isolated outposts were unable to patrol wide areas of Ireland. In July 1920, Mayo’s

<sup>77</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 418; Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 215.

<sup>78</sup> Testimony of Daniel Crowley, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 385. Crowley was careful to say that he “tendered his resignation,” e.g. “I tendered my resignation on the first day of June last.” (p. 376). This was because Crowley did not resign from the RIC: instead, he was dismissed on 17 June 1920. Constable 68895, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/36; see also Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 37.

<sup>79</sup> Outrage Reports, April-December 1920, PRO, CO 904/148-49.

<sup>80</sup> RIC Returns by County, 1920, PRO HO 184/61. Commissioned officers are not included in the returns, but on 31 December 1913 there were 36 county inspectors and 186 district inspectors (*Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*, p. 341).

<sup>81</sup> According to the *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and DMP*, Ireland’s total acreage, excluding Belfast and the Dublin Metropolitan district, was 3,959,178 (about 1,602,257 ha). On average, then, in the winter of 1920, each of the 7998 men in the force outside of Belfast and the depot was policing an area 495 acres (about two hundred hectares, or two square kilometres) in extent (p. 341).

<sup>82</sup> *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*, p. 346.

<sup>83</sup> Safety of Barracks: RIC Circular D.94/1919, 8 November 1919, PRO, HO 184/125.

<sup>84</sup> *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*, p. 346; RIC Returns by County, 1920, PRO, HO 184/61; RIC Returns by County, 1921, PRO, HO 184/62.

county inspector complained bitterly that, “the closing of Police Stations has proved a most disastrous and dangerous expedient.” “The countryside left without protection now bows the knee to Sinn Fein,” he said.<sup>85</sup> In one extreme case, all police barracks in the Dungloe District of county Donegal were closed after the army withdrew from the area in October 1920. “This,” according to Donegal’s county inspector, “has handed over all West Donegal and its coast line to the lawless element.”<sup>86</sup> By March 1921, the deputy inspector general noted that Dungloe District still had no police. “This area comprises about one-sixth of the county and it seems to have become a miniature Republic,” he said.<sup>87</sup> Redistribution could not cure the disease that was crippling the RIC in the summer of 1920: the force was just not large enough to fulfil its new military duties.

More police were needed, but they could not be found in Ireland, where the guerrillas were using threats and violence to strangle recruiting for the RIC. Some candidates were sent threatening letters: “From information received,” said one example, “you are intended to join the R.I.C., the real enemy of Ireland to-day. If you take that step I promise that you will not reach your destination. Life is sweet. Consider, the world is wide. Don’t join the assassin peelers.”<sup>88</sup> Other candidates were threatened in person, like Thomas Lawrence of county Cavan. On the night of 1 July 1920 about twenty-five men broke into the Lawrence family home, took away their shotgun, and made their son Thomas swear that he would not join the RIC.<sup>89</sup> In part as a result, on average, the RIC recruited only seven Irishmen per week in the summer of 1920.<sup>90</sup> An Ulster Special Constabulary was formed in the autumn, but this was a body of Protestant loyalists, recruited for service in the six counties that would soon become Northern Ireland.<sup>91</sup> There was no chance of raising an equivalent force elsewhere.

## B. The Black and Tans

The Black and Tans were the government’s answer to this manpower crisis. There were large numbers of unemployed ex-servicemen in post-war Britain—young men with both military training and combat experience. In June 1920, the Ministry of

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<sup>85</sup> RIC Reports, CI Mayo, July 1920, PRO, CO 904/112.

<sup>86</sup> RIC Reports, CI Donegal, October 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>87</sup> RIC Inspector-General’s Monthly Confidential Report [henceforward RIC Reports, IG], March 1921, PRO, CO 904/114.

<sup>88</sup> Outrage Reports, week ending 5 May 1920, PRO, CO 904/148.

<sup>89</sup> Outrage Reports, week ending 4 July 1920, PRO, CO 904/148.

<sup>90</sup> Outrage Reports, April-December 1920, PRO, CO 904/148-49.

<sup>91</sup> The Ulster Special Constabulary falls outside the scope of this dissertation. For a positive view of this force and its history, see Arthur Hezlet, *The ‘B’ Specials: The Story of the Ulster Special Constabulary*, new ed. (London: Pan Books, 1973; Belfast: Mourne River Press, 1997); for a negative view, see Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: The Formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920-1927* (London: Pluto Press, 1983); for some recent scholarship, see Brian A. Follis, *A State Under Siege. The Establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 88-113, 121-27, 131-32, and Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939*, pp. 161-63.

Labour reported that there were about 167,000 fit ex-servicemen receiving unemployment benefits in Britain, including 52,000 in London alone.<sup>92</sup> Walter Long had suggested using these men to raise the strength of the RIC in a letter to the viceroy, Lord French, as early as 19 May 1919.<sup>93</sup> This proposal found favour with French, and with General Shaw, commander in chief of the Army of Ireland: but the RIC's inspector-general, Sir Joseph Byrne, was against it, out of concern that ex-military men could not be controlled by police discipline.<sup>94</sup> But the government was losing confidence in Byrne: the inspector general was a Roman Catholic who supported negotiations with Sinn Féin and resisted the militarization of the constabulary.<sup>95</sup> In his letter of 19 May, Long told French that Byrne had "lost his nerve" and should be replaced with his deputy, T J Smith (an Orangeman). French finally took Long's advice in December, when he relieved Byrne of his duties and replaced him with Smith.<sup>96</sup> On 27 December 1919 the new inspector-general issued an order authorizing recruitment in Britain. The first British recruits joined the RIC six days later.<sup>97</sup>

These British recruits were called "Black and Tans" for their motley clothing. The RIC wore bottle-green uniforms with black leather kit. Black and Tans at first wore military khaki uniforms with a policeman's cap and belt. Later, they wore pieces of police green with pieces of army khaki—a constable's trousers with a soldier's tunic, or vice versa. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. Historians agree that a shortage of police clothing was to blame for these makeshift uniforms. This was also the reason given at the time. On 15 October 1920 a police newspaper, the *Weekly Summary*, reported that the RIC "has allowed itself to run out of uniforms and cannot clothe its recruits. As even in Ireland a policeman cannot function clad only in a cap and belt, it was necessary to find something to cover his nakedness. As a result, the R.I.C. recruit found himself fearfully and wonderfully attired in a mixture of dark green and khaki, and was promptly dubbed a 'Black and Tan' by an astonished Ireland." On 15 April 1921,

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<sup>92</sup> The Training and Resettlement of Ex-Servicemen: memorandum by the Minister of Labour, 19 June 1920 [henceforward Training and Resettlement of Ex-Servicemen], PRO, CAB 24/107, CP 1493, ff. 343-44.

<sup>93</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, *The Decline of the Union: British Government in Ireland 1892-1920* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), p. 188; Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 25.

<sup>94</sup> Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 25, 30, 41, 44.

<sup>95</sup> O'Halpin, *Decline of the Union*, pp. 188-89, 191-92.

<sup>96</sup> Weirdly, though Byrne was superseded in December 1919, he was not officially replaced until March 1920, and continued to draw his salary as RIC inspector-general until 1922, when he was appointed to govern the Seychelles. This was due to the intervention of Sir Warren Fisher, the powerful permanent secretary to the Treasury, who thought Byrne had been treated unfairly: see Eunan O'Halpin, "Sir Warren Fisher and the Coalition, 1919-1921," *Historical Journal* 24, no. 4 (December 1981): pp. 917-19. Byrne's replacement, Smith, retired on 4 November 1920, and the post of inspector-general was left officially vacant thereafter. In the last year of its existence, the force was headed by the police adviser (later chief of police), Major-General H H Tudor, but some of the inspector-general's duties were performed by the deputy inspector-general, C A Walsh: see Royal Irish Constabulary List, July 1921, PRO, HO 184/105, pp. xiv, xxi.

<sup>97</sup> Townshend gives 11 November 1919 as the date when British recruitment was authorized, but he seems to be mistaken: the RIC's General Register refers to an order dated 27 December 1919. Townshend, *British Campaign*, pp. 45-46; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

the *Weekly Summary* reported that when British recruits first appeared, “it was found impossible to provide them with R.I.C. uniforms of dark green. All Southern Ireland at the time was boycotting the Crown Forces, and uniforms would not be tailored for the Police. So the recruits went on duty in soldier khaki.”<sup>98</sup> Seven decades later, an RIC veteran recalled that Black and Tans “were recruited in such numbers that they didn’t have a normal uniform to provide them with.” Another agreed that, “when they got these crowds coming over from England they hadn’t enough police uniforms, so they gave us half. Whoever was short they made it up with military khaki.”<sup>99</sup>

It may be true that the RIC ran short of police uniforms in the late summer and autumn of 1920. When Chief Secretary Greenwood reviewed a group of British recruits on 15 October, “they certainly presented an extraordinary appearance, wearing a mixture of dark green and khaki, with, in some cases, civilian head-gear.”<sup>100</sup> However, there is clear evidence that British constables were wearing khaki clothing in the winter and spring of the same year. On St. Patrick’s Day 1920 the London *Daily Herald* reported that a “detachment of police attired in khaki tunics and trousers but wearing constabulary caps and greatcoats” had arrived at a town in county Tipperary. “Their mixed costumes attracted considerable attention as they marched to the local barracks.”<sup>101</sup> In his memoirs, Constable Jeremiah Mee said that in March 1920 two Black and Tans were posted to Listowel Barracks in county Kerry. “They came in full khaki uniform,” he wrote, “but were soon afterwards supplied with police uniforms.”<sup>102</sup> Another former constable saw British police recruits wearing khaki uniforms and police caps at the Curragh, county Kildare in May 1920.<sup>103</sup>

There were no “crowds” of Black and Tans in March and May 1920. The intake of British recruits was modest at first—about one hundred enlistments per month in the winter and spring.<sup>104</sup> Recruiting in Britain did not pick up until the summer, when the Royal Irish Constabulary was given a large raise in pay: a new constable’s pay more than doubled, from 31s to 70s per week. On average, the force took in fifty-eight British recruits per week in July, and seventy-eight British recruits per week in August.<sup>105</sup> The summer was also the season when the boycott became a serious problem for police. Therefore, it seems unlikely that there were too many recruits and not enough uniforms in the winter and spring of 1920. Any shortage of police uniforms at this time must have been due to the comparatively small stature of the Black and Tans. The typical Irish

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<sup>98</sup> “Story of the ‘Black and Tans,’” *Weekly Summary*, 15 October 1920, p. 4, PRO, CO 906/38; “The ‘Black and Tans,’” *Weekly Summary*, 15 April, 1921, p. 4, PRO, CO 906/38. See also testimony of Denis Morgan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 35.

<sup>99</sup> John Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 102, 106-7.

<sup>100</sup> C J C Street, *The Administration of Ireland, 1920* (London: P. Allan, 1921), p. 280.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Shaw Desmond, *The Drama of Sinn Féin* (New York, Scribner’s, 1923), p. 342.

<sup>102</sup> J Anthony Gaughan (ed.), *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee, RIC* (Dublin: Anvil, 1975), pp. 82-83.

<sup>103</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 86, 116.

<sup>104</sup> Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 209.

<sup>105</sup> RIC Constabulary List. January 1920, PRO, HO 184/103; RIC Constabulary List January 1921, PRO, HO 184/104; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 20; Outrage Reports, April-December 1920, PRO, CO 904/148-49.



recruit was two inches taller than the typical British recruit, and many Black and Tans could not meet the RIC's minimum height requirement. As a result, the force may not have had the right sizes of clothing to fit its British reinforcements.<sup>106</sup> But why would such a shortage have persisted for six months?

The Black and Tans may have been dressed in khaki simply to save money. At the time, the Conservative press was complaining loudly about government 'squandermania': khaki uniforms may have been a response to this 'anti-waste campaign'. There is a hint of economy in the recollections of one old constable, which also indicate that the pied uniform became fashionable among Black and Tans in the summer and autumn. "You need two suits of uniform," he said, "because you could get mucked up in one and need a change, but the boys, as soon as they got the khaki suit along with the black one they immediately switched the trousers, wore the khaki trousers with the black tunic and vice versa."<sup>107</sup> By December, however, Black and Tans in Cork city no longer wore mixed uniforms, because they made them conspicuous. By the winter of 1921, both Irish and British constables were dressed alike in the RIC's traditional rifle green.<sup>108</sup>

Most historians agree that the Black and Tans got their nickname in county Limerick.<sup>109</sup> Contemporaries thought this as well. The 15 April 1921 issue of the *Weekly Summary* says: "Their first field of action was Limerick. Now Limerick had a famous pack of foxhounds—the 'Black and Tans'—and the Irish promptly christened the new police recruits, whom they found to be very strong in the chase, after this pack."<sup>110</sup> The Black and Tans were certainly numerous in Limerick—they comprised about 50 per cent of the city and county police forces by January 1921—and their county inspector was the first senior officer to use their nickname in his monthly report.<sup>111</sup> However, the *Weekly Summary*'s tale may simply be legend. First, it was reprinted from the *Morning Post*, which was not noted for its accurate reporting of the First Irish War. Second, Limerick was not the first field of action for British recruits. Twenty-six of the 110 Black and Tans who joined the Force in January 1920 were posted to county Cork, and only 7 to Limerick; later, 36 out of the 95 Black and Tans who joined in April 1920 were posted to county Tipperary, and only 2 to Limerick.<sup>112</sup> Third, an Irish constable who was training with British recruits at the Curragh in May 1920 was sure that they got their name in

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<sup>106</sup> See Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

<sup>107</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>108</sup> Testimony of John Charles Clarke, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 713.

<sup>109</sup> Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, p. 38; D G Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy 1918-22* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 50; Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 94; Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, p. 90.

<sup>110</sup> "Story of the 'Black and Tans,'" *Weekly Summary*, 15 October 1920, p. 4, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>111</sup> RIC Returns by County, 1921, PRO, HO 184/62; RIC Reports, CI Limerick, December 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>112</sup> RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/36-37.

county Kildare.<sup>113</sup> Whatever its origins, though, the name stuck, and began appearing in the British Press in the late summer of 1920.<sup>114</sup>

As we have already seen, British recruiting was fairly slow in the winter and spring of 1920, but began to accelerate in the summer (see Table 1.3). Then, suddenly, in the last weeks of September, the weekly intake of British recruits tripled: sixty-one British men enlisted in the week ending 19 September; 222 enlisted in the week ending 26 September.<sup>115</sup> The reasons for this abrupt upsurge are obscure, but it may have been connected to the Sack of Balbriggan on 20 September. On that Monday evening, a newly promoted RIC head constable was shot and killed in Balbriggan, north of Dublin, near the training camp for British RIC recruits at Gormanstown. Later that night, a mob of Black and Tans attacked Balbriggan, killing two men, looting and burning four public houses, destroying a hosiery factory, and damaging or destroying forty-nine private houses. The Sack of Balbriggan caused a sensation in Britain: it made headlines in the British press, and made reprisals an important topic of debate in Parliament.<sup>116</sup> Paradoxically, this negative publicity may also have alerted many British ex-servicemen to the prospect of employment in the Royal Irish Constabulary.

In any case, thousands of British recruits flooded into the RIC that autumn. By the winter of 1921 about one quarter of all RIC constables was British (see Table 1.4).<sup>117</sup> The nominal returns for 1921 indicate clearly that Black and Tans were not evenly distributed across Ireland. Almost half of them were stationed in the southern province of Munster, where 37 per cent of all constables were Black and Tans. On the other hand, only 12 per cent of them were stationed in the comparatively peaceful northern province of Ulster, where they made up only 16 per cent of the men.<sup>118</sup> The number of Black and Tans in each region was roughly proportional to the level of violence therein, with one interesting exception: there were very few Black and Tans in strife-torn Belfast. In 1913, future Inspector General T J Smith was commissioner of police in that city. "Recruits are not, as a rule, sent to Belfast," he said. "We get men in from the country with some little experience of country work after their time in the Depot—generally men from two or three or four years' service."<sup>119</sup> In addition, there were very few Black and Tans in the

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<sup>113</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 116.

<sup>114</sup> See *Daily News*, 23 August 1920, p. 3; *Weekly Summary*, 27 August 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38; *Manchester Guardian*, 20 September 1920, p. 9.

<sup>115</sup> Outrage Reports, weeks ending 19 September and 26 September 1920, PRO, CO 904/149.

<sup>116</sup> Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, pp. 51-54. For sample press reports, see "Irish Town Raided," *The Times*, 22 September 1920, p. 11; "Wild Police Excesses in County Dublin," *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1920, p. 7.

<sup>117</sup> These numbers are estimates only. RIC Returns by County did not distinguish between Irish and British constables. Every constable with an RIC number greater than or equal to 71500 was counted as a Black and Tan: these men enlisted after mid-May 1920, and the number of Irish constables who enlisted after this point should roughly balance the number of British constables who enlisted before. According to Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 102 British RIC constables were killed between 11 July 1920 and 10 July 1921. Only nine of these men (about 9 per cent) had RIC numbers less than 71500. During the same period, the guerrillas killed 141 Irish RIC constables. Only 15 of these men (about 11 per cent) had numbers greater than 71499.

<sup>118</sup> RIC Returns by County, 1921, PRO, HO 184/62.

<sup>119</sup> *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*, p. 93.

special Reserve Force quartered at Phoenix Park. “People in the Reserves was mostly from the North,” said one member of this force.<sup>120</sup>

The Black and Tans were not a separate force apart. They were treated as regular constables, despite their irregular uniforms, and they lived and worked in barracks with Irish policemen. Their living and working conditions were poor. They spent much of their time on patrol—walking, cycling, or riding on Crossley tenders.<sup>121</sup> These patrols were frequent victims of rebel ambushes, and though most of the Black and Tans had fought in the Great War, their training and experience was of limited worth in their battles with Irish guerrillas. After eleven police (including seven Black and Tans) were ambushed and killed at Dromkeen, county Limerick on 3 February 1921, General Macready warned Sir John Anderson that the police were “not properly trained for coping with big ambushes.”

Although many of your Police recruits and all the Auxiliaries have been soldiers, it by no means follows that they are necessarily experts in this game. If you take the finest soldier who had served in France alone and suddenly put him in the Himalayas to cope with the Afridis you would find that until he had absorbed that particular mode of warfare he would be quite useless, and the same, in my opinion, applies to Police methods here, with the additional disadvantage that people like the D.I.'s [District Inspectors] are quite untrained in anything like Military tactics.<sup>122</sup>

In addition, police patrols were often as tedious as they were dangerous. The longer the war lasted, the more the guerrillas relied on roadblocks to reduce the mobility of the security forces. By May 1921, Kerry's county inspector said that the IRA had “trenched all roads, blew up bridges, tore up railway lines, felled trees across roads, built up walls across roads, stretched wires across roads, with the intention of making the journeys of Crown Forces by motors impossible. They have made it practically impossible to travel in the dark. Journeys of about 20 miles sometimes take between 4 & 5 hours to accomplish.”<sup>123</sup> That same month, a policewoman, Inspector Walton, described a drive to the next county in her diary.

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<sup>120</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 85.

<sup>121</sup> Ordinarily, a constable spent about six hours per day out on patrol. Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 64, 72, 75, 79, 80, 91-92.

Crossley tenders were 34 cwt (1.9 ton) pick-up trucks built by Britain's Crossley Motors. They were based on the company's 1909 20/25 hp (4 litre) model car, and had room for 11 men: three in front, and eight on two bench seats in the box. Built originally for the Royal Air Force, they became the RIC's maid-of-all-work in the First Irish War: [www.crossley-motors.org.uk/WW1.html](http://www.crossley-motors.org.uk/WW1.html), accessed 22 May 2002. By September 1921, the RIC's Transport Division fielded 626 Crossley tenders (81 of them armoured), along with 283 Ford touring cars and 327 armoured Lancia lorries: Papers of Brigadier H N G Watson, “State of Transport Division R.I.C., September 1921,” IWM 77/100/1

<sup>122</sup> Macready to Anderson, 5 February 1921, Anderson Papers, PRO, CO 904/188. The Afridis were unruly border tribes in the Indian Empire's North-West Frontier Province.

<sup>123</sup> RIC Reports, CI Kerry. May 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

The journey took four hours, owing to our having to try several ways before we could get through. As so often happens, the rebels had been at work during the night—one road had two huge trees right across, another had a deep trench. At one place, on turning a corner, we were all but precipitated into a deep river. The driver only just pulled up in time to avoid having the car and its occupants thrown into the water below. A wide hole had been hewn right through and across the bridge.<sup>124</sup>

Autumn and winter patrols were often caught in the rain. “You see,” said one old constable, “an open tender with a central seat both facing outwards and no cover on you, you sit in the back for a hundred miles and you’re soaked through. It runs down you see and goes right through. There were some army fellows who showed me that if you wanted an inside shirt or long johns dried, you wrung it out well and put it under your sheet on the bed and lay on it. It took three nights to dry it.”<sup>125</sup> The rain let up in the spring and summer of 1921, but sunny weather brought its own discomforts. On 5 June 1921 Inspector Walton wrote: “The long-continued spell of hot, dry weather makes these rough roads unbearable, the dust covering us all, especially those seated in the second or third Crossleys, who have layers of white on their eyelids, noses and chins, which makes travelling quickly by road none too pleasant, and gives us all a most curious and dirty appearance.”<sup>126</sup>

The police spent most of their off-duty time in their fortified stations, which were generally dark, stuffy, and cramped. In one remarkable case, the police in Tralee, county Kerry lived in a commandeered prison. Tralee prison became Tralee No. 2 Barracks on 5 November 1920. The police lived in the prison cells. There was no laundry. According to the head constable in charge, “often after the long heavy marches and runs in very wet Country” the police “had no other way to dry their uniform except to hang it up in their cells &c.” By the following spring, the sanitary facilities had broken down completely. There was no water supply to the washhouse or its adjoining bath. “The baths were for this reason never used by the Police, though they would have often wished to do so.” In addition, the lack of water made it impossible to flush the toilets. “Every morning a party of Police and prisoners had ... to remove the soil from the WCs [water closets] and carry it out in buckets and bury it in deep holes in the outer grounds of the prison. It was only with the utmost persuasion I was able to get political prisoners to do this work.”<sup>127</sup> On 2 March 1921 Kerry’s county inspector noted that there was “a heavy smell about the premises.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Quoted in Mary Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925), p. 189. A small number of British women constables were sent over to Ireland in the summer of 1920, and were employed there as women searchers. One of them, a former nurse named Alice Gray, was awarded the Order of the British Empire for her bravery during an ambush (PRO, HO 351/87). However, since these women enlisted in neither the RIC nor the ADRIC, they were not “Black and Tans,” and their story falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>125</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 85.

<sup>126</sup> Quoted in Allen, *Pioneer Policewoman*, p. 190.

<sup>127</sup> “Tralee prison,” 22 April 1922, PRO, HO 351/88.

<sup>128</sup> CI Kerry to RIC Office, 2 March 1921, PRO, HO 351/88.

Conditions in barracks could be tense as well as uncomfortable. Attacks on RIC barracks were frequent, and to make matters worse, relations between British and Irish constables were often strained. Some Irish police got along well with the Black and Tans. “Oh, we got on alright, just the same as ourselves,” said one old Peeler. “They were alright to work with,” said another. “I didn’t pass much remarks on them, give them their dues they were alright, reasonable enough you know.”<sup>129</sup> However, it seems that many Irish police did not like their new British colleagues. As we might expect, the four Irish constables who testified to the American Commission had nothing positive to say about the Black and Tans. “They were the lowest type of humanity,” said John Tangney: “they were roughnecks.” Irish constables “had no friendship for them, and had nothing more to do with them than necessary.” John Caddan said the Black and Tans “were generally very careless fellows, and did not give a hang about what they did.” Irish constables did not respect them, and did not associate with them. “They were not friendly by any means. Only, of course, they had to go together with them on duty.” “We did not mix with them,” said Daniel Galvin. “We had as little to do with them as we could.”<sup>130</sup>

Seventy years later, one old RIC veteran took an equally dim view of the Black and Tans, saying they did “damn all” as policemen. “Their atrocities were against [the interests of] the RIC men,” said Constable Gallagher. “They weren’t dependable enough. They were the scum of Britain. We could have done without it.” However, most of John Brewer’s interviewees gave the Black and Tans mixed reviews. “I met one or two of them, there was some right fellows and then there was others who weren’t great, weren’t good you know,” said one man. “Some of the Black and Tans were alright,” said another, “some of them were decent fellows, and some of them were a real damned nuisance, you know. Drink; they were a bit rough, especially when they got drink taken, but you know, there were some fine fellows among them.” Even Gallagher qualified his views: “There were some of them right good,” he admitted, “like all men of war and ex-army, and some of them mixed.”<sup>131</sup>

“Rough” is a word that Irish constables used often to describe the Black and Tans. Policing had been a respectable occupation in Edwardian Ireland: most of the RIC’s constables had been farmers, and there were few ex-soldiers among them. As a result, some Irish policemen disdained their British reinforcements, who were mostly urban working-class war veterans.<sup>132</sup> “We didn’t like them,” said one, “we would have no place for them, we didn’t like them coming along and mixing with us.” “The regular force didn’t have much contact with them at all,” said another, “we didn’t really know them, they were stationed along with us but they were never popular with the regular force.” A third constable named Sterrett was one of forty police in a large barracks at Abbeyleix, in Queen’s county. When interviewed by Brewer, he had this to say:

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<sup>129</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 111, 115-16.

<sup>130</sup> *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 400, 402, 414-15, 427.

<sup>131</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 112-13, 115.

<sup>132</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp. 6, 21, 23.

The Black and Tans were all English and Scotch people see, and they were rough, but there was two, we had two, they were two gentlemen and they wouldn't associate with the others. They always kept to themselves, they were reading books and all this and they didn't like them because they were very respectable. But the others were very rough, they were very rough, f-ing and blinding and drinking and booze and all. They'd have shot their mother, oh desperate altogether. We had about ten of them there, see, but they weren't too bad. There was a couple of Scotch fellows there and they were a bit rough, but these two Englishmen, they were terrible nice fellows.<sup>133</sup>

Given the tension that must have existed in isolated barracks where men did not get along, it is not surprising that there were occasional incidents of violence between Black and Tans and Peelers. There were a few cases in which Black and Tans threatened and even attacked their Irish sergeants.<sup>134</sup> One of Brewer's interviewees described one of these cases:

I remember one such occasion where this fellow was drunk and the sergeant took the revolver off him and his comrade said, 'you were handed that revolver and you're supposed to keep it. Nobody has any right to that revolver only you so we'll have to get that revolver off the sergeant'. So they went into the office, the two sergeants were in the office and they went in and they said, 'I want Billy's revolver'. He pulled the hammer back on his own and says, 'do I squeeze the trigger or do I get the revolver?' I stepped in between, he says, 'stay you back, Brookes, I don't want to shoot you'. The sergeant wouldn't hand him the revolver. They weren't as disciplined as the RIC, not at all.<sup>135</sup>

There were other cases where Black and Tans got into fights with Irish constables, and with each other. But the Black and Tans were not always the aggressors. On 30 June 1921 Constable John Bourke, an Irish ex-soldier who had enlisted the previous year, got into a fistfight with an eleven-year police veteran, Constable William Sheehan. Afterward, Sheehan took his revolver and shot Bourke dead.<sup>136</sup>

### C. General Tudor and the Auxiliary Division

Clearly, there were some bitter feelings between some Irish and British members of the RIC. In addition, it seems there was no love lost between the RIC and its Auxiliary

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<sup>133</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 112-13, 116.

<sup>134</sup> RIC Reports, CI Clare, March 1921, PRO, CO 904/114; RIC Reports, CI Tipperary South, March 1921, PRO, CO 904/114; RIC Reports, CI Monaghan, June 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

<sup>135</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 111.

<sup>136</sup> MCI (Constable J H Bourke), PRO, WO 35/146B. This incident may have been hushed up. Abbott relied on news reports for the circumstances of police deaths, and he lists Bourke as having been killed in action: *Police Casualties*, p. 261.

Division. The ADRIC was a paramilitary force composed of British ex-army officers, dressed in distinctive uniforms and organized in military-style companies. The men of the Division were officially “temporary cadets,” but were paid and ranked as RIC sergeants. Some Irish RIC men saw these temporary cadets as upstarts: before the Great War, a constable served 18.5 years on average before being promoted to the rank of acting sergeant.<sup>137</sup> One civilian witness told the American Commission that Auxiliaries were being “brought over from England as sergeants and put over the RIC. This has made for bad blood in many cases. The old local senior military police resent this, because these English who are brought over are getting more pay and are put over them.”<sup>138</sup> As well, when the division first appeared in the summer of 1920, some RIC constables were afraid that these temporary cadets would become permanent sergeants. RIC headquarters issued a special circular to reassure these men: “I wish to make it clear,” said the inspector general, “that the ‘temporary cadets’ are a temporary service only, inaugurated to assist the constabulary in the present pressure, that they are supernumerary to the establishment, and their appointment as Sergeant will in no way operate adversely in the promotion of Constables to that rank, which will continue under the existing rules of the Service.”<sup>139</sup>

The Auxiliary Division seems to have been Winston Churchill’s brainchild. At a conference of ministers on 11 May 1920, “the Secretary of State for War undertook to submit to the Cabinet a scheme for raising a Special Emergency Gendarmerie, which would become a branch of the Royal Irish Constabulary.”<sup>140</sup> The strength of this new corps would not exceed 8000 men. This proposal was referred to a committee chaired by the new commander in chief of the forces in Ireland, General Sir Nevil Macready. This committee rejected the scheme, for three reasons: first, because a completely new force could not be raised in a hurry; second, because police discipline was not strict enough to control such a force; and third, because the men of this new force “would have to be paid at exceptional rates, and this would undoubtedly lead to trouble with the Royal Irish Constabulary regarding their pay.” Instead of a “Special Emergency Gendarmerie,” Macready’s committee recommended raising a special military force of eight “garrison battalions,” consisting of war veterans enlisted for a year and paid at a special rate.<sup>141</sup>

Twelve days later, at a cabinet meeting on 31 May, Churchill seems to have lost his enthusiasm for this idea. The new force would require a public appeal from the government, and Churchill was “in two minds if it was wise to risk an appeal and get no response.” Lloyd George agreed: “I read the appeals,” he said, “and I did not think you would make any young fellow drop his tools and go over to Ireland.” For his part,

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<sup>137</sup> *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*, p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> Testimony of Francis Hackett, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 166.

<sup>139</sup> Promotion: RIC Circular, 9 August 1920, PRO, HO 184/126. In addition, a special article about the Auxiliary Division was printed in the *Weekly Summary* on 27 August 1920, to reassure the force that Temporary Cadets “will not absorb vacancies in the rank of sergeant, or operate in any way against the promotion of constables.” *Weekly Summary*, 27 August 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>140</sup> Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 11 May 1920, PRO, CAB 23/21, f. 141.

<sup>141</sup> Formation of a Special Force for Service in Ireland: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 19 May 1920, PRO, CAB 24/106, ff. 46-47.

General Macready was doubtful that the government could find enough officers for the new force: "I find no great alacrity among the officers to go to Ireland," said the general. "You do not want the scallywag." As a consequence, the cabinet gave no further attention to these plans.<sup>142</sup> Yet remarkably, two months later, the Irish government went ahead with Churchill's original scheme, and began recruiting a "special Corps of Gendarmerie," the Auxiliary Division.

The man behind this turn of events was Major-General Henry Hugh Tudor. On 11 May 1920 the conference of ministers had also concluded that, "a special officer, with suitable qualifications and experience, should be appointed to supervise the entire organisation of the Irish police, namely the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, who should have at his disposal a small staff, including a first-rate Intelligence Officer to co-ordinate and develop the Intelligence Services."<sup>143</sup> Major-General Tudor was appointed 'police adviser' to the Irish government four days later, on Winston Churchill's recommendation. Tudor was a gunner: born in Devonshire in 1871, he enrolled at Woolwich in 1888 and was commissioned in the field artillery in 1890. He was stationed in India from 1890 until 1897, when he returned to England. He fought in the South African War, where he was badly wounded at the Battle of Magersfontein (11 December 1899). After serving in South Africa, he went back to India for another five years (1905-10), and then was posted to Egypt, where he stayed until the start of the European war. Tudor served on the western front from December 1914 to the Armistice, rising from the rank of captain in charge of an artillery battery to the rank of major general and the command of the 9th (Scottish) Division. He continued to command this formation after 11 November 1918, as part of the Army of the Rhine, until the 9th Division was disbanded in March 1919.

Tudor was a professional and forward-thinking artilleryman. During the war, he pioneered the use of smoke shells to create screens, and he was one of the earliest advocates of predicted artillery fire.<sup>144</sup> He suggested an attack with tanks in the Cambrai sector in July 1917, and his ideas laid the foundation for the British breakthrough at the battle there in November. In addition, he was a fighting general who spent a lot of time in the front lines. He was almost killed at the 1st Battle of Passchendaele in October 1917, when a shell fragment hit him in the head and smashed his helmet, and he was almost captured by the Germans during Operation Michael, their first spring offensive, in March 1918.<sup>145</sup> One historian has described him as an "expert tactician,"<sup>146</sup> but Tudor

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<sup>142</sup> Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, III, p. 22.

<sup>143</sup> Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 11 May 1920, PRO, CAB 23/21, f. 142.

<sup>144</sup> Predicted artillery fire uses maps, aerial photographs, and calculations involving various factors to predict where artillery shells will fall. It allows artillery to fire at map coordinates, without observations or preliminary ranging shots, giving artillery greater tactical flexibility and increasing the chance that its fire will surprise the enemy: Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-18* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994; paperback edition, 1996), pp. 137-38.

<sup>145</sup> Joy Cave MS "A Gallant Gunner General: The Life and Times of Sir H H Tudor, KCB, CMG, together with an edited version of his 1914-1918 War Diary, 'The Fog of War,'" IWM, Misc 175 Item 2658. See also "A Woman of No Importance" [pseud. Mrs. C Stuart-Menzies], *As Others See Us* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1924), pp. 87-102, and the pen portrait in "Periscope" [pseud. G C Duggan], "The Last Days of Dublin Castle," *Blackwood's Magazine* 212, no. 1282 (August 1922), p. 167.



had no training or experience as a policeman, and his knowledge of guerrilla warfare was limited. His chief qualification for the position of police adviser was his friendship with the secretary of state for war. Tudor and Churchill had met at Bangalore in 1895, and became life-long friends. During the brief period when Churchill had served as an infantry officer on the western front, after the formation of the first coalition, he was posted to the same sector as Tudor, near Ploegsteert.<sup>147</sup>

Like his patron, Tudor thought of the First Irish War in legalistic terms: “I had nothing to do with politics,” he wrote years later, “and don’t care a hoop of hell what measure of Home Rule they got.” His assignment was to raise police morale, to punish crime, and to restore law and order.<sup>148</sup> At the cabinet conference of 23 July 1920, Tudor agreed with Wylie that the RIC would soon become ineffective as police, “but as a military body he thought they might have great effect.” While his civilian colleagues were calling for an offer of Dominion Home Rule, Tudor was confident that, “given the proper support, it would be possible to crush the present campaign of outrage.” The government, he said, should replace the civil courts with military tribunals; introduce identity cards and passports; restrict changes of residence; deport Irish prisoners to Britain; and levy fines and other collective punishments on disturbed districts. Finally, Tudor wanted “a special penalty of flogging imposed for the cutting of girls’ hair and outrages against women.” “The whole country was intimidated,” he said, “and would thank God for stern measures.”<sup>149</sup>

Like Churchill, Tudor gave senior Irish police appointments to his military friends and acquaintances. Brigadier-General Ormonde Winter became deputy police adviser and head of intelligence. According to Tudor’s war diary, Brigadier Winter was an old friend: “He had once been my Captain in a battery at Rawalpindi and we had done a lot of racing together at various meetings in India.” One of Tudor’s divisional commissioners, Lieutenant-Colonel Gerard Smyth, had been a battalion commander in the 9th Division: in his diary, Tudor describes him as “exceedingly brave and efficient.”<sup>150</sup> Another divisional commissioner, Brigadier-General Cyril Prescott-Decie, had become friends with Tudor in April 1916. “He had visited me to get the hang of

<sup>146</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*), p. 180.

<sup>147</sup> Cave, “Gallant Gunner General,” esp. pp. 92, 97, and 102.

<sup>148</sup> Quoted in Cave, “Gallant Gunner General,” pp. 308-9. Sir John Anderson later told Tom Jones that “when Tudor came over to Ireland he was not unfriendly to the Irish cause but that the murdering of his men had embittered him”: Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, III, p. 53.

<sup>149</sup> Cabinet Conference, 23 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1693, ff. 448-51.

<sup>150</sup> Divisional commissioners were special police officials intermediate between county inspectors and RIC Headquarters. There were five divisional commissioners at first (one per province, and one for Dublin city), but by 27 November there were nine. Each divisional commissioner commanded the police forces in an area covering three to six counties: County Inspector R F R Cruise, for example, was in charge of Galway’s East Riding, Galway’s West Riding, and Mayo, while Lieutenant-Colonel G C Wickham was in charge of the six counties that became Northern Ireland. Their powers and responsibilities were not clearly defined. Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 56, 91, 165-66; Divisional Commissioners: RIC Circular D.455/1920, 27 November 1920, PRO, HO 184/126.

things before joining his unit,” said Tudor. “He had just arrived in France.”<sup>151</sup> These officers quickly became notorious. Smyth was assassinated in Cork City on 17 July 1920, after making an inflammatory and widely publicized speech to mutinous police at Listowel barracks in county Kerry.<sup>152</sup> Former policeman John Tangney complained about “General Deasey” to the American Commission. “There were six Black and Tans present when General Deasey came to the barracks,” Tangney said, “and he was questioning them about what they knew about Sinn Feiners and the movement that was going on in the southern part of the country. And he said that in case they were able to identify a person with Sinn Fein sympathies passing the barracks or going near the barracks, to bayonet him and not to waste good powder, but just to bayonet him.”<sup>153</sup>

The police adviser also chose a pair of old colonial fighters to command his new Auxiliary Division: Brigadier-General F P Crozier, and Brigadier-General E A Wood. The former was an Irishman, and the latter was an Anglo-Indian. Crozier began his career fighting in the South African War from 1899 to 1902 (less four months in 1900, when he fought in the Third Ashanti War). After 1902 he took part in a number of West African campaigns until 1908, when he resigned under a cloud, after passing some bad cheques. He spent four years in Canada, then returned to Ireland and became an Ulster Volunteer Force officer in 1912. Wood, on the other hand, spent nine years in the late Victorian army before transferring to the British South Africa Police in 1895. He took part in the Jameson Raid (1895) and fought in the Matabele Rebellion (1896-97) before serving in the South African War. After 1902, he continued to serve in various police forces until after 1909, when he retired and became a tin miner. Both Crozier and Wood rejoined the army in 1914. They both fought on the western front until the Armistice, and were awarded numerous decorations: Wood won the Distinguished Service Order three times, and was twice recommended for the Victoria Cross. Crozier was the Auxiliary Division’s first commandant, and Wood was his assistant. However, Crozier gave up command for two months after he was injured in a road accident on 23 November 1920. He resumed his duties on 17 January 1921, but resigned a month later, on 19 February, after a dispute with Tudor. Wood commanded the division thereafter, until its demobilization in the winter of 1922.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Cave, “Gallant Gunner General,” pp. 198, 197, 277. This kind of patronage had been common in the Edwardian Army: Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front, and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 6-12.

<sup>152</sup> *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, pp. 93-150, 286-306.

<sup>153</sup> Testimony of John Tangney, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 396-97. On 10 December 1920, when martial law was imposed on Prescott-Decie’s division, the British commander in chief said the military would “have to watch the police carefully, for certainly Prescott-Decies [sic] will think that martial law means that he can kill anybody he sees walking along the road whose appearance may be distasteful to him.” Quoted in Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 138. For a more favourable view of the Brigadier, see “Woman of No Importance,” *As Others See Us*, pp. 73-86.

<sup>154</sup> Crozier was a prolific memoirist: see *Impressions and Recollections* (London: T. W. Laurie, 1930); *A Brass Hat in No Man’s Land* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930); *Angels on Horseback* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932); *Five Years Hard* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932); and *Ireland For Ever* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932); see also the documents in PRO, WO 374/16997 and PRO, HO 45/24829. At the end of his life Crozier became a pacifist and a sponsor of H R L Sheppard’s Peace Pledge Union: Joyce Berkman, “Pacifism in England, 1914-1939” (PhD dissertation: Yale University, 1967), pp. 271-81. On

Under both Crozier and Wood, the men of the Auxiliary Division acted more like dragoons than police. In theory, a temporary cadet's duties consisted of "training and co-operating with Police in patrol and defence work."<sup>155</sup> In practice, the division was a completely separate force. One RIC constable who served in county Kerry remembered that, "the Auxiliaries didn't mix up with the police at all." Another constable who served in county Cork said, "I did meet the Auxiliaries but we never mixed with them." A third man described them as "a force unto themselves." Decades later, one RIC veteran who served in county Tipperary seemed to resent the Auxiliary Division's freedom from ordinary police duties. "We weren't fond of them, like," he said. "We had to stand the brunt, we had to stay there, while they were sailing here and there." Another man who served in Sligo and Mayo mocked them for their administrative inefficiency. "They weren't there more than a week," he said, "till everything was topsy-turvy, there was nothing right about it. So the RIC had to supply them with a Head Constable and a Constable for office work; there wasn't one of them Auxiliary officers who was a first class scholar. All of them high ranks in the army and no education. The RIC had to do the whole paperwork."<sup>156</sup>

The men of the division seem to have spent most of their time conducting raids, a fact that was noticed by contemporary observers. When Denis Morgan testified to the American Commission, he was uncertain about the division's duties. "It is very hard to place this Auxiliary Corps I spoke of under any head," he testified. "It is not a police force. It is more for raiding purposes. It seems to be particularly the duty of the Auxiliary Corps to carry out raids on houses."<sup>157</sup>

One of the division's units (F Company) was based in Dublin Castle. It raided 181 addresses in Dublin between the beginning 13 April and 2 July 1921, and its records paint an interesting picture of an Auxiliary company in action. On some days, the company raided as many as thirteen addresses, but three raids a day was much more common. Sometimes they were looking for arms, ammunition, and seditious literature. Other times, they were looking for wanted men. Sometimes they were given some information on the reason for the raid. On 18 May, for example, they were told: "PETER KERNAN 8 BLESSINGTON St. was seen throwing a bomb in a recent ambush. Arrest him after curfew tomorrow night 19th." On 20 May the company was ordered to raid a pawnbroker named Mrs Kelly at 48 Fleet St. "Two brothers managing this shop are supplying arms & uniform to IRA. They are supposed to have received a consignment of revolvers & uniform a week ago. Information reliable." Ten days later on 30 May they were instructed to raid 50 Seville Place, "belonging to SHEERAN BROS Dairymen. Search for arms documents etc and arrest SHEERAN who is Captain F Coy 2nd Bn IRA." More often, however, the company was just given addresses to search: sometimes

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Wood's career, see the documents in PRO, CAB 134/2803 and "Woman of No Importance," *As Others See Us*, pp. 116-29.

<sup>155</sup> *Royal Irish Constabulary Auxiliary Division. Outline of Terms on which Cadets were engaged and of Conditions on which at various times it was open to Cadets to re-engage for further Periods of Service* [henceforward *Auxiliary Division: Outline of Terms*], Cmd. 1618 (1922), p. 7.

<sup>156</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 113-16.

<sup>157</sup> Testimony of Denis Morgan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 49.

they were cautioned not to arrest anyone unless incriminating evidence was found; other times they were told to arrest anyone who could not account for themselves.

F Company raided for other reasons as well. In some cases they were looking for incriminating documents: on 22 April they were instructed to raid 45 Munster Street. “Look out for letters from Liam TOBIN. The daughter of the house is aged 18 is a rabid SF & friend of Tobin. She may have charge of documents &c.” On other occasions the Auxiliaries were looking for bombs and bomb materials: they conducted a number of raids in late May and early June looking for James Leahy, suspected of being “the official bomb maker of the IRA.” Their most unusual assignment came on 26 April, when the company commander was given the following orders:

Send a few plain clothes Cadets to 14-15 Lower SACKVILLE St the buildings in which are the offices of the American Consul. On the first landing of the entrance leading to the second landing (on which second landing the consulate is located) a Dail Eireann notice is said to be posted. This landing is the property of the owner Messrs Donnelly & Son of Westmoreland Street & has no connection with the consulate. Have the poster removed quietly. The consulate is not to be interfered with.

The results of many of these raids are noted plainly in the logbook, with a check mark and the word NIL in coloured pencil. This lack of success should not be surprising, given the tiny scraps of information with which the Auxiliaries were working. Their intelligence was so unreliable that in one case F Company’s commander was told to “use discretion as to extent of search as information is not very certain.” On another occasion, he was told that “enquiries should be made before any thorough search as to whether this is the correct address.” The company also raided the same addresses repeatedly. On 13 April they were sent to raid 31 Upper Fitzwilliam St. “This house was searched on 6.II.21 & now in captured letters MC [Michael Collins] is informed that luckily only the ‘main building’ was searched; it is obvious that there must be some outhouses, cellars or communications with another building which escaped observation.” On 21 April they were ordered to raid the home of Mrs Mitchell at 76 Aughrim St. “There was a raid here before for O’Neill who escaped through the back door. She had a son in the Army, and every time she is raided, she pretends to be loyal, and shows her son’s discharge papers.” On 20 May they were sent to 51 Denzille Street. “The roof should be searched for men in hiding,” they were told, “as after a previous raid there men were seen to leave the building.” About a month later, they were told to raid five addresses on Molesworth and Dawson Streets, “Just to make sure there is nobody there.”<sup>158</sup>

The Auxiliaries were not always unsuccessful. Sometimes they raided the right address at the right time. On 20 November, the eve of Bloody Sunday, raiders from F Company captured Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy, commandant and vice-commandant of the IRA’s Dublin Brigade. They also managed to capture William Pilkington, commandant of the Sligo Brigade, in a separate raid on Vaughn’s Hotel; two more

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<sup>158</sup> “F” Company ADRIC, Raids Completed, April-July 1921, PRO, WO 351/86B.

important rebels, Piaras Béaslai and Sean O’Connell, escaped out the back of this hotel just as the Auxiliaries stormed in the front. Later, in December 1920, IRA headquarters sent another officer, Ernie O’Malley, to county Kilkenny to organize an attack on A Company’s barracks at Inistiogue. O’Malley was just beginning to plan this attack when the Auxiliaries raided his house. The guerrilla leader was taken completely by surprise: according to his memoir, O’Malley was reading in his room when a cadet opened the door and walked in. “He was as unexpected as death,” said O’Malley.<sup>159</sup>

Other Volunteers had a number of close brushes with the Auxiliaries, including Michael Brennan, leader of the IRA’s East Clare flying column. Auxiliary Company G was headquartered at Killaloe, County Clare, and its men almost caught Brennan on several occasions. The first time, Brennan was with a small party of Volunteers at the house of Michael Gleeson, captain of the IRA’s Bodyke Company.

When tea was about half through, one of the Gleesons rushed in to say he thought he heard the squeak of brakes coming down the hill. He said he heard no sound of engines and he was sent back for a further report. Almost immediately he returned and shouted ‘Auxiliaries!’

The guerrillas got out of the house just as the raiding party was hammering on the front door, and escaped from the back yard as cadets were jumping over the wall. Once the raiders left, Brennan returned and discovered what happened. “We found that engines and lights had been switched off at the top of the hill outside the village and the lorries had coasted silently down to the very gate of Gleeson’s house.”

Brennan was nearly captured again the next day, at nearby KIELTA, but he got word that cadets were waiting for him at a house where he planned to spend the night. The night after that, Brennan was forced to run from another house in Scariff, fleeing out the back while the Auxiliaries came in the front. After these and other incidents, the IRA started blocking the roads around G Company’s billets and keeping a close watch on the Auxiliaries, using visual signals to warn the flying column if a raiding party was heading in their direction.<sup>160</sup>

On still other occasions, Auxiliaries found the guerrillas by accident. On the morning of Bloody Sunday, for example, a team of ten IRA men invaded a house at 22 Lower Mount Street in Dublin. Once inside, they caught a British army lieutenant named Angliss and shot him to death as he lay in bed. The gunfire alerted another officer across the hall. While this man blocked his bedroom door with furniture, the housekeeper rushed upstairs, leaned out a window, and screamed for help.

By coincidence, a party of Auxiliaries in plain clothes was driving along Lower Mount Street at that moment. (The men were on their way from their depot at Beggars Bush to the train at Amiens Station.) They noticed the screaming housekeeper, stopped, got out of their vehicles, and surrounded the house. The IRA men were still trying to

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<sup>159</sup> Ernie O’Malley, *Army Without Banners: Adventures of an Irish Volunteer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), pp. 258-59.

<sup>160</sup> Michael Brennan, *The War in Clare* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1980), pp. 72-74.

break down the second British officer's bedroom door when they heard shooting. One of the Volunteers, Denis Begley, made for the front door, where he found Willie McClean, who was supposed to be standing guard outside. "He had come inside when he saw the Auxiliaries appearing in the street in lorries, and they followed him to the door; he got wounded in the right ankle when running for the door. When he got inside he closed the door and started to fire through the letter-box; one of the Auxiliaries put a gun through the letter-box and shot him through the fore-finger of the right hand." Two Volunteers managed to escape out the back, but a guerrilla named Frank Teeling was wounded and fell. The remaining seven shot their way out of the front of the house, ran down Grattan Street, and escaped across the Liffey on a commandeered ferryboat.<sup>161</sup>

General Crozier arrived at 22 Lower Mount Street soon afterward, with a platoon of reinforcements. The wounded Frank Teeling had been captured, and the Auxiliaries were threatening to finish him off: when Crozier entered the house, he found a cadet holding Teeling at gunpoint and counting up to ten. Crozier knocked the revolver out of the cadet's hand and ordered his men to take Teeling to King George V Hospital.<sup>162</sup>

The incident described by Crozier was not unusual. The Auxiliaries were known as "Tudor's Toughs," and most sources agree that they were frequently threatening, abusive, and violent while carrying out their duties. Once again, "rough" was the word that RIC veterans used to describe the behaviour of temporary cadets. "They were rough chaps indeed," said one. "They were rough, no doubt about that," said another, who served in county Waterford. "They just got somebody that were doing something wrong, they would lift and him and throw him into this van and take him away with them." A man who served in county Clare described them as "fairly rough, they done their work in a very rough way. I mean to say, as regards interviewing people who they met on the roads and one thing and another." "The Auxiliaries were in a kind of world of their own," he concluded: "they raided rough."<sup>163</sup>

These impressions are strengthened by contemporary reports. In October 1920, Hugh Martin was in Dublin when Auxiliaries and soldiers raided a billiard parlour on Sackville Street. In a news article, Martin described how a cadet swore at him, ordered him off the street, and followed him back to his hotel. When the porter was too slow opening the hotel's front door, the cadet hit him in the face with his revolver, and then pointed his weapon at Martin, ordering him to remain inside. "Discipline appeared to be singularly lax," wrote the English reporter.<sup>164</sup> A Dublin Castle diarist noted later that Auxiliaries held up a member of the Irish executive in early December. "Our Judge Wylie was hiked off a tram the other day to be searched at the point of a revolver—'Come down yer bloody Irish barstard'—Tudor's Tactful Tough!" Months later, in June 1921, the adjutant of the IRA's Cork No. 2 Brigade sent a report to Michael Collins

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<sup>161</sup> Extract from report by Denis Begley, late "E" Coy, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, IRA, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0532/1.

<sup>162</sup> Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, pp. 101-2.

<sup>163</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 11, 114, 115. Another RIC veteran who worked in County Mayo described the Auxiliaries as "wild men" (p. 116).

<sup>164</sup> "Terrorism in Dublin," *Daily News*, 25 October 1920, p. 1 (Also Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 133-35).

describing a round-up involving both soldiers and Auxiliaries. “The military were not offensive to the people,” he wrote: “they treated them alright,” but the Auxiliaries “badly beat everyone they came into contact with.”<sup>165</sup>

Clearly, none of these three forces was an ideal implement of government policy. The Royal Irish Constabulary was a civil police force. It had neither the numbers nor the training that an army of occupation required, and its Irish constables had not enlisted to fight a guerrilla war. Some retired, and others resigned. Others were playing it safe, or just marking time. Still others began feuding with local republicans—forming death squads to liquidate known and suspected guerrillas, and burning the homes and shops of boycotters. Their British reinforcements, the Black and Tans, had military training and combat experience, but they were fish out of water in Ireland, where they soon picked up the bad habits of their Irish comrades. The Auxiliary Division was designed as a mobile police force for service in disturbed areas, but in some of these areas its companies began behaving like British Free Corps. When faced with resolute resistance, these forces often lost all restraint, and committed numerous atrocities, which only hardened insurgent resolve. In the next chapter, we will study the conflict between the police and the guerrillas on the level of a single county, where we can watch closely as the spiral of violence unwinds.

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<sup>165</sup> Report by Adjutant, 1st Battalion, Cork No 2 Brigade, IRA, 6 July 1921, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0668/X.

Table 1.1. *RIC stations and personnel in Galway West Riding, 1920-21.*

| Station                | January 1920 |     |     | March 1921 |     |     |
|------------------------|--------------|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|
|                        | HC           | Ser | Con | HC         | Ser | Con |
| Ardrahan               | --           | 1   | 9   | 1          | 2   | 13  |
| Ballymoe Joint Station | --           | 1   | 4   | --         | 2   | 13  |
| Barna                  | --           | 1   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Barnaghderg            | --           | 1   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Boffin Island          | --           | 1   | 6   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Carna                  | --           | 2   | 4   | --         | 2   | 14  |
| Carraroe               | --           | 1   | 7   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Castlegrove            | --           | 1   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Castlehacket           | --           | 1   | 6   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Clarinbridge           | --           | 1   | 8   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Clifden                | 1            | 4   | 7   | 1          | 3   | 14  |
| Cliggan                | --           | 1   | 4   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Clonboo                | --           | 1   | 8   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Clonbur                | --           | 1   | 5   | --         | 2   | 12  |
| Corofin Hut            | --           | 1   | 4   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Cummer                 | --           | 1   | 9   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Dominick St (Galway)   | --           | 1   | 9   | --         | 7   | 23  |
| Dunmore                | 1            | 3   | 9   | 1          | 2   | 19  |
| Eglinton St (Galway)   | 1            | 8   | 29  | 2          | 15  | 54  |
| Errismore              | --           | 1   | 6   | --         | 2   | 11  |
| Glenamaddy             | --           | 1   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Gort                   | 1            | 3   | 20  | 1          | 3   | 18  |
| Headford               | --           | 1   | 6   | --         | 2   | 7   |
| Inish Hut              | --           | 1   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Kilcolgan              | --           | 1   | 9   | --         | 2   | 13  |
| Kilkerrin              | --           | 2   | 9   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Kilronan               | --           | 1   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Kinvarra               | --           | 1   | 8   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Letterfrack            | --           | 2   | 6   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Loughgeorge            | --           | 2   | 8   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Maam                   | --           | 2   | 5   | --         | 2   | 12  |
| Mace Hut               | --           | 1   | 6   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Miltown                | --           | 1   | 5   | --         | 2   | 13  |
| Moycullen              | --           | 2   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| New Dock St (Galway)   | --           | 1   | 6   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Oranmore               | --           | 2   | 10  | --         | 3   | 12  |
| Oughterard             | 1            | 3   | 9   | 1          | 4   | 17  |
| Rosmuck                | --           | 1   | 6   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Roundstone             | --           | 1   | 8   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Salthill               | --           | 1   | 4   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Spiddal                | --           | 2   | 6   | --         | 2   | 10  |
| Tonamace Post          | --           | --  | 2   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Tuam                   | 1            | 4   | 16  | 2          | 5   | 45  |
| Tubber Joint Station   | --           | 1   | 6   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Turloughmore           | --           | 1   | 8   | 1          |     | 16  |
| Williamstown           | --           | 1   | 5   | Abandoned  |     |     |
| Total                  | 6            | 72  | 337 | 10         | 62  | 336 |



(Source: RIC Returns by County, 1920-21, PRO, HO 184/61-62)

Table 1.2. *Enlistment dates of RIC constables in County Galway, 1920 and 1921.*

| Date    | East Riding |          | Change |
|---------|-------------|----------|--------|
|         | Jan 1920    | Jan 1921 |        |
| 1920    | --          | 57       | +57    |
| 1915-19 | 43          | 38       | -5     |
| 1910-14 | 79          | 62       | -17    |
| 1905-9  | 72          | 50       | -22    |
| 1900-4  | 42          | 23       | -19    |
| 1895-99 | 16          | 16       |        |
| 1890-94 | 16          | 11       | -5     |
| 1875-89 | 10          | 3        | -7     |

(Source: RIC Returns by County, 1920-21, PRO, HO 184/61-62)

Table 1.3. *Irish and British RIC recruits, summer 1920 to spring 1921.*

| Season             | Irish      | British     |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Summer 1920        | 92         | 1348        |
| Autumn 1920        | 206        | 2944        |
| Winter 1921        | 237        | 2206        |
| <u>Spring 1921</u> | <u>143</u> | <u>1435</u> |
| Total              | 678        | 7933        |

(Source: Outrage Reports, PRO, CO 904/148-150)

Table 1.4. *Estimated numbers of Black and Tans, by province, winter 1921.*

| Province or Site | Force       | Black and Tans | % of Force | % of B & T |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| Ulster           | 1933        | 301            | 16         | 12         |
| Belfast          | 1098        | 4              | --         | --         |
| Leinster         | 1872        | 460            | 25         | 18         |
| Depot            | 394         | 257            | 65         | 10         |
| Reserve          | 268         | 12             | --         | --         |
| Munster          | 3480        | 1269           | 37         | 48         |
| <u>Connaught</u> | <u>1592</u> | <u>326</u>     | <u>21</u>  | <u>12</u>  |
| Total            | 10637       | 2629           | 25         |            |

(Source: RIC Returns by County, 1921, PRO, HO 184/62)

## CHAPTER TWO

### MURDER GANGS The War in West Galway

The preceding sections used evidence and examples from all across Ireland. This is a valid and useful approach, but not the sole way to study the First Irish War, nor even the best. The First Irish War was not a single conflict: it was instead a patchwork of local conflicts. The level of revolutionary violence varied from province to province: the IRA was most active in Munster, and least active in Connaught (see Table 2.1). From the summer of 1920 to the summer of 1921, the guerrillas killed 189 police and Auxiliaries in Munster—more than the rest of Ireland put together. The intensity of the fighting also varied from county to county. For example, attacks on the police were just as numerous in county Galway, in the province of Connaught, as they were in Galway's neighbour, county Clare, in the province of Munster.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, the level of conflict varied within counties, as well as between: there were twenty-five attacks on the police in Galway's West Riding, but only ten attacks in the county's East Riding; ten police were killed in the West Riding, out of eleven in the whole county.

As a result, one of the best ways to follow the course of the First Irish War is to study the conflict in a single county, stepping back now and then to look at events nationwide. David Fitzpatrick pioneered this approach in the 1970s, with his book on county Clare, and a number of other historians have since followed in his footsteps, with very fruitful results. Local histories allow the social historian to study the war from the local perspective of the combatants. Since the Royal Irish Constabulary was organized into county forces, with county inspectors who submitted monthly reports on the local progress of the conflict, this approach is especially suitable for a history of the police.

Here we shall follow the guerrilla war in county Galway's West Riding. This was not a "typical" district. Indeed, as we have just seen, Galway was the most violent county in the province. But for purposes of study the West Riding has a number of advantages over other counties. The war in Galway West is well documented, which allows us to build our narrative with a wide range of materials. The level of conflict in the West Riding varied greatly from season to season: the highs were higher, and the lows were lower, and as a result, overall trends were clearer there than elsewhere. Finally, there was violence enough to provide a steady stream of incidents, but not so much that these incidents become a blur. When we study the guerrilla war in Galway West, we can hear every gun shot, and feel every bullet.

Once we study the course of the First Irish War, from the summer of 1920 to the summer of 1921, it becomes clear that the war went through five roughly seasonal periods. In the spring and summer of 1920, Irish republicans were on the offensive, building an alternative state and pushing their chief enemy, the Royal Irish Constabulary, to the brink of collapse. In the fall of 1920, armed with emergency powers and

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<sup>1</sup> Outrage Reports, PRO, CO 904/148-50.

reinforced with British recruits and Auxiliaries, the RIC counterattacked, driving the Irish Republic and its army underground. The winter of 1921 was a period of deadlock and attrition, a 'wearing-out fight' in which casualties rose on both sides. This was followed by a new republican offensive in the spring. The decisive battle of the war was fought at Whitsuntide, when republican politicians captured almost every seat in the new Home Rule parliament, and republican guerrillas inflicted heavy losses on the Crown forces.

After Black Whitsun, the government's Irish policy was in tatters. By the summer of 1921, there were only two choices: military re-conquest, or a negotiated settlement. The government prepared for the former, but offered the latter. Its offer was accepted, an armistice was negotiated, and the fighting ended on 11 July 1921.

### **A. Initial Manoeuvres: Spring and Summer 1920**

Early twentieth-century Galway was remarkable in many ways. It was (and is) the largest county in the province of Connaught, and the second largest county in Ireland, with an area of 1,467,849 acres of land. Galway was also the most thinly populated county in Ireland, and one of the poorest. In 1911, roughly 79 per cent of its population lived in poverty, on agricultural holdings valued at £15 pounds or less. The county's population had fallen from 211,227 people in 1891, to 192,549 in 1901, to 182,224 in 1911, leaving just one person for every eight acres of land. According to one estimate, the number of emigrants during this twenty-year period was equal to 25 per cent of Galway's population in 1891. As a result, one writer has described early twentieth-century Galway as a "barren wilderness." Even so, despite (or perhaps because of) its desolation, Galway was the most heavily policed region of Ireland. In 1911, Galway's two "county forces" consisted of 900 officers and men, housed in 94 barracks. There was one constable for every 202 people in Galway, compared to an island-wide average of one constable for every 400 people. This large establishment must have been a legacy of the Land War (1879-82),<sup>2</sup> when poverty-stricken Galway became the most disturbed

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<sup>2</sup> The Land War was a low-intensity conflict caused by the disastrous harvests of 1877 and 1879. Evictions in the spring of 1879 led to widespread resistance and mass protests. Irish nationalist leaders took up the cause of land reform and rent relief, and organized a mass movement, the Irish National Land League, in defence of tenant farmers. After two years of disorder and violence, the Liberal government attempted to resolve the crisis by passing coercive legislation, the Protection of Person and Property Act, in April 1881, along with a Land Act in August. However, farmers whose rent was in arrears could not benefit from the Land Act's provisions, and, as a result, unrest continued. The government suppressed the Land League and imprisoned its leader Charles Stewart Parnell in Kilmainham gaol in October. Finally, in April 1882, the government agreed to release Parnell, suspend coercion, and provide additional rent relief; in exchange, Parnell and the League agreed to support the government's land reforms and use their influence to discourage violence. Unfortunately, three days after Gladstone and Parnell agreed to this 'Kilmainham Treaty', the chief secretary for Ireland and his under secretary were assassinated in Dublin's Phoenix Park by Irish republican extremists. British outrage at the Phoenix Park Murders made it impossible for Gladstone to suspend coercion. A new Prevention of Crime Act was passed in July 1882, but violence and unrest finally subsided after the government kept its promise to write off arrears of rent. On the Land War, see Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance Since 1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), Chapter 3, and John D Johnston, "The Irish Land War, 1879-82:

county in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Between 1879 and 1882, the RIC reported more than fifty-eight agrarian outrages per thousand people in Galway, compared to a national average of twenty-four per thousand.<sup>4</sup>

Lough Corrib divided Galway's West Riding into two distinct regions. The region east of the lake was open country, suitable for grazing and farming, and included Galway town (population 13,426 in 1911). The region west of the lake, known as Connemara, was "barren, rugged, and mountainous."<sup>5</sup> Judging from the distribution of RIC barracks, most of the riding's population lived east of Lough Corrib. This is also suggested by the distribution of the Irish Republican Army's Galway Brigades: three of the riding's five brigades, and six of its eleven battalions, were based in the district east of the lough.<sup>6</sup> There were five IRA battalions in Connemara, grouped into two brigades, but these were much weaker than their eastern counterparts. When it was organized in January 1919, the IRA's West Connemara Brigade had only two officers, when its table of organization called for sixteen.<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, revolution flourished in Galway's rocky soil. During the Rebellion of 1916, Galway's Volunteers had been some of the few to rise outside of Dublin. The rebels attacked Gort police barracks on the morning of 25 April, and Oranmore police barracks that afternoon, wounding Constable Joseph Ginty. Constable Patrick Whelan was killed and Constable Hugh Hamilton was wounded in a skirmish at Carnmore on the morning of 26 April.<sup>8</sup> The 1916 rebels were dispersed on 28 April, but four years later, in the late spring of 1920, the Irish Republic was firmly rooted in Galway West. According to County Inspector Sidley's report for the month of June, the situation from the police perspective was already hopeless:

Sinn Fein courts have set aside Petty Sessions courts to a great extent. The Irish Volunteers are in control everywhere and the police are set aside. The Police cannot go on patrol except in considerable force and on the slightest opportunity they are held up. It is difficult for them to get provisions and fuel & light in many places. Their condition of life in barracks with light and air shut out

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Lessons for Counter-Insurgency," *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* Vol. 119, no. 2 (April 1989), pp. 194-202.

<sup>3</sup> In 1865, when county Galway's population was larger by tens of thousands, its two county forces together numbered only 657 men: see the schedule annexed to 28 & 29 Victoria Ch. 70 (29 June 1865).

<sup>4</sup> "Galway," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.), vol. X (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp. 431-32; *Committee of Inquiry into the RIC and the DMP*, p. 341; David Fitzpatrick, "The Geography of Irish Nationalism," *Past & Present* no. 78 (February 1978), pp. 138, 142; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. xii; Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 352.

<sup>5</sup> "Galway," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 431.

<sup>6</sup> RIC Returns by County, 1920, PRO, HO 184/61; RIC Returns by County, 1921, PRO, HO 184/62; Sean Mac Eoin, "The Constitutional Basis of the National Struggle," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1945), p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Mac Eoin, "National Struggle," p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook: Easter 1916* (Dublin: Weekly Irish Times, 1917), pp. 38, 57, 175; C. Desmond Greaves, *Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), pp. 85-101.

by sand bags, shell boxes and steel shutters is very irksome and disagreeable. At night they cannot sleep during the dark hours apprehending an attack at any time. No one speaks to them in a friendly way. No one will give them any information. Owing to the way mail cars are held up it is getting increasingly difficult to transmit orders and correspondence from County Head Qrs to the Districts of the Riding. Men cannot travel by rail armed, and transfers cannot be carried out by rail, owing to the munition strike. Galway Quarter Sessions is at present sitting and Police cannot attend by rail. Nine police travelling from Galway to Tuam on 23rd June were held up at Athenry and are still there as no train has run to Tuam since then. The old form of police control is practically beaten to the ropes and it is as well to recognise the situation.<sup>9</sup>

The shooting war in the West Riding began on 19 July. That evening, an RIC sergeant and three constables were returning to their station at Dunmore, after attending the Galway assizes. Around nine o'clock they passed through Tuam. Three miles outside of town they stopped. Guerrillas had blocked the road with a fallen tree, and were waiting in ambush, hidden behind a hedge. When Constables James Burke and Patrick Carey got out of their car to clear the road, the rebels opened fire. Burke and Carey were killed. The other two police fired back until they ran out of ammunition and surrendered. They were taken prisoner, disarmed, blindfolded, and told to walk back to Tuam. Burke and Carey's bodies were recovered later.

Police from Galway and soldiers from Claremorris hurried to the district, and searched the countryside for hours. Finding nothing, they went back to Tuam around three in the morning. Reprisals began shortly before dawn. The police rushed into the streets, shouting, "Where are the [fucking] Sinn Feiners? Let the cowards come on!" Soon they were smashing windows, shooting wildly, throwing grenades. They wrecked shops and public houses, set fires, dragged young men from their beds, threatened to shoot them. They cheered when the Town Hall went up in flames: a republican court had been held there days before. They burned a drapery warehouse, and the family inside escaped only by climbing onto the roof. Not long after the riot ended, an English reporter came to Tuam and saw the damage. "As I entered the town this morning," he wrote, "it recalled nothing so much as some of the ruined Belgian and French towns, and bore, I thought, a striking resemblance to wrecked Albert."<sup>10</sup>

The Tuam police riot inspired copycat reprisals across Ireland: three days later, for example, police in Caltra, county Longford shouted "Up Tuam!" as they wrecked houses and burned the local Sinn Fein hall.<sup>11</sup> However, these events did nothing to hearten County Inspector Sidley. "The life of the police is scarcely bearable," he complained at month's end.

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<sup>9</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, June 1920, PRO, CO 904/112.

<sup>10</sup> "Constables Shot Dead," *Manchester Guardian*, 21 July 1920, p. 7; "Irish Police Run Amok," *Daily News*, 21 July 1920, p. 1; "Police Run Amok in Tuam," *The Times*, 21 July 1920, p. 14; "Police Ambushed," *Morning Post*, 21 July 1920, p. 7; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 103-4.

<sup>11</sup> "Sinn Fein Buildings Wrecked," *The Times*, 24 July 1920, p. 14.

They are shunned and boycotted, and for the most part they cannot get the necessities of life unless they commandeer them. They are held up and shot at on every opportunity.... Intimidation broods everywhere and the dark hours are dreaded in many places owing to the operations of armed and masked men.<sup>12</sup>

The guerrillas claimed their third victim in August. On the morning of the 21st five policemen were cycling from Oranmore to Galway. Sergeant Healy, Constable Foley, and Constable Brown were carrying despatches: they were armed with revolvers. Sergeant Mulhearn and Constable Doherty were going on leave: they were unarmed. As they were passing a railway bridge they were ambushed. The police dropped their bicycles and ran. Foley was shot four times and later died of his wounds. Sergeant Healy emptied his revolver at the rebels then fled into a nearby wood to escape being surrounded. He and Constable Brown made it to Galway unharmed. Sergeant Mulhearn and Constable Doherty were both wounded, but escaped as well.<sup>13</sup> That night, Foley's comrades from Oranmore station attacked the house of a local woman, Mrs Kane. "They asked her if her son was home that night," said a local businessman, speaking to the American Commission. "Well, he has been shot since. They asked him to come down. They said, 'Come down, you coward.' So they burned the house—burned the whole place to the ground and tore the house up the same night."<sup>14</sup>

By the end of the month, the West Riding's county inspector was completely demoralized. "Sinn Fein has become immensely strong," he wrote, "and little short of a Republic will satisfy the leaders now."

It is recognized that the Police from their local knowledge are a great hindrance, and they are to be removed by murder or threats. They are shunned and hated and rejoicing takes place when they are shot. They have to take the necessities of life by force. Their wives are miserable and their children suffer in the schools and nobody cares.<sup>15</sup>

The insurgents continued to press the police hard. A policeman stationed in Galway had been kidnapped on the night of 28 August. Constable Curley was on leave at his home in county Kerry when armed men took him away in a motorcar. He was released on 1 September, and subsequently resigned from the force. On the evening of 3 September six police came under fire as they were travelling by motor from Athenry to Loughrea. The most serious violence occurred on the night of 8 September. A Black and Tan, Edward Krumm, and a Volunteer, John Mulvoy, were killed in a shootout at Galway railway station. When news of the shooting reached Eglinton Street barracks, the Galway

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<sup>12</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, July 1920, PRO, CO 904/112.

<sup>13</sup> The best source in this case is "A Galway Ambush," *Morning Post*, 23 August 1920, pp. 5-6; by chance, their correspondent was on the scene soon after the ambush occurred; cf. "Six Police Murders in Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1921, p. 7; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> Testimony of Thomas Nolan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 852-53; cf. "A Galway Ambush," *Morning Post*, 23 August 1920, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, August 1920, PRO, CO 904/112.

police rioted again, as they had in Tuam. They shot up the streets and went hunting for Volunteers, killing James Quirke, adjutant A Company, 1st (Galway) Battalion, IRA. They almost killed the battalion's commandant, John Broderick, but he got away. The police then burned out a couple of houses, and wrecked the machinery of a republican newspaper, the *Galway Express*.<sup>16</sup>

General Tudor was in Galway on the night of the riot.<sup>17</sup> The next day he spoke to the police at Eglinton Street. John Caddan later described the scene.

He had two motor lorries of soldiers there to guard him. He had two other officers with him. The county inspector was there and two district inspectors, and all the men in the barracks were there. And he started to talk about this business. He said, 'This country is ruled by gunmen, and they must be put down.' He talked about giving home rule to Ireland, and he said home rule could not be given until all of these gunmen were put down, and he called on the RIC to put them down. He asked them what they required in the barracks, and that whatever they wanted he would give them, and they were also going to get a raise in pay. And he said they needed machine guns, and he said that they would get them, and also tanks and more men—men who had been in the army during the war and who knew how to shoot to kill; and he said they would be the right men in the right place.<sup>18</sup>

A curfew was imposed on Galway town. Under the terms of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, a military court of inquiry was held instead of a coroner's inquest. An independent civilian inquiry into the events of 8 September was suppressed. A woman named Eileen Baker gave evidence to the military court. On the morning of 18 September a gang of Volunteers attacked Baker and cut off her hair. In retaliation, police or soldiers cut off the hair of five Cumann na mBan women that night.<sup>19</sup>

Under cover of darkness, the police began taking revenge on boycotters. By the end of September, at least thirteen homes and shops belonging to well-known republicans had been damaged and looted.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the *Galway Express* was targeted again. The paper had defiantly printed a one-page edition the day after the riot. "The Murder of Innocent Men," read its headlines: "People's Admirable Restraint Under Extreme Provocation. *Galway Express* Premises Demolished." The police soon went back to the paper's offices and wrecked what was left.<sup>21</sup> Later, they attacked the editor's home and

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<sup>16</sup> See Chapter Three for details and references.

<sup>17</sup> Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, p. 459.

<sup>18</sup> Testimony of John Joseph Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 413-14.

<sup>19</sup> "Hair Cutting Outrages," *Daily Mail*, 20 September 1920, p. 7; "Police Reprisals in Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 20 September 1920, p. 9; Testimony of Thomas Nolan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 855. The Cumann na mBan was the women's auxiliary of the Irish Volunteers/Irish Republican Army.

<sup>20</sup> Register of Crime. Province of Connaught, July-December 1920 [henceforward Register of Crime], PRO, CO 904/45, pp. 78-82.

<sup>21</sup> Testimony of Agnes King, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 134; Testimony of Thomas Nolan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 862.

smashed his furniture. The police report admitted only that, “the damage appears to have been done by anti-Sinn Feiners.”<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, the fighting outside the city continued. On the afternoon of 23 September, the police surprised three men waiting in ambush at Drumharsna, in the Gort district. The ambushers fled when they came under fire, leaving a shotgun and two revolvers behind. The police later arrested two of them.<sup>23</sup> Two nights later, the homes of five republican farmers in the Gort district were burned.<sup>24</sup>

## B. The Clash of Battle: Autumn 1920

The men that General Tudor had promised began arriving in late September. Black and Tans came to reinforce the riding’s police barracks. In addition, a detachment of the Auxiliary Division, D Company, was posted to Galway town. Thereafter, the West Riding’s police went on the offensive, with the Auxiliaries leading the way. Lurid reports of police brutality began to appear in the British press. For example, on the night of 9 October, a large party of police raided the Deveney home at Maree, near Oranmore. The family had three sons: Thomas, Stephen, and Patrick. Men wearing khaki clothes and black caps pulled the boys out of bed, demanding to know if they were Sinn Feiners. The three were then dragged out into the road, one in his shirt and trousers, the others in their shirts alone. They were ordered to kneel down and say their prayers, and shots were fired over their heads. Then they were marched down the road a short distance, and finally told to stand still. One of the raiders lit up the boys with a flashlight, and another fired both barrels of a shotgun. Thomas and Stephen were hit in the legs and Patrick in the stomach. The gunmen then told the wounded boys to clear off home.<sup>25</sup>

More attacks took place that same night in the Oranmore district. A man named Albert Cloonan was dragged from his bed and hit in the head with a gun butt. The police finally caught up with Mrs Kane’s boy, and gave him the same treatment. Mrs Anne Cloonan’s unoccupied house was burned down, along with the local Sinn Fein hall.<sup>26</sup>

The poet and playwright Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory, a friend and patron of Yeats, lived at Coole Park in southwest Galway. Lady Gregory heard about the violence at Maree from her doctor. “He has just been again this evening to see Anne,” she wrote in her journal.

When he came down he said, ‘Those Black-and-Tans that were in Clarenbridge went on to Maree that is a couple of miles further. They dragged three men out of their houses there and shot them. They are not dead, they are wounded. I was sent for to attend them. Then they set fire to some of the houses and burned them down.’ I asked if anything had happened there, if these were ‘reprisals,’ and he

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<sup>22</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 82.

<sup>23</sup> Summary of police reports, 28 September 1920, PRO, CO 904/142.

<sup>24</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> “The Police Terror in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 22 October 1920, p. 9; “‘Pressure’ in Galway,” *The Times*, 22 October 1920, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 82.



said, ‘Nothing, except that a good while ago, last year, a policeman was disarmed there but not hurt.’ He said, ‘I used not to believe the stories of English savagery whether written or told. I thought they were made up by factions, but now I see that they are true.’<sup>27</sup>

The police became even more savage as the month wore on. On Friday, 16 October 1920, a National School teacher named Patrick Joyce was kidnapped from Barna. Joyce was the county president of the National Teachers’ Association, and according to reports was a strong constitutional nationalist. He was never heard from again, and his kidnapping was never explained, but it seems to have enraged the Auxiliaries. On Saturday, 17 October a notice was posted in Barna, warning that the village would be blown up if Joyce were not returned by that evening. The cadets of D Company scoured the district all weekend, threatening, beating, flogging, and firing shotguns at its inhabitants. Two men wound up in the county hospital after encounters with police: Thomas Carr was beaten with a revolver and shot in the leg; William Connolly was first whipped and then wounded by a shotgun blast.<sup>28</sup>

At last, on Monday, 19 October, a mixed force of soldiers and Auxiliaries raided the co-operative society store at Moycullen. The store’s manager, Lawrence Tallan, and his four male employees were told to put up their hands, and then were taken outside, to stand against the side of a corrugated iron hut. A man wearing khaki breeches, a blue Guernsey, and a knitted blue tam-o’-shanter was in charge of the police. He held a revolver in one hand, and a whip and a thong in the other. Speaking with an English accent, he questioned one of Tallan’s assistants, Walter Macdonagh. When Macdonagh said he knew nothing about Joyce’s kidnapping, the Auxiliary leader hit him in the face with his revolver.

“On my honour,” cried Macdonagh, “I know nothing of the man. I have heard of him, that is all.”

“Well,” said the Auxiliary, “we will make you know something.”

The police pulled Macdonagh’s trousers down and whipped him. Then they treated a second man, Tim Connor, in the same way. When the manager protested that his assistants were innocent, he was threatened with a bayonet and told to go back inside. As Tallan turned to go back to the store, an Auxiliary pointed a shotgun at him. Tallan got his left hand up before the gun went off, and was wounded in the left arm and the left side of the neck. He stumbled back inside, where he found his female employees kneeling in prayer, terrified. Shortly thereafter, the police outside began shooting at the store, and kept firing their shotguns and rifles until their magazines were empty.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel J Murphy (ed.), *Lady Gregory’s Journals*, Vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 192.

<sup>28</sup> “The Police Terror in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 22 October 1920, p. 9; “‘Pressure’ in Galway,” *The Times*, 22 October 1920, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> “The Police Terror in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 22 October 1920, p. 9; “‘Pressure’ in Galway,” *The Times*, 22 October 1920, p. 12. Later, in a letter to the *Times*, an Irish Unionist peer, Lord Montagu, complained about the brutal treatment of the staff at the Moycullen co-operative store. He personally vouched for Lawrence Tallan’s “high character and veracity, and his strict avoidance, according

These incidents were widely publicized. The correspondent for the *Times* thought that some of the stories had “grown in the telling,” but concluded that they were “substantially accurate.”<sup>30</sup> In his view, the Auxiliary force was applying “systematic pressure” in the West Riding. The *Guardian*’s correspondent was more critical. The Auxiliaries, he said, “have introduced into the country quite new principles of police duty, which have as their frankly avowed aim to make the public espousal of Republicanism a danger and to compel by threat and cruelty all prominent Volunteers to leave the district.”<sup>31</sup> When Sir Hamar Greenwood was questioned about these reports in the House of Commons on 21 October, his denial was brusque: “I do not accept as true, or as anything approaching the truth, the allegations in this question or any allegations made in the papers in which this appeared.”<sup>32</sup>

By then, however, the men of D Company had gone beyond mere threat and cruelty. On the night of 19 October, in Galway town, five men had walked into the public house of Michael Walsh, a republican city councillor. They wore plain clothes and carried revolvers. Walsh and his assistant, Martin Meenaghan, were held up and robbed at gunpoint. Meenaghan told the pressmen what came next.

Mr Walsh asked me for a drink, and I pointed out a drop of rum. One of the men said: ‘It is no good to you, it is going astray; you will be dead within an hour.’ Mr Walsh said: ‘I should like to see a priest if that is so.’ The answer was: ‘Your priests are worse than you are yourselves. You will not see a priest, Walsh; you have shot a lot of police.’

The gunmen had English accents and said they were “English secret service men.” They took Walsh down to the dockside, shot him through the head, and pushed his body into the water. They let Meenaghan go. When he asked if the gang was going to shoot him, he was told: “I don’t think so; we have not heard anything about you yet.”<sup>33</sup>

Two days later, Parliamentary questions were asked about Walsh’s death as well. The chief secretary’s reply was just as dismissive. “I will not accept,” he said, “except on the clearest and most conclusive proof, the allegation that any of these ex-officers now serving in the auxiliary division are guilty of murder.”

In his report at the end of the October, the county inspector’s tone was transformed. The pessimism of August was gone. The assistance of the army and the Auxiliaries, he said, “is having a very healthy effect on the morale of the Force.” He brushed off the bad publicity his men had attracted. “During the month several Special Correspondents from English newspapers have been in Galway. In no case did they seek

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to our Cooperative rule, of politics.” He also noted that, “The society and its staff have always served the police and military, and the manager had recently given up his own bed one night to a belated policeman, who was wet through.” *The Times*, 2 November 1920, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> “Police Terrorism in Galway,” *The Times*, 21 October 1920, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> “Flogged by Police in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 21 October 1920, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Chief Secretary’s reply to T P O’Connor, 21 October 1920, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 133, col. 1058.

<sup>33</sup> “Political Murder in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 21 October 1920, p. 7.

information from me or from the C.M.A. [Competent Military Authority]—they were obviously sent over to write up ‘reprisals’.”<sup>34</sup> The deputy inspector general, Charles Walsh, was optimistic as well. He concluded his own monthly report on Galway West with the following words: “The tone of Galway has never been very bad and it should not be too difficult a task to restore order there.”<sup>35</sup>

The security forces were counterattacking everywhere in the fall of 1920. As a result, insurgent activity declined across Ireland. This decline was especially marked in the province of Connaught, where the number of attacks on police dwindled from forty-two in the summer to just fourteen in the fall (see Table 2.1). Disturbingly, though, while attacks on police declined, the number of police who were killed in these attacks rose, from eight in the summer to twelve in the autumn. Five constables were killed in a single battle at Ballinderry, County Mayo on 12 October (see Table 2.2). Another four were killed when their patrol was ambushed near Moneygold, county Sligo on 25 October. These two bloody skirmishes were portents. All across Ireland, IRA Volunteers were going on the run, to escape arrest, or sometimes to escape summary execution. These fugitives became full-time guerrillas, joining armed bands known as flying columns. Flying columns were much better at killing police than local units of part-time guerrillas, and as a result, police casualties went up steadily, season by season.

In the meantime, the police were crushing the life out of the IRA in Galway West. The Volunteers attacked the police just once, in the first week of November, causing no casualties.<sup>36</sup> However, guerrillas in the East Riding ambushed an RIC cycle patrol at Castledaly on 30 October, killing Constable Timothy Horan.<sup>37</sup> This may have kept the West Riding’s police on edge. Police patrols began to reconnoitre by fire, shooting ahead blindly when they came near woods and other likely spots for an ambush.

The results were predictable. On 1 November a patrol approached a dangerous bend in the road and opened fire as a precaution. Unknown to the police, Ellen Quinn was sitting on a nearby wall with a baby in her arms. The young mother was hit and killed by a ricochet. A few days later, a military court of inquiry considered the case, and returned a verdict of death by misadventure.<sup>38</sup> Irish people were understandably outraged: in its press release, Dublin Castle soft-pedalled the court’s findings, describing its verdict as “manslaughter by accidental shooting,” and tried to shift the blame onto the guerrillas. “The case was very sad & most regrettable,” they said, “but while [the] present state of affairs continues such cases are liable to occur. The police must take precautions to protect their lives & if [the] innocent accidentally suffer at times those who ambush & murder policemen are to blame.”<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, on the day after Ellen

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<sup>34</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, October 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>35</sup> RIC Reports, IG, October 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>36</sup> Outrage Reports, August-December 1920, PRO, CO 904/149.

<sup>37</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 139; “The Latest Outrage,” *Morning Post*, 1 November 1920, p. 7; “New Police Murder,” *Daily Telegraph*, 1 November 1920, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> “Irish Suspects Shot Dead,” *Morning Post*, 6 November 1920, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Statement on shooting of Ellen Quinn, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/168 (1); “An Irish Verdict,” *Daily News*, 16 November 1920, p. 3. For a more sensational version of Quinn’s death, see “Woman Killed in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 November 1920, p. 7.

Quinn's death, RIC headquarters issued new orders for "parties travelling by motor," forbidding indiscriminate firing.<sup>40</sup> A week later, General Tudor must have had the dead woman in mind when he wrote a memorandum on discipline. "There must be no wild firing," he said. "It is useless and dangerous to innocent people. Firearms should never be fired except with the intention of hitting the object aimed at."<sup>41</sup>

Lady Gregory was away when Ellen Quinn was killed, but she knew the dead woman's husband, Malachi Quinn. When she returned on 5 November, her friends and relatives told her the news. Her nephew, John Shawe-Taylor, was bitter.

John had been two nights at Malachi's house—says the little children said, 'Mama's asleep.' Malachi was in Gort when it happened—they sent for him—Marian had been there also, says 'you could take up the three little children in your arms together'—and there was another coming. There were eighty-nine cars at the funeral. 'Burning would be too good for the Black-and-Tans,' John says.

Someone else told her that, "Malachi cannot stand alone—has to be led 'linked.' They were so happy, they had just got in the harvest, just dug the potatoes and threshed the corn and were ready for winter." The next day, Lady Gregory wrote in her journal: "A letter from poor Malachi in answer to my own. 'My God, it is too cruel.'"<sup>42</sup>

Worse was to come. On the night of Sunday, 14 November, Father Michael Griffin left his residence at St Joseph's Church in Galway. His housekeeper heard him talking to someone at the door, and thought the priest was going to visit a sick parishioner. Father Griffin never came back that night. His disappearance was reported to the police the next day. On Friday, 19 November, an Irish Parliamentary Party MP, Joseph Devlin, raised the matter in Parliament. Griffin was known to hold strong republican views, and Devlin accused the security forces of kidnapping him.

The chief secretary replied hotly. "I do not believe for a moment that this priest has been kidnapped by any armed forces of the Crown," he said. "It is obviously such a stupid thing that no members of the forces of the Crown would do it."

"That is why they would do it," Devlin heckled.<sup>43</sup>

Devlin was too late. Father Griffin was dead. Like Michael Walsh, he had been shot through the head execution-style, and buried in a shallow grave in a bog near Barna. His body was found on the night of Saturday, 20 November. Griffin's housemate, Father O'Meehan, described the scene to the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent.

<sup>40</sup> Orders for Convoys and Parties Travelling by Motor: RIC Circular D. 436/1920, 2 November 1920, PRO, HO 184/126. The next day, General Macready sent a letter to Sir John Anderson, in which he wrote: "I have dropped a line to Tudor again asking him to try and put a check on the promiscuous firing in the air of lorry loads of R.I.C. It does not do any good, and is very subversive to discipline, and annoys the Army people extremely": Macready to Anderson, 3 November 1920, Anderson Papers. PRO, CO 904/188.

<sup>41</sup> Discipline: RIC Circular D. 446/1920, dated 9 November 1920, circulated 12 November 1920, PRO, HO 184/126.

<sup>42</sup> *Lady Gregory's Journals*, I, pp. 197-98.

<sup>43</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1921, p. 13.

By the light of a lantern and with the assistance of spades and shovels we scraped the earth carefully away. We put the horse and car in a house near by so as not to attract attention. Presently one of the men who was down in the mud searching carefully with his hands said: 'I have found a priest's collar.' I put my hand down and laid it on the collar and neck. The body was clad just as when he left the house on Sunday night, but we could not find his hat.<sup>44</sup>

Officially, Father Griffin's murder was never solved, and soon the case was overshadowed by events in Dublin.<sup>45</sup> (The day after Griffin's body was found was Sunday, 21 November—Bloody Sunday) However, Brigadier-General Crozier visited Galway on Monday, to discipline D Company's commander for drinking, and inquired into the case. Months later, after he resigned, Crozier told the press that Auxiliaries had murdered Father Griffin.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the scandals caused by these killings, RIC headquarters was well satisfied with conditions in Galway West. In his report for November, DIG Walsh was sanguine about the riding's future. "Much of the moral and material support lent to Sinn Fein is due to fear," he wrote, "and with the growth of the realisation that the Government is beginning to get a grip of the situation there are indications of a return to sanity and revulsion against Sinn Fein on the part of the more responsible persons. In Galway Sinn Fein has largely lost its power, matters are well in hand, and the murder gang is on the run."<sup>47</sup>

The government was confident as well. On 27 November it was reported that the Galway County Council had voted "to sever its connexion with Dail Eireann and to revert to its allegiance to the legally constituted authorities of the realm."<sup>48</sup> Soon afterward, members of the council passed a resolution appealing to both sides to negotiate a truce, "so that an end may be brought to the unfortunate strife by a peace honourable to both countries." The cabinet was pleased. "It was pointed out that the first paragraph of the Galway County Council's resolution was the first occasion on which a Sinn Fein county council had condemned the Sinn Fein policy of murder and outrage."<sup>49</sup> Ireland's elected representatives were showing a "gleam of sanity" at last. The prime minister's answer to

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<sup>44</sup> "Kidnapped Priest," *Manchester Guardian*, 22 November 1920, p. 7. The RIC dug up the site on Monday and found Griffin's hat: "The Murdered Priest," *Manchester Guardian*, 23 November 1920, p. 9. The murder was front-page news in both the United States and Canada: "Find Priest's Body in a Galway Bog," *New York Times*, 21 Nov 1920, p. 1; "Missing Priest Shot to Death," *Globe and Mail*, 22 November 1920, p. 1. The report in the *The Times* was brief and inaccurate: "Kidnapped Priest found Dead," *The Times*, 22 November 1920, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> In his monthly report, the county inspector wrote: "The murder [of Father Griffin] is yet a mystery. At first the Crown Forces were suspected by a large majority of the people, but now opinion is that he was slain by Sinn Feiners, or by some friends of Mr Joyce, NT": RIC Reports, CI Galway West, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113. In his own report, the deputy inspector general was intriguingly vague on the subject. Walsh wrote only that: "It is strongly suspected that his murder was the sequel to the kidnapping and presumed murder of Mr Joyce, NT": RIC Reports, IG, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>46</sup> "Dublin Castle Terrorists," *Daily News*, 24 May 1921, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> RIC Reports, IG, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>48</sup> *The Times*, 27 November 1920, p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> Cabinet Conclusions, 6 December 1920, PRO, CAB 23/23, ff. 165-66.

the resolution was uncompromising. “The first necessary preliminary to the re-establishment of normal conditions,” he said, “is that murder and crimes of violence shall cease. It is to that end that the efforts of the Irish Executive have been constantly directed, and until it has been attained no progress can be made toward a political settlement.” “I would add,” he concluded, “that the Government has learnt with satisfaction of the action of your Council in submitting their accounts to audit by the Local Government Board and that the fullest support can be assured to every local authority which loyally carries out its obligations under the law.”<sup>50</sup>

There would be no truce. Lloyd George announced his reply to the Galway County Council in a speech to the House of Commons on 10 December. Martial law was proclaimed in four counties of Munster that same day.<sup>51</sup> The Government of Ireland Act was assented thirteen days later, on 23 December 1920. At a cabinet meeting on 29 December, British generals predicted victory by the spring. The police adviser (now known as the chief of police) agreed. “General Tudor said he thought that, in his area, in four months’ time the terror would be broken if there was no truce. The great hope of the extremists was a change of policy.”<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, back in Galway West, people were horrified by the deaths of two young men from Shanaglish. Patrick Loughnane was president of the local Sinn Féin club, and his brother Harry was its secretary. Auxiliaries arrested the two brothers on Friday 3 December. On Sunday, Lady Gregory wrote: “The Mason here says the Black-and-Tans have come back to Shanaglish, after two days, looking for the Loughnanes, said they had escaped, and everyone believes they were done away with.” Later that night, their burned bodies were found in a pond near Coole Park. Lady Gregory recorded the rumours that flew round. “The flesh was as if torn from their bones,” said some; “the bodies looked as if they had been dragged after the lorries,” said others.

M. says, ‘It is said when they were taken they gave impudence to the Black-and-Tans. It will never be known what way they died. There is no one dare ask a question. But the work they are doing will never be forgotten in Ireland.’<sup>53</sup>

When the year ended without further incident in the West Riding, the RIC’s deputy inspector general thought the war there was almost over. “The firm manner in which the Crown Forces are performing their duties has subdued the disloyal spirit of the people,” he wrote.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cabinet Conclusions, 8 December 1920, PRO, CAB 23/23, ff. 206-7.

<sup>51</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 135, cols. 2601-11: the four counties were Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and Tipperary; on 30 December the cabinet extended martial law to Clare, Kilkenny, Waterford, and Wexford

<sup>52</sup> Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 29 December 1920, PRO, CAB 23/23, ff. 345-46.

<sup>53</sup> *Lady Gregory’s Journals*, I, pp. 209-10; “Brothers Found Dead,” *Manchester Guardian*, 8 December 1920, p. 11; *The Times*, 8 December 1920, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> RIC Reports, IG, December 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

### C. The Wearing-Out Fight: Winter 1921

In fact, the IRA's disloyal spirit was far from subdued. The guerrillas finally resurfaced on 13 January, when they shot at a police patrol in Tuam.<sup>55</sup> Then on 18 January they attacked a party of Auxiliaries. Eleven cadets in a Crossley tender were on patrol from Galway to Headford that morning. About thirty guerrillas were hiding behind stone fences and trees at Kilroe Wood, about four miles from Headford. When the Auxiliaries drove into the trap, the rebels threw a bomb and opened fire from both sides of the road. The fight lasted only a few minutes. Three cadets were badly wounded, one in the leg by a bullet, the other two in the head and back by shotgun pellets. Another three suffered slight wounds. The Auxiliaries fired back, and the rebels fled. After the battle, the Auxiliaries were forced to wait for a commercial truck to carry their wounded back to Galway. The rebels had shot a hole in the Crossley tender's gas tank.<sup>56</sup>

A large force of police and Auxiliaries left Galway to search for the ambushers. At Kilkeel, the new Auxiliary company commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Guard, arrested and questioned a young man named Thomas Collins. "Having got very unsatisfactory answers from him," said Guard, "I handed him over to Sergeant Keeney RIC & instructed him to take this man down to the cars which were about 200 yards away."

Shortly afterwards I heard cries of Halt! & one shot immediately followed by a volley. Sgt Keeney came back & reported to me that the prisoner had attempted to escape, failed to halt when challenged and had been shot dead. I walked over to the body, satisfied myself that the man was dead & ordered that the body should be put in a tender & conveyed back to Renmore Barracks.

At Renmore barracks, an RAMC officer examined the young man and found ten bullet wounds on his body, including one through the head.<sup>57</sup>

The police kept searching and making arrests. By the end of the day, eight houses and stack-yards had been burned.<sup>58</sup> A few days later, the police killed Michael Howard and John Kirwan near Tuam. The West Riding's county inspector glossed over these

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<sup>55</sup> "Shooting in Dublin," *The Times*, 14 January 1921, p. 12.

<sup>56</sup> DI Galway, 18 January 1921, PRO, CO 904/168 (2); Weekly review of Irish conditions, 28 January 1921, PRO, CO 904/168 (2); "Six Police Wounded in Ambush," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 January 1921, p. 7; Constabulary Medal Citation, 25 May 1921, PRO, HO 351/73. The commander of the Auxiliary detachment, Section Leader Lieutenant T. Simmonds DSO MC DCM, was awarded the Constabulary Medal for bravery during this ambush. "Although suffering from very painful wounds in the back he organised his defence splendidly, drove off the attackers and then withdrew with all the wounded clear of the wood to a place of vantage, where a defence position was taken up until the arrival of reinforcements." Note that Lieutenant Simmonds had previously been awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross, which were awarded only to officers, along with the Distinguished Conduct Medal, which was awarded only to other ranks. See Chapter Four for a discussion of Auxiliaries who had been promoted from the ranks during the Great War.

<sup>57</sup> MCI (Thomas Collins), 20 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/147A.

<sup>58</sup> "Reprisals for Ambush of Police," *Manchester Guardian*, 20 January 1921, p. 7.

incidents in his monthly report. The police were fired on during their search, he said, "and as a result some houses were set on fire."

One house seems to have been a Rebel arsenal, as many thousands of rounds of ammunition were heard exploding in the flames. This will be a serious loss to local Rebel activity. As a result of information received the police subsequently searched a large area of country, and arrested 3 men on suspicion of being concerned in a previous ambush. 3 other IRA men were shot dead when attempting to escape from custody. This resolute action on the part of the Crown Forces is having an excellent effect on the peace of the locality.

The county inspector's report made it clear that the Irish Republic was losing ground on the legal front as well. "The Petty Sessions Courts are now beginning to again function," he said. "At Galway Quarter Sessions on 25th inst there was an exceptionally large attendance of jurors."<sup>59</sup>

The reprisals continued throughout the next month. On 5 February a farmhouse near Claregalway was burned, along with haystacks at three other farms. Crown forces set fire to Thomas Duggan's farmhouse and buildings near Castlegar on 12 February. On 13 February Bridget Quinn's house at Kinvarra was burned, and seven local men were stripped and beaten. Republicans who won municipal elections became targets for death squads. On 20 February two men in uniform took District Councillor John Geoghegan from his home at Moycullen and killed him. On 26 February bombs were thrown into the houses of two Dunmore county councillors, Michael Finnigan and C J Kennedy.<sup>60</sup> The insurgent response was weak. On 4 February they held up a train between Galway and Tuam, searching the mail car. They shot at the police in Salthill on 12 February.<sup>61</sup> That was all. The ammunition that cooked off in the burning house near Kilroe Wood may have been a serious loss indeed.

The county inspector mentioned almost none of this violence—only the killing of "a man named Geoghegan near Moycullen." "This man was a leading IRA officer," he said. "A Military Court of Inquiry has been held in this connection." Otherwise, order was well on its way to being restored. "Sinn Fein Courts have ceased to exist and the ordinary Petty Sessions are now operating freely."<sup>62</sup>

The mails were raided near Gort on 3 March. An auctioneer was shot and wounded at Gossford on 10 March.<sup>63</sup> Roads were blocked with fallen trees and cut with

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<sup>59</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, January 1921, PRO, CO 904/114.

<sup>60</sup> "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 12 February 1921, p. 10; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 February 1921, p. 11; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 26 February 1921, p. 11; "Farmers Murdered," *The Times*, 21 February 1921, p. 12; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 5 March 1921, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 5 February 1921, p. 10; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 February 1921, p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, February 1921, PRO, CO 904/114.

<sup>63</sup> "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 5 March 1921, p. 6; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 12 March 1921, p. 6.



trenches.<sup>64</sup> But the guerrillas refused battle in the West Riding's eastern districts. The Crown forces continued to kill and burn. On 2 March Thomas Mullen of Killavoher was arrested, taken away in a police lorry, and later shot dead by the roadside. The official story was that Mullen had tried to escape, but reporters were sceptical. Houses were set on fire near Dunmore the next day. On 24 March another prisoner was killed while 'attempting to escape.' Louis D'Arcy of Clydagh was shot dead while the police were escorting him from Oranmore to Galway.<sup>65</sup> In his monthly report, County Inspector Sidley noted with satisfaction that D'Arcy had been a captain of the IRA.<sup>66</sup> (D'Arcy had in fact been the commandant of the Galway Brigade's 3rd (Headford) Battalion.)

While the Crown forces tightened their grip on the riding's eastern half, there were two ominous developments elsewhere. On 22 February, the dead bodies of three British soldiers were found at Woodford, in the East Riding. All three men had been executed—shot in the head. A note by their bodies read: "Spies. Tried by court-martial and found guilty. All others beware."<sup>67</sup> A few weeks later, on 14 March, a Connemara man, Thomas Whelan of Clifden, was hanged in Dublin's Mountjoy gaol. Connemara had been quiet so far, but soon after the hanging, the IRA's newly formed West Connemara flying column struck for the first time, in Whelan's birthplace. On the evening of 16 March, six guerrillas ambushed four police constables on patrol in Clifden. Constable Charles Reynolds was killed, and Constable Thomas Sweeney was mortally wounded.

The remaining two constables escaped unhurt to the barracks. When reinforcements arrived, the police took revenge on the town, shooting in the streets and setting fires. Nine buildings were burned, including a hotel, a restaurant, and three shops. An ex-soldier named John J Macdonell, son of the hotel owner, was shot dead while 'attempting to evade arrest.' An ex-policeman named Peter Clancy was in his brother's butcher shop when it was set on fire. The police put Clancy up against a wall, forced him to his knees, and shot him. Police reinforcements arrived early the next morning, and both Clancy and Constable Sweeney were both taken to hospital in Galway. Sweeney had his leg amputated, and died on 16 March. Clancy survived, and told the press about the riot.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Commander in Chief's Weekly Situation Report [henceforward GOC-in-C's WSR] for week ending 14 March 1921, PRO, CAB 24/121, CP 2757, f. 323.

<sup>65</sup> "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 5 March 1921, p. 6; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 26 March 1921, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, March 1921, PRO, CO 904/114.

<sup>67</sup> "3 Soldiers Murdered in Galway," *Manchester Guardian*, 23 February 1921, p. 7; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 26 February 1921, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> "St Patrick's Day Prayers," *The Times*, 18 March 1921, p. 14; "Houses Burned at Clifden," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 March 1921, p. 9; "16 Houses Burned in Galway Reprisals," *Manchester Guardian*, 20 March 1921, p. 7; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 209; Peter J McDonnell, "Action by West Connemara Column at Mounterown," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, p. 204.

## D. The Decisive Blow: Spring 1921

The fighting worsened in April, as the IRA went back on the offensive in Galway West. On 6 April the West Connemara flying column ambushed another police patrol at Screebe, near Rosmuck. The guerrillas wounded a constable and captured a rifle, two revolvers, and ammunition. The wounded man, Constable William Pearson, later died. The security forces retaliated: that same day, five houses in the Screebe district were burned, along with a cooperative store.<sup>69</sup> The guerrillas in the riding's eastern districts reappeared in mid-month, shooting and wounding two constables near Milltown.

Around this time, a new man, Douglas Duff, arrived at Eglinton Street barracks in Galway town. Duff had enlisted in the RIC on 2 April, and was pressed into service after only three day's training. After a couple of weeks of "hole-and-corner fighting in the Dublin area, where a man never saw his attackers," he was "delighted" to go to Galway. "Life was much freer than it had been at Gormanstown," he wrote later, in his memoirs: "there was little of the military discipline so necessary in a large camp. As long as a man did his fair share of work no one interfered with him."<sup>70</sup> Soon after his arrival, Duff took part in a reprisal—the burning of a house. The police drove to their destination in the dead of a rainy night. Duff stood guard at the gate while the rest of his party walked up to the house, carrying cans of gasoline and bundles of cotton waste. Not long after, "there was a sudden, savage gout of flame among the trees, a couple of shots, some shouting and then the sound of my comrades returning down the drive, whilst the flames mounted ever higher behind them."<sup>71</sup>

On 23 April, the West Connemara flying column struck again, when they ambushed an RIC cycle patrol near Maam Cross. The police were pinned down by the rebel gunfire. Two Crossley tenders of reinforcements (including Douglas Duff) rushed to the scene. Soon these men were pinned down as well. The battle went on for eleven hours, even after Auxiliaries and armoured cars arrived from Galway. According to Duff, the police were not in any hurry to rush the rebel position. "Remember," he says, "we were mercenary soldiers fighting for our pay, not patriots willing and anxious to die for our country; most of us had been that already in a far more important 'scrap,' and had seen exactly how much that sort of thing was worth or even appreciated by the people at home."<sup>72</sup> Eventually, the guerrillas withdrew. Constable John Boylan had been killed and a sergeant and a constable had been wounded. Two nearby houses were burned afterwards.<sup>73</sup> A week later, on 30 April, the police were attacked again, between Tuam and Dunmore.

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<sup>69</sup> McDonell, "West Connemara Flying Column," p. 204; "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 9 April 1921, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Douglas Duff, *Sword for Hire: The Saga of a Modern Free Companion* (London: John Murray, 1934), pp. 67, 69. Duff devotes only two chapters of this book to his brief career as a Black and Tan: the remainder describes his much longer service in the Palestine Gendarmerie.

<sup>71</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>72</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>73</sup> "Eleven Hours' Fight in County Galway," *Manchester Guardian*, 25 April 1921, p. 7; McDonell, "West Connemara Flying Column," pp. 204-9; Duff, *Sword for Hire*, pp. 72-75.

Meanwhile, both sides were now attacking civilians. On 2 April the guerrillas used shotguns to kill an ex-soldier and ex-constable named Thomas Morris at Kinvarra. Morris was a 'convicted spy.' On 6 April a death squad took Patrick Cloonan out of his sister's house at Maree and killed him by the seashore.<sup>74</sup> In his monthly report, the county inspector wrote that, "Cloonan was at one time an advanced Sinn Feiner, but latterly it was reported that he as endeavouring to cut away from the movement and go to America. It is believed that some of the Sinn Feiners thought he was about to give them away before he left and therefore, murdered him."<sup>75</sup> This was likely a lie. A month later, the army inquired into Cloonan's death. They were told that Cloonan had taken part in the attack on Oranmore RIC barracks in 1916. He was second in command of the Maree Volunteers, and a well-known republican policeman. "It is alleged," furthermore, "that deceased was one of the party who ambushed Consts Browne and Ewings at Middlethird Oranmore on 13:5:20. All his people are rank Sinn Feiners and took a very active part in every movement originated to foster Sinn Fein." The local constabulary had a long memory. The army concluded that, "this man probably was not killed by SF."<sup>76</sup> In the meantime, on 27 April, the guerrillas killed another 'convicted spy,' Thomas Hannon of Clonbern, for being friendly with the police.<sup>77</sup>

This outburst of violence was reflected in the cautious tone of the county inspector's monthly report. "There is still a strong tendency towards the Sinn Fein movement," he admitted, "and this is largely due to the reign of terror exercised by the 'murder gang'." Indeed. He went on to say that:

The majority of the people are afraid to be seen associating with the Crown Forces, and they are also afraid to give the Forces of the Crown any information which might lead to the extermination of this band of outlaws. Swift vengeance on the part of the IRA follows those who are even suspected of giving the police any information, and so long as this reign of terror continues the country will be in a disturbed and unsatisfactory condition.

Nonetheless, the war against the republican counter-state was still going well. "There was no Sinn Fein Arbitration Court held in the Riding during the month. The Petty Sessions Courts in almost every place are now functioning as usual. The Quarter Sessions opened in Galway on 12th April, and there were only two absent jurors."<sup>78</sup>

Fighting intensified across Ireland in the spring of 1920. In Galway West, the killing peaked in mid-May. A death squad struck again in Galway town. James Folan

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<sup>74</sup> "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 9 April 1921, p. 6; RIC Reports, IG, April 1921, PRO, CO 904/115; RIC Reports, CI Galway West, April 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

<sup>75</sup> RIC Reports, Galway West, April 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

<sup>76</sup> MCI (Patrick Cloonan), 8 April 1920. PRO, WO 35/146A; DAG GHQ Ireland to HQ Galway Brigade, 2 May 1921, PRO, WO 35/146A; DI Galway to CI Galway, 10 May 1921, PRO, WO 35/146A; Minute by RO, 22 May 1921, PRO, WO 35/146A.

<sup>77</sup> "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 30 April 1921, p. 6; RIC Reports, IG, April 1921, PRO, CO 904/115; RIC Reports, CI Galway West, April 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

<sup>78</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, April 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

had been imprisoned for six months for holding a seditious document. He was released on 11 May. That night, armed and masked men came to his house and demanded to see him. When they found he wasn't home, they shot his brothers instead, killing Christopher and wounding Joseph. A short time later, the gang went to another house and demanded to see Hubert Tully. When Tully came to the door, they shot him dead.<sup>79</sup> A few days later, on 14 May, the guerrillas attacked a police patrol at Spiddal. That same day, five houses were burned and two others raided and damaged in the Spiddal area.<sup>80</sup> Then, that night in Galway, two more men were attacked. A medical student named John Green and an insurance inspector named James Egan were taken from their hotel room, beaten, and shot. This time, however, both men survived, and reported the attack to the police. As a result, two Black and Tans (Constable James Murphy and Constable Richard Orford) were arrested the next morning. Both were ultimately tried, convicted, and imprisoned for this crime—a rare event.<sup>81</sup>

Like the murder of Father Griffin, the attempted murder of Egan and Green was overshadowed by what happened the next day. On the afternoon of 15 May District Inspector Cecil Blake drove to Ballyturin House near Gort with his wife Lily. They were accompanied by a pair of army officers, Captain Cornwallis and Lieutenant McCreery of the 17th Lancers, and by Margaret Gregory, Lady Gregory's daughter-in-law. Later, Margaret remembered that, "I noticed that from Gort to Mr Bagot's house the peculiar fact because it was Sunday we passed nobody on the road when there are a good many people." They spent the afternoon visiting the Bagot family and playing tennis, and left in the early evening. They stopped their car by the gate, and Captain Cornwallis got out to open it. Suddenly, someone shouted 'hands up,' shots were fired, and the car's windshield was broken by bullets.

"It's an ambush," said Mrs. Blake, very calmly.

Cornwallis tried to take cover by the gate. The remaining four tried to hide behind the car. It was too late. They were surrounded. There was an intense fusillade. Cornwallis, the Blakes, and McCreery were shot to death. Only Margaret Gregory escaped, unharmed.<sup>82</sup>

The Bagots ran down to the gate when they heard the shooting. John Bagot was held back at gunpoint while the guerrillas came out and searched the bodies of his guests. His daughter May drove off to Gort to warn the police. Her father watched as the rebels ran and cycled away. Someone handed him a note that read: "Volunteer HQ. Sir, if there is any reprisals after this ambush, your house will be set on fire as a return. By Order IRA."<sup>83</sup> May Bagot returned, bringing the police and a doctor, but the guerrillas were

<sup>79</sup> "Men Murdered by Night in Galway," *Manchester Guardian*, 12 May 1920, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> "A Week of Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 21 May 1921, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> Attempted murder and assault on John P Green, Gerald Hanley, and James Egan, PRO, CO 904/44; "Galway Reprisals," *Manchester Guardian*, 20 May 1921, p. 9. For a sensational version of this "Galway horror," see Desmond, *Drama of Sinn Féin*, pp. 362-64. "These things rarely got out to the world," says Desmond, wrongly.

<sup>82</sup> Statement of 1st witness (Mrs Lily Margaret Gregory), MCI (District Inspector Blake), PRO, HO 351/77; Ormonde Winter, *Winter's Tale* (London: Richards Press, 1955), pp. 312-15.

<sup>83</sup> Statement of 4th witness (John Christopher Bagot J. P. Esq.), MCI (District Inspector Blake), PRO, HO 351/77.

waiting in ambush once again. “We went straight to Captain Cornwallis,” said May Bagot, ‘who was lying on the further side of the gate between the wall and the road.’”

I then went to see the other 3, but they were all dead. I turned round to the car after getting inside the gate and waited for 2 or 3 minutes. Then a shot was fired and my Father who was present shouted at me ‘Take cover’. I ran to the wall and lay down underneath it. There was a good deal of firing and then Constable Kearney who was on the other side of the wall and close to me was hit.<sup>84</sup>

Police from Galway came to reinforce the local constabulary. Douglas Duff was among them, and he was appalled when he saw the dead at Ballyturin House. “I cannot think, without shuddering,” he wrote, “even now when I have seen dozens of more shocking sights, of the scene as we recovered the bodies. Shot to pieces, some of them at close range with a sporting-gun, than which no weapon delivers a more ghastly wound, the corpses lay all around.”<sup>85</sup> Lady Gregory was in England, and heard the news of her daughter-in-law’s brush with death from George Bernard Shaw.

He said, ‘There is bad news in the papers, but Margaret is not hurt,’ and told me of the shooting of Captain Blake and his wife and the two officers, and then I saw a telegram for me from Margaret, ‘sole survivor of five murdered in ambushed motor.’ It was a bad shock, the thought of the possibilities . . . and then though she is safe, thank God, it is impossible to know how it will affect her outlook and the life of the children and, through them, of mine. I was quite broken up—went into the air for a while...<sup>86</sup>

Constable John Kearney died of his wounds on 21 May, raising the body count at Ballyturin House to five.<sup>87</sup> In the meantime, the police had ignored the IRA’s warning to John Bagot. On 16 May nine houses were destroyed or damaged in the vicinity of Ballyturin. A curfew was imposed, and all businesses were ordered to close.<sup>88</sup> On 23 May two houses and some barns were burned at Corofin and Castlehacket; according to the *Guardian*’s report, “six orphans were turned out of one house before it was fired.”

County Inspector Sidley’s confidence was shaken by the bloodletting in May. In his report, he admitted that the riding was in “a disturbed and restless state,” and

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<sup>84</sup> Statement of 3rd witness (Miss May Bagot), MCI (District Inspector Blake), PRO, HO 351/77. For more on the Ballyturin House ambush, see the remaining documents in PRO, HO 351/77, and “Four People Murdered in Ireland after a Tennis Party,” *Manchester Guardian*, 17 May 1921, p. 5; “Ambushers Waited for Five Hours,” *Manchester Guardian*, 18 May 1921, p. 9. For a possible motive behind the ambush, see Vere R T Gregory, *The House of Gregory* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan), pp. 93-95.

<sup>85</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, pp. 75-76. The medical examiner found six wounds on the corpse of District Inspector Blake, and nine wounds on the corpse of his wife: Statement of 5th witness (Dr. James Sandys), MCI (District Inspector Blake), PRO, HO 351/77.

<sup>86</sup> *Lady Gregory’s Journals*, I, p. 256.

<sup>87</sup> “A Week of Ireland,” *Manchester Guardian*, 28 May 1921, p. 11; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 242.

<sup>88</sup> “Galway Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 20 May 1921, p. 9.

mentioned “a spirit of restlessness which gives cause for anxiety.” Reinforcements were needed:

The force available is almost sufficient, but I would be glad of some more men to strengthen out stations. A strong Barrack and transport is needed at Kinvarra, but I have not enough men to form a Barrack. The supply of ‘Lancia’ armoured cars is quite inadequate, and at least 4 more are needed.

Still, he tried to sound cheerful. “The morale of all ranks is excellent,” he wrote, “and search for and pursuit of rebels is energetically kept up. The later [*sic*] dare not come into the open and appear to have a wholesome respect for the Galway Police.” He also continued to blame the IRA for civilian casualties. Christopher and Joseph Folan were shot, he said, because the Sinn Fein party was afraid that James might inform on them. He also said that Tully “was on good terms with the police and was probably suspected of giving information.”<sup>89</sup>

### **E. The Truce: Summer 1921**

The Ballyturin House ambush was the bloody climax of the war in the West Riding. The fighting continued, but on a smaller scale. The guerrillas kept on blocking the roads, and the Crown forces kept on clearing them. A servant of Lady Gregory rode in to Gort for the post on 7 June and was press-ganged by soldiers and Auxiliaries. “They said I was to come with them to do some work and I said I had all Lady Gregory’s letters in my pocket, but that didn’t save me,” he said later. “They took every one they met, about forty in all, bringing them out of the shops or from the streets.”

They put us in the lorries and brought us past Lough Cutra, and there were two sheep killed on the road, the lorries running over them. We came to where there were three or four big trees cut and thrown across the road and trenches dug in it, and we weren’t long moving the trees, but the trenches were very long and we had to go into the bog filling them up. But they didn’t mind if it was a stone of no size you would bring back with you, they were good-humoured enough. They kept us at it till dark and we got nothing to eat.<sup>90</sup>

In Douglas Duff’s opinion, “June, 1921, was one of the worst months of the whole campaign.” Around the same time that Lady Gregory’s man was working on a road gang, Duff was out on patrol, “searching certain cottages near Oughterard for arms

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<sup>89</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, May 1921, PRO, CO 904/115. Once again, the Deputy Inspector General did not repeat his County Inspector’s accusations. Walsh mentioned the shootings in his report, but his only comment was: “These outrages took place in Galway town”: RIC Reports, IG, May 1921, PRO, CO 904/115. The three were almost certainly shot by a police death squad, though Tully may have been killed by mistake.

<sup>90</sup> *Lady Gregory’s Journals*, I, pp. 268-69.

and suspects.” In one cottage, Duff’s patrol found a girl in bed. “That was an old dodge,” he wrote later, “putting the daughter of the house to bed after concealing whatever weapons they possessed under the mattress.” Duff told the girl’s mother to make her get up. The girl’s mother protested: her daughter was ill, she said. The Black and Tans were not impressed. They were in a bitter mood: an IRA flying column had killed seven police at Carrowkennedy, County Mayo just a few days before. “I told her that if she did not move the girl, I would search the bed whilst she lay in it, and that would be pleasant for none of us,” Duff said.

The mother shouted at the Black and Tans in Irish, ran outside, and came back waving an axe. Duff was confounded. Disarm her? No—too dangerous. Shoot her? “That was unthinkable,” he said. So the Black and Tans fled. “Rifles in our hands, revolvers and bayonets swinging at our belts, we ran like stags before the old woman who had gone baresark.” They jumped into their Crossley tender and drove away laughing. “Our last glimpse of her was a vision of fury, brandishing her weapon and screaming curses in Erse.”<sup>91</sup>

Not many such encounters ended in laughter. On 27 June a police patrol from Milltown was ambushed on the road to Tuam. Sergeant James Murren and a Black and Tan, Constable Edgar Day, were both killed. Murren had been due to retire on pension the week before: for some reason, his papers had been delayed. The rebels destroyed Glenamaddy workhouse on the same day. In his monthly report, County Inspector Sidley was pessimistic once again. “There is little prospect of a change for the better,” he wrote, “until drastic measures are taken to put down Sinn Fein with a strong hand. The great majority of the people would be glad to see this done, but their moral cowardice—coupled with the reign of terror—is so great, that they are afraid to give the least assistance.” In the meantime, more men were needed. “The morale of all ranks is excellent and while the force available is almost sufficient, I would be glad of a number of recruits to meet wastage, and strengthen stations.” The one bright spot was the purely military nature of the conflict. “No Sinn Fein Courts were held and the ordinary law is now operating as usual.”<sup>92</sup>

By the end of June, however, the political situation was changing rapidly. The Government of Ireland Act had created two Home Rule parliaments. A general election for the Southern parliament was held on 13 May 1921. It was a republican triumph and a disaster for the government. Sinn Fein won 124 of the new parliament’s 128 seats unopposed. Liam Mellows, the man who led the rebel attack on Oranmore RIC barracks in 1916, became one of Galway’s members of parliament.<sup>93</sup> Mellows and his comrades declared themselves the second Dáil Eireann, and showed every sign of refusing to take their seats in the Southern House of Commons. If that happened, then under the terms of the act, the Southern parliament would be dissolved and the twenty-six counties would be governed as a Crown colony. In the meantime, the IRA killed fifteen police that weekend, on Saturday (14 May) and Whit Sunday (15 May).<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>92</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway West, June 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

<sup>93</sup> Greaves, *Liam Mellows*, p. 245.

<sup>94</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 237-42.

Thus, by Whitsuntide 1921 the government's policy—"the repression of crime and the determination to carry through the Government of Ireland Bill"—had failed utterly. Once again, the government "had either to give way or to go very much further in repression." At first, it prepared for war: at a meeting on 2 June, the cabinet decided to declare martial law throughout Southern Ireland if its parliament had not assembled by 12 July.<sup>95</sup> The Army of Ireland was reinforced, and in a grim speech to the House of Lords on 21 June, the lord chancellor, Birkenhead, at last admitted that the United Kingdom was at war in Ireland—a war that the government was determined to win. Negotiations would be pointless. The Irish revolutionaries would accept "nothing less than that which they have repeatedly and publicly avowed that they require—namely, open independence and a Republic of Ireland." This the British never would concede. "I profoundly hope," he concluded, "that even at this eleventh hour wiser councils will prevail, but should we be forced to the melancholy conclusion that by force and by force alone can these mischiefs be extirpated, it is a conclusion which, however sorrowfully, we shall accept, and upon which we shall not hesitate logically and completely to act."<sup>96</sup>

Twenty-four hours later, though, the two-headed ass was pulling in the opposite direction. A second election had been held in Northern Ireland on 24 May, and had resulted in a strong Unionist majority. On 22 June, King George V was in Belfast for the opening session of the Northern parliament. The speech he gave was nothing like Birkenhead's.<sup>97</sup> In his address, the king called on "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 that they love a new era of peace, contentment, and good will."<sup>98</sup> The First Irish War was not popular in Britain, and the king's appeal was welcomed by British public opinion. It was also well received in the Irish nationalist press, and this, along with some indications that republican leader Eamon de Valera might finally be willing to compromise, appears to have persuaded Lloyd George to try for a negotiated settlement.

At a meeting on 24 June, the cabinet agreed to propose talks with the leaders of Sinn Féin. Agreement was made easier by changes in the cabinet itself. Walter Long had retired in February 1921, and Bonar Law had retired in March. Austen Chamberlain was the new leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party. Austen had not inherited his father Joseph Chamberlain's passion for the Union, and he agreed that: "the King's speech ought to be followed up by a last attempt at peace before we go to full martial law."<sup>99</sup> If nothing else, an offer to negotiate would strengthen the government's moral

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<sup>95</sup> Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 181-90; Boyce, *English Men and Irish Troubles*, pp. 133-36.

<sup>96</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 44, cols. 690, 695-96.

<sup>97</sup> The king, his private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, and the South African prime minister, Field Marshal J C Smuts, had persuaded Lloyd George to let His Majesty make a conciliatory speech. The king's address was discussed by the Irish Situation Committee on 16 June, and was written by one of the prime minister's private secretaries, Sir Edward Grigg, using material from rough drafts by Smuts and Arthur Balfour: Boyce, *English Men and Irish Troubles*, p. 137; Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, III, pp. 77-78, 247-48.

<sup>98</sup> Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, III, p. 79.

<sup>99</sup> Austen Chamberlain to Hilda, 26 June 1921, quoted in Boyce, "Lloyd George and Ireland," p. 156.



position, if the revolutionaries refused.<sup>100</sup> In the end, the government's offer was not refused—though De Valera would not negotiate unless a truce was called first. As a result, a truce was arranged in Dublin on 8 July 1921, and came into force three days later, at noon. The First Irish War was over.

Five months later, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 6 December 1921 conceded Dominion Home Rule to the twenty-six counties of Southern Ireland—the very concession that the government had strenuously rejected in the summer of 1920. But the government did succeed in imposing its three fundamental conditions on the peace treaty—the autonomy of Ulster, the authority of the Crown, and the defence of the realm. Both sides accepted this obvious compromise only after a year and a half of bloody guerrilla fighting, in which about fourteen hundred people were killed.<sup>101</sup> Between January 1920 and July 1921, the Crown forces suffered 1,545 casualties, while the IRA suffered 548.<sup>102</sup> 523 police, soldiers, guerrillas, and civilians were killed and 513 wounded in county Cork alone.<sup>103</sup> Though the war in county Galway was much less intense than the war in Cork, at least thirty-six people were killed in the West Riding, including two women, Ellen Quinn and Lily Blake.<sup>104</sup> The county's two police forces lost thirteen men, including three Black and Tans.<sup>105</sup> Constable Edgar Day was a 23 year-old labourer and ex-soldier from Nottingham: he was killed in the ambush near Milltown on 27 June 1921. Constable William Pearson was a thirty year-old ex-soldier from New Zealand: he was fatally wounded in the ambush at Screebe in Connemara, on 6 April 1921. The first Black and Tan to die was Constable Edward Krumm, whose identity and brief police career will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>100</sup> Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 191; Boyce, *English Men and Irish Troubles*, pp. 138-40; Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, III, pp. 79-81.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), p. 201.

<sup>102</sup> Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 180.

<sup>103</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, p. 87.

<sup>104</sup> At least one death is not mentioned in the narrative. On 24 November 1920, in Galway town, Michael Moran was killed by an Auxiliary detachment led by the future company commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Guard. The colonel and his men told the subsequent court of inquiry that they shot and wounded Moran when he tried to escape: they called an ambulance to take the wounded man to hospital, but he died on the way. However, the medical examiner testified that Moran died about three hours after he was wounded. The court made a point of accepting the medical examiner's testimony: MCI (Michael Moran), PRO, WO 35/155A.

Several months later, General Macready mentioned in his weekly report that a guerrilla had been shot dead on 26 May 1921, in Galway, "when attempting to escape from custody," but no further information is available on this incident: GOC-in-C's WSR for week ending 28 May 1921, PRO, CAB 24/125, CP 3003, f. 12. Macready may have been misinformed. The week before, he reported that police had been ambushed on 19 May 1921 at Kilmeena, County Galway, but this ambush took place in County Mayo: GOC-in-C's WSR for week ending 21 May 1921, PRO, CAB 24/123, CP 2974, f. 460.

<sup>105</sup> Note that two dead are not listed on Table 2.1, because they were killed in July 1921, which is counted as a summer month.

Table 2.1. *IRA attacks on police and police killed, summer 1920 to spring 1921.*

| Province/<br>County | Summer 1920<br>Attacks Killed |           | Autumn 1920<br>Attacks Killed |           | Winter 1921<br>Attacks Killed |           | Spring 1921<br>Attacks Killed |            | Total<br>Attacks Killed |            |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Antrim              | 1                             | 2         | --                            | --        | 1                             | --        | 1                             | 2          | 3                       | 4          |
| Armagh              | --                            | --        | --                            | --        | 6                             | 2         | 3                             | 1          | 9                       | 3          |
| Belfast             | 14                            | --        | 3                             | --        | 3                             | 5         | 8                             | 3          | 28                      | 8          |
| Cavan               | 1                             | --        | 2                             | 1         | 5                             | --        | 3                             | 2          | 11                      | 3          |
| Donegal             | 11                            | --        | 2                             | --        | 6                             | 3         | 9                             | 2          | 28                      | 5          |
| Down                | --                            | --        | 2                             | 1         | 5                             | 1         | 5                             | 2          | 12                      | 4          |
| Fermanagh           | --                            | --        | 2                             | 1         | --                            | 2         | 6                             | 2          | 8                       | 5          |
| Londonderry         | --                            | --        | 4                             | --        | --                            | --        | 5                             | 3          | 9                       | 3          |
| Monaghan            | --                            | --        | 1                             | --        | 5                             | 5         | 6                             | 1          | 12                      | 6          |
| Tyrone              | 2                             | 1         | 5                             | --        | 1                             | --        | 14                            | 1          | 22                      | 2          |
| <b>Ulster</b>       | <b>29</b>                     | <b>3</b>  | <b>22</b>                     | <b>3</b>  | <b>31</b>                     | <b>18</b> | <b>60</b>                     | <b>19</b>  | <b>142</b>              | <b>43</b>  |
| Carlow              | 1                             | 2         | 1                             | --        | 1                             | --        | 4                             | 1          | 8                       | 3          |
| Dublin              | 2                             | 1         | --                            | --        | 6                             | 2         | 11                            | 6          | 19                      | 9          |
| Kildare             | 1                             | 2         | 2                             | --        | 2                             | 1         | 3                             | --         | 8                       | 3          |
| Kilkenny            | --                            | --        | 2                             | --        | 2                             | 1         | 11                            | 1          | 15                      | 2          |
| King's              | 2                             | 1         | 4                             | 2         | 1                             | --        | 4                             | 2          | 11                      | 5          |
| Longford            | 3                             | 2         | 4                             | 3         | 9                             | 5         | 6                             | 3          | 22                      | 13         |
| Louth               | 3                             | 2         | 2                             | --        | 1                             | --        | 6                             | 1          | 12                      | 3          |
| Meath               | 1                             | --        | 1                             | --        | 8                             | 1         | 9                             | --         | 19                      | 1          |
| Queen's             | 1                             | --        | --                            | --        | 2                             | --        | 4                             | --         | 7                       | --         |
| Westmeath           | 7                             | 1         | 5                             | 1         | 1                             | --        | 4                             | 2          | 17                      | 4          |
| Wexford             | 2                             | --        | 1                             | 1         | 3                             | --        | 6                             | 1          | 12                      | 2          |
| Wicklow             | 1                             | --        | --                            | --        | --                            | --        | 1                             | --         | 2                       | --         |
| <b>Leinster</b>     | <b>24</b>                     | <b>11</b> | <b>22</b>                     | <b>14</b> | <b>36</b>                     | <b>16</b> | <b>69</b>                     | <b>17</b>  | <b>151</b>              | <b>58</b>  |
| Clare               | 8                             | 8         | 5                             | 5         | 7                             | 9         | 15                            | 3          | 35                      | 25         |
| Cork                | 28                            | 7         | 29                            | 25        | 42                            | 18        | 44                            | 22         | 143                     | 72         |
| Kerry               | 11                            | 3         | 16                            | 7         | 18                            | 6         | 26                            | 17         | 71                      | 33         |
| Limerick            | 20                            | 6         | 7                             | --        | 10                            | 14        | 26                            | 5          | 63                      | 25         |
| Tipperary           | 14                            | 3         | 21                            | 12        | 28                            | 4         | 20                            | 8          | 83                      | 27         |
| Waterford           | 5                             | 1         | 6                             | 2         | 4                             | 3         | 7                             | 1          | 22                      | 7          |
| <b>Munster</b>      | <b>86</b>                     | <b>28</b> | <b>84</b>                     | <b>51</b> | <b>109</b>                    | <b>54</b> | <b>138</b>                    | <b>56</b>  | <b>417</b>              | <b>189</b> |
| Galway              | 20                            | 4         | 2                             | 1         | 4                             | 2         | 9                             | 4          | 35                      | 11         |
| Leitrim             | 3                             | --        | --                            | --        | 1                             | --        | 2                             | 1          | 6                       | 1          |
| Mayo                | 8                             | 1         | --                            | --        | 1                             | 1         | 15                            | 16         | 24                      | 18         |
| Roscommon           | 6                             | 3         | 6                             | 5         | 9                             | 3         | 8                             | 1          | 29                      | 12         |
| Sligo               | 5                             | --        | 6                             | 6         | 4                             | 1         | 8                             | 2          | 23                      | 9          |
| <b>Connaught</b>    | <b>42</b>                     | <b>9</b>  | <b>14</b>                     | <b>11</b> | <b>19</b>                     | <b>5</b>  | <b>42</b>                     | <b>26</b>  | <b>117</b>              | <b>51</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>181</b>                    | <b>51</b> | <b>142</b>                    | <b>79</b> | <b>195</b>                    | <b>93</b> | <b>309</b>                    | <b>118</b> | <b>827</b>              | <b>341</b> |

(Sources: Outrage Reports, PRO, CO 904/148-150; Richard Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland, 1919-1922* (Dublin: Mercier, 2000). For the purposes of this table, ‘summer’ is July to September; ‘autumn’ is October to December; ‘winter’ is January to March; and ‘spring’ is April to June. Thus, attacks and losses that occurred in July 1921 (i.e. in the summer of that year) are not listed on this table: in county Galway, for example, there were five attacks on the police, leaving two dead, in July 1921. For a more detailed examination of police casualties, see W. J. Lowe, “The War against the R.I.C., 1919-21,” *Éire-Ireland* 37, nos. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2002), pp. 79-117, esp. pp. 88-97.)

Table 2.2. *Battles resulting in heavy police casualties, 1920-21.*

| Date              | Location      | County    | Province  | Casualties |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 22 September 1920 | Rineen        | Clare     | Munster   | 6 dead     |
| 12 October 1920   | Ballinderry   | Roscommon | Connaught | 5 dead     |
| 28 November 1920  | Kilmichael    | Cork      | Munster   | 17 dead    |
| 20 January 1921   | Glenwood      | Clare     | Munster   | 6 dead     |
| 3 February 1921   | Dromkeen      | Limerick  | Munster   | 11 dead    |
| 4 May 1921        | Rathmore      | Kerry     | Munster   | 8 dead     |
| 1 June 1921       | Castlemaine   | Kerry     | Munster   | 5 dead     |
| 2 June 1921       | Carrowkennedy | Mayo      | Connaught | 7 dead     |

(Source: Richard Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland, 1919-1922* (Dublin: Mercier, 2000))

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONSTABULARY IN KHAKI The Black and Tans

The Black and Tans may be the most infamous police force in the history of the British Isles. Yet in spite of their notoriety, historians have done little to find out who they were, or to explain their behaviour in Ireland. Most historians agree that frustration was the chief cause of ‘black-and-tannery,’ and a few have argued that alienation played a part as well. However, most historians also agree that the Black and Tans were somehow predisposed to violence and crime. Some have said the ranks of the Black and Tans were filled with criminals and ex-convicts. In 1926, Piaras Béaslaí wrote that, “the Black and Tans were largely drawn from the criminal classes, and authentic cases were discovered where they had been released by a beneficent Government from penal servitude, incurred through revolting crimes, to enable them to bring the lights of English law and order to Ireland. They were, in short, dirty tools for a dirty job.”<sup>1</sup> Others have said the Black and Tans had been brutalised and demoralised by their experiences in the Great War. In 1937, Dorothy Macardle wrote that, “the despatch of this new force to Ireland helped to relieve England of a very dangerous type of unemployable—men of low mentality whose more primitive instincts had been aroused by the war and who were now difficult to control.”<sup>2</sup>

The results of new research reveal that both of these claims are unfounded. Instead, the evidence indicates that British recruits for the RIC were fairly ordinary men. The typical Black and Tan was a small fellow, and young. He was an unmarried Protestant from London or the Home Counties who had fought in the British army during the Great War. He was a working-class man with few skills who joined the RIC because the pay was good. A few of his comrades might have spent a few days in jail, but the typical Black and Tan had no criminal record and a good reference from the army. He was posted to a police station after only two or three weeks of training, and served with the force until it was disbanded, unless he resigned first. He likely stayed out of trouble in Ireland, though he knew men who were fined or even dismissed; many of these were older men who had served with the pre-war regular army. He was certainly not an ex-convict, and there is no evidence that his war experience affected his mental balance. In fact, there is nothing at all in his background that would explain his conduct in Ireland. If he took the law into his own hands, it was because of his situation, not his disposition.

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<sup>1</sup> Béaslaí, *Michael Collins*, II, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (New ed., New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965), p.

### A. The Killing of Constable Krumm, 8 September 1920

About nine thousand Black and Tans joined the Royal Irish Constabulary between July 1920 and July 1921. One of them was an Englishman named Edward Krumm. We can learn a little about Krumm from the RIC's General Register. He was born on 15 October 1894. He was a tall man (5 feet 11 inches) from Middlesex, with family in neighbouring Surrey. He was a member of the Church of England, and was unmarried. He described himself as an electrical engineer and an ex-soldier. He joined the force in London on 10 August 1920, and was allocated to the west riding of county Galway on 18 August. Three weeks later, on the night of 8 September 1920, he was shot to death in Galway town. The Register says only that he died of a bullet wound inflicted by persons unknown.<sup>3</sup>

We can learn a little more about Krumm from the evidence given to the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland. Former constable John Caddan told the commission he met Edward Krumm in Galway town. Caddan said that Krumm worked as a motor driver in Dunmore, about ten miles away. "He was in town about two weeks getting his motor repaired," said Caddan. "He was a generally reckless fellow and drank a lot. I know of one case that he shot a sheep and brought him in to the barracks to be cooked." On the night of 8 September, both Caddan and Krumm were in the RIC barracks on Eglinton Street. The young Peeler saw the Black and Tan passing around a bottle of poteen, and heard him say that he would get another bottle when it was finished. Some time later, Krumm left the barracks. He went to a nearby hotel, where he had another drink and met an acquaintance, a civilian driver named Yorke. At about twelve o'clock, Krumm and Yorke went up to Galway's railway station to meet the midnight train, which was bringing the evening papers from Dublin.<sup>4</sup> Soon after they arrived, a gun battle erupted on the station platform, and Constable Krumm was killed, along with Volunteer John Mulvoy of the Irish Republican Army.

Edward Krumm's death was the subject of a brief official press release from Dublin Castle. "Constable Crumm [*sic*] of the Royal Irish Constabulary, an ex-soldier, who recently joined the force, was shot dead at Galway railway station at midnight on Wednesday," it said. "Three of the assailants were shot dead by the police, and two more are believed to have been wounded."<sup>5</sup> His death is also described in the Register of Crime for the province of Connaught, a very large bound volume preserved at the Public Record Office. "He went to the mail train for the evening paper accompanied by a civilian," it says.

On their way back an attack was made on him. He drew his revolver & fired on his assailants, before he received the bullet which entered his right jaw & penetrated his brain & mortally wounded him. Before he fell he shot John Mulvoy—and John Quirke was found dead by civilians near where the attack took

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<sup>3</sup> Constable 72372, RIC General Register PRO, HO 184/37.

<sup>4</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 410.

<sup>5</sup> "Sinn Fein Attacks on Irish Policemen," *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1920, p. 9.

place. The police rushing to the assistance of above fired as they came & it is believed other Sinn Feiners have been wounded.<sup>6</sup>

As we shall see, these official reports were both inaccurate and misleading. There were at least three conflicting versions of what happened that night at Galway station. The report in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly Edition* agreed with the Castle's official version, up to a point. "The facts of the trouble were briefly these," it begins. Krumm and Yorke were part of a crowd on the station platform, waiting for some race results, and for news about the lord mayor of Cork, who was on a hunger strike in Brixton prison. Some Irish Volunteers were in the crowd that night as well. "Krumm was in plain clothes," says the report, "but was known to carry a revolver, and it seems likely that the Volunteers wished to disarm him." The Volunteers shouted 'hands up' and pointed their guns at Yorke and Krumm. Yorke put up his hands, but the Black and Tan drew his revolver. In the battle that followed, both Constable Krumm and Volunteer John Mulvoy were shot through the head and killed.<sup>7</sup>

The *Guardian's* version is clearly plausible, and Richard Abbott has published a similar story in his chronicle of police casualties in Ireland.<sup>8</sup> But a second version appeared in the British press, and was later corroborated by one of the witnesses to the American Commission. The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Morning Post* printed a report from a Galway correspondent, who wrote that Krumm opened fire when "a number of men rushed on the station for the evening papers." Mulvoy was wounded. Someone in the crowd returned the fire, and Krumm fell shot in the chest. Both men were taken to hospital, where they died.<sup>9</sup> A few months later, when Francis Hackett testified at the American Commission, he mentioned that he had visited Galway a week after Krumm was killed, and had spoken to Rev. Michael Griffin. Father Griffin, he said, had seen the official report on the incident, which apparently confirmed the *Daily Telegraph's* version.<sup>10</sup> "There was a great rush for the papers," he said. "For some reason, whether this young man was drunk or not, he got excited and began firing."<sup>11</sup> This too is plausible. As we shall see, there were other cases where Black and Tans got excited and began firing for no apparent reason, especially when they had been drinking.

Moreover, two eyewitnesses offered a third version of these events to the American Commission. Rev. Dr. James Cotter (an American) was at the station that night, speaking to an Irish priest. "Then very quickly," he said, "a Black-and-Tan went out on the platform that leads to the back door of the railway hotel, and when the people were coming to get the papers off the train at midnight, he used his revolver in any way,

<sup>6</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> "The Galway Outbreak." *Manchester Guardian Weekly Edition*, 17 September 1920, p. 238.

<sup>8</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> "Sinn Fein Attacks on Irish Policemen," *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1920, p. 9; "Wild Scenes at Galway," *Morning Post*, 10 September 1920, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Under the terms of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, a military court of inquiry was held instead of a coroner's inquest. (Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 120) Its findings do not appear to have survived: they are not among those preserved in PRO WO 35/146-61. An independent civilian inquiry was suppressed. ("Police Reprisals in Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 20 September 1920, p. 9)

<sup>11</sup> Testimony of Francis Hackett, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, 161-62.

shooting in any direction.”<sup>12</sup> A civilian tackled Krumm and tried to disarm him, but the Black and Tan kept firing, wounding a couple of bystanders. Finally, another civilian shot him dead. Another American, Mrs. Agnes King, was waiting on the platform with the crowd. King testified that she saw Krumm draw his revolver, ‘slash it around,’ and start firing. While a British officer tried to protect a nearby woman and her children, Krumm shot a young man in the leg. When Mulvoy stepped up to help the wounded boy, Krumm shot him as well. “Then,” she said, “another boy jumped from the back and caught the soldier in this way (indicating across the body) so that he had only one hand free. And then a harsh shot rang out and this soldier fell to the ground.”<sup>13</sup> Neither Father Cotter nor Mrs. King saw any reason for Krumm’s actions. “There was perfect peace,” said King, “and we were all waiting for the papers, and he whipped out the revolver and began to fire.”<sup>14</sup> King thought Krumm started shooting “to provoke the people into open rebellion.”<sup>15</sup> This seems unlikely. Cotter and King may not have seen what made Krumm open fire, and their stories could easily be reconciled with other versions of these events; but eyewitness testimony cannot simply be discounted.

There is no disagreement about what happened after Krumm was killed. Constable Caddan was in bed by midnight. “The next thing I knew,” he said, “one of the constables came up and gave the alarm, and said one of the constables was shot. And we all had to get up and dress and get our carbines. There were about fifty men in the barracks, and they ran amuck then.”<sup>16</sup> The Galway police rioted, firing volleys in the streets and attacking the homes of Irish Volunteers. Caddan watched as his comrades invaded the Broderick family home, abducted their Volunteer son, John Broderick, splashed gasoline around, and set the house on fire. “They took the son up toward the station,” said Caddan, “but he got away, and they fired after him, and I think wounded him in the leg, but I am not sure of that. He got away. And then they turned around and saw a crowd of neighbours trying to put out the flames, and they fired into the crowd.”<sup>17</sup> Broderick and a second young man escaped, but the police killed a third Volunteer named Seamus Quirke. They also burned out two houses, and wrecked the machinery of a republican newspaper, the *Galway Express*. While the riot was in progress, Father Cotter left his hotel bed, lay under his window (“That is the place that is generally advised in Ireland—under the window.”) and listened to the firing for an hour and a half.<sup>18</sup> In the meantime, British army officers assured the terrified Mrs. King that no harm would come to her. “They are shooting some of the townspeople that deserve shooting,” said the officers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Testimony of James Cotter, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> Testimony of Agnes King, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup> Testimony of Agnes King, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> Testimony of Agnes King, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 135.

<sup>16</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 410.

<sup>17</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 411-12.

<sup>18</sup> Testimony of James Cotter, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> Testimony of Agnes King, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 133.

The night's events were fully reported by British newspapers: even *The Times* mentioned reports of a civilian being taken out of his house and shot in the street.<sup>20</sup> John Caddan resigned from the RIC on 13 September 1920 and emigrated to the United States, where he described the Galway police riot to the members of the American Commission. As a result, the hard-drinking, sheep-stealing Edward Krumm is one of the very few Black and Tans known to history by name.

## B. 'Ex-Service Men of Good Character and Physique'

How typical was Krumm? The single best source of information about the Black and Tans is the general register of the Royal Irish Constabulary, which includes the names and several particulars of every man who joined the force. Let us examine a sample consisting of the single largest monthly intake of British recruits: the 1153 who joined up in October 1920, close to midway through the conflict.<sup>21</sup> David Fitzpatrick has written that the Black and Tans were "shorter and feebler" than Irish recruits for the RIC, and our sample confirms this impression.<sup>22</sup> Only 55 per cent of the men who enlisted in October could meet the RIC's minimum height of 5 feet 8 inches. Only one in three could have met the pre-war standard of 5 feet 9 inches. Edward Krumm stood more than three inches taller than the average Black and Tan.<sup>23</sup>

In practice, it seems the minimum height for British recruits was 5 feet 6 inches: only twenty-six men in the sample fell below this standard.<sup>24</sup> One man, twenty year-old Walter Louis of London, stood only 5 feet 2 inches tall, which was less than the army's minimum. Louis had not served in the armed forces during the war, but this may have been due to his youth as well as his size.<sup>25</sup> Short men like Louis reflect how desperate the constabulary's need for new recruits had become: like the British army in 1914-18, the RIC had to lower its physical standards to meet the crisis of war. The short stature of many Black and Tans also reflects how recruiting shifted from rural, agricultural Ireland to urban, industrial Britain: in October 1920, the average Irish recruit stood two inches taller than his British counterpart.

The majority of the men in the sample were quite young, between eighteen and twenty-four years of age (see Table 3.1). A little more than half of them were born between 1897 and 1902, and were too young to enlist in the army when the Great War broke out in 1914. Eleven per cent of them were born in 1901 and 1902, and were still

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<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 10 September 1920, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39. As these numbers imply, 272 of the men in the register have been excluded from the sample, being either Irish or, more commonly, temporary constables.

<sup>22</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921*, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> "Ordinary Candidates must be at least 5 feet 8 inches in height, unmarried, and between 19 and 27 years of age.... Men who have served in His Majesty's Forces who do not come up to this standard, or who are married, will receive special consideration if strong and suitable." RIC Constabulary List, January 1921, PRO, HO 184/104.

<sup>24</sup> See *Lady Gregory's Journals*, I, p. 210 for a Peeler's complaints about these "little chaps".

<sup>25</sup> Constable 73746, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.



too young to enlist when the war ended in 1918. Men between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine, like Edward Krumm, made up only 22 per cent of the sample. Less than 20 percent of them were more than twenty-nine years old. The oldest recruit among them was Benjamin Ebdon of Warwick, a fitter and former Royal Engineer, who turned forty-eight soon after he joined the force.<sup>26</sup> The youth of the RIC's British recruits was noted at the time. "They were most all young men," said John Caddan, though some of them "were up to forty."<sup>27</sup>

Ninety per cent of these young men were ex-servicemen, which indicates how many under-aged recruits joined the British armed forces during the war. Interestingly, two Irish 'Black and Tans' interviewed by Brewer had both been underage when they enlisted in the British army: one man named Fails joined in early 1917 at the age of seventeen, and another man named Thompson in late 1917 at the age of sixteen.<sup>28</sup> Eighty per cent of the men who enlisted in October 1920 were ex-soldiers like Fails and Thompson. Eight per cent of them had served in the navy, and 2 per cent had been marines. Either the remaining 10 per cent did not serve in the military, or their service was not recorded. The register does not mention the arms and regiments of ex-soldiers, but there is evidence that they were predominantly infantrymen. Seventy-three men had their names and regiments recorded in an allocation book preserved at the Garda Síochána museum in Dublin, and out of these seventy-three, forty-nine had served in the infantry, and thirteen in the artillery.<sup>29</sup>

The men in the sample were disproportionately English: only 10 per cent of them came from Scotland and Wales, despite the fact that over 16 per cent of Britain's population was Welsh and Scottish (see Table 3.2). Moreover, almost half of these Englishmen came from London and the Home Counties, in spite of the fact that this area made up less than a quarter of Great Britain's population (see Table 3.3). The only other region of Britain that was over-represented in the sample was the South. Every other region of the island was under-represented, especially the North and the Midlands: only 27 per cent of the men in the sample came from the northern and central counties, which made up 48 per cent of Britain's population. The proportion of Scotsmen was also low, but as we shall see this was in line with the proportion of Scottish soldiers in the British army. However, there were very few Welshmen in the sample: only 16 recruits out of 1153.

The regional nature of British recruiting for the Royal Irish Constabulary becomes even clearer when we consider where men enlisted. The RIC's recruiting officer in London recommended 55 per cent of the men in the sample. The recruiting officer in Liverpool recommended 19 per cent of the recruits, and the Glasgow recruiting officer recommended another 8 per cent. The remaining 18 per cent of the men in the sample enlisted in forty-six different communities, most of them army and navy recruiting

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<sup>26</sup> Constable 74255, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.

<sup>27</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 414.

<sup>28</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 100, 105.

<sup>29</sup> RIC Allocations Record, 1902-1921, Garda Síochána Museum, M.239. Of the remaining eleven, four had served in the navy (including one in the Royal Naval Division), three in the cavalry, two in the flying corps, one in the engineers, and one in the machine-gun corps.

centres in southern and eastern England. In fact, British RIC recruits applied at army recruiting offices, and as a result, the constabulary was competing with the army for recruits. The RIC's chief recruiting officer in Great Britain, District Inspector Charles Fleming, worked in the army recruiting office at Great Scotland Yard in London.<sup>30</sup> "The necessity for recruiting large numbers of men for service in the Royal Irish Constabulary, in which body the conditions as to pay, etc., were more attractive than in the Army," was one of three factors the War Office blamed for the small numbers of recruits it raised in 1920-21.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the regional distribution of RIC recruits in October 1920 was very different from the regional distribution of army recruits in 1920-21 (see Table 3.4). While only 19 per cent of the army's recruits enlisted in the London recruiting area, 55 per cent of the RIC's recruits joined the force in the metropolis. Even more surprisingly, though 21 per cent of the army's recruits enlisted in the Northern Command, only 5 of the RIC's 1153 recruits joined the force in this area.<sup>32</sup>

The proportions of Catholics and Protestants among RIC recruits in October 1920 were also somewhat different from those in the British army (see Table 3.5). Eighty per cent of October's recruits were members of the Church of England. Of the remaining 20 per cent, 8 were Roman Catholics, 6 were Presbyterians, and 6 were Nonconformists. As we might expect, 90 per cent of the Presbyterians were Scottish. Interestingly, seven of the Anglicans in the sample converted to Catholicism while they were in the force, and one Roman Catholic, Frederick Wilkinson of Lancashire, joined the Church of England.<sup>33</sup> The sample also included five Jews. In 1920-21, by comparison, only 72 per cent of the

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<sup>30</sup> "VACANCIES for PERMANENT CONSTABLE in the ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY are offered to ex-servicemen of good character and physique. Candidates should apply to the nearest Army Recruiting Office, where they will be dealt with, and should bring with them private references and a Birth Certificate.

"If living in or near London, apply personally or by letter to the R.I.C. Recruiting Office, Army Recruiting Office, Gt. Scotland Yard, London, and if by letter state age, height, Regiment, Regimental Number and Record Office." (Classified advertisements, *Daily Mail*, e.g. 3 July 1920, p. 2.)

Note that Black and Tans were permanent members of the RIC, not part of the temporary forces David Fitzpatrick has mistakenly referred to the Black and Tans as temporary constables (e.g. *The Two Irelands*, pp. 90, 268), but the 'Temporaries' were a separate and distinctive (and much less numerous) body of policemen.

<sup>31</sup> *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1921*, Cmd. 1941 (1923) [henceforward *Army Report (1921)*], p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Four Black and Tans enlisted in Sheffield; one enlisted in Northumberland, possibly in Newcastle. The distribution of RIC recruiting officers and recruits outside London, Liverpool, and Glasgow is rather strange. Recruits enlisted in eleven out of eleven of the army's recruiting centres in Southern Command, and ten out of twelve centres in Eastern Command, but only four out of eleven centres in Western Command, and one out of ten centres in Scotland. Except for the one man who may have joined the force in Newcastle, no recruits joined the RIC in any of the ten army recruiting centres in Northern Command. Similarly, while Lancashire was part of Western Command, and more men joined the army in Manchester than anywhere else in the Western recruiting zone, out of 229 Black and Tans from this area, 222 enlisted in Liverpool, 2 enlisted in the Liverpool suburb of Seaforth, 1 enlisted in Chester, and the remaining 4 enlisted in Wales (2 in Cardiff, 1 in Newport, and 1 in Wrexham): Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; *Army Report (1921)*, pp. 28-31.

<sup>33</sup> Constable 74133, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38. Wilkinson's conversion may have been related to the fact that he married a woman from county Antrim on 6 May 1921.

army's warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers were Anglicans, and 14 per cent were Roman Catholics; the proportions of Presbyterians and Nonconformists were also somewhat higher.<sup>34</sup> This might indicate some reluctance among Roman Catholics to join the RIC, but there is probably a simpler explanation. In 1920-21 there were still over 19,000 Irish soldiers in the British army. Four of the army's six Irish regiments were disbanded in 1922, and the number of Irish soldiers fell from nineteen to eleven thousand; during the same period, the number of Roman Catholics in the army fell from thirty-three to twenty-four thousand, or from 14 to 10 percent.<sup>35</sup>

Most of the RIC recruits in the sample (71 per cent) were single men. However, 25 per cent of them were married when they enlisted. Another 4 per cent married after they enlisted. This was against RIC regulations: ordinarily, constables had to serve for seven years before they could marry. Once again, the RIC was willing to bend its rules to accommodate its British reinforcements.

Married British recruits were older than average (see Table 3.6). Most of them had been married for less than six years, but there were some exceptions: three men had been married for seventeen years, and Scott Arthur of Chester had been married for twenty years.<sup>36</sup> Fifty-three per cent of these men married women from London and its neighbouring counties, which reflects how they tended to marry women from their native regions: the majority of them (52 per cent) married women from their counties of origin. Once again, however, there were exceptions. Fifteen men in the sample married Irishwomen. Fred Warburton of Lancashire was married to a Frenchwoman, and Charles Houlston of Shropshire married a German woman in September 1920.<sup>37</sup>

More than 90 per cent of the recruits came from the urban working class: less than one hundred of the men in the sample were not manual workers, and the majority of these 'middle-class' men were clerks and shop assistants; most of the 'professionals' among them were actors and musicians (See Table 3.7). The majority of them were either unskilled or semi-skilled. About 64 per cent of them worked in just three economic sectors: metal manufacturing, transportation, and general labour (see Table 3.8). This fact is reflected in the three most common occupations among recruits, which were labourer, motor driver, and fitter (a type of engineer). As Fitzpatrick has noted, British recruits for the RIC "came of stock strikingly unlike that of the traditional recruit."<sup>38</sup> The proportion of labourers and skilled workers among Irish recruits for the RIC was only 26 per cent in the spring of 1913, and 19 per cent in the autumn of 1916: the majority of Irish recruits in both cases had been farmers.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, the social and occupational backgrounds of Black and Tans were also quite different from their opponents in the

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<sup>34</sup> These proportions were almost identical to those in the pre-war army. Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1924*, Cmd. 2342 (1925), p. 71. The Royal Irish Regiment, the Connaught Rangers, the Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment, the Royal Munster Fusiliers, and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers were disbanded in 1922. The Irish Guards and the Royal Irish Rifles remained, though the latter became the Royal Ulster Rifles.

<sup>36</sup> Constable 74462, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.

<sup>37</sup> Constables 73607 and 74781, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.

<sup>38</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 22.

IRA. Peter Hart found that working-class men made up only 34 per cent of a sample of provincial Irish Volunteers, and only 69 per cent of a sample of Volunteers from Dublin, compared to 87 per cent of our sample of Black and Tans. In addition, 23 per cent of the IRA men in both samples came from middle-class occupations, compared to less than 10 per cent of the Black and Tans.

There are numerous indications that British recruits for the RIC were simply ex-servicemen looking for work. According to a memorandum from the Ministry of Labour, in June 1920 the cities of London, Liverpool, and Glasgow had the greatest numbers of ex-servicemen drawing out-of-work donations in the United Kingdom. As we have seen, these three cities produced 83 per cent of the RIC's British recruits in October 1920.<sup>40</sup> According to the same source, the occupational classes with the highest numbers of ex-servicemen receiving unemployment relief were general labour, transportation, and metal manufacturing.<sup>41</sup> Again, as we have seen, these occupational classes also produced the highest numbers of recruits for the RIC in October 1920, and the most common occupations among recruits fell into these classes. Finally, the testimony of Irishmen who joined the force in 1920 seems to confirm that unemployment was an important factor for many British recruits. John Caddan was a nineteen year-old Irishman who went to England looking for work; finding none, he joined the RIC in London in February 1920.<sup>42</sup> Seventy-five years later, the Irish ex-serviceman Fails recalled that, "there was great unemployment in England, everybody was on short comings and they'd come up in the morning on the boat from Dublin. Some of them only had the suit they stood in."<sup>43</sup>

The British economy was imploding during the period of the First Irish War: in the summer of 1920 Britain's brief postwar boom ended and its long interwar depression began. According to trade union statistics, the percentage of unemployed went up from 2.4 per cent in 1920 to 14.8 per cent in 1921; according to unemployment insurance statistics, the percentage went up from 3.9 per cent in 1920 to 16.9 per cent in 1921.<sup>44</sup> The number of British recruits for the Royal Irish Constabulary increased apace. The *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent visited Gormanstown camp on 12 October 1920. After interviewing the men, he concluded that, "unemployment has been the pinch that has driven most of them to this hazardous job," and he expected the "slackening in trade" to provide the government with as many recruits as it wanted.<sup>45</sup>

The constabulary offered such men competitive wages, a chance for promotion, and the prospect of a pension. Above all, the pay seems to have drawn British recruits to the RIC. By the autumn of 1920, new constables were earning three pounds ten shillings

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<sup>40</sup> Training and Resettlement of Ex-Servicemen, f. 344.

<sup>41</sup> Training and Resettlement of Ex-Servicemen, f. 345.

<sup>42</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 419-20.

<sup>43</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 101.

<sup>44</sup> W R Garside, *The Measure of Unemployment: Methods and Sources in Great Britain 1850-1979* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 47.

<sup>45</sup> "Black-and-Tans' Camp Visited," *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1920, p. 9.

a week, and were offered a number of allowances and bonuses besides.<sup>46</sup> For example, Edward Krumm would have been entitled to a boot allowance of one shilling six pence a week; a disturbance allowance of two shillings a day; and a motor driver's allowance of two shillings six pence a day, for a total weekly pay of five pounds three shillings.<sup>47</sup> Had he lived another month, he would have been eligible for another six shillings a week as a cost-of-living bonus.<sup>48</sup> This was good money in 1920. One Irish recruit recalled that a constable's base pay was, "more than a tradesman had at that time."<sup>49</sup> Nevil Macready wrote in his memoirs that British recruits "were only too glad to avail themselves of the high rates of pay which were offered."<sup>50</sup> One Black and Tan who was dismissed from the force lamented that he had lost, "what is termed an excellent berth with a good rate of pay & good prospects for promotion & in addition a pensionable job."<sup>51</sup>

Besides, there was no long period of apprenticeship for policemen in Ireland. In his book *Sword for Hire*, Douglas Duff described his passage to Ireland as a police recruit. "In the early grey of the February morning," Duff sailed from Holyhead to Dublin with about thirty other men. As they disembarked at the North Wall, the new recruits found Crossley tenders waiting to carry them to the depot. They also found four coffins draped with Union flags, awaiting their final voyage home.<sup>52</sup> An RIC sergeant noticed them staring, and told them the dead men were Black and Tans like themselves. "That fellow there," indicating one of the grim boxes, 'only joined the Force three weeks ago, just as healthy and fine-looking as one of you. He was killed in Mayo and the other three in Tipperary. God rest their souls, and it's maybe some of you that I'll be bringing down here one of these fine mornings.'" Duff and the other recruits were then handed rifles and ammunition and told to climb aboard the tenders. "First two men keep an eye ahead," they were told; "next two on the second floor windows; next couple on the pavements and the rear pair looking astern." Sitting back to back in the open boxes of the Crossleys, the nervous recruits were driven across Dublin at top speed, first west along the Liffey past the Four Courts, and then north into Phoenix Park and the depot.<sup>53</sup>

This is a good story, but may not be true. According to the RIC register, Douglas Duff enlisted on 2 April 1921, not February.<sup>54</sup> This is confirmed by the details in Duff's account. Duff mentions another new recruit named Beckett, "who had crossed from Holyhead with me," and who was killed in county Mayo three weeks later.<sup>55</sup> Constable Harry Beckett was indeed killed in an ambush near Kilmeena, county Mayo on 19 May

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<sup>46</sup> Royal Irish Constabulary List, January 1921, PRO, HO 184/104, p. 235. Cf. classified advertisements, *Daily Mail*, e.g. 3 July 1920, p. 2: "Pay commences at £3 10s. per week and allowances. Prospects of promotion are good."

<sup>47</sup> Royal Irish Constabulary List, January 1921, PRO, HO 184/104, pp. 235-36; Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 132.

<sup>49</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 57.

<sup>50</sup> Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, Vol. II (London: Hutchinson, 1924), p. 481.

<sup>51</sup> Constable William Gibson, Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 24 March 1921, PRO, HO 351/69.

<sup>52</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 55.

<sup>54</sup> RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/41.

<sup>55</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 62.

1921—about a month after he enlisted.<sup>56</sup> In addition, there were not enough dead Black and Tans in Ireland to fill Duff's four coffins. Constable William Stephens of London was shot dead in county Mayo on 29 March. If Duff arrived in Ireland on 2 April, then one of the four coffins might have belonged to Constable Stephens. However, Stephens had been serving with the force for five months. Two more Black and Tans were killed in Ireland on 31 March 1921, but neither of them was killed in county Tipperary. A fourth man had been killed in county Roscommon on 23 March, but the bodies of dead Black and Tans were generally returned to Britain within five days.<sup>57</sup>

These details might make us wonder about Duff's account of his police training. After spending an hour at Phoenix Park depot, Duff and his companions were again armed, loaded onto tenders, and rushed off to the sub-depot at Gormanstown. Once they arrived, they were issued with bedding, uniforms, arms, and equipment. "At eleven o'clock," writes Duff, "we were again paraded, this time in uniform and under arms, upon the drill square and addressed by the Head Constable Major," who told them that the training course would last three days for infantrymen, and three to four weeks for everyone else.<sup>58</sup> Duff pretended to have served in the infantry. His training at Gormanstown lasted only a day and half, consisting of a brief lecture on hand-grenades followed by one practice throw, a bit of target shooting with rifle and revolver, and a single class of instruction on police duties. "As far as I remember," he writes, "the schoolmaster was lecturing on some point of the Game Laws. We solemnly listened for an hour and were then dismissed to our companies as fully trained policemen, ready for duty with the public."<sup>59</sup>

Another good story: but once again, is it true? As we have seen, Edward Krumm was allocated to a station in Galway just eight days after he enlisted in the force. One of the Irish policemen interviewed by John Brewer recalled that, "the ex-servicemen got no training at all. The ex-servicemen got three of four days and then they were sent out."<sup>60</sup> But as we have also seen, most of the Black and Tans had probably been infantrymen. If such men received only three days training, and were then sent to police stations, then most of the men in our sample should have been allocated to a county police force very shortly after they enlisted. We know when and where 910 of the men in our sample were allocated to county forces: two-thirds of these men spent between fifteen and twenty-eight days in camp before they were allocated (see Table 2.10), and most of the remaining third spent more than four weeks at Gormanstown; only 5 per cent of them were in camp for less than two weeks.<sup>61</sup> This corresponds with the observations of the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent, who noted in October 1920 that RIC training had

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<sup>56</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 244.

<sup>57</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 151, 167, 206, 210, 214-18, 227, 260. One or more of the coffins might have held the bodies of soldiers.

<sup>58</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>60</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> Allocations were not recorded in every case: 66 of the men in the sample either left the Force in 1921, or were demobilized in 1922, but we do not know when they completed their training, or where they served.

formerly lasted six months. “For the English recruits,” however, “the course is compressed into twelve or fourteen lectures, which along with drill, revolver, musketry, and bombing practice are crowded into a fortnight or three weeks.”<sup>62</sup>

Admittedly, time spent in camp was not necessarily training time. Duff mentions that he spent several eventful days on duty at Gormanstown before he was posted to Galway’s west riding. (How long he stayed in camp is unclear, but it was less than three weeks: he was definitely in county Galway by 23 April 1921, when he took part in the battle of Maam Cross)<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, one Irish ex-serviceman remembered spending two weeks at the depot before he was posted to Tullamore, King’s County. “I was put on duty right away,” he said. “No drill or anything like that,” and no instruction in police duties either: “I had no police training and I didn’t know much,” he admitted.<sup>64</sup>

Whether they spent three weeks in camp or three days, the Black and Tans were poorly trained. The *Guardian*’s correspondent had a low opinion of their course of instruction in police duties. “It is very plain that a man coming absolutely fresh to all ideas of law or criminal procedure will not be a highly trained guardian of the peace after but a fortnight of cramming.”<sup>65</sup> Jeremiah Mee complained in his memoir that the two Black and Tans at his post in Listowel, county Kerry, “had no police training whatsoever and showed no inclination to settle down to routine police work.”<sup>66</sup> One of the witnesses at the American Commission, former policeman John Tangney, thought the Black and Tans completed their training in six days, and told the following story:

They absolutely knew nothing about police duties. On one occasion there was a county inspector whose duty it was to visit the barracks. He was trying to instruct these fellows, and we were all in the barracks, for we had to go to school to him. And he asked this fellow what was his power of arrest, and he said he didn’t know. He tried to make it simpler to him. He said, ‘If you see a man on the street, and you ask him to give you his name and address, and he refuses, what would you do?’ And the Black-and-Tan said, ‘If I met a man on the street and asked him his name and address, and he refused, I would lift him right under the jaw, and the next thing I would use my bayonet. That is what I would do to the man.’<sup>67</sup>

Recruits may have been glad to cut their training short: conditions at Gormanstown were primitive. “It is obvious,” said the *Guardian*’s correspondent, “that with a short staff and hastily improvised living arrangements the conditions have been as bad as in any overcrowded army depot in the first few months of the war.”<sup>68</sup> Months later, Duff was quartered in a draughty aircraft hangar and slept on a plank bed with a

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<sup>62</sup> “Black-and-Tans’ Camp Visited,” *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1920, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>64</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 107-8.

<sup>65</sup> “Black-and-Tans’ Camp Visited,” *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1920, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, p. 83.

<sup>67</sup> Testimony of John Tangney, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 395.

<sup>68</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1920, p. 9.

straw mattress: he impersonated an infantryman to get out of camp as quickly as possible, and he noticed that his fellow recruits were anxious to volunteer for duty.<sup>69</sup> Others were so dissatisfied that they simply quit. Unlike soldiers, Black and Tans were free to resign on a month's notice, and many of them did. One of J R W Goulden's correspondents recalled that many British recruits disliked the military nature of their training and duties. "All had Army experience and when they were once more handed a rifle and were expected to put up with Barrack life & drilling again—a great many resigned," he wrote.<sup>70</sup> One of the Irish police veterans interviewed by Brewer blamed resignations on the poor living conditions, especially the food. "The English people wouldn't have that," he said, "they weren't going to be like these people from the bogs of Ireland that put up with anything. They wouldn't have that and they were going back as quick as they were coming over."<sup>71</sup>

Despite these problems, most Black and Tans were able to endure a few weeks of training at Gormanstown, and went on to serve in police stations throughout Ireland (see table 3.11). There is no record of the reasons for these allocations, but as we might expect, the proportions of men allocated to each province roughly correspond to the amount of violence against the police therein. Some of these recruits excelled at their new jobs, despite their lack of training. None of the men in the sample were awarded the Constabulary Medal, but seventy-eight received a monetary reward for meritorious service, and sixteen of them were rewarded on more than one occasion. Thirty-two of them were promoted to temporary sergeant, and six of them were promoted even higher, to temporary head constable.

However, the rate of attrition among these British recruits was startlingly high: only half of them were still serving with the force when it was disbanded in the winter of 1922 (see Table 3.12). The register does not record what happened to 169 of the men in the sample. Ninety-eight of the men who enlisted in October 1920 resigned from the force before the end of the year, many of them after only a few days or weeks in Ireland. Another 149 resigned in 1921. Again, as we might expect, a disproportionate number of the men who resigned were stationed in the southern province of Munster, where the fighting was heaviest.

Though guerrilla warfare took a heavy toll on men's nerves, it did not claim many lives: only sixty-five of the men in the sample were killed, died, discharged, or pensioned off. The IRA killed only twenty-one: the first was Harry Biggs of London, on 22 October 1920; the last was William Cummings of Hampshire, on 3 March 1922, after most of the Force had been demobilized.<sup>72</sup> Four men in the sample died in accidents, including the unfortunate Francis Hayward of Worcestershire, who drowned on 11 July 1921, the day of the Truce. Just 582 members of the sample definitely continued to serve in the Royal

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<sup>69</sup> Duff, *Sword for Hire*, p. 59.

<sup>70</sup> O'Mahony to Goulden, 12 April 1967, TCD, Goulden Papers 7382A/ 81.

<sup>71</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Three of these deaths are not recorded in the RIC's General Register: Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 188-9, 227, 232. Once again, the proportions of deaths per province correspond roughly to the proportions of violence per province: Munster 13, Leinster 4, Ulster 3, Connaught 1. In addition, the insurgents killed three Irish recruits who enlisted in October 1920, and a fourth Irish recruit was accidentally shot dead.



Irish Constabulary until its British recruits were sent home. Some remained with the RIC until the spring and even the summer of 1922, but most of them were demobilised in February of that year. As men who had served for more than a year but less than eighteen months, they were each entitled to a pension of fifty pounds fourteen shillings per annum.

### C. 'The Scum of London's Underworld'

However, not all the Black and Tans served with honour. Ninety of the men who enlisted in October 1920 were subsequently dismissed from the force. This was a very high percentage (7.8 per cent): less than 1 per cent of the men in the RIC had been dismissed each year between 1885 and 1914, and by way of comparison, only 4 per cent of the soldiers in the British army were punished for crimes and breaches of discipline in the year 1920-21.<sup>73</sup>

Their dismissal rate is bad enough, but the Black and Tans' behaviour looks even worse when we check their disciplinary records. Two hundred and six of the 1153 men who joined the force in October 1920 (about 18 per cent) have some kind of punishment entered beside their names in the register. Of these men, 3 merely received a warning, but 138 committed an infraction serious enough to warrant a fine, and 65 of them were fined on more than one occasion. The offences for which these men were punished are not recorded, but some indications are provided by the cases of two men listed in the constabulary's disbandment register. By the winter of 1922, Constable William Simpson had been punished on three occasions, losing two days' pay for absence from hospital, four days' pay for absence from his post and disobedience of orders, and one week's pay for leaving his post and absence without leave. Constable James D Murphy, on the other hand, had lost four days' pay for drunkenness, assaulting a comrade, and absence on one occasion, and been fined six days' pay for absence and drunkenness on another occasion, when he was warned that any further infractions would result in his dismissal.

Constable Murphy seems to have straightened out after his warning, since he continued to serve with the RIC until it was disbanded.<sup>74</sup> It seems reasonable to suppose that most Black and Tans were punished for infractions like absence and drunkenness, but some of them were punished for much worse. At least ten of the men who joined in October 1920 were dismissed for committing criminal offences. Eight of these ten men were sacked in February 1921, for offences committed in the fall. On 17 November 1920 Constable Edward Knights and Constable William Johnson, both stationed at Roscommon, were arrested for a series of robberies in the district. The two men were searched, and "a large quantity" of stolen goods was recovered. The pair was tried by court martial on 18 February 1921, acquitted of robbery, but convicted of unlawful possession, and dismissed from the force the same day. Johnson had joined the RIC on 12 October, and had been allocated to county Roscommon on 1 November. He had

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<sup>73</sup> Griffin, "The Irish Police," p. 524; *Army Report (1921)*, pp. 61-63.

<sup>74</sup> British Recruits Disbandment Register (Miscellaneous), PRO, HO 184/167.

enlisted in London, but may have been an Irish immigrant, like John Caddan, the young witness to the Galway police riot: Johnson was a Roman Catholic, and though his home county was London, he had family in Westmeath.<sup>75</sup>

Worse was to come. On the night of 28 November 1920 half a dozen houses in county Wexford were invaded and robbed by three men in police and military uniforms. Wexford's district inspector investigated and arrested two constables and a soldier, who confessed their crimes and returned the money and property they had stolen.<sup>76</sup> The identity of the soldier is a mystery, but a Black and Tan named James O'Hara and an Irish constable named Patrick Myers were court-martialled, convicted, and dismissed.<sup>77</sup> Three Black and Tans from county Longford—William Gibson, Edwin Hollins, and Harvey Skinner—were arrested and ultimately court-martialled for robbing a bank in neighbouring county Roscommon on 23 December.<sup>78</sup> Constable Edward King, stationed in county Clare, was arrested for burglary two days later, on Christmas Day, and dismissed on 6 February 1921.<sup>79</sup> Finally, Constable James Roberts was dismissed on 17 February 1921 for larceny.<sup>80</sup>

The bank robbery in county Roscommon is the most interesting and instructive of these cases. On the morning of 23 December 1920, a party of fifteen police from Longford drove into the community of Strokestown and stopped at the local RIC station. While the sergeant in charge of this party was away giving evidence in court, four men in police uniforms and two in civilian clothes walked into the Strokestown branch of the Northern Banking Company and robbed it at gunpoint. The robbers tried to lock the staff and customers inside the bank when they left, but the manager got away and reported the crime to the Strokestown police. The local head constable arrested six of the visiting Black and Tans: the bank staff identified some of them as gang members, and bundles of stolen money were found in the pockets of others. Three of them had been caught drinking in a local pub with stolen banknotes falling out of their pockets. All six were put into military custody and taken back to Longford.

Apparently, the six bank robbers had friends among the Longford police. On 30 December someone wrote to the manager of the bank and threatened to kill him unless he dropped the charges. The letter was posted from Longford, signed by the "President" of "Section B, E.S.S.S." and illustrated with skull and crossbones. The manager reported the letter to the directors of the Northern Banking Company, but assured them that he was unconcerned. However, soon after the letter arrived, two men in civilian clothes called at the bank and asked to speak to the manager. When he refused to see them in private, they referred to the letter and alternately threatened and pleaded with him to drop the charges.

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<sup>75</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 281; Constable 74213, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.

<sup>76</sup> RIC Reports, CI Wexford, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>77</sup> Constables 74334 and 75000, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38. Despite his very Irish surname, Constable O'Hara's home was in Rhodesia.

<sup>78</sup> Constables 73878, 74684, and 74695, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38; this case is fully described in PRO, HO 351/69.

<sup>79</sup> RIC reports, CI Clare, December 1920, PRO, CO 904/113; Constable 73615, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/138.

<sup>80</sup> Constable 73848, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.

This incident convinced RIC headquarters that the bank manager was in danger from the Black and Tans, and on 6 January, the Strokestown and Longford district inspectors were warned that they would be held personally responsible for the manager's safety.

Nothing more was heard from ESSS. The charges against one Black and Tan were eventually dropped: none of the witnesses had identified him, and while stolen money was found in his coat, there was no way to prove who put it there. The remaining five were tried by field general court martial in February 1921. One was acquitted; the rest were convicted and sentenced to five years' penal servitude.<sup>81</sup>

The RIC register tells us only one thing about crimes like these: while the majority of the Black and Tans were young men between the ages of 18 and 24, eight of the ten criminals in our sample were mature men like Edward Krumm, between the ages of 25 and 30.<sup>82</sup> This seems to have been an especially troublesome cohort. Though men born between 1891 and 1895 made up only 22 percent of the men who joined the RIC in October 1920, they made up 31 percent of the men who were subsequently dismissed.

Older men like these might have spent years in prison, or in the trenches, and most writers have suggested that the Black and Tans were the product of one or both of these environments. By November 1920 Irish republicans were accusing the British of recruiting criminals for the RIC. The *Irish Bulletin* published the names of six Black and Tans, none of whom were a credit to the force: the first had been arrested for felony; the second, dismissed for theft; the third had died from a drug overdose, and the fourth had been certified a dangerous lunatic; the fifth had been allowed to join the force after being convicted of larceny, and the sixth had committed suicide after being caught stealing in a Liverpool hotel. "Nothing could have illustrated the character of the Black-and-Tans better than this simple list," wrote the *Bulletin's* editor, Frank Gallagher: "every thief, drug addict, madman and murderer could come into this new force."<sup>83</sup> That same month, a writer in the American *Irish Press* declared that, "the 'Black and Tans' are poor miserable creatures from the hell holes of London, the scum of London's underworld, mis-called men, but in reality subsidised assassins, a type of manhood whose presence among Hottentots would degrade them."<sup>84</sup>

However, republicans produced little evidence to support these accusations. The proof given to the American Commission, for example, was simply hearsay. Francis Hackett related the following story, which he claimed to have heard from an English officer. "An English detective, he said, came over here to see me this morning. 'I am over here to find a convict, and I went to the depot of the Black-and-Tans to find him,' the detective told me. 'I did not find him there, much to my surprise, but I found a

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<sup>81</sup> Bank raid by six RIC constables, PRO, HO 351/69.

<sup>82</sup> The ninth and tenth men were thirty-nine and twenty years old respectively. Charles Riley was dismissed on 22 October 1920 for larceny committed at the depot, and Jack Austin was dismissed on 27 January 1921 after being convicted by court-martial of an undisclosed offence. Constables 73849 and 74337, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.

<sup>83</sup> David Hogan (pseud. Frank Gallagher), *The Four Glorious Years* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1953), p. 103.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in *Weekly Summary*, 26 November 1920, p. 3, PRO, CO 906/38.

number of other convicts whom I know very well.”<sup>85</sup> Mary MacSwiney told the commission that, “there is a friend of mine who was temporarily the prison physician at Portland prison, and one day he met a man on the street in the Black-and-Tan uniform and stopped him and said, ‘Where did I meet you?’ And the man said, ‘Oh, doctor, don’t you know? I was at Portland prison when you were the prison physician.’”<sup>86</sup>

Claims like these have since been contradicted by witnesses like Pat Mahon, an Irish constable who worked as a clerk in the RIC’s recruiting office in London. “A canard has been put about,” he wrote, “that we recruited criminals deliberately.”

It is on a par with other falsehoods. We had a police report on every candidate, and accepted no man whose Army character was assessed as less than ‘Good.’ The assessment ‘Fair’ met automatic rejection. So much for that.<sup>87</sup>

One way of testing these competing claims is by examining the attestation papers of eight Black and Tans that are preserved at the PRO. All of them have either police reports or army characters appended, but not all of them have both. Police reports are included with only six of the files: four of the candidates are described as respectable men; in the remaining two cases, the police noted only that they knew nothing against them. Army references are included with only five of the files, but all five men were given “good” characters; of the remaining three, Gilbert Horace Walker had served with the Leeds University OTC and came highly recommended by its commanding officer. Though Walker was a university student, John Blacklaw of Aberdeen had left school at age fourteen, and Geoffrey Fisher of Gloucestershire failed a qualifying examination in reading, writing, and simple arithmetic: nonetheless, District Inspector Fleming approved his application, suggesting that Fisher could improve his education in the force. Finally, there are some troubling details in the papers of one candidate, Thomas Arthur Sellars of Yorkshire. The police reported that Sellars came from a very respectable family, but had recently sold his grocery business and moved, leaving his wife with her parents: his wife had not heard from him in six weeks. Sidney B. Gulpin of Gulpin Hall & Co, Electrical Engineers wrote that Sellars was “always a conscientious & reliable workman,” but noted that, though Sellars described himself as an “electrician,” he was actually employed as a labourer.<sup>88</sup>

It seems that while the RIC did conduct background checks, it was not quite as choosy with its British recruits as Mahon claimed. This becomes even clearer when we consider the case of another October man, Thomas Sanson. Sanson had been a London Metropolitan Police constable before the war. He served in the navy, but was discharged in 1916 for medical reasons. He applied to rejoin the Metropolitan Police, but was rejected as unsuitable: he had been charged with assaulting a man in Pimlico in May 1917, and in November 1917 he had been fined in Lambeth Police Court for being drunk

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<sup>85</sup> Testimony of Francis Hackett, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 163.

<sup>86</sup> Testimony of Mary MacSwiney, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 250.

<sup>87</sup> Pat Mahon to J R W Goulden, 13 February 1960, TCD, Goulden Papers 7382A/ 153.

<sup>88</sup> Sample attestation papers of RIC recruits, PRO, HO 184/237.

and incapable.<sup>89</sup> The Metropolitan Police must have reported these facts to the recruiting officer when Sanson applied to join the RIC. Nonetheless, District Inspector Fleming accepted Sanson's application on 29 October 1920. Bizarrely, Sanson resigned the day after his appointment, complaining to an Irish newspaper that he had joined under the misimpression that he was "going to be on ordinary police duties, walking about the streets unarmed."<sup>90</sup>

Sanson, however, was untypical: very few Black and Tans had criminal records. This becomes clear when we examine the Calendar of Prisoners, the register of every person committed to prison in Great Britain, which has now been opened for this period. Working on the assumption that, unlike Sanson, almost all of the Black and Tans had remained in the service until the end of the war, we can compare the calendars for London in the years 1919 and 1920 with our sample from the RIC register—a tedious, time-consuming, and unrewarding exercise. Out of 337 men from London, just one had been in prison since the war's end—for two days. Samuel William Butcher, a painter, born 1891, was committed for trial and imprisoned on 15 June 1920, and bailed on 16 June. He was again imprisoned on 19 July, and tried the same day on a charge of "fraudulently converting to his own use and benefit the several sums of thirteen pounds three pence and three pounds nineteen shillings three pence, received by him for and on account of another person." Butcher pleaded guilty, and was sentenced "to enter into his own recognizance in the sum of twenty pounds for his appearance to hear judgment if called upon."<sup>91</sup> He joined the RIC less than three months later, on 1 October, and after less than four weeks' training was allocated to county Londonderry, where he served for thirteen months. He was fined four days' pay on the 14 December 1921 and was dismissed ten days later, for reasons unknown.<sup>92</sup>

The cases of Sanson and Butcher are discreditable, but hardly prove that the Black and Tans were 'the scum of London's underworld.' Two men out of every 337 are only 0.6 per cent: this would suggest that about fifty or sixty Black and Tans in total had criminal records. Furthermore, neither of these two men could be described as hardened or habitual criminals, and their crimes were hardly revolting. Finally, most importantly, there is no evidence that these men were the ones who were breaking the law in Ireland. As we have seen, ten of the men who joined the RIC in October 1920 were dismissed for criminal offences. None of them are known to have criminal records before they joined the Force.

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<sup>89</sup> Notes on newspaper cutting (*Freeman's Journal*, 4 November 1920) preserved in PRO, CO 904/168.

<sup>90</sup> Newspaper cutting (*Freeman's Journal*, 4 November 1920) preserved in PRO, CO 904/168.

<sup>91</sup> Calendar of Prisoners (London, 1919), PRO, HO 140/354; Calendar of Prisoners (London, 1920), PRO, HO 140/361.

<sup>92</sup> Constable 73629, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38.

## D. Violent Veterans

Even while Irish republicans were insisting that the Black and Tans were ex-convicts, other more sympathetic observers were concluding that experience of trench warfare must have altered the dispositions of British recruits, turning ordinary men into thieves, arsonists, and murderers. One of the witnesses at the American Commission suggested that, “you cannot switch off a man’s moral nature like you would an electric light. You have produced these feelings by what has recently happened. You have brought these men up to use force during six years of war, and then you cannot expect them to switch themselves off in a moment.”<sup>93</sup> Many historians have followed this line of reasoning. In his book on the Black and Tans, Richard Bennett wrote that “their only service experience had been in trench warfare which had a brutalizing rather than ennobling effect.” “Their morale,” he continued, “had not been improved by months of unemployment. The Army had taught them that the reputation for a good character can be based on undiscovered crime and that scrounging only becomes stealing when it is found out.”<sup>94</sup> More recently, Charles Townshend has suggested that as Great War veterans the Black and Tans were “habituated to excitement and violence,” while Martin Seedorf has concluded that, “the brutal impact of the war and ‘the long merciless ordeal in the trenches affected their mental outlook.’”<sup>95</sup> F S L Lyons provided the classic expression of the ‘brutalisation hypothesis’ in 1973. “The Black and Tans,” he wrote, “were for the most part young men who found it hard to settle down after the war, who had become used to a career of adventure and bloodshed, and who were prepared to try their luck in a new sphere for ten shillings a day and all found.”

They were the same type, and produced by much the same circumstances, as the Congo mercenaries of our own day. Their ruthlessness and contempt for life and property stemmed partly from the brutalisation inseparable from four years of trench warfare, but partly also from the continual and intense strain imposed upon them by service in Ireland.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Testimony of Ellen Wilkinson, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 599.

<sup>94</sup> Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, p. 38.

<sup>95</sup> Charles Townshend, “The Irish Insurgency, 1918-21: The Military Problem,” in *Regular Armies and Insurgency*, ed. Ronald Haycock (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 35; Martin Seedorf, “Defending Reprisals: Sir Hamar Greenwood and the ‘Troubles,’ 1920-21,” *Eire-Ireland* 25, no. 4 (1990), p. 83.

<sup>96</sup> F S L Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, new ed. (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1973), p. 415. Lyons also wrote that the Black and Tans “were not, as the contemporary legend had it, the sweepings of English jails, sadists and perverts let loose upon an innocent countryside.” Other historians have also written against this ‘contemporary legend,’ but no one seems to have investigated the matter, and their remarks have made no impression on the popular memory on the Black and Tans.

It is worth noting that Lyons may have been mistaken about the Congo mercenaries as well as the Black and Tans. Though the Katangese Gendarmerie included a number of European freebooters (including a few former Waffen SS fighters and OAS terrorists), most of the gendarmes were young South Africans and Rhodesians, many without previous military experience: see Anthony Mockler, *The Mercenaries* (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

However, there are a couple of problems with this explanation. First, it's completely hypothetical. We have almost no information about the service records of the Black and Tans. We know that most of them were ex-servicemen, but we do not know when they enlisted, where they served, and what battles they fought, if any. We also do not know what kind of men they were before the war. Without this information, we can hardly make meaningful statements about the brutalizing effect of the Great War on British recruits for the RIC. Second, there is very little evidence to suggest that there were large numbers of criminalized war veterans in post-war Britain. If this were the case, there should have been an increase in the crime rate; but in fact, the number of criminal convictions was lower in post-war Britain than it had been in pre-war Britain.<sup>97</sup> Third, historian Joanna Bourke has recently argued that in English-speaking countries, the 'violent veteran' was merely a figment of fearful civilian imaginations. "The removal of external prohibitions against killing, and even encouragement to kill," she concludes, "did not nurture men who would kill in civilian contexts."<sup>98</sup>

Moreover, the evidence suggests that Black and Tans who had served in the regular army *before* 1914 were more likely to commit crimes than wartime volunteers and conscripts. At least two of the nine offenders in our sample had served in the regular army. Patrick Myers, one of the Wexford home invaders, had no occupation but ex-soldier. William Gibson, one of the Roscommon bank robbers, had served in the Gloucester Regiment for ten years before he was demobilized in 1919. Interestingly, the fourth Black and Tan who was convicted for the same bank robbery had also been a regular soldier. Thomas Chester had joined the Royal Fusiliers in 1909, served in India before the war, and had been among the first soldiers to land at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. After the Dardanelles campaign, he served in Egypt, France, and Belgium; he was wounded six times during the war, and when he was demobilized in January 1919, he was given a "very good" character.

Given the comparatively small size of the Edwardian army—only a quarter of a million men, compared to the five million who enlisted during the war—and the heavy losses among the Old Contemptibles, it is remarkable that three of these ten constables had been regular soldiers.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, if we widen our search, we can find other

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<sup>97</sup> *Report of the Commissioners of Prisons and the Directors of Convict Prisons with Appendices for the Year ended 31st March 1920*, Cmd. 972 (1920), p. 6; *Report of the Commissioners of Prisons and the Directors of Convict Prisons with Appendices for the Year ended 31st March 1921*, Cmd. 1523 (1921), p. 6. The figures in these reports were obtained by counting the numbers of prisoners received each year. These numbers were drastically reduced by the operation of the Criminal Justice Administration Act, 1914, which allowed more time for the payment of fines: the 1920 report calls this a "very beneficent Act". (1920, p. 9) Nonetheless, both reports emphasize that the number of persons imprisoned without the option of a fine had also fallen sharply, from over 89,000 in 1909-10 to 26,136 in 1919-20. (1920, p. 10) The commissioners were struck especially by the persistence of this trend in 1920-21, a period of severe economic depression: the number imprisoned without the option of a fine in 1920-21 was 30,512, still far below pre-war levels. (1921, p. 6) The commissioners credited this "principally to the effect of Unemployment Pay, which has prevented acute distress." (1921, p. 6)

<sup>98</sup> Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: Granta Books, 1999), 365.

<sup>99</sup> Britain's regular army was almost wiped out in the first year of the Great War. During its 1915 offensives the British First Army on the western front lost 5,927 officers and 134,579 other ranks, which was more than the full complement of the British Expeditionary Force in the summer of 1914: J E

references to regular soldiers among the Black and Tans. Thirty-four of the men who joined in October 1920 listed no occupation but ex-soldier; another two had no occupation but ex-marine. Nor were these the only regulars among them: William Gibson was listed in the register as a miner, and Gordon Smith, a man who had served in the army for fourteen years, described himself as a coachman as well as an ex-soldier.<sup>100</sup> Archibald Thompson, one of two Black and Tans at Listowel barracks in county Kerry in the spring of 1920, was also apparently a former regular. One of his Irish colleagues later recalled that, “whatever brought Thompson to Ireland, it was not any over-developed sense of patriotism. He had an old soldier’s dislike for officers and a true old soldier’s love for all the beer he could buy or scrounge. Outside his love for beer he showed no interest in anything.”<sup>101</sup>

More disturbingly, another one of the few prosecutions on record involved a former regular soldier. Thirty-one year-old William Wilton joined the force on 11 January 1921. Ten days later, he was on his way to his station in Cork’s west riding when his convoy stopped for the night at Maryborough, Queen’s County. After spending some time drinking in a pub, Wilton and three other men (a Black and Tan named Perkins and two soldiers named Smith and McCowett) went looking for someplace to stay the night. Three families told Wilton they had no room. When the fourth family refused to open up, Wilton fired his revolver at their front door, killing the man on the other side: Thomas Lawless, a former Irish Guardsman. A court of inquiry found a verdict of manslaughter against Wilton on 22 January. He was arraigned at the Maryborough spring assizes on 12 March, tried by court-martial on 27 May, convicted of manslaughter, and sentenced to ten years’ penal servitude. He is listed in the constabulary’s general register as both a bricklayer and an ex-soldier, but like Gibson and Chester he enlisted years before the Great War, serving in at least three campaigns between 1910 and 1913.<sup>102</sup>

Wilton showed no remorse for his crime. After he was arrested, he said, “I knocked at this particular door where the trouble occurred & asked for lodgings. The door was not opened & some one shouted ‘We have no room’ or something to that effect. I imagining that we were going to be attacked took my revolver from my holster & the

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Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1915*, Vol. 2, (London: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 391-93. As a result, Anthony Farrar-Hockley’s history of the Battles of Ypres, 1914 is entitled *Death of an Army*, while Alan Clark’s book on the disasters of the following year begins: “This is the story of the destruction of an army—the old professional army of the United Kingdom that always won the last battle, whose regiments had fought at Quebec, Corunna, in the Indies, were trained in musketry at Hythe, drilled on the parched earth of Chuddapore, and were machine-gunned, gassed and finally buried in 1915.” Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (New York: Award Books, 1965), p. ix.

<sup>100</sup> Constable 75016, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/39. Smith resigned the day after he was appointed. His fourteen years’ military service is mentioned in a newspaper cutting (*Freeman’s Journal*, 4 November 1920) preserved in PRO CO 904/168.

<sup>101</sup> *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, p. 105fn.

<sup>102</sup> Constable 77598, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/41; Man shot dead by RIC constable, PRO, HO 351/85.



shot was accidentally discharged into the street.”<sup>103</sup> The two soldiers testified that Wilton drew his gun at the start of their search for a billet, and even threatened to shoot Private Smith when he wanted to go back to barracks. They also testified that when Lawless refused to open up, Wilton swore at him and threatened to shoot through the door before he fired; he was prevented from firing a second shot when Smith caught his wrist and tried to disarm him.<sup>104</sup>

Wilton petitioned the lord lieutenant from Mountjoy prison on 28 June 1921. He continued to claim that the shooting was “a pure accident,” and that he “had not the slightest intention to harm anyone.” In his petition, he emphasized that he was “not out for any unlawful purpose” and that he made no attempt to escape after the shooting. He also emphasized that he had never met Lawless, “so that I could not have any malice,” and that since the bullet had penetrated the door, “it could not be said that I fired wilfully at the man.” Wilton also mentioned that he was a married man with two children, and an ex-soldier: “I was in receipt of a Pension and always held a respectfull [*sic*] character when I have my home if I have to undergo this sentence it will mean my home will have to be sold and that my Family and myself branded for nothing more than a most unfortunate accident which I could not possibly help.”<sup>105</sup>

Wilton’s petition was rejected on 13 July 1921, two days after the Truce. However, he appealed to the viceroy again on 31 October 1921, and if anything his tone was even less repentant after five months in prison. “My motive in sending this,” he wrote, “is not to appeal to the merciful sympathies of your Lordship, but to ask from you justice. Intuition tells me that British justice has been sadly miscarried in my case, that is to emphasize British justice as it is minstrated [*sic*] by his Majesty’s judges.” Wilton called his sentence “brutal” and pointed out that other men convicted of manslaughter had received sentences of a year or less: “then,” he continued,

there was the doubt of any intent which was not given to me at my trial as British law intends it should be, and personally I arrive at the conclusion that the law and justice of the British Nation had ridiculously and shamefully administered for the express purpose that it would serve the then political atmosphere indeed I can anticipate no other formula for the ridiculous sentence of 10 years.

Wilton also mentioned that this was the first time he had ever been in trouble, either as a soldier or a civilian, and argued that,

my services to King and Empire which include Somaliland 1910 Persian Gulf 1910-11 the British intervents [*sic*] in the Balkan war of 1912-13 then the Late war, and at the call of my country for men to serve in Ireland and as I have always

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<sup>103</sup> Statement of Constable Hogan, RIC, 22 January 1921, PRO, HO 351/85: note the lapse into the passive voice.

<sup>104</sup> Statement of Private Smith, Royal Scots Fusiliers, 22 January 1921, PRO, HO 351/85: this was corroborated by Private McCowlett.

<sup>105</sup> William Wilton. Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 21 June 1921, PRO, HO 351/85: Wilton had married a woman from Lancashire on 20 June 1915.

shown my loyal support to my King and Empire in grave and critical times this should at least entitle me to justice.

“I do not plead for mercy,” he concluded, “but simply ask from your Lordship that which I have always gladly given my services for eaven [*sic*] at the cost of my own life and was never found wanting to uphold that cause namely right and justice.”<sup>106</sup> Wilton was transferred from Mountjoy to Liverpool prison on 4 November, and his second petition was rejected twelve days later.

Prisoner petitions have also been preserved in the Strokestown bank robbery case. The two old soldiers, William Gibson and Thomas Chester, were as unrepentant as William Wilton. Chester had been caught with two bundles of stolen banknotes in his pockets, and all three of the bank’s employees had identified him as one of the robbers. Nonetheless, he protested his innocence. According to his account, Chester “remained with the cars for some little time, eventually going down the town.” When the sergeant in charge returned from court, Chester was ordered to get “the boys” together: he had just located four of them in the pub when the local head constable arrived and ordered them all back to barracks. Chester went on to complain that the identification parade had not been conducted properly: the bank men “were all talking together in the centre of the half-circle of men, pointing to different men and arguing pretty strongly.” He also complained that charges had been dropped against one Black and Tan, and that another had been tried for receiving stolen money rather than robbery, “so that there are 4 men here answering for the original six men.” He concluded by mentioning that his wife had been compelled to sell their home. “As I am now, Sir,” he wrote, “my wife has no means of support, a boy 14 months old and expecting another in a few months time. She has nowhere to go except the Workhouse, for she had nothing to rely on except my monthly pay.”<sup>107</sup>

Gibson mentioned many of the same points as Chester. He complained that “only four have to suffer for a deed committed by 6,” and that “the identification parade on which we were arrested was more or less a farce, as it states in the evidence that the witnesses were talking to one another on the parade & deciding whom they should identify.” Like Chester, Gibson was married: he had two young children, and his wife was pregnant. “Now that I am in this predicament she has no means of sustenance & the only course laying open to her is to enter the workhouse, & of course selling up the home.” Again, like Chester, Gibson had been caught with stolen money in his pockets, and was identified by all three witnesses. His defence was rather startling. “On the day this crime was committed,” he wrote, “I was under the influence of drink and therefore contend that I was unaware of the serious nature of what I was doing, in point of fact, I do not remember having any hand in the affair at all.”<sup>108</sup> Not surprisingly, both Chester and Gibson’s petitions were rejected.

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<sup>106</sup> William Wilton, Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 31 October 1921, PRO, HO 351/85.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Chester, Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 23 March 1921, PRO, HO 351/69.

<sup>108</sup> William Gibson, Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 24 March 1921, PRO, HO 351/69.

The two men who had not served in the regular army, Edwin Hollins and Harvey Skinner, made similar excuses and appeals, but neither man made any attempt to deny his guilt, and the tone of their petitions is apologetic. Hollins said simply that he was “badly under the influence of drink” when the robbery occurred and had no memory of what happened. “I also wish to state that during my four years army service I never had any offence against me so this fall is very black against my character.” Skinner too mentioned that his character had previously been good. “On the day,” he wrote mournfully, “I was very drunk and not capable of my actions if I had been sober this would not have happened.” Like Chester and Gibson, Hollins and Skinner were married with young families. Skinner had served with the Royal Marine Artillery until 1917 and with the merchant marine until he joined the RIC. “My wife is not very strong,” he wrote. “My two children are but little babies the eldest being two years old and the youngest 13 months so my wife cannot go to work & consequently my little home will be sold & my wife will have to go to the workhouse. The children I have never seen much of as being away from home & only then after voyages of 6 & 7 months.” Once again, however, the lord lieutenant rejected their appeals.<sup>109</sup>

In late 1920, the *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* suggested that “a by no means negligible proportion” of the Royal Irish Constabulary, “as at present constituted, consists of men of intemperate habits who are utterly unsuited to their duties. It may be that not more than one percent of the RIC are men of really bad character. Nevertheless, this small fraction has discredited the whole force as an instrument of policy by making it an object of general dread and detestation.”<sup>110</sup> We might easily conclude that this “small fraction” was composed of old soldiers like Wilton, Chester, and Gibson. The pre-war army had been recruited from “the least skilled sections of the working-class,” and many recruits were failures in civilian life, unemployed and hungry.<sup>111</sup> For such men, military service was a deal with the devil: the army taught them no useful skills, and as Gareth Stedman Jones has pointed out, “army recruitment alleviated the unemployment of young adults only to reproduce it in a more intractable form in early middle age.”<sup>112</sup> Old Contemptibles who survived the war were swept out of the army in the spring of 1919: every man who enlisted before 1 January 1916 was demobilized, with the exception of those who volunteered for a year’s service with the armies of occupation.<sup>113</sup> It is easy to see why such men became Black and Tans, and

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<sup>109</sup> Edwin Hollins, Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 22 March 1921, PRO, HO 351/69; Harvey Skinner, Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 23 March 1921, PRO, HO 351/69.

Interestingly, Mrs. Hollins and Mrs. Skinner both tried to get their men out of prison. Mrs. Hollins wrote to the lord lieutenant on 31 March 1921 and to the home secretary on 19 June 1921, pleading on her husband’s behalf, while Mrs. Skinner approached her Member of Parliament in October 1921 and asked him to intervene. Although Tom Chester’s mother wrote a number of letters to officials about her son’s case, Chester and Gibson’s wives remained silent.

<sup>110</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* (London: The Labour Party, 1921), p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> Spiers, *Army and Society*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>112</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971; Toronto: Penguin Books Canada, 1992), p. 79.

<sup>113</sup> Stephen Graubard, “Military Demobilization in Great Britain following the First World War,” *Journal of Modern History* 19 (1947), p. 304.

easy to imagine that they were the Labour Commission's "men of really bad character," or Macardle's "dangerous type of unemployable." If nothing else, old soldiers like Wilton, Chester, and Gibson had many more years to learn Bennett's lessons than their wartime comrades.

However, before we blame men like these for police reprisals in Ireland, we should remember a few important facts. Out of eleven convicted criminals we have examined here, only four of them were definitely regular soldiers. Similarly, out of the six men arrested for the Strokestown bank robbery, only Chester and Gibson were definitely regulars. Harvey Skinner and Edwin Hollins both enlisted during the war, and we know nothing about the military service of the two men who were acquitted.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, despite their insolence, Wilton, Chester, and Gibson look more like respectable workingmen than criminals. They were homeowners, not vagrants or lodgers, and all three of them were married with children. Nor were they unemployable. Between leaving the army and entering the RIC, Chester worked in a munitions factory, and Gibson worked in the London underground. Furthermore, by 23 December 1920 Chester had been serving with the RIC for 10 months and was expecting a promotion to temporary sergeant.<sup>115</sup> Admittedly, we have only their word on many of these matters, but this was good enough for the chief crown solicitor when their cases were reviewed in February and March 1922.<sup>116</sup>

Finally, these men committed unusual crimes. Most of the police crime and violence in Ireland was directed against known and suspected rebels. No Black and Tan was ever prosecuted for taking part in a police riot, or for joining a death squad. To understand why, we must remember that the Black and Tans were a minority in the RIC. Only one in four constables was British by the end of 1920, and only one in three constables was British when the force was disbanded in the spring of 1922.<sup>117</sup> By the end of 1920, the garrison of a typical rural police station consisted of a couple of sergeants and a dozen constables, only three or four of whom were Black and Tans.<sup>118</sup>

As we shall see, the attitude of the RIC's Irish majority was crucial. Peelers were willing to tolerate men who killed Volunteers and burned the homes of Irish republicans. In fact, they did a fair amount of killing and burning themselves. Edward Krumm was

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<sup>114</sup> Constable John Norris of Middlesex continued to serve with the RIC in county Longford until he was demobilized on 2 February 1922. Constable Albert Smith of London continued to serve with the RIC until he was accidentally shot and killed on 9 April 1921: Constables 71895 and 72213, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/37.

<sup>115</sup> Tom Chester was a very untypical Black and Tan. Born 12 December 1891, over 5 feet 10 inches tall, he was a Roman Catholic from Berkshire who married an Irishwoman from county Kildare on 18 April 1916. He seems to have been residing in Ireland after the war: he joined the RIC in Dublin on 16 February 1920, and was recommended by an RIC district inspector rather than a recruiting officer in Great Britain: Constable 70318, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/36.

<sup>116</sup> Opinions of Chief Crown Solicitor in cases of Tom Chester, William Gibson, Harry Skinner, and Edwin Hollins, 16 February 1922, PRO, HO 351/69: the four men had the remainder of their sentences remitted on 18 February 1922. Opinion of Chief Crown Solicitor in case of William Wilton, 6 March 1922, PRO, HO 351/85: Wilton had the remainder of his sentence remitted on 9 March 1922.

<sup>117</sup> RIC Returns by County, 1921, PRO, HO 184/62; Outrage Reports, PRO, CO 904/149; British Recruits Disbandment Register (by county), PRO, HO 184/129-67.

<sup>118</sup> RIC Returns by County 1921, PRO, HO 184/62.

the only Black and Tan in Galway town the night he was shot. The police who took reprisals for Krumm's killing were all Irishmen.<sup>119</sup> However, these Irish policemen were not willing to tolerate bank robbery, or the shooting of innocent civilians who refused to open their doors at night. Consequently, men responsible for such offences were frequently prosecuted. In the spring of 1921, at least thirty-six RIC constables were court-martialled and thirty of them were convicted. Sixteen of them for imprisoned for theft and ten of them for crimes of violence; the remaining four were sentenced to three months' hard labour for vandalizing a church.<sup>120</sup> Hard cases like William Wilton may have been responsible for crimes like these, but crimes like these were extraordinary. Ordinary crimes like the shooting of suspects and the burning of homes were the work of ordinary policemen. This will become even clearer when we turn our attention to a force that was almost never accused of recruiting ex-convicts and thugs, but became just as infamous as the Black and Tans: the Auxiliary Division.

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<sup>119</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 415.

<sup>120</sup> Dublin Castle weekly press releases, 18 February-30 June 1921, PRO, CO 904/168; see also C J C Street, *Ireland in 1921* (London: Philip Allan & Co., 1922), p. 35.

## TABLES

Table 3.1. *Birth dates of British RIC recruits, October 1920 (%)*

|           |    |
|-----------|----|
| 1901-1902 | 11 |
| 1896-1900 | 48 |
| 1891-1895 | 22 |
| 1886-1890 | 13 |
| 1881-1885 | 5  |
| 1871-1880 | 1  |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

Table 3.2. *Nationalities of British RIC recruits, October 1920, compared to population of Great Britain, 1921 and nationalities of British soldiers, 1920-21 (%)*

| Nationality           | British RIC Recruits<br>October 1920 | 1921<br>Census | British Soldiers<br>1920-21 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| English               | 89                                   | 83.4           | 87                          |
| Welsh                 | 1                                    | 5.2            | 3                           |
| Scottish              | 8                                    | 11.4           | 8                           |
| Empire & Commonwealth | 2                                    | --             | 2                           |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; 1921 Census of England and Wales (Preliminary Report), Cmd. 1485 (1921), p. 63; *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1921*, Cmd. 1941 (1923), p. 81. Irish soldiers have been discounted.

Table 3.3. *Native regions and recruiting offices of British RIC recruits, October 1920 compared to the 1921 Census (%)*

| Region              | RIC Recruits<br>Native Regions | 1921 Census | RIC Recruits<br>Recruiting Offices |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Central England     | 12                             | 20          | 5                                  |
| Northern England    | 15                             | 28          | 20                                 |
| London and Vicinity | 47                             | 23          | 59                                 |
| Southern England    | 12                             | 9           | 7                                  |
| Eastern England     | 3                              | 4           | 1                                  |
| Scotland            | 8                              | 11          | 8                                  |
| Wales               | 1                              | 5           | --                                 |
| Other               | 2                              | --          | --                                 |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; 1921 Census of England and Wales (Preliminary Report), Cmd. 1485 (1921), p. xi.

Table 3.4. *British Army recruiting, 1920-21 compared to RIC recruiting in Britain, October 1920 (%)*

| <u>Area</u>      | <u>Army Recruits</u> | <u>RIC Recruits</u> |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Eastern Command  | 17                   | 6                   |
| London Zone      | 19                   | 55                  |
| Northern Command | 21                   | --                  |
| Scottish Command | 9                    | 8                   |
| Southern Command | 18                   | 11                  |
| Western Command  | 16                   | 20                  |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1921*, Cmd. 1941 (1923), pp. 5-7.

Table 3.5. *Religious denominations of British RIC recruits, October 1920, compared to British soldiers, 1920-21 (%)*

| <u>Denomination</u> | <u>British RIC Recruits<br/>October 1920</u> | <u>British Soldiers<br/>1920-21</u> |
|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Church of England   | 80   | 72                                  |
| Roman Catholic      | 8  | 14                                  |
| Presbyterian        | 6  | 7                                   |
| Nonconformist       | 6  | 7                                   |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1921*, Cmd. 1941 (1923), p. 83. Irish soldiers have not been discounted.

Table 3.6. *Birth and marriage dates of married British RIC recruits, October 1920 (%)*

| <u>Birth Date</u> |    | <u>Marriage Date</u> |    |
|-------------------|----|----------------------|----|
| 1901-1902         | 2  | Enlistment-1922      | 17 |
| 1896-1900         | 32 | 1918-Enlistment      | 40 |
| 1891-1895         | 31 | 1915-1917            | 19 |
| 1886-1890         | 23 | 1912-1914            | 10 |
| 1881-1885         | 10 | 1909-1911            | 7  |
| 1871-1880         | 2  | 1900-1908            | 7  |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

Table 3.7. *Occupations of British RIC recruits, October 1920, compared to occupations of IRA Volunteers from provincial Ireland and Dublin, 1920-21 (%)*

| Sample...                 | IRA Volunteers |            |        |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------|--------|
|                           | Black & Tans   | Provincial | Dublin |
|                           | 1,153          | 1,985      | 507    |
| Farmer/son                | 0.7            | 29         | --     |
| Farm labourer             | 1.4            | 12         | --     |
| Un/semi-skilled           | 52             | 15         | 46     |
| Skilled                   | 35             | 19         | 23     |
| Shop assist/clerk         | 6              | 14         | 18     |
| Professional              | 2              | 4          | 2      |
| Merchant/son              | 0.6            | 5          | 3      |
| Student                   | 0.2            | 1          | 3      |
| Other                     | 0.5            | 2          | 4      |
| None Given/Indecipherable | 1.6            | --         | --     |

Sources: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; Peter Hart, "The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army, 1916-1923," *Historical Journal* 42, no. 1 (1999), pp. 211, 215; also, Peter Hart, "The Geography of Revolution in Ireland 1917-23," *Past and Present* no. 155 (May 1997), p. 161.

Table 3.8. *Common occupational classes and occupations for British RIC recruits, October 1920 (%)*.

| Occupational Class                           | %    | Occupation     | %    |
|--|------|----------------|------|
| Metals, Machines, Implements and Conveyances | 23.5 | Labourer       | 15.8 |
| Conveyance of Men, Goods, and Messages       | 22.4 | Motor Driver   | 8.5  |
| Other, General, and Undefined Workers        | 18.4 | Fitter         | 4.0  |
| Commercial Occupations                       | 5.9  | Clerk          | 3.9  |
| Mines and Quarries                           | 3.9  | Motor Mechanic | 3.8  |
| Defence of the Country                       | 3.3  | Mechanic       | 3.3  |
| Building and Works of Construction           | 3.0  | Ex-Soldier     | 3.0  |
| Domestic Offices or Services                 | 2.9  | Miner          | 2.9  |
| Agriculture                                  | 2.5  | Engineer       | 2.0  |
| Food, Tobacco, Drink, and Lodging            | 2.3  | Carman         | 1.9  |
| Professional Occupations                     | 1.8  | Painter        | 1.5  |
| Dress  | 1.6  | Porter         | 1.5  |
| Total  | 91.5 |                | 52.1 |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39. Occupational classes follow those in the 1911 Census.



Table 3.9. *Cities with more than ten British recruits for the RIC, October 1920, compared to cities with the greatest numbers of ex-servicemen drawing unemployment donation, June 1920.*

| <u>RIC Recruits, Oct 1920</u> |     | <u>Ex-Servicemen, Jun 1920</u> |        |
|-------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|--------|
| London                        | 639 | London                         | 52,083 |
| Liverpool                     | 222 | Liverpool                      | 5,319  |
| Glasgow                       | 85  | Glasgow                        | 5,219  |
| Birmingham                    | 19  | Bristol                        | 3,734  |
| Portsmouth                    | 19  | Portsmouth                     | 3,233  |
| Bristol                       | 18  | Manchester                     | 3,158  |
| Canterbury                    | 15  | Birmingham                     | 2,834  |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; The Training and Resettlement of Ex-Servicemen, f. 344.

Table 3.10. *Number of days between appointment and allocation for British RIC recruits, October 1920 (%)*

|       |    |
|-------|----|
| 1-14  | 5  |
| 15-21 | 38 |
| 22-28 | 29 |
| 29-35 | 8  |
| 36-42 | 6  |
| 43-56 | 5  |
| >56   | 8  |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

Table 3.11. *Allocation of British RIC Recruits by Province, October 1920, compared to IRA Attacks on RIC by province, July 1920-July 1921.*

| Province  | Recruits |    | Attacks           |    |
|-----------|----------|----|-------------------|----|
|           | Oct 1920 | %  | Jul 1920-Jul 1921 | %  |
| Munster   | 338      | 38 | 450               | 50 |
| Leinster  | 256      | 28 | 169               | 19 |
| Ulster    | 177      | 20 | 150               | 17 |
| Connaught | 129      | 14 | 129               | 14 |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39; Outrage Reports, 1920-21, PRO, CO 904/ 148-150.

Table 3.12. *Fates of British RIC Recruits, October 1920 (%)*.

| Sample...         | All recruits<br>1153 | Recruits whose<br>fates are known<br>984 |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|
| Unknown           | 15                   | --                                       |
| Resigned, 1920    | 8                    | 10                                       |
| Resigned, 1921    | 13                   | 15                                       |
| Dismissed         | 8                    | 9  |
| Discharged        | 3                    | 3  |
| Pensioned         | 1                    | 1  |
| Killed or Died    | 2                    | 3  |
| Demobilized, 1922 | 50                   | 59                                       |

Source: Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DAS BRITISCHE FREIKORPS The Auxiliary Division

General Tudor might be described as the Doctor Moreau of the First Irish War. In his novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, H G Wells described how a mad scientist created a race of hybrids, part human and part animal. In the summer of 1920, Dublin Castle's police adviser created his own race of hybrids, part soldiers and part police—the Auxiliaries. Like Moreau, Tudor seems to have conducted his experiments with little thought for the consequences. Like Moreau's beast folk, 'Tudor's Toughs' quickly escaped from their creator's control and ran amok on their island. In terms of both money and public support, the Auxiliary Division was a costly failure. The division was much more expensive than Tudor anticipated, and the crimes of some temporary cadets made it more expensive still; other cadets behaved more like terrorists than policemen, and their undisciplined violence was widely reported in the British press. The division was supposed to embody the best features of both military and police forces. In many ways, it embodied their worst features instead.

#### A. Defence of Barracks Sergeants

The Auxiliary Division's origins can be traced back to the winter of 1920, when the insurgency was just beginning. Between 1 January and 21 February, eleven police barracks were attacked by armed bands of Irish Volunteers.<sup>1</sup> In the early morning of 12 February the guerrillas destroyed the barracks at Allihies, county Cork. The attackers planted a bomb at the gable end of the building. When the bomb exploded two constables were wounded: one of them, Constable Michael Neenan, died of his wounds later that afternoon.<sup>2</sup> Five days later, Lord French decided that the RIC needed men with military experience to help the force defend its barracks. Deputy Inspector General T J Smith informed Assistant Under Secretary Sir James Taylor of the lord lieutenant's decision in the following minute, dated 17 February:

His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant decided today that, in view of the recent successful attacks on Police barracks in Ireland, 300 demobilised Army

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Denise Moran, "A Force Beleaguered: The Royal Irish Constabulary 1900-1922," (Unpublished MA Thesis, University College Galway, 1989), p. 188. Moran's list does not include a raid on the RIC barracks at Baltinglass, county Wicklow, where Constable James J Malynn was shot dead when he opened the barracks door: Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>2</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 60-61; Neenan was awarded a posthumous Constabulary Medal on 3 March 1920.

Officers should be appointed to organise defences of Barracks and command in case of attack, but not to interfere with ordinary police duties.

It is proposed to take these Officers on for a year at a time and to pay them at the rate of £7 a week (which is double the initial pay of a Constable). The question of employing permanently any of them who showed a special aptitude for police work could be considered later on.

The cost of this arrangement for one year would be about £110,000 and I have to request that the sanction of the Treasury may be obtained for the payment of this amount from Constabulary funds.

Attacks on police barracks have of late become very numerous & casualties to men defending the barracks have been serious. It is considered that the employment of young officers who have had experience in the War will enable the men to put up a better defence & may result in a saving of life & property.<sup>3</sup>

There were a couple of obvious problems with the Irish government's plan. If these temporary sergeants were not to "interfere" with police work, then their duties would have been quite limited once their barracks defences were organised. They would also have no chance to show the "special aptitude" that might lead to permanent employment, if they were not to "interfere" with policing. Despite these unanswered questions, Taylor embodied Smith's minute in a letter to the Treasury the following day—a letter that incidentally clarified what Smith meant by interference: "it is not intended that these Officers should take part in the discharge of ordinary police duties," he wrote.<sup>4</sup> On 5 March, the Treasury rejected this plan outright. In his reply, the secretary stated simply that, "Their Lordships feel grave doubt as to whether this scheme is either practicable or desirable and on present information They regret to be unable to authorise the proposed expenditure." "They would," however, "be disposed to give favourable consideration to proposals for the inspection of the defences of the barracks and for the instruction of the police on the best means of defence, by military experts."<sup>5</sup>

Sir James passed the Treasury's decision to Major-General Shaw with a request for his observations. On 8 March the RIC barracks at Hugginstown, county Kilkenny was attacked and destroyed, and Constable Thomas Ryan had his arm blown off during the fighting. That same day, Brigadier-General Brind replied to the assistant under secretary on behalf of the commander in chief, noting "with regret" that the Treasury had refused to sanction the employment of temporary sergeants. Brind's letter provided a number of interesting reasons for adopting the Irish government's plan. To begin with, it was only a part of a larger scheme: the government was planning to increase the strength of the RIC overall and the temporary sergeants would be part of this overall increase. Though sergeants cost twice as much as constables, the overall cost would be no greater: the government could simply reduce the number of new constables to cover the cost.

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<sup>3</sup> T J Smith to Assistant Under Secretary, 17 February 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>4</sup> J J Taylor to Secretary of the Treasury, 18 February 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>5</sup> G L Barstow to Under Secretary, 5 March 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

Furthermore, the sergeants were temporary, while any additional constables would be permanent, which suggested that the Irish government's plan would actually be cheaper in the long run.

Brind also noted that "duties now fall to the lot of the R.I.C. which necessitate military knowledge, training and experience," and that "the difficulty of finding large numbers of recruits of the stamp, class and size required by the R.I.C. makes it necessary to look for an alternative course." Finally, he pointed out that the Treasury's suggestions had already been adopted, and were "already being carried out all over Ireland, without any necessity for Treasury Sanction or funds. 'Inspection of defences' and 'instruction of the police' are obvious measures," he concluded, "but in the opinion of the G.O.C.-in-C. are insufficient to meet to meet the present requirements."

On 9 March Taylor asked the RIC's deputy inspector general for any further observations. Smith replied on 10 March that the police were indeed receiving advice and instruction from the military, but that this was insufficient: unless something more was done, police barracks would continue to fall to rebel attacks. "Failing actual military assistance which cannot be given," he concluded, "I think an additional fighting man in [barracks] likely to be attacked particularly a man with a good knowledge of the best methods of defence would be a great advantage." As if to emphasize Smith's point, Constable Thomas Ryan, who lost an arm defending Hugginstown RIC barracks, died on the evening of 10 March.

Strengthened by military and constabulary support, Taylor wrote back to the Treasury on 13 March and asked them to reconsider the Irish government's proposal. Their Lordships, however, still seem to have doubted that the scheme was either practicable or desirable. The Irish government had asked for three hundred temporary sergeants. In his reply of 26 March, the secretary of the Treasury wrote that, "in deference to the further representations now made by His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, My Lords are prepared to assent to the employment of not more than 50 demobilized officers for this purpose for one year at the proposed rate of remuneration."

Ultimately, despite the Treasury's limited approval, nothing much came of this idea. Although the IRA continued to attack police barracks, the RIC had recruited only twelve defence of barracks sergeants by May 1920; one of these men, Sergeant John Stokes, was shot dead when the guerrillas attacked Rearcross RIC Barracks in county Tipperary on 12 July 1920. Nonetheless, the defence of barracks sergeants were the RIC's first experiment with temporary police forces, and when Major-General Tudor took up Churchill's idea for a 'special emergency gendarmerie' during the summer of 1920, he used these temporary sergeants as both a precedent and a model. And as we shall see, problems with recruiting and conflicts with the Treasury would plague the Auxiliary Division as well.

## **B. 'These Ex-Officers will be called Temporary Cadets'**

But above all, the ADRIC's administrative history was marked by disorganization, confusion, and waste. On 6 July 1920 the police adviser submitted a

scheme for an auxiliary police force to the under secretary, Sir John Anderson. “It is essential to reinforce the Royal Irish Constabulary quickly,” he said. “Recruiting in the ordinary way will take time. I recommend that the present system of getting officers to assist in the defence of Barracks be extended. I consider permission should be given to recruit, in the first instance, up to 500 ex-officers, conditions of service as under:”

- (1) These ex-officers will be called Temporary Cadets.
- (2) Terms of enlistment 1 year, terminable on one months notice after the first 4 months, if the Temporary Cadet wishes to resign
- (3) Pay, £7 per week.
- (4) To rank as Sergeants for discipline and (subsistence and travelling) allowances.
- (5) Uniform Khaki, with R.I.C. badges and buttons, or Sergeant’s uniform, R.I.C., at will. When Khaki is worn the letters T.C., for Temporary Cadet will be worn on shoulders, instead of badges of rank or stripes.
- (6) These Temporary Cadets will have priority of consideration for permanent appointment as officers of the R.I.C.<sup>6</sup>

This is an interesting document, for a number of reasons. First, the mission of this new force was left undefined. Tudor seems to have seen his temporary cadets merely as a way to reinforce the RIC quickly. If this was their mission, then they failed completely. Recruiting for the ADRIC would always be much slower than recruiting for the RIC. Between July 1920 and July 1921, while about thirty-two hundred men joined the Auxiliary Division as temporary cadets and temporary constables, about nine thousand men became permanent constables. In October 1920, when 1153 men became Black and Tans, only 270 men became Auxiliaries. The division’s relative lack of success in attracting recruits is interesting when we consider that an Auxiliary’s base pay was double the base pay of a Black and Tan. The prospect of a career as a policeman, followed by a pension, may have made the RIC more attractive than the higher wages offered by the temporary forces.

In any case, Tudor seems to have thought more about his new force’s uniforms than its mission. He was also responsible for some of its most peculiar characteristics. He seems to have invented the paradoxical rank of ‘temporary cadet’ (that is, temporary officer trainee), to wedge the new Auxiliaries into the RIC’s table of ranks, and to preserve the illusion that these men were civilian police rather than auxiliary troops.<sup>7</sup> He made it clear that temporary cadets would have no standard uniform: they could wear military khaki or constabulary green, as they wished. He also planned to make his irregular temporary cadets into permanent officers, regardless of the fact that regular members of the RIC worked for years to earn such appointments.

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<sup>6</sup> Tudor to Under Secretary, 6 July 1920. PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>7</sup> According to Brigadier Crozier, Tudor told the commandant of the Auxiliary Division that his men were soldiers “camouflaged” as police. Frank P Crozier, *Impressions and Recollections* (London: Laurie, 1930), p. 251.

Tudor was given verbal approval for his plan, and on 11 July, the deputy police adviser, Ormonde Winter, wrote another letter to the under secretary, asking for written authority to proceed. Interestingly, Winter seems to have misunderstood Tudor's intentions: in his letter, he asked Anderson for the authority to enlist ex-officers as special constables rather than as temporary cadets.<sup>8</sup> There is no record of how this confusion was dispelled, but at the conference on 23 July, Tudor told the cabinet that, "He had just recruited 500 ex-officers and a number of ex-soldiers, which formed a fine body of men, and he felt that, given the proper support, it would be possible to crush the present campaign of outrage." Apparently, Tudor was still thinking of his temporary cadets as emergency reinforcements (or even replacements) for the RIC: in reply to a question, he stated that, "the recruitment of the Royal Irish Constabulary was only keeping pace with resignations. If it was impossible to get the men, he must develop the idea of temporary cadet officers, 500 of whom he had obtained. These officers were drafted from England to strengthen the Royal Irish Constabulary personnel in certain parts of the country and had had a great effect."<sup>9</sup>

Either the police adviser's statements were not correct, or the records of this cabinet conference are in error. Tudor could not possibly have recruited 500 ex-officers in less than three weeks, and whatever recruits he had obtained could not possibly have exercised a "great effect" in such a short period. Indeed, according to the Auxiliary Division's own records, the first temporary cadets were not appointed until 23 July—the day of the conference—and the division still numbered less than six hundred men two months later.<sup>10</sup> Either the recording secretary misunderstood what Tudor said, or the police adviser was exaggerating wildly.<sup>11</sup>

On 28 July Tudor wrote again to Sir John Anderson and provided a somewhat plainer mission statement for his new auxiliaries. Temporary cadets would be formed into military-style companies, to provide "a mobile police force to send to threatened points and to the worst disturbed areas," working under the direction of divisional

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<sup>8</sup> Winter to Under Secretary, 11 July 1920, PRO, HO 351/63. Townshend says that Winter was asking for authority to recruit 500 special constables *in addition to* 500 temporary cadets (Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 110). However, Winter mentions that his request has already received verbal approval, and Tudor referred to just 500 men on 23 July. This would seem to suggest that Winter was referring to the same 500 men that Tudor had previously requested, and was confused about their anomalous designation.

<sup>9</sup> Speech of Police Adviser, Cabinet Conference, 23 July 1920, PRO, CAB 24/109, CP 1693.

<sup>10</sup> Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 110, 210.

<sup>11</sup> Historians of British policy in Ireland have not been able to explain this anomaly. Townshend noted that Tudor was referring to a force that did not yet exist, but offered no explanation, and did not mention Tudor's claim that his new force had "exercised a great effect". In an earlier section on the Cabinet conference, Townshend wrote that Tudor "announced that he was recruiting 500 ex-officers" (Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 102), but this is not what Tudor is recorded to have said, as Townshend later acknowledged. According to Seedorf, "At the 23 of July conference, Tudor had urged further reinforcement of the RIC, including an augmentation of 500 ex-officers and ex-soldiers," (Martin Seedorf, "The Lloyd George Government and the Anglo-Irish War, 1919-1921" (Unpublished PhD dissertation: University of Washington, 1974), p. 93) but again, this is not what Tudor is recorded to have said. Frustratingly, Tudor's remarks are not mentioned in the published version of Thomas Jones' diary entry referring to the conference (Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, III, pp. 25-31).

commissioners, county inspectors, and district inspectors. However, the police adviser's plans were still vague. He justified a paramilitary organization on the additional grounds that it would help "maintain a proper control over the Temp. Cadets," and recommended that companies consist of two hundred men in eight platoons of twenty-five.<sup>12</sup> At this time, he seems to have thought of companies as administrative formations, and platoons as tactical formations, operating independently: the new force would have only five companies, and its company commanders would have the rank of district inspectors. In time, however, companies of one hundred men or less became the basic tactical formation, which increased their independence: since company commanders were equal in rank to the most senior RIC district inspectors, they took orders only from county inspectors, divisional commissioners, and their own commandant.<sup>13</sup>

The decision to reduce the size of companies had been taken by 11 August. In a letter to Alfred Cope, Tudor wrote that each company would require one commander, one second in command, four platoon leaders (instead of eight), twelve section leaders, and a company clerk. (Later, in early November, the number of platoons per company was reduced further, from four to three)<sup>14</sup> In his 11 August letter, the police adviser also mentioned that the new force would require a small depot staff, consisting of a quartermaster and a mess caterer. "The latter two will remain at the Sub-depot," he wrote, "and assist the Commandant by dealing with the reception and equipping of recruits as they arrive, and the formation of the successive companies."<sup>15</sup>

Tudor was seriously underestimating the amount of staff work his new force would require. The commandant in question was the commanding officer of the RIC sub-depot at the Curragh, not of the auxiliary force. Conditions at the sub-depot were poor: one of the first recruits, Brigadier-General Crozier, said they were "appalling." "A lot of misery, inconvenience, and hard drinking could have been avoided," he said, "had arrangements been made for the reception of these men, for their ordinary comfort—quartering, messing, and discipline—but instead the men were running about the Curragh as they liked. The original members of the division, which then had no name, had to arrange their own messing and canteens, and there was nobody in command."<sup>16</sup>

Tudor did not ask for permission to appoint a commanding officer until a week later, and even then his conception of this officer's role was very limited.

The Cos. [Companies] have to be formed & unless there is a head at the Sub-Depot to decide between the claims of each Co. there is a danger of the Co. going off with many men best suited for Platoon Leaders of the other Cos. forming. 3 Cos. are already practically formed and are only awaiting completion of clothing.

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<sup>12</sup> Tudor to Under Secretary, 28 July 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>13</sup> "The R.I.C. county inspector is nominally over the local Auxiliary commander for tactics, but for nothing else": F P Crozier, "The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries: Their Organisation and Discipline," *Manchester Guardian*, 28 March 1921, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> This was done to increase the number of companies available: Crozier, "The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries," p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Tudor to Under Secretary, 11 August 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>16</sup> Crozier, "The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries," p. 7.



I recommend Brig-General T. Cadet Crozier for this post, & that his command pay should be £1 per diem.<sup>17</sup>

Tudor was forced to add additional officers and staff almost as soon as the auxiliary force took the field. On 3 September 1920 the police adviser asked for permission to appoint an intelligence officer and a quartermaster to each company. The force's commanding officer was given an adjutant by 8 September, and by 29 October the force's headquarters had grown from three to twelve officers, with the addition of a second in command, a quartermaster sergeant, three clerks, and two storemen (the mess caterer seems to have been dropped). Each company had also acquired an assistant quartermaster.<sup>18</sup>

Even by late October, the police adviser was still underestimating the number of additional personnel that his temporary cadet companies would require. As part of the inquiry into the Burning of Cork on 11 December 1920, the commander of K Company gave the court a description of his unit's organization. According to this officer, K Company's headquarters consisted of himself, his second in command, an intelligence officer, eight cadet motor drivers, and five cadets "engaged on Administrative duties." "In addition," wrote the company commander, "there are 17 Temporary Constables who act as Batmen, Cooks etc. but have no status as Policemen." This despite the fact that K was one of the new, smaller companies, with only three platoons instead of four: there were only seventy-two temporary cadets in the whole company, including those attached to the company headquarters.<sup>19</sup>

The division itself grew just as rapidly. Twice, it seems, Tudor began recruiting additional forces before he had the money to pay for them. On 10 August, Tudor informed the under secretary that the chief secretary had given him verbal permission to recruit up to 1000 temporary cadets: "Will you please confirm this."<sup>20</sup> Cope assured the police adviser that the Castle was seeking formal sanction for this increase, but warned Tudor that temporary cadets "should not be promised priority of permanent appointment as officers in the Royal Irish Constabulary, seeing that Head Constables, etc., have also to be considered for such posts, but may be informed that their services will be considered

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<sup>17</sup> Tudor to Under Secretary, 18 August 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096. "About August 20 I was sent for by General Tudor and asked to take over command of the new force": Crozier, "The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries," p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Tudor to Under Secretary, 8 September 1920, and Tudor to Under Secretary, 29 October 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096. Later, it was explained that an intelligence officer was added to the headquarters staff to "relieve the Adjutant of the duties of dealing with the reports of the Company Intelligence Officers": Whiskard to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 3 December 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>19</sup> Statement of District Inspector Latimer, OC K Company ADRIC, undated, PRO, WO 35/88A. The number of Temporaries attached to an Auxiliary company is mentioned in another document, a letter from Michael Collins to an IRA Brigade Intelligence Officer in the autumn of 1921. "Information has been received that the strength of 'P' Coy Auxiliary Division stationed at Tubbercurry, in your area, is—68 Temporary Cadets and 13 Temporary Constables." Director of Intelligence to I/O Sligo Brigade, 31 October 1921, IMA, Collins Papers A/0747/XXXV.

<sup>20</sup> Tudor to Under Secretary, 10 August 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

in making selections for permanent appointments.”<sup>21</sup> Treasury sanction was requested on 13 August, and granted on 23 August.<sup>22</sup> About two months later, Tudor once again informed the Irish government that he had permission from the chief secretary to increase the size of the Auxiliary Division, from 1000 to 1500 temporary cadets.<sup>23</sup> By the spring of 1921, the division had grown to nineteen companies: a Depot Company at Beggars Bush barracks (in Dublin city)<sup>24</sup> and seventeen field companies, labelled A to R.<sup>25</sup> A Veterans Division of temporary constables was formed as well.<sup>26</sup>

We know where some but not all of these companies were stationed (see Table 4.1). For a time, there were three field companies in Dublin city: F Company at Dublin Castle, C Company at Portobello barracks (now Cathal Brugha barracks), and Q Company at the London and North Western Railway Hotel. There is a great deal of confusion surrounding the disposition of the remaining companies outside of Dublin. Several authors have supplied lists, none of which agree, and the records are fragmentary. To further confound matters, Auxiliary companies were sometimes moved from one county to another. Q Company, for example, later moved to Dundalk, county Louth. C Company was originally based at Macroom Castle, county Cork until most of its No. 2 Platoon was wiped out in the famous ambush at Kilmichael on 28 November 1920. A few weeks thereafter, C Company was transferred to Dublin city and replaced at Macroom with J Company. B Company had moved northward from Templemore, county Tipperary to Castle Saunderson, county Cavan by June 1921, presumably to check IRA infiltration across the new border with Northern Ireland.

There is also some confusion about the uniforms worn by temporary cadets. A number of sources say the men of the division wore khaki at first, and then switched to dark blue clothing.<sup>27</sup> This is not correct, and the origin of this error is difficult to find.<sup>28</sup> From beginning to end, the Auxiliaries wore either military khaki or the rifle green of the

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<sup>21</sup> Cope to Police Adviser, 16 August 1920, PRO, HO 351/63. Despite Cope’s intervention, a temporary cadet’s conditions of service included the following promise: “Preferential selections for permanent cadetships will be given to suitable temporary cadets as vacancies occur”: *Auxiliary Division. Outline of Terms*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Cope to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 13 August 1920; Waterfield to Under Secretary, 23 August 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>23</sup> Tudor to Under Secretary, 6 November 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>24</sup> The division had moved its depot from the Curragh to Beggars Bush in the first week of September: Crozier, “The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries,” p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> A twentieth company, K Company, was disbanded on 31 March 1921 for its part in the Burning of Cork: see Chapters Six and Seven for more details on this incident.

<sup>26</sup> Crozier, “The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries,” p. 7. This formation is rather mysterious: though referred to as a ‘Division’, it was counted among the ADRIC’s nineteen companies: its duties are unclear.

<sup>27</sup> Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, p. 77; A D Harvey, “Who Were the Auxiliaries?” *Historical Journal* 35 no. 3 (1992), p. 665; Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: A Short History and Genealogical Guide* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1997), pp. 105-7; Frank Pakenham (Lord Longford), *Peace by Ordeal* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972), p. 42; Seedorf, “Lloyd George Government,” p. 93. The Auxiliary Division’s trademark balmoral or tam-o’-shanter is also sometimes mistakenly referred to as a glengarry, which is a completely different type of cap.

<sup>28</sup> The earliest reference to blue uniforms seems to be Béaslaí, *Michael Collins*, II, p. 28: according to Béaslaí, the Auxiliaries “wore khaki uniforms at first, but were afterwards supplied with special blue uniforms.”

constabulary. “Uniform of RIC supplied free,” say their conditions of service, “or Service Dress (Officers) may be worn without badges of rank.”<sup>29</sup> Their distinctive caps were either khaki, or blue (like the cap worn by the leader of the raid on the Moycullen co-operative store in October 1920), or green (like the caps worn by the members of K Company in December 1920). However, green caps may have been unusual: a “Statement of Deficiencies in Stores of Auxiliary Division RIC,” prepared in June 1921, lists only green RIC frocks and trousers, along with khaki and blue balmorals.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly, the Auxiliary Division’s uniforms were chiefly distinguished by their lack of uniformity. As we have seen, Tudor always intended to allow a mixture of clothing. Photographs show groups of Auxiliaries wearing both police and military uniforms, some with shirt and tie and some without, some with the bottoms of their trousers wrapped with puttees and some without, and some with breeches and leggings. David Neligan worked alongside F Company in Dublin Castle, and later wrote that:

Generally they wore khaki tunics belonging to their army service complete with decorations, military riding breeches and a Glengarry woolly cap. I have no idea how they came to wear this curious headgear. I suppose some quartermaster discovered a dump of them in some store or perhaps bought them via a good rake-off from the wholesaler.”<sup>31</sup>

Neligan also confirmed that they wore the initials TC on their shoulder straps: “The Auxiliaries’ own interpretation of those letters is unprintable,” he said.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, according to a former Auxiliary named Bill Munro, while in county Cork the men of C Company were initially given the peaked caps of the constabulary.

It was not till some months later that we were given the Balmoral-cum-beret that became the only distinguishing mark between ourselves and the RIC constables. The uniforms we got were the usual RIC, that is to say dark green jackets and trousers, and at no time was the official uniform breeches and leggings. Really there were no uniform regulations and we could turn out in a mixture of Army, RAF and Naval uniforms provided we wore the regulation cap.<sup>33</sup>

Munro also mentioned that the government could not always keep its promise to supply constabulary clothing free. Since the average height in the RIC had until recently been

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<sup>29</sup> *Auxiliary Division: Outline of Terms*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Statement of deficiencies in stores of Auxiliary Division RIC, 30 June 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096. In his report to the court of inquiry, the commander of K Company mentioned that his Auxiliaries wore service dress (i.e. military khaki) with green tam-o’-shanters, while his Temporaries wore service dress with service caps: Statement of District Inspector Latimer, OC K Company ADRIC, undated, PRO, WO 35/88A.

<sup>31</sup> David Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle* (London: McGibbon & Kee, 1968), p. 87.

<sup>32</sup> Neligan, *Spy in the Castle*, p. 86.

<sup>33</sup> Bill Munro, “The Auxiliary’s Story,” in James Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday* (London: Four Square, 1963), pp. 63-64.

over 5 feet 10 inches, there were no police uniforms available for shorter men.<sup>34</sup> One witness to the American Commission thought the Auxiliaries had no uniform at all. “They dress in civilian clothes and in soldier’s clothes,” said Denis Morgan. “They dress in every way. You can never tell them.”<sup>35</sup> The only time they seem to have dressed alike was on parade.

The Auxiliary Division’s uniforms are of more than antiquarian interest, for a couple of reasons. First, their haphazard clothing sometimes made it difficult to distinguish friend from enemy, especially at night. During a night raid on Kilrush, county Clare in April 1921, men of the RIC twice mistook IRA Commandant Michael Brennan for an Auxiliary.<sup>36</sup> “I had never seen an Auxiliary up to this time except at night,” he later recalled, “and a description of their dress on service made the RIC error in my identification at least understandable.” The Auxiliaries were also blamed after Brennan and his men mistakenly shot up a convent instead of the RIC barracks on the same night.<sup>37</sup> Later, in June 1921 an Irish ex-soldier mistook the members of the IRA’s North Tipperary flying column for Auxiliaries and condemned himself as a spy by giving the ‘police’ information about the local IRA. The Volunteers took the man prisoner and were going to shoot him, but he escaped in the confusion following the ambush at Kallegbeg Cross.<sup>38</sup>

Second, the division’s uniforms were apparently designed to advertise its elite status, and the toughness of its members. The balmoral cap and the leather bandolier were the accessories of the army’s glamorous and prestigious Highland and Cavalry regiments, respectively. Instead of wearing their revolvers on their belts, like police and military officers, some Auxiliaries wore them in open thigh holsters, like the gunfighters of the American West. This last affectation did not always impress onlookers. An RIC veteran later recalled that, “We thought it laughable to see them with the gun strapped to the thigh.”<sup>39</sup> It could also be hazardous: Munro wrote that, “some of us were influenced by Western films and wore our revolvers in holsters low slung on the thigh which looked very dashing but which were the cause of quite a number of shot-off toes—as the enthusiasts attempted to emulate the cowboys of Texas.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, we can learn something about early twentieth-century British masculinity by examining the Auxiliary Division’s clothing. In the words of Henry Smart, Roddy Doyle’s fictional Irish revolutionary, the Auxiliaries dressed like “nut-hard bastards.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Munro, “Auxiliary’s Story,” p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> Testimony of Denis Morgan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Brennan, *The War in Clare*, pp. 87-91.

<sup>37</sup> Brennan, *The War in Clare*, p. 91. Brennan explained that, “I wore a gray-green coat cut like a military tunic, khaki breeches, collar and shirt, brown boots and leggings, Sam Brown belt and holstered revolver, field glasses slung over my shoulder, and no head gear. The only difference in our dress was that the Auxiliary tunic was khaki and this would not be very noticeable in moonlight.”

<sup>38</sup> Ernie O’Malley, *Raids and Rallies* (Dublin: Anvil, 1982), pp. 143-47, 154-55.

<sup>39</sup> Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 116.

<sup>40</sup> Munro, “Auxiliary’s Story,” p. 64.

<sup>41</sup> Roddy Doyle, *A Star Called Henry* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 262.

### C. Who Were the Auxiliaries, Really?

What kind of men wore these uniforms? One way to answer this question is by taking a sample from the ADRIC register, just as we took a sample of Black and Tans from the RIC register: as before, the sample consists of every man who enlisted in October 1920, when recruiting was at its peak and 270 men joined the division as temporary cadets.<sup>42</sup> A D Harvey based his 1992 communication on a survey of both volumes of this register, along with its accompanying journal.<sup>43</sup> Both the register and the journal are amateurish, incomplete, and uninformative compared to their RIC counterparts, but Harvey made three interesting arguments based on evidence therein. “Officers promoted from the ranks clearly represented a significant element in the Auxiliary Division as a whole,” he concluded, after studying the decorations they had received. During the Great War, the British army awarded different decorations to officers and soldiers: officers received the Military Cross and the Distinguished Service Order, while other ranks received the Military Medal and the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Harvey noted that 281 temporary cadets had been decorated for gallantry, and 101 had received medals like the MM and the DCM.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Harvey argued that “the Auxiliaries were, by the standards of the time, far from socially exclusive” because of the regiments they served with during the war: few temporary cadets had served with elite regiments like the Guards, while the register showed that some had served with the merchant marine, the Chinese Labour Corps, and the Burma Police.<sup>45</sup> Finally, Harvey argued that “the predominant element in the Auxiliaries comprised men ignorant of Ireland and the Irish people,” because he found few men who had either served with Irish regiments or had Irish surnames.<sup>46</sup>

Harvey’s arguments about the number of ‘temporary gentlemen’ among the temporary cadets appear sound, but his arguments about their social and geographical origins are less convincing. One way to check Harvey’s arguments about the division’s lack of social exclusiveness is to compare the proportions of temporary cadets from the various army corps to the proportions of officers in the various corps of the wartime army, in January 1918 (see Table 4.2). The results are interesting. Officers of the Guards were actually over-represented among the men who joined the ADRIC in October 1920, while the percentage of cavalry officers was equal to the percentage of cavalry officers in the army; on the other hand, the socially lowly service corps were greatly *under*-represented among the temporary cadets.<sup>47</sup> There was a far greater number of men from

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<sup>42</sup> Cadets 647 to 920, ADRIC Register no. 1, PRO, HO 184/50.

<sup>43</sup> ADRIC Registers Nos. 1 and 2; ADRIC Journals Nos. 1 and 2, PRO, HO 184/50-52. During my first research trip to Great Britain in August 2000 I met Dr. Harvey by chance at the photocopy service counter in the Public Record Office. When I asked him about his article, he dismissed it as “one of those five-minutes-in-the-archives jobs.” Dr. Harvey was merely being self-effacing, but he does seem to have confined his primary source research to these four documents.

<sup>44</sup> Harvey, “Who Were the Auxiliaries?” p. 666.

<sup>45</sup> Harvey, “Who Were the Auxiliaries?” p. 666.

<sup>46</sup> Harvey, “Who Were the Auxiliaries?” p. 667.

<sup>47</sup> Six men in the sample came from the most prestigious regiments in the army: the Foot Guards, the Household Cavalry, and the Rifle Brigade. Only seven men in the sample came from the army’s least

the Royal Air Force (and its predecessor, the Royal Flying Corps), and a far smaller number of men from the Royal Engineers than their numbers in the army would lead us to expect. (Harvey noticed the large numbers of flyers among the Auxiliaries, but seems to have overlooked the absence of engineers) About 61 per cent of the temporary cadets were infantrymen, compared to roughly 44 per cent in the wartime army. Finally, the proportions of officers from the artillery, and from the Cyclist, Machine-Gun, and Tank Corps were roughly similar. Since the various service corps were the least prestigious in the army, these numbers might suggest that the Auxiliary Division was much more socially exclusive than Harvey believed. However, it seems more likely that the ADRIC attracted fighting officers, from the army's "teeth" rather than its "tail," and that Harvey's attempt to discern social class from service branch was misguided.

We are also not likely to learn much about their geographical backgrounds from their surnames and former regiments. It seems Harvey was unaware that many of the ADRIC's temporary cadets were listed in the RIC's general register, in addition to the divisional register: at least 228 of the 270 men who joined the division in October 1920 are listed in both documents. From this additional information, we learn that 16 of these 228 temporary cadets were Irishmen. None of their names had the Irish prefixes that Harvey was looking for, and only five of them had served with Irish infantry regiments; it should also be noted that an equal number of men from outside Ireland (five) had served as officers in Irish regiments.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, we need additional evidence if we want to know more about the men who joined the Auxiliary Division. Unfortunately, very little additional evidence is available. Only the birth dates, native counties, and religions of temporary cadets are recorded in the RIC's general register; the only previous occupation listed for each man is "ex-officer," and most of the remaining columns were left blank.

Nonetheless, it is possible to make some generalizations about the men in our sample, and to compare them in some ways to our sample of British recruits for the RIC. First, the Auxiliaries were generally mature men (see Table 4.3). Thirty-nine per cent of the Auxiliaries were born before 1891, compared to just 19 per cent of the Black and Tans. The majority of the Black and Tans were born after 1895; the majority of the Auxiliaries were born before 1896. Some Auxiliaries were older than any Black and Tan: Captain G P T Dean was born in 1875, while Lieutenant T Mitchell, Lieutenant J Munn, and Second Lieutenant G L Shaw were all born in 1874, and were old enough to have served in the South African War.<sup>49</sup> Of course, some Auxiliaries were quite young: Midshipman P M E Hall and Second Lieutenant G C M Timeline were both born in 1902,

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prestigious elements: the Service Corps, the Ordnance Corps, and the Labour Corps. On the army's regimental pecking order, see Keith Simpson, "The Officers," in *A Nation in Arms: A social study of the British Army in the First World War*, eds. Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> To be fair to Harvey, he was aware of this latter possibility: "few of the Auxiliaries are shown as having been officers in Irish regiments, and some of those so listed were probably English in any case." Harvey, "Who Were the Auxiliaries?" p. 667.

<sup>49</sup> Temporary Cadets 734/79098, 732/79082, 916/79239, and 658/79038. ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/42.

and three others were born in 1900; all five must have been quite underage if they served in the Great War.<sup>50</sup> Overall, however, the average Auxiliary was about five years older than the average Black and Tan.

The sample included officers of all ranks from midshipman (of which there were two) to brigadier (of which there was one: Brigadier-General E A Wood). The sample also included 4 lieutenant colonels (3 listed and 1 unlisted), 6 majors, and 39 captains (including 2 naval captains). However, the majority of the men in the sample (139 out of 270) were lieutenants, and of the remainder, 49 were second lieutenants; another 4 were naval sub-lieutenants. On average, senior officers were seven years older than their immediate juniors: lieutenants and second lieutenants were about twenty-six years old, captains about thirty-three, and majors about forty, though clearly there were exceptions, like the elderly lieutenants mentioned earlier.

No ranks are listed for two-dozen men, but what this means is unclear. It probably does not mean that they were not ex-servicemen: two of these men had been decorated for gallantry—A J Andrews received the Military Cross and the Distinguished Service Order, while J H Rogers received the Distinguished Conduct Medal—and a third had served with the 3rd Battalion, Leinster Regiment.<sup>51</sup> It might mean that some of them were not commissioned officers. This was Harvey's explanation, and he was not alone in this suspicion: Frank Pakenham, for example, referred to the men of the Auxiliary Division as "supposed ex-officers."<sup>52</sup> However, these blanks are probably evidence of nothing more than bad bookkeeping, for which the division was notorious. One man with no recorded rank, A J Andrews, had been a lieutenant colonel.<sup>53</sup>

The men in the sample came overwhelmingly from the army. A branch of service was recorded for 247 men: out of these 247, only 17 served in the navy, and 3 in the marines. Once again, the absence of information for the remaining men probably means nothing: in 4 cases, men who were decorated for bravery have no regiment beside their names, including A J Andrews, J H Rogers, Major J A Mackinnon, and Brigadier-General Wood.<sup>54</sup> However, the sample does confirm one of Harvey's conclusions: 33 temporary cadets had served with the Royal Air Force or the Royal Flying Corps, more than any other regiment or corps in the army.

The sample also confirms Harvey's most interesting observation: the significant number of temporary cadets who had been commissioned from the ranks during the War. Out of the 270 men in the sample, 48 had been decorated for bravery, though not always for bravery in battle: 3 men in the sample had won medals for saving life at sea.<sup>55</sup> Fifteen

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<sup>50</sup> Temporary Cadets 898/79229 and 749/79122, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/42.

<sup>51</sup> Temporary Cadets 670, 833/79155, and 890/79187, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/42.

<sup>52</sup> Harvey, "Who Were the Auxiliaries?" p. 666; Pakenham, *Peace by Ordeal*, p. 42.

<sup>53</sup> On page 1 of a list of "Auxiliary Division Deficiencies" submitted to the Treasury in the winter of 1922, PRO, HO 351/123.

<sup>54</sup> Temporary Cadets 917 and 817, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50.

<sup>55</sup> Lieutenant D Wainwright, RN (Temporary Cadet 809) was awarded the Albert Medal, while Captain C de P D Swain (Temporary Cadet 654/79026) and Captain H F Littledale (Temporary Cadet

of these 48 men had received medals reserved for non-commissioned officers and other ranks: either the Military Medal or the Distinguished Conduct Medal, including Lieutenant C A Burnett of the Black Watch, who won the DCM twice. A sixteenth man, Second Lieutenant E Handcock of the Royal Engineers, had been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, which was awarded only to non-commissioned officers of the rank of sergeant or above, for long, efficient, and meritorious service. Six of these 16 men went on to win medals as officers, including Major J A Mackinnon MC DCM MM, Captain E S Garrod DSO MC DCM, and Captain W L King MC & Bar DCM. Mackinnon and King both became company commanders in the ADRIIC, and Garrod became a platoon commander. It seems that Harvey was correct when he wrote that men commissioned from the ranks were both a “significant element in the Auxiliary Division as a whole, and probably included most of the more active and intrepid spirits.”<sup>56</sup>

Were there a significant number of former regular soldiers among the Auxiliaries, as it seems there were among the Black and Tans? There is not much evidence one way or another. Both of the division’s commandants had been army officers before the Great War. Many of the temporary cadets who enlisted in October 1920 were old enough to have served before 1914, and their religious profile matches that of the pre-war army. At least one man in our sample must have been a former regular, to earn a Meritorious Service Medal. Furthermore, on 14 October 1920 Lord French inspected a company of Auxiliaries at his residence in Phoenix Park. When they paraded on the grounds of the viceregal lodge, one observer noted that many temporary cadets were wearing decorations in addition to their war service medals.<sup>57</sup> Following the inspection, the Lord Lieutenant made a short speech. He began by mentioning that the men of the company had already served their country once, as army officers in the Great War. Some of them had even served under French himself, when he commanded the British Expeditionary Force from the summer of 1914 to the winter of 1915. How he knew this is not clear, but some Auxiliaries may have been wearing the 1914 Star or 1914-15 Star.

On the other hand, British newspapers published some information about the careers of eight of the temporary cadets who were killed at Kilmichael. Out of these eight, only one might have served in the Edwardian army: twenty-six year-old William T Barnes of Surrey, who joined the ADRIIC in August 1920. His brief obituary in the *Times* says the following: “At the outbreak of the war he was a private in an infantry regiment, and was wounded several times, being temporarily blinded on one occasion. He gained a commission for distinguished service in the field, and was gazetted to the R.A.F., in which as a pilot he gained the D.F.C. [Distinguished Flying Cross] after bringing down

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883/79198) were awarded Royal Humane Society Medals: ADRIIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/42.

<sup>56</sup> Harvey, “Who Were the Auxiliaries?” p. 666; Temporary Cadets 839/79250, 758/79130, 826/79176, and 834/79055, ADRIIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/42.

<sup>57</sup> “R.I.C. Auxiliary Corps: Lord French’s Eulogy,” *Daily Telegraph*, 15 October 1920, p. 11. This is not mentioned in “Lord French Addresses Auxiliary Police: Self-Restraint Advised,” *Manchester Guardian*, 15 October 1920, p. 10. The omission of this detail from the *Guardian*’s item is interesting, since the two reports were otherwise virtually identical, and were probably just modified versions of an official press release. Note also the different emphases in the titles of each journal’s report.



11 enemy aeroplanes.”<sup>58</sup> Out of the remaining seven men, five had definitely enlisted during the war; a sixth had been a member of the Territorial Force; and the seventh had been an officer in the 8th Battalion of the Black Watch, a wartime unit of the New Army.<sup>59</sup> However, these are no more than indications: there is simply not enough information to be sure.

One thing we can be sure about is from where the men in our sample came (see Table 4.4). Once again, a disproportionate number of temporary cadets came from London and the Home Counties, though the imbalance between North and South was not as extreme as it was with the Black and Tans. However, the situation with the Celtic Fringe was reversed: a much higher proportion of Auxiliaries came from Wales, and a much lower proportion from Scotland. Moreover, 10 per cent of the men in the sample (22 out of 212) came from outside the British Isles. Eighteen of these men came from the Empire and Commonwealth: seven from South Africa, four from India, two apiece from Canada, British Guiana, and Jamaica, and one from Australia. The remaining four were foreigners, including one man who claimed to come from Southern Russia.<sup>60</sup> Add the sixteen men who have been excluded from the sample for being Irish, and it seems that temporary cadets were a somewhat more diverse group than the Black and Tans. The information in the RIC register also confirms that Harvey’s attempt to discern their geographical origins from their former regiments was ill-advised: less than 20 per cent of the men listed in the RIC register (41 out of 228) served in their local infantry regiments.

Interestingly, Harvey’s overlooking of the RIC’s general register also led him to neglect the temporary constables who served alongside the temporary cadets in the ADRIC. In the House of Commons, the Temporaries were described as “veteran ex-soldiers of 35 years of age and upwards,” “recruited for a year’s service” and “paid 10s. a day and a gratuity of £25 on completion of a year’s service.”<sup>61</sup> There is a register for these men, but this tells us little besides their names, their companies, and the total number of enlistments: 997, about a third of the men who enlisted in the ADRIC overall. However, unlike temporary cadets, temporary constables were given full records in the RIC general register, which gives us another sample of 149 temporary constables who enlisted in October 1920.

This group of men was quite distinctive in many ways. Temporary constables were much older than either Black and Tans or temporary cadets (see Table 4.3). While 81 per cent of Black and Tans and 60 per cent of Auxiliaries were born after 1890, this was true of only 9 per cent of temporary constables. The majority of temporary constables were at least forty years old in 1920. Temporary constables were comparable to Black and Tans in height, but they were even more likely than Black and Tans to come

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<sup>58</sup> *The Times*, 13 December 1920, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 15 December 1920, p. 5; *Manchester Guardian*, 1 December 1920, p. 9; *Manchester Guardian*, 6 December 1920, p. 5; *Daily Chronicle*, 1 December 1920, p. 1; *Glasgow Herald*, 1 December 1920, p. 11; *Leeds Mercury*, 1 December 1920, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Temporary Cadet 727/79097 (A/Lt T F P Briggs, Royal Naval Reserve), ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/42.

<sup>61</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 136, col. 1292.

from the London area (see table 4.4). A clear majority (60 per cent) of temporary constables were Londoners, and the remaining 40 per cent came more or less equally from the rest of Britain. In addition, 82 per cent of them joined the force in London, while almost all of the remainder signed up in Glasgow, Liverpool, and Portsmouth. A much greater percentage of them (30 per cent) were married, and almost half of the married men had married before the Great War.

Like Black and Tans and temporary cadets, temporary constables were mostly ex-servicemen: in fact, only one man in the sample has no military service listed in his record. Interestingly, almost one in five temporary constables listed no previous occupation except ex-soldier, suggesting once again that the police forces in Ireland were attracting former members of the pre-war regular army. However, the number of former regulars among them may have been exaggerated by sloppy record-keeping: at one point in the register, there is a batch of temporary constables listed simply as ex-soldiers, in much the same way as temporary cadets were listed simply as ex-officers. Overall, temporary constables were even more proletarian than Black and Tans: 65 per cent of them were unskilled or semi-skilled workers, and another 25 per cent of them were skilled workers (see Table 4.5). Their two most common previous occupations were ex-soldier and labourer, with clerks and cooks a distant third and fourth, and painters fifth. Their working-class character is confirmed by their religious profile: 124 of the 149 men in the sample were Anglicans, and only two were Dissenters: a Wesleyan, and a Baptist.

There is very little record of what these temporary constables did in Ireland. Only 10 of the 149 men in the sample have any sort of note beside their names: five resigned, two were discharged, and three were dismissed, one for taking out a Crossley tender without authority and damaging it, and another for discharging his rifle under illegible circumstances. Fortunately, we are on much firmer ground with the temporary cadets, whose fates were recorded in the ADRIC register (see Table 4.6). Once again, as with the Black and Tans, though casualties were low, attrition was high. Less than 50 per cent of the Auxiliaries who enlisted in October 1920 re-engaged for another year's service in the division in August and September 1921. Out of the remainder, 17 per cent resigned and a further 10 per cent did not re-engage for another year's service. Proportionately fewer Auxiliaries were struck off or dismissed from the division, but a higher percentage was discharged on medical grounds. The Auxiliaries also suffered losses in the form of transfers. Eighteen of the men in the sample transferred from the ADRIC to another police force. Twelve temporary cadets became permanent cadets, and eleven of them eventually became officers of the Royal Irish Constabulary, though only three of them saw much service before the Truce.<sup>62</sup> Another six men transferred to the RIC's Transport Division. One man from each group wound up rejoining the Auxiliary Division. The remaining two men went to the Ulster Special Constabulary, including Captain J C Abraham MC, Welch Regiment, who was appointed second in command of the USC training camp at Newtownards, county Antrim in the spring of 1921.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> RIC Officer's Register, PRO, HO 184/47 and 48.

<sup>63</sup> Temporary Cadet 815, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50.

In terms of casualties, our sample is clearly not representative: thirty-nine temporary cadets were killed or died in Ireland; fourteen of these thirty-nine enlisted in October 1920. The sample includes Frank Garniss and Cecil Morris, who were shot and killed execution-style in Dublin on Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920. It also includes four of the eighteen men who were rubbed out at Kilmichael a week later. The sample is also unrepresentative when it comes to promotions. It includes one of the division's two commandants, Brigadier General E A Wood. It includes two men who became assistant commandants, Brigadier Wood and Lieutenant Colonel F H W Guard.<sup>64</sup> It also includes seventy-nine men who became officers, about 29 per cent of the sample.

The success of these October recruits in winning promotion was probably due to two factors: first, they enlisted relatively early in the conflict, and were in line to replace officers of the first generation who resigned or were demoted; second, the division more than doubled in size after October 1920, creating a demand for officers at all levels. As a result, fifty-three men in the sample became section leaders, fourteen became platoon commanders, nine became intelligence officers, eight became company commanders, and seven became seconds in command. However, advancement was irregular: five of the eight men who became company commanders had not served as junior officers, and a number of platoon commanders and intelligence officers had not served as section leaders. Only one man in the sample (Second Lieutenant N P Wood, Royal Air Force) was promoted all four steps, from section leader in G Company on 12 February 1921 to commander of Q Company on 2 August 1921. Furthermore, while promotion could be rapid, demotion could be just as rapid: almost a third of the men who became officers (twenty-five out of seventy-nine) reverted to temporary cadets, only occasionally at their own request, and only one of the eight men who became company commanders still held this post when the division was demobilized.<sup>65</sup>

#### **D. 'Totally Undisciplined by Our Regimental Standards'**

We know very little about how these temporary cadets and constables were recruited and trained. Some of the men who joined the division in October were probably responding to the following advertisement in *The Times*:

EX-OFFICERS WANTED. Seven pounds a week, free uniform and quarters. Must have first-class records: to join Auxiliary Division, Royal Irish Constabulary; 12 months' guarantee—Apply, with full particulars, service, age, &c. to R.O., R.I.C., Scotland-yard, London, S.W.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Temporary Cadet 864, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50.

<sup>65</sup> This was the aforementioned 2nd Lieutenant N P Wood, RAF, OC Q Company. Temporary Cadet 741/79123, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/42. Other sources suggest that two additional men may have become company commanders, though this fact was not recorded in the ADRIC Register.

<sup>66</sup> Classified advertisement, *The Times*, 27 September 1920, p. 3.

Brigadier-General Wood, on the other hand, was invited to join. Wood had been unemployed since March 1920. On 3 June he applied to the War Office for a position with a Persian army. Lieutenant-General Philip Chetwode, the War Office's military secretary, wrote to Sir Nevil Macready about Wood's situation: on 23 September, Macready wrote back to say that, "I have passed on your letter about Brigadier-General Wood to Tudor, and I daresay we may be able to find a job for him in the Cadet Companies of the 'Black and Tans.'" On 2 October, Chetwode wrote back to Wood, forwarding a letter from Crozier, and inviting Wood to apply to the RIC's recruiting office at Great Scotland Yard.<sup>67</sup> Wood enlisted in the Auxiliary Division on 20 October, and became the second in command.

Applicants were given forms to complete, and the recruiting officer checked their military records and police references; if these were satisfactory, the applicants were called in for interviews.<sup>68</sup> Once their applications were approved, the new temporary cadets were sent from London in groups, twice a week, to their depot in Ireland.<sup>69</sup> Like the Black and Tans, temporary cadets were given very little training. Bill Munro joined the division in late July or August 1920, and described his training in the following terms:

We spent about six weeks messing about—what little we got of instruction had very remote relationship to the work we had to do in the country. Theoretically, we were put through a shortened police course, having impressed on us the meaning of a misdemeanour and a felony, our powers of arrest, and what we could and could not do. There was a certain amount of arms and bombing practice but all very sketchy, instructors being drawn from our own numbers.<sup>70</sup>

Although the ADRIC was supposed to be a mobile force, few temporary cadets knew how to operate or repair motor vehicles: men from mechanised units and the air force were used as drivers and mechanics, but according to Munro, "some of the drivers were sitting behind the wheel for the first time and barely knew how to change gears."<sup>71</sup>

As we might expect after only six weeks in camp, temporary cadets were badly disciplined as well as badly trained. The Labour Commission found that, "a licence is permitted among the 'cadets' (the rank and file of the division) which makes their

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<sup>67</sup> Wood to the Secretary, War Office, 3 June 1920; Military Secretary to Wood, 8 June 1920; Macready to Chetwode, 23 September 1920; Military Secretary to Wood, 2 October 1920, PRO, CAB 134/2803. On 22 March 1921, after Wood became commandant of the ADRIC, Chetwode finally wrote back to inform him that, "it is regretted that there is no prospect of offering you employment in Persia": Military Secretary to Wood, 22 March 1921, PRO, CAB 134/2803.

<sup>68</sup> Fleming to Inspector General, 12 September 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>69</sup> Cope to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 31 August 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>70</sup> Munro, "Auxiliary's Story," p. 63. One of Goulden's correspondents, V H Scott, was adjutant of the ADRIC sub-depot at Hare Park camp while Munro was training there, and described the Auxiliaries as "a very nice lot." "After a few days," he said, "my Commandant (Rodwell) and I had little to do with them as they started to run their own show under us for discipline. General Tudor was constantly down to see them": Scott to Goulden, undated but probably February 1967, TCD, Goulden Papers 7382a/66.

<sup>71</sup> Munro, "Auxiliary's Story," p. 67.

conduct depend more on the personality of local commanders than on instructions from headquarters.”<sup>72</sup> Though he was critical of the Labour Commission’s report, Sir Nevil Macready’s memoirs confirm its verdict in this case: “Those companies,” he wrote, “that had the good fortune to have good commanders, generally ex-Regular officers, who could control their men, performed useful work, but the exploits of certain other companies under weak or inefficient commanders went a long way to discredit the whole force.”<sup>73</sup> Even more damning was the verdict of another British officer who had served as the adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, Cameron Highlanders in Ireland during the insurgency. In his unpublished memoirs, General Wimberley recalled that the Auxiliaries “were totally undisciplined by our regimental standards,” and “whenever some of them accompanied me, on any search, patrol or foray in which I was in command, my first action was always to detail two or three of my own Jocks simply to watch over them, and see that they did not commit any atrocities such as unlawfully looting or burning houses, when they were acting under my command, or even shooting prisoners, on the grounds that they were attempting to escape!”<sup>74</sup>

Documents preserved at the PRO would seem to confirm this picture of a poorly disciplined force. In its Supplementary Routine Orders for 9 December 1921, divisional headquarters published the names and numbers of sixty-three temporary cadets and eighteen temporary constables who had been fined over the past couple of months. The most common offence among both temporary cadets and temporary constables was absence without leave. In one case, three temporary cadets from J Company were fined £3 apiece for sneaking out of barracks and for “entering Barracks in an irregular manner” the following day. Other Auxiliaries apparently had trouble getting out of bed: many were fined for being absent from morning parades, and one man from N Company was fined 10 shillings for “Conduct to the prejudice of good order and Police discipline, i.e. Being in bed at 10.30 hours.” “Conduct to the prejudice of good order and Police discipline” was a common charge that covered a wide variety of offences. For example, two cadets in J Company were fined £3 for creating a disturbance in a cinema, and a third was fined £5 for “making an improper burlesque of a superior Officer.”

As might be expected, both temporary cadets and temporary constables were fined for drunkenness: in one case, Temporary Constable J Curley of Depot Company was fined seven pounds for being drunk in barracks, being in the officers’ mess without permission, and refusing to obey an order. In addition, the temporary cadet in charge of one company’s canteen was fined £5 for selling liquor to his comrades on credit. However, a few offenders did not fall into any of these categories. Two temporary cadets were fined and ordered to pay for losing their service revolvers, and another was punished for incurring a debt with a civilian. A temporary constable attached to F Company was fined £1 for threatening a temporary cadet, and a temporary cadet belonging to the same unit was fined £3 for “using abusive and obscene language to a superior Officer.” Commandant Wood dealt personally with the most serious case:

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<sup>72</sup> *Labour Commission Report*, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, II, p. 483; see also Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, II, pp. 521-22.

<sup>74</sup> Douglas Wimberley MS, Vol. I, IWM, PP/MCR/182, p. 153.

Temporary Cadet J L Lamb was fined £5 for “being in illegal possession of a motor car.” Since this was the same fine imposed for “making an improper burlesque of a superior Officer,” the commandant seems to have taken a lenient view of auto theft.<sup>75</sup>

Other records make it clear that Lamb’s case was not an isolated one. In its weekly review for 11 March 1921, Dublin Castle announced that, “Fines of £30 and £15 were inflicted on four members of the Auxiliary Division, RIC who were found guilty of having entered the premises of the Bank of Ireland, Dunmanway, without authority and of having assaulted two civilians.”<sup>76</sup> In his confidential report for the same month, the RIC’s county inspector for county Dublin wrote that two temporary cadets had been arrested for breaking into a shop in Balbriggan and stealing goods.<sup>77</sup> On 14 April, a member of our sample, 2nd Lieutenant C W Martin, Royal Air Force, was dismissed following a civil conviction. On the week of 28 April, a temporary cadet was found guilty of stealing money and jewellery and sentenced to three months’ imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>78</sup> On the week of 28 June, a temporary cadet and a temporary constable were sentenced to five years’ penal servitude for robbery.<sup>79</sup>

These cases did not include a pair of notorious crimes by Auxiliaries during the Irish insurgency: the robbery of a creamery at Kells, county Dublin on 10 October 1920, and the wrecking and looting of a licensed grocery store belonging to Protestant Unionists at Robinstown, county Meath on 9 February 1921. The latter incident has been described in detail elsewhere. When Brigadier-General Crozier was told of the looting, he took immediate (some would say precipitate) steps, dismissing twenty-one temporary cadets and arresting five. The chief of police at first approved of the commandant’s actions, but then reversed himself, and reinstated the twenty-one cadets pending an official inquiry. Crozier then resigned. Months later, the cadets in question were finally tried by court-martial: some of them were convicted, but most were acquitted.<sup>80</sup> As we might expect, the Robinstown case created a sensation, and was debated furiously in both press and Parliament. Here we will consider the stranger and lesser-known case of Major Bruce and the raid on the Kells creamery.

Major Evan Cameron Bruce of the Tank Corps seems to have had a colourful military career. He was a native of Gloucestershire, and 30 years old in 1920. He had served in Russia and the Far East, and was awarded the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun and the Russian Cross of St. George and Order of Vladimir, as well as the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross, before he lost his left arm to a gunshot wound in

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<sup>75</sup> Supplementary Routine Orders No 392 Part II, Auxiliary Division RIC, Beggars Bush Barracks, 9 December 1921, PRO, HO 351/187. Five pounds was not even the maximum fine: company commanders had the power to fine temporary cadets five days’ pay (£5 5s.), while the commandant had the power to fine them seven days’ pay (£7 7s.): Crozier, “The R.I.C. and the Auxiliaries,” p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Weekly Survey, 11 March 1921, PRO, CO 904/168 (2).

<sup>77</sup> RIC Reports, CI Dublin, March 1921, PRO, CO 904/114.

<sup>78</sup> Weekly Review, 28 April 1921, PRO, CO 904/168 (2).

<sup>79</sup> Weekly Review, 30 June 1921, PRO, CO 904/168 (2).

<sup>80</sup> Oliver Coogan, *Politics and War in Meath 1913-1923* (Dublin: Folens & Co., 1983), pp. 152-56; Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 163-4; Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, pp. 129-34.

France.<sup>81</sup> Despite this obvious disability, he was allowed to enlist in the Auxiliary Division, where he became a platoon commander with A Company in County Kilkenny. He claimed to have “a private grudge against Sinn Fein,” and this (along with his skill with a revolver) may have recommended the one-armed Bruce to Major Fleming at the RIC’s recruiting office in London.<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately for Bruce, he seems to have let his private grudge get the better of him: at some point in the autumn of 1920 Brigadier General Crozier dismissed the one-armed major for “striking an Irishman without cause.”<sup>83</sup>

On 10 October, Major Bruce and his nephew, Temporary Cadet A E T Bruce, tried to borrow a car from the RIC’s county inspector at Innistiogue, county Kilkenny. After County Inspector Whyte turned him down, Major Bruce and his nephew hired a private car and drove back to Thomastown, where they picked up two soldiers, Lieutenant Cooper and Sergeant Blake of the Devonshire Regiment. The four then drove through Kilkenny to the creamery at Kells, where two of them went inside, held up the manager, John Power, and robbed the safe. Major Bruce left Ireland for England on 19 October. He was arrested in Cheltenham on 21 October, and charged with stealing £75 from the Kells creamery. He was brought back to Ireland, and tried by court martial at Waterford on 22 December.<sup>84</sup>

During the trial, the creamery manager admitted that he used the safe for his own money, made unrecorded cash advances to customers, borrowed money from the till for his own use, and did not know how much was there on the day of the robbery; as a result, the judge advocate called Power an “unsatisfactory witness.” Lieutenant Cooper and Sergeant Blake testified that they stayed in the car while Bruce and his nephew raided the creamery. Cooper also testified that Bruce had organized the raid, and that he went along because Bruce told him he was in secret service; however, he admitted under cross-examination that Bruce had made no such claim; instead, Cooper had heard it from another officer, Major Macfie. Bruce’s nephew was not called to testify, but a statement by the temporary cadet was entered into evidence. Major Macfie was called to testify, but did not appear, because his car broke down three times on the way to Waterford. In the end, Major Bruce was found guilty of robbery and sentenced to a year in prison. His nephew was tried separately, found guilty, and received a sentence of three months’ imprisonment. The major was committed to Mountjoy on 28 December, and ultimately transferred to Liverpool on 8 August 1921, after the Truce.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> In addition, Bruce suffered from “loss of power and sensibility of the entire left leg with some wasting of the calf muscles” due to injuries received in a motor accident some time in 1920. However, it is not clear if he had his accident before or after he joined the Auxiliary Division: Report of the Medical Officer, Mountjoy Prison, 15 February 1921, PRO, HO 351/127.

<sup>82</sup> Bruce boasted that, “with my own revolver at 25 yards I have taken the five ‘pips’ out of the five of diamonds with five shots”: Major E C Bruce, Petition to be re-tried by Court Martial, 14 February 1921, PRO, HO 351/127.

<sup>83</sup> Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, p. 96.

<sup>84</sup> Documents relating to Major E C Bruce’s petition to be re-tried by Court Martial, PRO, HO 351/127.

<sup>85</sup> Documents relating to Major E C Bruce’s petition to be re-tried by Court Martial, PRO, HO 351/127.

Bruce, however, did not take his conviction lying down. On 14 February 1921 he petitioned to see a solicitor to take action against the Crown. In his petition, Bruce wrote that he had been staying with Lieutenant Cooper in Thomastown, and asked to be included in any raids. Cooper, he said, had organized the raid on the Kells creamery, but had no car, and could only trust his sergeant: could Bruce find another trustworthy man, and borrow a car from the ADRIC at Innistiogue? Bruce also claimed that he and his nephew had found nothing and taken nothing: Cooper and Blake, he said, had entered the creamery afterwards. Bruce also derided Power's testimony, accusing him of embezzling money from the creamery, and said that Major Macfie would have testified that he never told Lieutenant Cooper that Bruce was in secret service. Finally, Bruce pointed to his previous record: during the war he had handled money in Japan and Russia with no losses, and "although when I was with the A.F.R.I.C.<sup>86</sup> I was described as the 'terror of the district' yet no one ever—with the exception of Power—missed anything after I or my men had raided them and during those raids literally hundreds of pounds passed through my hands on more than one occasion."<sup>87</sup>

Bruce did not wait for a reply to his Valentine's Day petition. On 9 March 1921 he wrote a second petition, complaining again about irregularities at his trial and attacking the credibility of both the creamery manager and Lieutenant Cooper. Bruce also made an extraordinary accusation: he had "discovered and obtained proof that these proceedings were taken by the authorities because I knew the whole story of the raid on the Kilkenny mails, having myself been on the raid."

I believe Mr Tottenham<sup>88</sup> had worked upon the fears of the authorities by saying that I had said that 'it seemed a damn dirty game' when I found him writing 'Censored by the IRA' on the envelopes, and his pointing out that I left the force a few days later and was the only person outside the A.F.R.I.C. who knew the story of the raid.

Now it was rumoured that a large sum of money, between £700 & £1100, was missing when the mailbags were returned, and I knew in whose hands they were from the time the seals were broken until they were returned.<sup>89</sup>

Crozier wrote later in his memoirs that the 'raid on the Kilkenny mails' had taken place sometime in the autumn of 1920, without the knowledge or approval of either Crozier or the commander of A Company, Colonel Kirkwood. According to Crozier, "a highly placed and very senior official" had ordered a party of Auxiliaries to disguise themselves as Volunteers and raid the Kilkenny post office at night. The Auxiliaries bound and gagged the sorters, took the mailbags back to Innistiogue for examination, and publicly blamed the IRA for the raid. An unknown amount of money was stolen and divided by

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<sup>86</sup> As Crozier mentioned, the Auxiliary Division at first had no name, but then was briefly known as the Auxiliary Force (AFRIC), before it settled on Auxiliary Division (ADRIC). Bruce's use of the first acronym reflects his early enlistment and dismissal from the division.

<sup>87</sup> Major E C Bruce, Petition to be re-tried by Court Martial, 14 February 1921, PRO, HO 351/127.

<sup>88</sup> Tottenham was the Auxiliary Division's Chief Intelligence Officer at the time

<sup>89</sup> Major E C Bruce, Petition to be re-tried by Court Martial, 10 March 1921. PRO, HO 351/127.



the raiders, and while some of the mail was subsequently returned, some of it was dumped in a river.<sup>90</sup>

However, Major Bruce's conspiracy theory is difficult to take seriously. His denials are not very convincing, and Crozier himself was convinced that Bruce was guilty.<sup>91</sup> Bruce's credibility is not helped by his claim that he simply "left the force" when Crozier had dismissed him for assaulting a civilian. Of course, it is possible that everyone else was lying when they testified at Bruce's court martial. Power may have been embezzling money from the creamery, and he may have blamed the soldiers and police after the raid, to conceal his crime. Lieutenant Cooper and Sergeant Blake may have planned the robbery, and made the luckless one-armed major their scapegoat: the two soldiers had the chance to get their stories straight before the trial, while the two Bruces apparently did not. It is also possible that the four men planned the robbery together, and fell out afterwards. Whatever the truth, the case of Major Bruce reflects no credit on the Auxiliary Division. How a man was allowed to enlist in the division with only one arm (and perhaps a wasted leg as well) has never been explained.<sup>92</sup>

Although historians have devoted most of their attention to Auxiliaries who stole from the Irish people, temporary cadets apparently stole from the Irish government as well. In March 1922, the Treasury was supplied with a list of deficiencies in the accounts of the Auxiliary Division's various companies. E Company's accounts showed a deficiency of £61, which was blamed on a Major Dudley, "who was in command up to November 1920, and is now being prosecuted for defalcations in his accounts as a regular District Inspector." G Company's accounts were short more than £291. "Lt.-Col. Andrews, who has been under notice in connection with various irregularities, is responsible." Depot Company could not account for over £319 in cash: "the whole amount is due to the defalcations of ex-Cadet Joslyn, who was convicted by court martial and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for false pretences and falsification of accounts in December 1921." Worst of all, P Company's accounts were short more than £535: its commander, Captain Johnstone, had received this money as a temporary advance from the commander of Depot Company. Although Johnstone told the company paymaster that he repaid this advance, "it has now been ascertained that this is not the

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<sup>90</sup> Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>91</sup> According to Crozier, Bruce's conviction had a salutary effect on the discipline of A Company in County Kilkenny. "Only in Kilkenny under Captain Webb did sanity and honour appear to hold sway," he wrote, "and that because the commander was sound and the men had been taught a lesson over Bruce and the post office robbery that eventually killed Colonel Kirkwood." Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, p. 127.

<sup>92</sup> Major Bruce apparently protested his innocence to the end. He wrote another petition on 25 April 1921, which was rejected on 20 June. After his transfer to Liverpool prison on 8 August he petitioned for early release on 22 August, citing his war record, his previous good conduct, and his two months' imprisonment before his trial, but still complained that he had been unjustly convicted. He was released on 3 September 1921. On 17 May 1922 he applied for a retrial. "I fully realise," he wrote, "that the court may find me guilty and increase the punishment. On the other hand I am satisfied that no Court can possibly find me guilty in the face of the evidence. In short I am prepared to 'risk' my pension (£150 a year) in order to clear myself." Mark Sturgis finally brushed him off on 7 September 1922, informing him that there was no jurisdiction to order a new trial in his case: PRO, HO 351/127

case.” Johnstone had been granted compensation under the terms of the Criminal Injuries Act, and the government was taking steps to stop the payment of the captain’s award.<sup>93</sup>

### E. ‘A Corps De Luxe’

Even when the Auxiliaries were not actually stealing money from their employers, the division was a heavy financial drain on the government. Tudor had planned to pay temporary cadets a pound per day, or £365 per year. This was much better than the salaries being offered to ex-officers in civilian life: many positions paid only £250, £200, or even £150 or less per year. It was also at least as good as what they had been paid as officers during the war: junior officers were paid about £300 per year before demobilization.<sup>94</sup> Temporary cadets were also offered allowances (about which more later) and one month’s leave per year on full pay, with a free railway warrant both ways. Nonetheless, as early as 1 October 1920, a temporary cadet’s base pay was raised to a guinea (£1 1s.) per day, apparently to make service in the division more attractive. When the Treasury complained about the cost of the ADRIC in February 1921, and suggested reducing the base pay for new recruits to £6 per week, they were told this would be impossible. “Recruiting is bad and recruits must be obtained. The pay is not excessive for suitable men considering the risk and long hours.”<sup>95</sup>

The division was also unexpectedly costly in other ways. Like members of the regular RIC, members of the temporary forces were entitled to allowances in addition to their wages.<sup>96</sup> Since temporary cadets ranked as sergeants in the RIC, they were paid a sergeant’s allowances. In his original scheme, Tudor had planned to pay temporary cadets £7 a week, inclusive of all but travelling and subsistence allowances, and this rate of pay was approved by the Treasury. However, the conditions of service offered to prospective recruits in London mistakenly promised them “£1 per diem with allowances,” full stop. As a result, on 28 August 1920 the Irish government asked the Treasury for sanction to pay an RIC sergeant’s rent and boot allowances to temporary cadets: failure to do so, they argued, would be a breach of faith.<sup>97</sup> The Treasury’s response was predictably frosty: they thought the original terms had been adequate, and they found nothing in the Irish government’s request to indicate otherwise. They demanded an assurance that temporary cadets would not be offered terms that were “materially different” from those the Treasury had approved, but in this case, “in view of the fact that

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<sup>93</sup> Copy of unsigned letter to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, March 1922, PRO, HO 351/123.

<sup>94</sup> Martin Pether, “‘Temporary Gentlemen’ in the Aftermath of the Great War: Rank, Status and the Ex-Officer Problem,” *Historical Journal* 37, no. 1 (1994), p. 134.

<sup>95</sup> T. I. 230/21, 26 February 1921, and unsigned letter to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, May 1921, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>96</sup> See Chapter Three for a discussion of the allowances paid to Black and Tans.

<sup>97</sup> Cope to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 28 August 1920, PRO, HO 351/63. Cope tried to assure the Treasury that rent allowance would not be paid often, since temporary cadets were “to form a special force in disturbed districts,” and noted that the boot allowance was only 1s 6d a week.

public faith is pledged,” they grudgingly approved the payment of rent and boot allowances.<sup>98</sup>

The mistaken promise of full allowances proved to be a costly one, both in terms of money and Treasury goodwill. In some cases, the Irish government was compelled to ask the Treasury for additional funds: in October, for example, Cope requested approval for an RIC sergeant’s separation allowance of 2s per night for temporary cadets forced to live apart from their families.<sup>99</sup> In other cases, the Castle tried to avoid additional expenditures. When General Crozier requested his RIC uniform allowance of £50, for example, he was told he would have to get along with an ordinary cadet’s uniform, “with suitable badges.”<sup>100</sup>

In one case, the Castle seems to have resorted to trickery in the name of economy. RIC constables who were stationed in disturbed districts were entitled to a disturbance allowance of two shillings per day. On 19 September 1920, Crozier wrote to inform Tudor that the question of disturbance allowances had “arisen again.” Since the Auxiliaries were promised a pound a day plus allowances, they naturally felt entitled to the disturbance allowance. “I am sure there will be a lot [of] complaints amongst this force if this is not allowed,” said Crozier, “and I personally think they are perfectly entitled to it.”<sup>101</sup> Tudor suggested paying the allowance at a reduced rate, but somehow it was decided to pay the men a sergeant’s plainclothes allowance of 5s per week instead, “in view of the work which they are from time to time required to carry out in plain clothes.”<sup>102</sup> The Treasury approved this request, and Dublin Castle may well have congratulated itself on its little deception: the Auxiliaries would be pleased with their additional pay, and the Treasury, if not pleased, would be less displeased with 5s per week than it would have been with 14s per week.

Unfortunately, this little deception came back to haunt the Castle a few months later. On 7 February 1921, Cope wrote to the Treasury to request a pay raise for the assistant commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Guard.<sup>103</sup> Like every member of the division, Guard was being paid 5s per week for plainclothes work, and 1s 6d per week as a boot allowance. As a married man, he was also being paid a rent allowance of 11s 6d per

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<sup>98</sup> Waterfield to Under Secretary, 17 September 1920, PRO, HO 351/63. Temporary constables were paid boot, rent, and separation, allowances as well: *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 136, col. 1292.

<sup>99</sup> Cope to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, October 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>100</sup> Crozier to Inspector General, 17 September 1920; Assistant Inspector General to Under Secretary, 20 September 1920; Cope to Police Adviser, 21 September 1920; Tudor to Under Secretary, 26 September 1920; Cope to Inspector General, 28 September 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>101</sup> Crozier to Police Adviser, 19 September 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>102</sup> Tudor to Assistant Under Secretary, 20 September 1920 (Unsigned marginal note: “Discussed with Sir J. A. & Genl Tudor. Agreed not payable. Plain CIs allce instead.”); Cope to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 30 September 1920; Waterfield to Under Secretary, 8 October 1920, PRO, HO 45/20096. To understand the need for stealth in this case, we must refer to the Treasury’s minute of 23 August 1920, which states: “My Lords assume that, inasmuch as these men have been recruited for the special purpose of taking duty in disturbed areas, they will not be regarded as eligible for the special service allowance which was recently sanctioned for ordinary R.I.C. personnel serving in those areas”: Waterfield to Under Secretary, 23 August 1920, PRO, HO 351/63.

<sup>103</sup> Cope to Treasury, Assistant Secretary 7 February 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096.

week, and a separation allowance of 2s per night. His allowances added up to £83 6s per year. Unfortunately for Guard, and for Cope, the Treasury replied to this minute with three questions, the third of which was: why was the assistant commandant receiving a plainclothes allowance?<sup>104</sup>

Cope's initial reply was disingenuous: "Command allowances," he wrote, "are paid in addition to ordinary allowances. Not to pay the ordinary allowances would result in higher command allowances."<sup>105</sup> However, the Treasury would not be fobbed off. On 26 February they sent a long minute to Dublin Castle complaining that married cadets were being paid allowances amounting to £83 6s per annum, all because the Irish government had mistakenly offered more generous terms than the Treasury had allowed.

My Lords are aware that at the time it was necessary to make out a case for extra allowances; recruiting was urgent, and men would not come without financial inducement; the position of the Crown Forces in Ireland, especially with winter coming on, was serious; it was originally hoped to get bachelors only; but when a large part, if not the majority, or recruits proud [sic] to be married men, some extra allowance was clearly called for to meet the liability of separation.

But it appears to Their Lordships very doubtful whether these special reasons still apply. Recruits are coming in freely; unemployment is serious all over the United Kingdom; wages are falling.<sup>106</sup>

The minute concluded with the Treasury's suggestion that the pay of new recruits be reduced to £6 a week with allowances. Furthermore, the Treasury continued to press Cope on the issue of the plainclothes allowance. On 8 March, Waterfield wrote: "I am to point out that the allowance was originally intended to compensate Temporary Cadets for the wear and tear of plain clothes necessarily worn while on duty under certain conditions involving hard wear of their clothing. I am to enquire to what extent these conditions still continue and for what portion of their service on what occasions plain clothes are now worn by Temporary Cadets, both officers and other ranks, while on duty."<sup>107</sup> Since the plainclothes allowance had actually been intended as a substitute for the more generous disturbance allowance, it is perhaps not surprising that Dublin Castle tried to avoid answering these questions.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Waterfield to Under Secretary, 12 February 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>105</sup> Cope's marginal comments on Waterfield to Under Secretary, 12 February 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096. These comments were later embodied in Cope to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 22 February 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>106</sup> T. 1. 230/21, 26 February 1921, PRO, HO 351/63. See above for the Irish government's eventual reply (in May 1921) to the Treasury's plan to reduce the base pay of temporary cadets.

<sup>107</sup> Waterfield to Under Secretary, 8 March 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>108</sup> The Treasury was still waiting for an answer on 11 April (Matthews to Cope, 11 April 1921). Absurdly, Cope informed the Treasury on 18 April that: "The plain clothes allowance will now be paid to a maximum of 12 men per company, or less where possible. Details of the work done by men in plain clothes have been called for and the question will be considered again on the 1st proximo." (Cope to Waterfield, 18 April 1921). In its minute of May 1921, however, the Castle informed the Treasury that the allowance could not be limited to only 12 men per company: "the Chief of Police reports that he has given

Pressure from the Treasury over these and other financial problems involving the Auxiliary Division may have prompted Cope's outrage over the *Shannon* affair. On 16 November 1920 Lieutenant Colonel R J Andrews, commander of G Company in county Clare, commandeered the *Shannon*, a steamship that was the property of the Board of Public Works. On 2 February 1921, Andrews relinquished command of G Company and was replaced by another officer, Lieutenant Colonel Hemming. Hemming decided that the *Shannon* was "too slow, old, and expensive" for G Company's purposes, and decided to return the boat to its owners. Before he could do so, however, the *Shannon*'s crew of Auxiliaries ran it aground and damaged its bottom on 9 February 1921. Hemming sent the ship into dry dock in Limerick, obtained three estimates for the cost of repairs, and accepted the least expensive estimate. Once repairs were completed, Hemming handed the *Shannon* back to the Board of Works, and billed ADRIC headquarters for £56.<sup>109</sup> However, the Board of Works then submitted a claim for over £2200 to repair their ship and over £574 for stores consumed or missing, along with other expenses.<sup>110</sup>

When Hemming submitted his report on this affair to Dublin Castle, Cope replied with an extraordinary minute to the RIC's director of personnel services:

I am afraid I cannot accept Hemming's report as satisfactory. I think it most unsatisfactory for he has not met the charge made by the Bd. of Works that a large quantity of goods of considerable value are missing. The Bd. of Works refers to Blankets, Quilts, Mattresses &c. as missing.

Further: On whose authority did Hemming pay £56 for repairs. The boat was the property of the Bd. of Works—a Government Dept.—& his duty was to hand her over & leave her for the Bd. of Works to get her repaired. He exceeded his duty very considerably & he must be told that he is nothing more than OC of an Auxiliary Company & as such is not empowered to spend Govt. money at his own sweet will. He should put his difficulties up to H.Qrs. & get instructions in matters which need not be decided off hand. I should be grateful if you should so inform him & tell him that if he repeats this kind of thing he will be cleared out. We really can't stand this sort of thing. These fellows have got to understand that we will not tolerate the expenditure of public money without our prior consent. I have had (& so have you) more than enough of Col. Andrews and his ilk. The furnishing of the Lakeside Hotel without the knowledge of H.Qrs. is monstrous.<sup>111</sup>

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the limitation a trial and finds it unworkable. He states it is so often necessary for men to travel in plain clothes for their own protection, and that, if the limitation were insisted on, men in uniform would have to travel and patrol in larger parties than at present and that the present numbers will not permit of this." (Minute to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, May 1922) There is no record of the Treasury ever receiving the information it requested: PRO. HO 351/63.

<sup>109</sup> Report of Lieutenant Colonel Hemming, OC G Company ADRIC, 27 March 1921, PRO. HO 351/122.

<sup>110</sup> Sturgis to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 18 February 1922, PRO, HO 351/122.

<sup>111</sup> What Cope is referring to here is unclear, but the Lakeside Hotel was the headquarters of G Company, ADRIC in Killaloe, county Clare.

Will you please tell me the date when Andrews resigned from the Division. He should have been sacked & not allowed to resign.<sup>112</sup>

Cope's frustration is easy to understand. By the spring of 1920, the Division was a scandal. General Crozier had resigned, and like the opposition was denouncing the government for raising a force of bashibazouks. To make matters worse, the division's accounts were in complete disarray, and Castle officials were forced to clean up numerous other financial messes besides the *Shannon* affair. By 30 June, for example, it was determined that the division could not account for over four thousand pounds' worth of arms and equipment, including seventy-two bayonets, seventy .45 revolvers, fifty-six .38 revolvers, three 12-gauge repeating shotguns, and two .303 service rifles.<sup>113</sup> Ultimately, the government wrote off the whole amount. "It is to be regretted," said Mark Sturgis, "that the deficiencies are partly due to the fact that no accurate record was kept in the early days of the Division of store accounting transactions or of articles lost either hostile attack or by members of the division, in circumstances excusable or otherwise."<sup>114</sup>

Even small sums were causing large problems. In November 1920, for example, the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment had issued £15 17s 9d worth of rations to an Auxiliary platoon. The regiment was never paid for these rations, and in the spring of 1921 the army asked the ADRIC to settle this platoon's mess bill. Between 23 March and 7 October 1921, over two-dozen letters and minutes went back and forth between the army, the police, and the Castle as they squabbled over who should pay this minuscule amount. Finally, Alfred Cope settled the matter by paying the bill out of the Auxiliary Division's fines fund.<sup>115</sup>

The temporary cadets in question had not paid their mess bill because almost all of them were dead. The Manchester Regiment had issued rations to No. 2 Platoon of C Company, stationed at Macroom, county Cork. On the afternoon of 28 November 1920, most of the men in this platoon had gone out on patrol in two Crossley tenders, and been ambushed by the IRA's West Cork flying column, led by Tom Barry. The guerrillas were waiting at a bend in the road near the village of Kilmichael. While his men took cover behind stone fences on both sides, Barry stood out in the road, wearing a Volunteer officer's tunic, trench coat and leggings. When the first Auxiliary vehicle came around the bend, they saw Barry waving, mistook him for a British officer, and slowed up. Barry threw a grenade, and his men opened fire.

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<sup>112</sup> Cope to Umfreville, 15 April 1921, PRO, HO 351/122. Andrews had resigned just twelve days before, on 3 April 1921. In his reply, Umfreville said: "Colonel Andrews I should very much like to find myself, but I believe that he heard something was in the air, and immediately vanished into the blue, and you and I will see him no more. It is a pity in one way, yet I cannot but consider him a good riddance": Umfreville to Cope, 20 April 1921, PRO, HO 351/122.

<sup>113</sup> Statement of deficiencies in stores of Auxiliary Division R.I.C., 30 June 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096.

<sup>114</sup> Mark Sturgis to Treasury, Assistant Secretary, 16 December 1921, PRO, HO 45/20096. The ADRIC's financial woes are exhaustively documented in files and folders preserved at the PRO.

<sup>115</sup> The documents describing this dispute are in PRO, HO 45/20096.

Within a few minutes, all of the cadets in the leading Crossley were dead and wounded. The following vehicle tried to turn around and get away, but got stuck, and then came under fire itself. The remaining Auxiliaries fought back as well as they could, but they were soon overwhelmed. When it was all over, sixteen of the twenty men in the No. 2 Platoon had been killed, along with three men of the West Cork flying column.<sup>116</sup> We will now turn our attention to battles like the Kilmichael ambush, and see how other Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries fared in combat with their enemies in the Irish Republican Army.

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<sup>116</sup> A seventeenth Auxiliary managed to escape the scene of the ambush, but was recaptured later by the guerrillas. After two days in captivity, he was executed and buried secretly in a bog. An eighteenth man was badly wounded and left for dead, but survived: Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies*, p. 35. The best account of the Kilmichael ambush is in Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies*, pp. 21-38.

## TABLES

Table 4.1. *Formation and Disposition of ADRIC Companies from summer 1920 to winter 1922.*

| <u>Company</u> | <u>Formed</u> | <u>County</u>                 |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| A              | Aug 1920      | Kilkenny                      |
| B              | Aug 1920      | Tipperary (later Cavan)       |
| C              | Aug 1920      | Cork (later Dublin city)      |
| D              | Aug 1920      | Galway                        |
| E              | Aug 1920      | Roscommon                     |
| F              | Sep 1920      | Dublin City                   |
| G              | Oct 1920      | Clare                         |
| H              | Nov 1920      | Kerry                         |
| I              | Nov 1920      | Unknown (ultimately Monaghan) |
| J              | Nov 1920      | Cork                          |
| K              | Nov 1920      | Cork (disbanded Mar 1921)     |
| L              | Dec 1920      | Cork                          |
| M              | Jan 1921      | Longford                      |
| N              | Jan 1921      | Meath                         |
| O              | Feb 1921      | Cork                          |
| P              | Mar 1921      | Sligo                         |
| Q              | Mar 1921      | Dublin city (later Louth)     |
| R              | Apr 1921      | Unknown (ultimately Kilkenny) |
| Depot          | Aug 1920      | Dublin city                   |
| Veterans       | Unknown       | Unknown                       |

(From various sources, including: Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 156, 203, 208, 221, 256, 316, 319; Bennett, "Portrait of a Killer", p. 471; Burning of House in County Sligo by ADRIC, PRO, HO 351/76; Captured Despatch, 29 October 1921, from British 6 Division re Composition and Disposition of Division, IMA, Collins Papers A/0627/IX/1; Coogan, *Politics and War in County Meath*, p. 150; Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday*, pp. 77-8; IRA Brigade Intelligence Reports, October 1921, IMA, Collins Papers, various references; O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*, p. 69; O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, p. 144; Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45; RIC Reports, CI various counties, various months, PRO, CO 904/112-4; Seedorf, "Lloyd George Government," p. 95; RIC Publicity, PRO, CO 904/168, pp. 993, 995, 1009, 1019; Street, *Ireland in 1921*, pp. 33-4; Townshend, *British Campaign*, p. 210.)



Table 4.2. *Proportions of Officers in the various Corps of the British Army, 1 January 1918, compared to proportions of Temporary Cadets from the various Corps of the British Army, October 1920 (%)*

| Corps                         | Army, Jan 1918 | ADRIC, Oct 1920 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Guards                        | 0.9            | 1.4             |
| Cavalry                       | 2.7            | 2.7             |
| Artillery                     | 12.9           | 10.5            |
| Engineers                     | 8.9            | 0.5             |
| Air Force                     | 8.8            | 15.0            |
| Infantry                      | 43.6           | 60.9            |
| Cyclists, Machine-Guns, Tanks | 5.4            | 5.9             |
| Service                       | 17.8           | 3.2             |

Sources: Temporary Cadets 647 to 920, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50; *Army Report (1921)*, p. 21. Cadets whose Corps is unknown have been excluded.

Table 4.3. *Birth Dates of Temporary Cadets and Temporary Constables compared to Birth Dates of Black and Tans, October 1920 (%)*

|           | Temporary Cadets<br>211 | Temporary Constables<br>149 | Black and Tans<br>1153 |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Sample... |                         |                             |                        |
| 1901-1902 | 1                       | --                          | 11                     |
| 1896-1900 | 29                      | 7                           | 48                     |
| 1891-1895 | 30                      | 2                           | 22                     |
| 1886-1890 | 17                      | 11                          | 13                     |
| 1881-1885 | 11                      | 23                          | 5                      |
| 1876-1880 | 10                      | 31                          | 1                      |
| 1871-1875 | 2                       | 22                          | --                     |
| 1861-1870 | --                      | 4                           | --                     |

Sources: Temporary Cadets 647 to 920, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50 and corresponding numbers in RIC General Register (There was no birth date recorded for one Temporary Cadet); Constables and Temporary Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

Table 4.4. *Native Regions of Temporary Cadets and Temporary Constables compared to Native Regions of Black and Tans, October 1920 (%)*

| Sample...           | Temporary Cadets<br>212 | Temporary Constables<br>149 | Black and Tans<br>1153 |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Central England     | 15                      | 9                           | 12                     |
| Northern England    | 19                      | 6                           | 15                     |
| London and Vicinity | 34                      | 60                          | 47                     |
| Southern England    | 8                       | 7                           | 12                     |
| Eastern England     | 2                       | 5                           | 3                      |
| Scotland            | 4                       | 6                           | 8                      |
| Wales               | 8                       | 2                           | 1                      |
| Other               | 10                      | 5                           | 2                      |

Sources: Cadets 647 to 920, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50 and corresponding numbers in RIC General Register; Constables and Temporary Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

Table 4.5. *Occupational Backgrounds of Temporary Constables and Black and Tans, October 1920 (%)*

| Sample...         | Temporary<br>Constables<br>149 | Black and Tans<br>1153 |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Un/semi-skilled   | 65                             | 52                     |
| Skilled           | 24                             | 35                     |
| Shop assist/clerk | 7                              | 6                      |
| Other             | 4                              | 7                      |

Source: Constables and Temporary Constables 73602 to 75027, RIC General Register, PRO, HO 184/38-39.

Table 4.6. *Fates of Temporary Cadets, October 1920.*

| <u>Sample...</u>                   | <u>270</u> | <u>%</u> |
|------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Re-engaged                         | 135        | 49       |
| Resigned                           | 46         | 17       |
| Did not re-engage                  | 26         | 10       |
| Discharged (medically unfit)       | 16         | 6        |
| Joined Royal Irish Constabulary    | 16         | 6        |
| Struck off or dismissed            | 15         | 6        |
| Killed or died                     | 14         | 5        |
| Joined Ulster Special Constabulary | 2          | 1        |

Source: Cadets 647 to 920, ADRIC Register No. 1, PRO, HO 184/50. Two men in the sample transferred to the Royal Irish Constabulary, but returned to the ADRIC, and are not counted as having joined the RIC.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ONE-SIDED WAR Police and Auxiliaries in Combat

What was it like to fight in the First Irish War? This question has been answered many times: but only by members and supporters of the Irish Republican Army.<sup>1</sup> We know what it was like to fight as a guerrilla. We do not know what it was like to fight as a policeman. Unlike their opponents, the Irish and British men of the Royal Irish Constabulary and its Auxiliary Division wrote almost no memoirs.<sup>2</sup> However, they did give evidence to military courts of inquiry into the deaths of their comrades, and their depositions paint a vivid picture of guerrilla warfare from the police perspective. This picture is quite different from the battle pieces of republican memoirists and popular historians. There are no carefully laid plans, and no tense periods of waiting for the enemy to appear; the police are the victims, not the attackers; there are few victories, but many casualties. From the police perspective, the Irish insurgency was a one-sided war. The guerrillas did most of the killing, and the police did most of the dying. When we appreciate this, we can better understand why the police began to take the reprisals that did so much to blacken their name and discredit their cause.

#### A. 'A Volley of Shots Rang Out': Inches Cross, 13 November 1920

The best way to start is with a close look at a single battle. On the morning of 13 November 1920, seven constables drove away from Tipperary RIC barracks in a Crossley tender, heading out of town. Constable Derwent Wallace was at the wheel, and Constable Patrick Mackessy was in the passenger seat. The remaining five constables rode in the box: Charles Buntrock, William Buntrock, Patrick Fardy, John Miller, and Jeremiah O'Leary. The patrol was a mixed group. Some of the men were veterans, and some were new recruits. Some of them were Peelers, and some were Black and Tans. O'Leary was a Cork man who had served in the RIC for ten years. Mackessy, from county Kerry, had been a constable for nine years. Miller was an Irishman from county Wicklow, but had only served with the force for six months. The Buntrock brothers were

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1949); Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1924; revised ed., Tralee: Anvil, 1964); Brennan, *The War in Clare*; *Dublin's Fighting Story 1916-1921* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1949); *Kerry's Fighting Story* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1949); *Limerick's Fighting Story*; Sean O'Callaghan, *Execution* (London: Frederick Muller, 1974); Ernie O'Malley, *Army Without Banners* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937); Ernie O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies* (Dublin: Anvil, 1982); and *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*.

<sup>2</sup> In *Sword for Hire*, Douglas Duff described his part in the relief of a police patrol that was ambushed at Maam Cross in county Galway on 23 April 1921 (pp. 72-75). For an eyewitness account of the fight at Maam Cross from the guerrilla perspective, see Peter J. McDonnell, "Action by West Connemara Column at Mounterown," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, pp. 203-9; McDonnell was the commanding officer of both the IRA's West Connemara Brigade and the brigade flying column.

Black and Tans from England. Both of them had joined the RIC less than a month before, on 15 October, and were allocated to the south riding of county Tipperary on 7 November. There was no sergeant with the group. As the senior constable, O'Leary was probably in charge.

There is no record of the patrol's orders, but their mission seems to have been to reconnoitre the roads to the west and south of Tipperary. The patrol drove northwest to Limerick Junction, where it turned left and proceeded west to Emly. After calling at Emly they turned left again and drove south to Galbally. At Galbally, they made another left turn and headed east, through the Glen of Aherlow in the shadow of the Galty Mountains, to Lisvernane. Beyond Lisvernane, their penultimate destination was Bansha, where a final left turn would put them on the road back to Tipperary.

The patrol's route must have been too well travelled by the RIC. At about 12:45 in the afternoon the seven constables drove into an ambush at Inches Cross, two or three miles between Lisvernane and Bansha. Dozens of Irish Volunteers armed with rifles, shotguns, and revolvers were waiting for them behind a fence on the right side of the road. Only three policemen survived the ambush: Wallace, Fardy, and William Buntrock. Two days later, on 15 November, the three gave evidence at a court of inquiry into the death of Constable Miller. Later, Buntrock and Fardy gave evidence against a number of men who were arrested in connection with the ambush. The following account is based on these depositions.<sup>3</sup>

The police were taken completely by surprise. None of the survivors reported seeing or hearing anything until the rebels opened fire. Some of the ambushers may have fired prematurely. At the court of inquiry, Buntrock testified that "a few shots rang out, and shortly afterwards a volley," but later he said simply that, "without warning, a volley of rifle shots was fired at us." None of the other police reported hearing any premature shots. Fardy testified at first that "shots rang out along the road behind the ditch," and later simply that, "a volley of shots rang out from the right hand side of the road." The driver, Wallace, said simply that, "a volley rang out."

Remarkably, none of the police were killed or even wounded by this initial volley. However, a bullet or slug hit the Crossley's steering gear and disabled it. The tender continued down the road for another ten to thirty yards before it swerved into the ditch on the left side of the road, hit the fence, and stopped. Fardy later stated that, "I got up and jumped out and told some of the others that it would be better to get down on the ground." His testimony at the court of inquiry better conveys the urgency of the situation: "I jumped out and said to the tothers [*sic*] "Get on the ground." Buntrock said that, "all of the men tumbled out except myself." For some reason, he remained in the car. The remainder of the patrol got down in the ditch, and all of them started to return fire with their service rifles.

The situation was hopeless. The police were exposed, without any cover but their tender, and they were heavily outnumbered. Nonetheless, the battle continued for

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<sup>3</sup> MCI (J. T. Miller), 15 November 1920, PRO, CO 904/43, file 33191; statement of evidence No. 2 [Constable Fardy RIC], undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 33191, statement of evidence No. 3 [Constable Buntrock RIC], undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 33191.

between twenty-five and thirty minutes. The survivors could supply few details of the engagement. Wallace said only that, "I with the others got down by the side of the car and returned the fire." Buntrock said that, "I lay down by the driver's seat and fired several shots through the body of the car at the men inside the fence. I lay there for about half an hour and with the others of my party kept firing away for that time." At the court of inquiry, he mentioned that, "The enemy fired at us with rifles and shot guns and threw five bombs." Fardy provided the greatest number of details. "I got down on my knee at the side of the lorry," he said, "and opened fire around the end of the lorry between the lorry and the ditch. Constable O'Leary was at my side and one or two more immediately behind me. I remember firing until Const. O'Leary was hit by a bullet, and just after my arm was broken by a bullet; we were then firing for about twenty minutes." At the court of inquiry, Fardy mentioned that, after O'Leary had been wounded, "He kept on saying 'Keep on firing.' He fell over on my heels against the ditch."

By this time, at least five of the seven constables had been killed or wounded. Buntrock said that, after half an hour, "I then heard some of our men groaning painfully and asking us to surrender as they, owing to wounds, could not put up any further defence, and they were being shot at without being able to reply." Fardy recalled that, "shortly after my being wounded the firing of the police ceased, but the attackers kept on firing for some time. All this time one of the police, whom I believe to be Const. [Charles] Buntrock, was under the car and evidently in great pain. I heard someone of the police say 'surrender', but this had no effect on the attackers, who kept on firing." The police stopped firing, and William Buntrock put up his hands, but the ambushers kept shooting for another fifteen minutes. According to the Black and Tan, the Volunteer leader shouted for his party to cease fire, "but his men took no notice of it, but kept firing away for about a quarter of an hour afterwards, and I saw the leader come out on the road before his men obeyed his order." Fardy agreed that the shooting continued until, "the leaders of the civilians told them to come out and cease fire." At this point, between twenty and thirty Volunteers emerged from cover and advanced on the defeated police.

The surviving constables noted that the Volunteers seemed very young, between 18 and 20 years old, and were dressed like farmer's sons. Fardy was handled roughly, and admitted afterwards that he was afraid for his life.

When all the firing had ceased a man came up, caught me by the broken arm, lifted me to my feet, and searched me, going through my pockets. I had nothing but some money and an empty pocket book. The man asked the leader something about the money and the leader said, 'don't touch it.' The man who searched me then told me to make an act of contrition and to prepare to die; he had a Webley pattern revolver in his hand. I was fully expecting that he would shoot me, and was then saying my prayers. This man took away my rifle and ammunition and also my belt and then left me.

Once the Volunteers had disarmed the police, they splashed gasoline on the Crossley tender and set it on fire. Buntrock recalled that,

Const. O’Leary was then lying dead under the motorcar, and I asked them to let me pull him from under it: they gave me permission, and I then pulled him a short distance away from the car. A bullet seemed to have gone through the petrol tank, as a stream of petrol was around Const. Mackessy, so that when the car took fire this petrol also went on fire, and as it was setting fire to Const. Mackessy I ran and dragged him away. He was then alive and his hair was lighting but I quenched it with my hands. He lived for a short time after that but didn’t speak.

“I have no doubt,” he concluded bitterly, “but that the attackers would have left Constables O’Leary and Mackessy to be burnt under the car only I pulled them away.”

The ambush party went away through the fields, and William Buntrock, who seems to have been the sole unwounded survivor, went ahead to Bansha to get help from the police barracks there. Fardy recalled that, once the ambush party had retreated,

I and another of the wounded Constables then went to look for help and found one house empty. At the next house there were three men inside who refused to let us in. I told them of one man dying above and the others dead but they refused to go. I then went to another house about 100 yards further on the road. The woman there was very kind, and when Const. Miller arrived badly wounded about an hour later she put him to bed.

Mackessy and O’Leary died at the scene. Charles Buntrock and Miller were rescued and taken to Tipperary military hospital, but Buntrock died of his wounds later that afternoon, and Miller died the following day. According to a report published in the *Daily Telegraph* on Monday, 15 November, “when news of the occurrence reached Tipperary four lorries packed with soldiers and police proceeded to the scene and scoured the country around. It is reported that a cottage in the neighbourhood was set on fire, on the allegation that the wounded police had been refused shelter.”<sup>4</sup>

## **B. Assassinations and Ambushes**

Throughout the First Irish War, the RIC and ADRIC took part in four types of combat: ambushes, assassinations, barracks battles, and encounter battles. Ambushes occurred when the guerrillas attacked a group of three or more police. Assassinations occurred when the guerrillas attacked one or two police. Barracks battles occurred when the guerrillas attacked a police barracks. In each of these cases, the guerrillas were on the strategic offensive: they chose when and where to fight, and often took the police by surprise. Furthermore, when they laid ambushes for police patrols, the guerrillas were on the tactical defensive: they were under cover, with weapons at the ready, while the police were caught in the open and unprepared. In a barracks battle, the situation was partly reversed: though the rebels were still on the strategic offensive, the police were on the

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<sup>4</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1920, p. 10.

tactical defensive. Encounter battles occurred when the police went on the strategic offensive, and encountered guerrillas who were not prepared for combat.

At least thirty-nine Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were assassinated in the First Irish War. Not many were killed in the line of duty, and the circumstances of their deaths can only loosely be described as combat. Some of them were simply executed, like Temporary Cadets Frank Garniss and Cecil Morris. The two cadets were members of the group that stumbled across the raid on 22 Lower Mount Street in Dublin on Bloody Sunday. Garniss and Morris were sent back to Beggars Bush barracks for help, but another group of Volunteers caught them on the way, took them around the back of No. 16 Lower Mount Street, and shot them dead.

A resident at No. 16 heard what happened. Earlier, he was in his bedroom with his brother, stropping his razor, when the door was opened and someone told him to put his hands up. The command was followed by a shot from a revolver. The bullet missed the witness and hit the wall, but was fired so close that the flash blinded him. Four men came into the room and questioned him. Who was he? Where did he come from? Where did he work? Were there any other men in the house? Once they were satisfied, they ordered the witness and his brother to stay where they were, and left.

About two minutes later, the witness heard noises in his back yard: voices, then shouted commands, followed by six or seven quick shots. He risked a look out the window, and saw five men escaping through the paddock out back. Then, according to the official report, he went out into the garden, “and saw the dead bodies of the two cadets against the side of the house. One was in a sitting posture against the wall, & the other was lying on his right side with his head on the legs of the first body.” Both men had been shot in the head.<sup>5</sup> Garniss and Morris had joined the ADRIC in September. They were the third and fourth members of the Division to die.

Many of the remaining thirty-seven men were killed just as suddenly. Constables George Cuthberton and Walter Shaw, for example, were shot down in a country lane on the afternoon of Sunday, 1 May 1921. The two Black and Tans left their barracks at Arvagh, county Cavan at about 11.30 a.m. to go for a walk. Gunfire was heard about one o’clock in the afternoon. Since the two constables had not come back, a search party went out along the Longford road at 5.30 p.m. Their bodies were found on the road in the township of Fihora, stripped of their revolvers, ammunition, and handcuffs.

According to the official report, both men had been killed hours before their bodies were found. Shaw had been shot three times. Cuthberton had been shot six times. Around the time the two constables left their barracks, six armed Volunteers had occupied a farmer’s house in Fihora. They told the women of the house not to be frightened, and took up firing positions both upstairs and downstairs. Some time after noon, the gunmen opened fire from the windows of the house, and left immediately

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<sup>5</sup> From the report of the Military Courts of Inquiry into the deaths of British officers and Auxiliary cadets on 21 November 1920, PRO, CO 904/189/2; see also Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, pp. 100-2; Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, pp. 121-22; Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday*, pp. 128-29; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 152-53.



afterward. Apparently, the farmer found the bodies of the two constables dead in the road when he returned to his house later that afternoon, but left them where they lay.<sup>6</sup>

As these cases indicate, most assassinations are not well documented. Since the victims were alone, there were no police witnesses. Civilian witnesses were few, and had little to say. Captured rebels were understandably reluctant to tell their stories to military courts of inquiry. In one case, however, two Black and Tans named Hubbard and McKibbin fought their attackers hand-to-hand and escaped to tell the tale. On 10 April 1921 the pair was picnicking with two Irish women near Athlone, county Roscommon when two Volunteers held them up. McKibbin said:

I grabbed my revolver which I had on the grass beside me & aiming it at the man I pulled the trigger it snapped but didn't go off. Immediately I made to jump to my feet & as I did so he fired and hit me in the hip. I staggered to my feet & as I did so he fired at me again. I then tried to fire back at him but as I did so my lady friend got between us so I couldn't fire in case I hit her.

Constable Hubbard was also shot and stunned by a bullet that grazed his head. "On gathering myself up," he said, "I found the lady I was with struggling with this man. I then rushed him a hand to hand fight followed in which I got my man to the ground there I succeeded in taking his revolver from him also my own." The Volunteer who shot Constable McKibbin rushed off to help his comrade. McKibbin said that:

I got to the spot as soon as I could and I saw [Constable Hubbard] on the ground in grips with a man, and one of the young ladies was trying to take the revolver of another man he being the one that had attacked me. He had me partly covered with his revolver and I couldn't fire for fear of hitting the young lady. The next thing I noticed was [Constable Hubbard] putting three rounds into the man who he was struggling with.

Hubbard was shot again in the back, before the Volunteers retreated under fire from McKibbin. At that point, however, the two Black and Tans noticed another group of men nearby, and in McKibbin's words, they "thought it best to get away." They ran to the police barracks in Athlone, where they reported the incident and handed over the automatic pistol that Hubbard had taken from his attacker. Both men were hospitalized. Their women friends were not injured in the incident, but apparently suffered a reprisal for walking out with policemen. According to the local district inspector, "the two ladies who accompanied the two Police on this occasion are employed in Mr. Burgess's drapery establishment Athlone."

A few days after this occurrence they were both discharged by Mr. Burgess in consequence, it is alleged, of his having received a threatening letter. I inquired into the matter, and no threatening letter could be produced. It is also alleged that

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<sup>6</sup> Summarized findings of MCI, Dublin Castle, 9 June 1921, PRO, CO 904/189/2

the 'Black and Tans' visited him and asked to have the two girls taken back. This has been done and the girls are now back in Mr. Burgess's shop.

To the researcher's dismay, the district inspector concluded that, "I have taken no written statements from these girls, and I do not intend to bring them as witnesses in the case, as I consider there is sufficient evidence without them."<sup>7</sup>

Most of the police testimony preserved at the PRO concerns ambushes, and their evidence makes it plain that the battle at Inches Cross was fairly typical. For the police, ambushes began suddenly and unexpectedly, when the guerrillas opened fire. "Without warning," said Buntrock, "a volley of rifle shots was fired at us." "A volley of shots rang out from the right hand side of the road," said Fardy. Words like these recur again and again in the testimony of ambush survivors. After he was ambushed in county Cork, a Peeler named Flaherty reported hearing a shot behind him, "and then a burst of about fifteen shots."<sup>8</sup> After he was ambushed in county Kerry, Constable Bergin reported hearing "a single shot followed immediately by a volley."<sup>9</sup> In other cases, battles opened with sudden explosions. On 1 February 1921 a convoy of Auxiliaries was on patrol near Clonfin Bridge in county Longford when the IRA detonated a road mine in front of their lead vehicle, killing the driver instantly.

Police caught in ambushes often could not find cover. One survivor of the Clonfin Bridge ambush, Cadet Wilford, later said that, "as soon as we recovered from the shock of the explosion, we jumped out of the Tender, some of us running into a ditch on the inside of the road, and some on the off side." Cadet Wase "fired a few shots from the Tender and then jumped out and took cover near a ditch on the left hand side of the road upon which we were travelling." Other cadets described how they "vacated our Tenders at once," and "dashed to the sides of the road." However, like the RIC at Inches Cross, the Auxiliaries at Clonfin were almost completely exposed. Cadet Wase said that they had "practically no cover," Cadet Williamson stated that the cover was "very poor," while Cadet Maddox noted that they "took what cover there was alongside the road, this was found to be inadequate, and so we laid in the open." One cadet, Keeble, stated that, "I tumbled out of the Tender, crawled underneath for cover, and commenced firing in the direction from where I could see spurts of flame coming from the attackers rifles." However, he soon regretted this move: "Whilst under the Tender, a shot from the ambushers burst the tyre of the rear wheel which I was firing through. I saw fit to change my position," he said. After a ferocious battle lasting two hours, the Auxiliaries ran out of ammunition and were forced to surrender: two of them had been killed, and two later died of their wounds; another seven were wounded but survived.

Quite often, the police could not see their enemies clearly. On the night of 8 September 1920 four police were patrolling on foot in the town of Tullow, county Carlow when ten or fifteen Volunteers appeared out of nowhere, shouted 'hands up' and started shooting. Later, Sergeant Warrington said: "I returned fire and one of two men who had

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<sup>7</sup> Report of District Inspector J. D. Crowley RIC, 10 May 1921, PRO, CO 904/44, file 40006.

<sup>8</sup> MCI (W. H. Taylor and E. Carter), 9 February 1921, PRO, WO 35/160.

<sup>9</sup> Statement of 1st Witness [Constable Patrick Bergin RIC], undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 41664.

me covered turned on the roads and ran towards the right hand side of the road; during the firing I saw a man fall face downwards on the road and remain motionless, the firing was then very rapid, and I could not say at the time if it was a policeman or civilian.” The two survivors later admitted that they could not identify the men who attacked them in the dark, even though some of the guerrillas were unmasked.<sup>10</sup>

Even by day, the insurgents were frequently invisible. On 4 April 1920 three constables named Finn, McCarthy, and Byrne were ambushed in county Tipperary. The trio was cycling from Rearcross to Newport when they were ambushed in Lackamore Wood. Constable Byrne was wounded in the right shoulder and knocked into a fence on the side of the road. He said:

I saw Finn and McCarthy lying on the road, and I scrambled over the fence. I heard McCarthy saying, “Oh stop! Stop!!” I took cover behind the fence and drew my revolver and fired into the wood, from where I saw the flashes.”<sup>11</sup>

Ten months later, Auxiliaries who survived the ambush at Clonfin Bridge talked about shooting at the “flashes” and “spurts of flame” from the guerrillas’ rifles. Two days after Clonfin Bridge, on 3 February 1921 a group of four constables was ambushed while cycling back to their barracks in Ballinhassig, county Cork. One of the two survivors, Constable Flaherty, said: “I dismounted and without looking back I made for cover on the river side of the road. Thence I fired six shots from my revolver into a clump of small trees about 50 yards from me, where I thought the attackers might be.” Flaherty fired another fourteen shots before he escaped, but admitted afterward that he never caught sight of any of the ambushers.<sup>12</sup>

In some cases, however, the police could see their attackers plainly. A large cycle patrol was ambushed near Castlemaine, county Kerry on 1 June 1921. Two constables named Bergin and Cooney were close to the front of the column. They were jumping off their bicycles when Cooney was hit: “He fell on his face,” said Bergin, “and I never saw him move afterwards.”

I knelt down and opened fire. After firing two shots I was myself wounded in the left leg. I fell on my face. I regained a kneeling position and I saw a man in civilian clothes firing at Constable Cooney. He had a rifle. I had a clear view of his head and shoulders. He was the width of the road from me—about 7 or 8 yards. He was dressed in a rain coat and a cap pulled down on one side of his face. I fired at him with my revolver and he ducked down behind the hedge and I saw him no more. I threw a Mill’s bomb in his direction and then ran down the

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<sup>10</sup> “Murder of Police at Tullow” [Statement by Sergeant W. H. Warrington RIC], undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39379; statement by Sergeant W. H. Warrington RIC, undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39379; statement by Sergeant Patrick Halloran RIC, undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39379.

<sup>11</sup> Statement of Constable Thomas P. Byrne RIC, 10 April 1920, enclosed in Outrage Reports, two weeks ended 11 April 1920, PRO, CO 904/148.

<sup>12</sup> MCI (W H Taylor and E Carter), 9 February 1921, PRO, WO 35/160.

road towards the rear of the patrol, where I saw some of the patrol putting up a fight.

Back at the rear of the patrol, two constables named Bowles and Foley were fighting a desperate close-range battle with the guerrillas. “I saw two men in civilian clothes behind the bank on the other side of the road,” said Constable Bowles. “Each of them fired point blank at me with rifles.” When Bergin arrived on the scene, he saw “Constable Bowles firing at a civilian who was behind a bank on the other side of the road. About 8 yards away on the right of Constable Bowles I saw Constable Foley who was standing in the road. I saw him throw a bomb in the direction of the civilian.” When the grenade exploded, both Bergin and Bowles climbed up onto the bank and shot at the Volunteers, who ran away. Bowles said afterwards that, “I had a good view of the two civilians for about 2 minutes when I was wounded in the back.” Bergin said that, “I fired at the two civilians as they ran, with no effect.” The battle had lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes. Five of the twelve police in the patrol had been killed, and another five had been wounded.<sup>13</sup>

In other cases, the police not only saw their attackers, but also knew them by name. On 22 March 1921 a sergeant named Reilly was leading a small cycle patrol from Keadue to Ballyfarnon in county Roscommon when it was ambushed. One of Reilly’s men, Constable Tully, said:

I saw Constable Devereux look over the wall on the left hand side of the road, into the laurel trees, as he did, I heard a shot ring out from the laurels, and saw the smoke blow by near him. I saw him then put up his hands and heard him shout ah! Immediately a shot rang out behind me, and several shots fired in quick succession.

Sergeant Reilly dropped his bicycle and ran for the gate of a nearby Protestant church. As he ran he was shot and wounded twice, in the head, and was knocked down. Once he got up and through the gate, he ran into a local man he recognized, named Dockery. “I said ‘Dockery you scoundrel is this the work you are at’, he said ‘Don’t shoot me’ and retreated a few yards. A man behind me jumped on my back, gripped my two arms, and Dockery returned, caught the lanyard of my revolver and pulled at it until he succeeded in bursting my shoulder strap and took the revolver.” Reilly fought free of Dockery and the second man, saw more Volunteers armed with shotguns in the churchyard, and fled to the Rectory, pursued by his attackers. “I managed to get into the Rev. Mr. Boyd’s house

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<sup>13</sup> The police were ambushed by men of the Kerry No. 1 Brigade flying column, reinforced by local Volunteers: for an account of the Castlemaine ambush from the guerrilla perspective, see Edward Gallagher, “Unlikely Ambush Posit on was Deliberately Chosen near Castlemaine,” *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, pp. 223-28. Although Gallagher claims to have based his account on information from participants, he implies that all but two of the twelve ‘Tans’ were killed in the ambush, and that these two survived by discarding their rifles, throwing off their tunics, and running away. “They were the only ones that did escape,” he writes. (p. 228); see also Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 248-49, who points out that four of the five ‘Tans’ killed in this ambush were Peelers.

which was only a few yards from me,” he said, “the attackers followed me near the door, I closed the door and got a bomb ready, I opened the door again and got throwing the bomb between them, immediately after they fired at the door which was followed by the explosion of the bomb.” The Volunteers retreated after Reilly’s grenade exploded, and both Reilly and Constable Tully got away.<sup>14</sup>

A policeman was lucky if he escaped unhurt from such an ambush. Police casualties in the First Irish War were not heavy overall. According to the figures provided by Dublin Castle to the British government, 890 policemen were killed and wounded between July 1920 and July 1921 (See Table 5.1).<sup>15</sup> This was less than 10 per cent of a force of ten to twelve thousand. However, combat was extremely dangerous for the police, and casualties among those police *involved* in combat were high. Only 34 per cent of police who were attacked by the IRA escaped unharmed: 42 per cent of them were wounded, and 24 per cent of them were killed. In some cases, almost all of the police engaged were killed or wounded, like the six out of seven at Inches Cross. In addition, the proportion of dead to wounded among police casualties was high, almost 1:2. The proportion of dead to wounded among British soldiers in the Great War had been 1:3.<sup>16</sup> In Cork, the most violent county in Ireland, the proportion of dead to wounded among police casualties was almost 1:1.<sup>17</sup>

These high proportions were caused by a number of factors. As we have seen, the police were usually outnumbered and caught by surprise. Most battles began with a volley from the guerrillas, and many police were killed and wounded before they could take cover and return fire. Another important factor was the type of weapons used by both sides. The Great War was mostly fought at long range with artillery. Shrapnel balls and shell splinters caused the majority of wounds suffered by British soldiers on the Western Front, and most British casualties in the Great War were wounded and killed at random. The First Irish War, on the other hand, was mostly fought at close range with handguns and grenades. Police casualties in Ireland usually suffered from deadlier bullet wounds, and the police were deliberately shot, sometimes execution-style, especially if they were alone or in pairs.

### C. Barracks Battles and Encounter Battles

Casualties were much lower in barracks battles, when the police were defending fortified positions—heavily fortified, if they followed instructions from RIC headquarters in the spring of 1920. Bombing holes were opened in gable walls without windows, to

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<sup>14</sup> Statement of No. 14 witness [Sergeant Reilly RIC], undated, PRO, CO 904/42, file 39749; statement of No. 6 witness [Constable John Tully RIC], undated, PRO, CO 904/42, file 39749.

<sup>15</sup> Outrage Reports, April 1920–December 1921, PRO, CO 904/148-50.

<sup>16</sup> The British Armies in France lost 510,821 killed and 1,523,332 wounded: Ian Beckett, “The British Army 1914-18: The Illusion of Change,” in John Turner ed., *Britain and the First World War* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 111.

<sup>17</sup> 105 killed and 131 wounded: Peter Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, p. 87.

allow police to throw grenades at attackers outside.<sup>18</sup> Later, barbed wire obstacles were placed at the bases of these walls, and trip wires were laid all around barracks. Doors were plated with steel, and blocked with barricades of sandbags or shell boxes filled with gravel, to prevent more than one man from entering the station at a time. Windows were protected by steel shutters or sandbags, with loopholes for firing, and covered with wire netting to prevent attackers from throwing grenades inside.<sup>19</sup> Further improvements were added in the autumn. Peepholes or periscopes were used to keep raiders from rushing the station doors by surprise. Holes were cut into roofs and protected with sandbags or steel, to let the police bomb and shoot guerrillas attacking from the roofs of adjoining houses.<sup>20</sup> Hollyford RIC barracks, one of the first to be attacked by the IRA in Tipperary, embodied most of these improvements, and more. According to Dan Breen's memoir, "its ground floor level was about six feet higher than the ground outside, and this ruled out all possibility of a break-in through the walls," while "the rear gable-end was fortified by a long lean-to building. On the whole," he concluded, "it looked a tough nut to crack."<sup>21</sup>

However, not all police barracks were so formidable. Instructions from headquarters make it clear that their instructions were not always followed. The March circular noted that in many cases where windows had been covered with steel shutters, "the loop-holes are placed opposite the iron bars outside, or opposite a wooden sash of the window. Care should be taken in the fitting of steel shutters in the future that this defect does not occur, as it is calculated to interfere with accurate shooting." The same circular noted that, "sandbag work, though much improved is still defective in some stations. The bags are often filled too full and not beaten or built in regular courses. They should be filled with gravel or sand instead of clay, and built in double instead of single formation. The latter is no defence as it is not bullet proof."<sup>22</sup> The November circular noted that, "in some cases lately, e.g. at Schull, one of the doors was not properly fortified by shell boxes."<sup>23</sup> It also complained that police did not fully realise the importance of barbed wire entanglements and trip wires, and directed them to improve these defences "in every way possible."<sup>24</sup>

Other sources confirm this haphazard state of affairs. Kilmallock RIC barracks in county Limerick was attacked and burned on the night of 27/28 May 1920. Afterwards,

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<sup>18</sup> Defence of Barracks: RIC Circular D 182/1920, 26 January 1920, PRO HO 184/124, f. 263.

<sup>19</sup> Defence of Barracks: RIC Circular, 13 March 1920, PRO, HO 184/124, f. 299.

<sup>20</sup> Defence of Barracks: RIC Circular D442/1920, 8 November 1920, PRO, HO 184/125, f. 146.

<sup>21</sup> Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, p. 107; O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, pp. 13-14, confirms this. The IRA attacked Hollyford RIC barracks unsuccessfully on the night of 11/12 May 1920: Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, pp. 106-10, and O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, pp. 11-26, describe the battle from the IRA viewpoint; see also the brief contemporary account by Sean Treácy in "Report of Offensive Action," Vice Commandant, South Tipperary Brigade to Adjutant General, no date, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0504/XVIII.

<sup>22</sup> Defence of Barracks: RIC Circular, 13 March 1920, PRO, HO 184/124, f. 299.

<sup>23</sup> The RIC station at Schull, county Cork was captured by surprise on the night of 4 October 1920: fifteen constables were taken prisoner without a shot being fired; *Manchester Guardian*, 6 October 1920, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Defence of Barracks: RIC Circular D442/1920, 8 November 1920, PRO, HO 184/125, f. 146.

the local district inspector noted that “the V shaped iron shutters erected in 1867 on this Barrack” had withstood the rifle bullets of the IRA, “while the flat plates recently erected did not.”<sup>25</sup> Michael Brennan was one of the raiders that night, and saw the light of the fire inside shining through bullet holes in the steel shutters.<sup>26</sup> In county Kerry, Constable Jeremiah Mee discovered that not even the walls of his police hut were bullet proof. In May 1920, the two Black and Tans with him decided to test their defences by shooting at the hut with their carbines. After the men had fired twelve shots apiece, the hut looked undamaged from the outside, but the bullets had gone through the walls. “The destruction inside was complete,” said Mee, “and even the Black and Tans were slightly shocked when they saw it. It was not the state of the hut, however, that annoyed them but the fact that the hut was not ‘impregnable’. What the people of the district thought of the R.I.C. shooting at their own barracks I do not know but I have no doubt that it caused some alarm among those law-abiding citizens.”<sup>27</sup> Mee himself became alarmed soon afterward, when soldiers came to improve the hut’s defences by surrounding it with barbed wire entanglements. “In fact what they succeeded in doing was to make the hut a death-trap, since there was now no means of escape either front or rear in the event of the hut being set on fire as happened at Kilmallock police-barracks. The two Black and Tans immediately realised this and made it the excuse for staying out all that night, returning only in the small hours of the morning.”<sup>28</sup>

Even well fortified stations were not impregnable. Tom Barry’s West Cork flying column attacked Roscarberry barracks in the early hours of 31 March 1921. They began their assault by detonating a large bomb in front of the station’s front door. Sergeant Ambrose Shea was asleep in the dayroom, on the ground floor at the front of the station. A Black and Tan, Constable Charles Bowles, was on the first floor, in a room right above the door. A man in the next room later testified that “when the explosion occurred the occupants of these two upper rooms were thrown onto the ground floor along with the wreckage and furniture of the two rooms and the interior walls of the building.”

With considerable difficulty the witness struggled free from beneath the debris. The bulk of the wreckage including the brick walls fell on the spot where Sergeant Shea was sleeping. The witness heard Constable Bowles calling for help from beneath the wreckage, but they were quite unable to render him assistance owing to the mass of debris, and the continued action of the attackers from a distance of 15 yards.

A fierce battle followed, as both sides fought at close range with rifles, revolvers, and hand grenades. The police were driven upstairs, and the guerrillas occupied the

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<sup>25</sup> Report of District Inspector Egan, 28 May 1920, enclosed in Outrage Reports, week ended 30 May 1920, PRO, CO 904/148: for an account of the attack on Kilmallock Barracks from the rebel viewpoint, see ‘Fenian’, “Destruction of Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks,” *Limerick’s Fighting Story*, pp. 74-81; for an eyewitness account, see Brennan, *The War in Clare*, pp. 49-52.

<sup>26</sup> Brennan, *The War in Clare*, p. 50

<sup>27</sup> *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>28</sup> *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, p. 89.

ground floor. The guerrillas fired up through the ceiling, set off more bombs trying to bring down the first floor, and set the barrack on fire. After five hours, the police finally surrendered. Out of twenty-two defenders, nine were wounded, three seriously. Ambrose and Bowles were killed. A doctor was present when the ruins of Roscarberry RIC barracks were excavated on 1 April and 6 April 1921. “On the former date,” he reported, “parts of the flesh and bones of one human body were exhumed and on the latter date charred human bones were found. He had examined both sets of remains, but it was quite impossible to establish any individual identity although he personally knew both of the police officers also who were lost in the debris.”<sup>29</sup>

However, not many stations were lost like Roscarberry. In most barracks battles, the police were the winners. According to Irish Office statistics, 243 occupied police stations were damaged between 1 July 1920 and 11 July 1921, but only 13 were destroyed.<sup>30</sup> One historian has checked weekly newspaper reports of about 100 attacks on police stations during this period, and found that only 11 stations were captured or destroyed.<sup>31</sup> In addition, police losses in barracks battles were low. Indeed, Constable Bowles was the only Black and Tan killed in a barracks battle during the First Irish War.

The police were even more successful when they could seize the initiative and take the offensive, both strategically and tactically. When surprised and faced with superior numbers, most guerrillas either surrendered or tried to escape. But the guerrillas were not often surprised. In its brief history of the insurgency in southern Ireland, the general staff of the 6th Division listed 177 attacks on police and mixed forces by the guerrillas, and only 12 attacks on the guerrillas by police and mixed forces.<sup>32</sup>

Still, some encounter battles were fought. The results were mixed. Three weeks before the ambush at Clonfin, on the afternoon of 7 January 1921, District Inspector Thomas McGrath led an RIC party to a cottage near Ballinalee, county Longford. The police were looking for the commandant of the IRA’s Longford Brigade, Seán MacEoin. There was a path about five yards long from the garden gate to the door of the cottage. DI McGrath led the way down the path, accompanied by Sergeant Daniel Ryan. Constable Gilbert and Sergeant Clements came next, and Constables O’Shea and Woods brought up the rear. McGrath and Ryan were almost at the cottage door when MacEoin pulled it open and started shooting at the range of a few feet.

The district inspector fell on his face, shot dead. MacEoin kept firing. Clements and Woods apparently scrambled for cover. Sergeant Ryan returned fire with his rifle, hitting the wall inside the jamb of the door. MacEoin threw a grenade and ducked back in the house. Gilbert got off a single shot before the grenade exploded and wounded him. Ryan shouted to his comrades to surround the house and rushed to the back of the cottage, thinking that the IRA commandant might try to escape out the back way.

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<sup>29</sup> Summarized findings of MCI, Dublin Castle, 29 April 1921. PRO, CO 904/189/2; see also Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>30</sup> Townshend. *The British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 214.

<sup>31</sup> Moran, “A Force Beleaguered,” p. 118.

<sup>32</sup> *The Rebellion in Ireland: Important Episodes, Outrages, Operations, and Encounters between Crown Forces and Rebels in 6th Divisional Area, April 1920—July 11th, 1921. Compiled by General Staff, 6th Division*, IWM, General Sir Peter Strickland Papers, P363.



MacEoin, however, ran out the front door, in full view of the wounded Gilbert and the unwounded O'Shea, who fired at the rebel leader as he ran. Ryan had just reached the back door when he saw MacEoin escaping across the garden. The sergeant said:

I fired at him and two other shots were fired by the party and McKeon fell upon his knees but again got on his feet. He then ran directly in front of me and I fired all that was in my magazine at him. He almost stood up on the bogland and exchanged shots with me. He roared at me several times "Come on you whore" my rifle jammed several times and I was frequently under his fire without being able to return it. Eventually he reached a furzy ditch and we exchanged shots for some minutes and as it was getting dark I lost sight of him and had to withdraw.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the dim light, Sergeant Ryan was sure that the man he was chasing was Seán MacEoin. He said: "I escorted this man to Sligo prison some months ago and I can identify him as the murderer of DI McGrath without a doubt."

Two months later, on the evening of 14 March 1921, a section of Auxiliaries in two Crossley tenders escorted by an armoured car went to raid the St. Andrew's Catholic Club on Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street) in Dublin. The convoy had just passed through the intersection of Brunswick and Sandwith Streets. The leading tender was just pulling up in front of the club. Suddenly, the street erupted with gunfire. Thirty-eight men of the IRA's Dublin Brigade (B Company, 3 Battalion) had been patrolling and skirmishing nearby. At this point, one section was inside the club, handing in weapons and ammunition. The remaining three sections were guarding the street. This was not an ambush in the conventional sense: the Volunteers were almost as surprised as the Auxiliaries. But when the police convoy passed through the intersection, the guerrillas opened fire from all directions.<sup>34</sup>

Five Auxiliaries in the leading Crossley were quickly shot and wounded. Two fell out of the tender. The remainder fell down in the box. Cadet Dowdall stated that, "I saw the flashes. I fired back ten rounds. The men on either side of me dropped, having been hit. My rifle would not load so I got out to get one of the wounded men's rifles." However, the night was so dark, and the fighting so sudden and confused, that Cadet Brownrigg did not recall seeing his comrades wounded: "I saw the flashes," he said. "I was in the body of the tender on the left hand side, I fired back at the flashes until I had emptied my gun. I then got out of the car, reloaded and took cover." An army officer,

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<sup>33</sup> Statement of Sergeant Daniel Ryan RIC, 17 January 1921, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39324; statement of Sergeant Walter Clements RIC, 17 January 1921, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39324; statement of Constable J T O'Shea RIC, 17 January 1921, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39324; statement of Constable T A Woods RIC, 17 January 1921, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39324; statement of Constable Alexander Gilbert RIC, 17 January 1921, PRO, CO 904/43, file 39324.

<sup>34</sup> Phil Quinn, "Battle of Brunswick Street," in *Dublin's Fighting Story*, pp. 159-61; War Office, *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*, IWM, General Sir Peter Strickland Papers, P363, pp. 38-39 (this includes the captured report on this engagement by Acting Captain Peadar O'Mara, B Company, 3 Battalion, Dublin Brigade IRA).

Lieutenant Weber, was riding on the back of the armoured car. “I heard a sudden burst of small arms fire from the direction of the head of the column,” he said.

My car was then fired on by groups of men standing at the corners of the cross streets immediately in my rear. We all replied to the fire with our pistols. I don’t know if we hit anyone. We fired at the points where we saw the flashes. The night was dark and the street was badly lighted. I emptied my pistol.<sup>35</sup>

The shooting lasted for ten minutes. Once it was over, most of the guerrillas had escaped, and five cadets and four civilians lay dead and wounded in the street. Two guerrillas were captured. Lieutenant Weber saw Volunteer Thomas Traynor run past his armoured car. “I jumped off the car,” said Weber, “and caught him at the corner of Great Brunswick Street and Upper Sandwith Street.”

I collared him and brought him down. He was on his back and I was on top of him. I had his right wrist held in my left hand. He had an automatic in his right hand. I called for help.

An Auxiliary officer, District Inspector Crang, came to Weber’s aid. “I heard a shout from a voice I knew round the corner of Sandwith Street,” he said.

I went to the spot and saw a dark mass in the road. I found this to be an officer, whom I know, kneeling on the chest of a civilian. The civilian was on his back.... I saw the officer holding the accused’s right arm across his chest and in the accused’s hand was a pistol.... We got the man on his feet and the officer took the gun from the accused and without examining it put it in his pocket.

Traynor was a veteran of the Rebellion of 1916: he was thirty-nine years old, married, and the father of ten. His captors put him in the armoured car and took him back to Dublin Castle. On 5 April he was tried by court martial for the murder of Cadet Farrell and found guilty. During the trial, District Inspector Crang testified that, while he was on the ground, Traynor had said something like, “For God’s sake shoot me now.” Traynor then cross-examined Crang, asking, “Did not somebody else, when I was down on the ground, say ‘Shoot him out of hand’?”

“Probably it was me,” said Crang.

Traynor was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was hanged on 25 April. The Tipperary IRA had captured an RIC district inspector named Gilbert Potter a few days before. His captors offered to trade Potter for Traynor, and threatened to kill their prisoner if Traynor was hanged. Their offer was refused, and they shot and buried their

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<sup>35</sup> Summary of evidence in the case of Thomas Traynor: statement of Lieutenant C F Weber, Tank Corps, undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 38887; statement of T/Cadet E Dowdall ADRIIC, undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 38887; statement of T/Cadet W X Brownrigg ADRIIC, undated, PRO, CO 904/43, file 38887.

hostage on 27 April. On 8 May, Potter's wife received a parcel containing a last letter from her husband, along with his diary, will, gold watch, and signet ring.

## D. War Crimes

The case of District Inspector Potter brings us to one of the darkest aspects of the First Irish War: the treatment (and mistreatment) of prisoners. It was risky for police to surrender. Sometimes the guerrillas treated their prisoners well, if only for military reasons. IRA leaders like Sean Treácy and Ernie O'Malley knew that threats and violence against captive police would make their comrades less willing to give up. After the Tipperary Volunteers attacked Hollyford RIC barracks, Treácy criticized his men for shouting threats at the station's defenders.<sup>36</sup> O'Malley wrote later that the guerrillas were yelling they'd have "roast peeler for breakfast." "Whatever inclination to surrender might have been wedging its way among the garrison," O'Malley said, "it was unlikely to gather impetus from this behaviour."<sup>37</sup> A month later, during an attack on Drangan RIC barracks, the Volunteers kept quiet, and the station was captured. In his memoir, O'Malley described how the police came out with their hands up, after he promised them that they wouldn't be shot; in his report, Treácy mentioned that, "I think the fact that there was no shouting or calls to surrender as in other attacks had a very good effect."<sup>38</sup>

Often the IRA simply disarmed its prisoners and let them go. The police who survived the ambush at Inches Cross were handled roughly, but their lives were spared. In another case, one of Constable Flaherty's comrades was left wounded and helpless after the ambush near Ballinhassig, county Cork, but the IRA simply took his belt and revolver and left him where he lay. Sometimes, the guerrillas behaved quite chivalrously. After the ambush at Clonfin, the North Longford flying column left the Auxiliaries alone, and burned only one of their two Crossleys, leaving them the other to carry their wounded back to barracks. Indeed, the conduct of the IRA commandant in this case made quite an impression on his captives. After he had been disarmed and searched, Cadet Wilford recalled that,

The 'Shin' leader then came up to me and stated that he was going to leave one Tender, and that we could look after our comrades. He then fired Tender No. 1877. Shook hands with us all, and told us that we had put up a jolly good scrap, and that his name was John McKeown and he would give us our lives and liberty. One of the 'Shinners' urged him to finish us off there and then, but he took no notice of him."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Sean Treácy, "Report on Offensive Action," Vice Commandant, South Tipperary Brigade to Adjutant General, no date, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0504/XVIII.

<sup>37</sup> O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, pp. 37-38; Sean Treácy, "Report on Offensive Action," Vice Commandant, South Tipperary Brigade to Adjutant General, no date, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0504/XVIII.

<sup>39</sup> Statement by T/Cadet T J Wilford ADRIC, 3 February 1921, PRO, HO 351/42; statement by T/Cadet W P P Williamson ADRIC, 3 February 1921, PRO, HO 351/42; statement by T/Cadet A W Keeble

Nonetheless, as Wilford's account implies, not all the Volunteers were as high-minded as MacEoin. After the capture of Roscarberry RIC barracks, the police were treated well after they surrendered, but only because they had a good reputation: "the men of this garrison had never run amok," said Tom Barry. "Therefore we sought no revenge." Other police were not so lucky. One of the guerrillas threatened to kill Constable Fardy after the ambush at Inches Cross, and there is evidence to suggest that some guerrillas did more than just threaten to kill their captives. Eleven police were ambushed and killed at Dromkeen, county Limerick on 3 February 1921. At least one of these eleven, Constable Samuel Adams of Lanarkshire, may have been killed after he surrendered. A witness told the subsequent court of inquiry that the Black and Tan was found wounded: "the Shinnors shot me with my hands up," he said, before he died.<sup>40</sup> An earlier inquiry into an ambush near Rineen, county Clare on 22 September 1920 concluded that the police had been finished off at close range with shotguns, and that one wounded survivor had been "hunted down and butchered in cold blood" after crawling away from the scene.<sup>41</sup>

A republican writer has denied that wounded men were finished off after the ambush at Rineen, and the proceedings of these courts of inquiry have not survived.<sup>42</sup> However, the proceedings of the court of inquiry into the Kilmichael ambush are preserved at the PRO, and they make gruesome reading. Doctor Jeremiah Kelleher examined their corpses of the sixteen dead police. He concluded that one body had received a "large gun-shot wound scorched over the heart inflicted after death." In another case, he found "extensive depressed fractures of the bones of the face and head caused by some heavy blunt instrument and inflicted after death." A third body had "a large compound fracture of the skull through which the brains protruded, this wound was inflicted after death by an axe or some similar heavy weapon."<sup>43</sup> Three other bodies had shotgun wounds inflicted at close or point blank range, and the court of inquiry

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ADRIC, 3 February 1921, PRO, HO 351/42. For more on the Clonfin ambush, see Marie Coleman, "County Longford, 1910-1923: A Regional Study of the Irish Revolution," (PhD: University College Dublin, 1998) pp. 210-11.

<sup>40</sup> Summarized findings of MCI, Dublin Castle, March 1921, PRO, CO 904/189/2; for an account of the Dromkeen ambush from the IRA perspective, see J. M. McCarthy, "Dromkeen Ambush Restored the Morale of the Local I. R. A. and People," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1945), pp. 154-60; McCarthy makes no mention of police being shot after they surrendered.

<sup>41</sup> "The Murders near Milltown Malbay," 19 October 1920, PRO, CO 904/168/1.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Lynch, "A Fighting Rearguard saved I.R.A. in the Retreat after the Ambush at Rineen," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, p. 72: according to Lynch, the police in their Crossley tender were "literally blasted to death" by the insurgents' opening volley, but one of the police "made a flying leap out of the tender, and so surprised the attackers by being able to do so, that he was past the rifle positions north of the road and racing in the direction of the sea, before fire was opened on him." The running constable was cut down by rifle fire at a range of five hundred yards. Charles Townshend has expressed scepticism about Lynch's account, describing it as "free from understatement": *The British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 115fn.

<sup>43</sup> MCI (Auxiliaries killed in Kilmichael ambush), 30 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/152.

concluded that most of the Auxiliaries had been shot and beaten to death after they were wounded.<sup>44</sup>

Tom Barry never denied that his men took no prisoners at Kilmichael, but he claimed that the Auxiliaries had tried to trick the guerrillas with a false surrender. Historian Peter Hart has thoroughly investigated this incident, and concluded that the false surrender never happened.<sup>45</sup> However, Barry's version was certainly plausible. On 1 September 1920 a small party of police was ambushed near Rathmacross, county Roscommon. A constable named Hopley won a Constabulary Medal for his part in this battle, and his medal citation makes it clear that sometimes both sides took the laws and customs of war very lightly. It reads:

The party was ambushed at a cross roads when cycling in open formation from Ballaghaderreen to Frenchpark Petty Sessions. The Sergeant exhausted his revolver ammunition and was overpowered. One Constable was fatally wounded in the spine. Another was surprised, seized and deprived of his rifle. Constable Murphy lay on the road and opened fire with his rifle. A raider crept up upon him from behind and, disregarding his plea for mercy, shot him dead. Sergeant (at the time Constable) Hopley, with one cartridge remaining in his rifle, employed the ruse of pretending to surrender, emerged from cover at the road side, went right up under the revolver of the murderer of Constable Murphy as if to hand him his rifle, shot him dead and ran towards Ballaghaderreen. At the point of the bayonet he commandeered the bicycle of a civilian and brought word of the occurrence to his station.<sup>46</sup>

Clearly, it was one thing to fight with the IRA, and quite another to fight with the RIC. For the police, combat began suddenly, with a surprise attack by the guerrillas. Usually, the only warning was a premature shot fired by a nervous Volunteer. The police were often badly outnumbered, and caught in the open. Many of them were wounded or killed before their comrades could fight back, shooting blindly in the dark or at well-concealed enemies. Sometimes, the police overcame the odds and defeated the guerrillas, or at least forced them to withdraw. At other times, the police were defeated and forced to surrender. Some police who surrendered were disarmed and released. Others were executed. In most cases, it was left to the police to rescue their wounded and retrieve their dead, and they were infuriated by the real or apparent indifference of civilians. As we have seen, the security forces burned a house near Inches Cross, after its occupants had refused to help the survivors of the ambush.

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<sup>44</sup> "Cadet H. F. Forde survived being clubbed and shot in the head, but remained paralysed with brain damage for the remainder of his life": Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, p. 35.

<sup>45</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, pp. 22-23, 25-27, 36-37; for Barry's original report on the Kilmichael ambush, which does not mention any false surrender, see *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*, IWM, General Sir Peter Strickland Papers, P363, pp. 26-27.

<sup>46</sup> Recommendation of RIC Sergeant John Hopley (68519) for Constabulary Medal, PRO, HO 351/73.

An even clearer example of police frustration can be found earlier in the year. After the small ambush at Lackamore Wood in April 1920, the Tipperary constabulary found the dead bodies of Constables Finn and McCarthy sprawled in the road. In his report, the local head constable described the scene in bitter terms. “The house of Thomas Ryan is about 10 or 15 yards away and three other houses are within a radius of 100 yards, but no one came to render any assistance to these murdered Constables, and they were lying there dead when I arrived and no one had done anything for them.” The head constable arrested four men in connection with the ambush, including Thomas Ryan. “These men,” he concluded, “were made to kneel down in the blood of our murdered comrades and kiss the road and say ‘The Lord have mercy on the souls of the men we murdered this morning’. They were conveyed to Limerick last night and handed over to the military authority.”<sup>47</sup> These men were lucky that the police took only symbolic revenge. Before long, the RIC and its Auxiliaries would start punishing suspects with fire instead of prayer, and many of their prisoners would not survive to be handed over to the military authorities.

## TABLES

Table 5.1. *Proportions of Dead, Wounded, and Unharmmed among RIC and ADRIC engaged in combat with IRA, July 1920—July 1921.*

|                           | Unharmmed | Wounded | Killed | Total |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|--------|-------|
| All police                | 455       | 566     | 324    | 1345  |
|                           | 34%       | 42%     | 24%    | 100%  |
| Wounded and killed police | --        | 566     | 324    | 890   |
|                           | --        | 64%     | 36%    | 100%  |

(Source: Outrages, weeks ending 4 July 1920—17 July 1921, PRO, CO 904/148-150; these proportions correspond closely to the figures provided by C J C Street: Unharmmed 326 (33%), Wounded 428 (44%), Killed 326 (23%). (C. J. C. Street, *Ireland in 1921* (London, Philip Alan & Co., 1922), 7.))

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<sup>47</sup> Statement of Head Constable J. Treanor, 10 April 1920. enclosed in Outrage Reports, two weeks ended 11 April 1920, PRO, CO 904/148.

## CHAPTER SIX

### BURNING AND GUNNING Analyzing Police Reprisals

Reprisals have always been the most controversial events of the First Irish War.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, many nationalist histories of this period read like a modern Book of Martyrs: as Carlyle said, “Exaggeration abounds, execration, wailing; and on the whole, darkness.”<sup>2</sup> For their part, revisionist historians have concentrated on demythologizing the insurgency, instead of demartyrologizing the counterinsurgency. Rather than provide another Account of the Persecutions in Ireland, this chapter will try to shed some light on police reprisals, using both contemporary news reports and official documents.

Analysis of this evidence reveals that, in many ways, police violence resembled guerrilla violence. Like the level of guerrilla provocation, the level of police retaliation varied widely from place to place. Like most guerrilla violence, most police violence was petty: large-scale reprisals were as uncommon as large-scale ambushes; like the guerrillas, the police were waging a penny-ante war of attrition, and in this war, property damage was more common than personal injury. Many guerrillas played it safe by burning abandoned barracks and blocking roads, and many police played it safe by burning abandoned homes and looting shops. However, just as there were guerrilla bands taking part in ambushes and assassinations, there were police death squads meting out punishment beatings and extra-judicial executions in reprisal. Finally, like the guerrillas, most police did not choose their victims at random. Even during mass reprisals, the police usually singled out well-known republicans for punishment. ‘Civilians’ who took no part in politics were generally spared, though they suffered indirectly.

#### A. Counting the Cost

Perhaps the most interesting source of information about reprisals is the register of crime for the province of Connaught.<sup>3</sup> As its name indicates, this official document is a chronicle of crimes committed in the western counties of Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, and Sligo during the period from July 1920 to December 1920. The register is divided into sections by county, with separate sections for each of Galway’s two ridings. Within each section, crimes are listed in chronological order, but by date of report rather than date of occurrence. There are columns for each incident’s location, for its nature (agrarian or not), for a brief summary of the case, for details of the accused and

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<sup>1</sup> In a recent article, Michael Hopkinson says that “Black and Tan reprisals rival the culpability of the British Government for the Great Famine as the most emotive subject in modern Irish history”: Michael Hopkinson, “Negotiation: The Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Revolution,” in Joost Augusteijn (ed.) *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *History of the French Revolution*.

<sup>3</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45.

his passage through the legal system, and for general remarks. These last are often details of claims for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Act. These details would seem to be the reason why this register was preserved: it is part of a class of documents devoted to compensation claims. If companion volumes existed for other periods and provinces, their fate is unknown.

Most of the crimes listed in the register are attributed to the IRA, and are marked “Sinn Fein” or “S.F.” in red. Some of the remaining entries describe non-political crimes, most of which were agrarian. However, a large number of the crimes described in the register must have been reprisals. In the summaries of these cases, the victims are often identified as “prominent,” “notorious,” “advanced,” “extreme,” or “violent” Sinn Feiners. In some cases, the victims were on the run when their property was damaged or destroyed. One case—the burning of three houses belonging to Sinn Feiners at Loughrea, in Galway’s east riding on 31 October 1920—is frankly described in the register as a reprisal for the killing of Constable Timothy Horan.

However, the register makes few admissions of this kind. When a Sinn Fein meetinghouse was burned in West Galway’s Dunmore district on 25 October, the register said, “it is believed the fire was caused by some person who suffered through the Sinn Fein movement.”<sup>4</sup> A month after that, when a farmer’s turf and hay were burned in Oranmore district, the register notes that he was an “extreme” Sinn Feiner, on the run. “The only motive that can be assigned for the outrage,” according to the register, “is that his neighbours are so disgusted with his murderous policy, that through spite or revenge, they destroyed his property.”<sup>5</sup>

In a few cases, the register accuses the guerrillas of playing dirty tricks. When a Roscommon publican said that a man in khaki had assaulted and robbed him on 18 October, the register noted that he was a Sinn Fein “sympathiser” with a brother on the run: “the police are of the opinion that the larceny never took place and is for the purpose of propaganda.”<sup>6</sup> A month later, on the night of 11 November, hayricks were burned on five farms near the town of Roscommon. One farmer had shots fired through his window before he was taken out of his house and beaten. “Police believe that these outrages were committed by terrorists with the object of terrorising what they regard as ‘tame’ persons into more extreme measures,” wrote the registrar.<sup>7</sup>

In some cases, the register says nothing at all. There is no mention, for example, of either the Tuam police riot of 19 July, or the Galway police riot of 8 September. The register of crime is neither complete, nor completely candid. Nevertheless, it still provides a surprising amount of information about reprisals in Connaught in the summer and autumn of 1920.

The first thing we can learn from the register is that some reprisals were simple, and some complex. A simple reprisal consisted of one type of damage, done to just one thing, in one place. Complex reprisals were combinations of simple reprisals: they consisted of many types of damage, done to many things, in many places. The record for

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<sup>4</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 100.

<sup>6</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 273.

<sup>7</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 278.



county Galway's east riding will make this distinction clear. On 23 July, the Caltra Sinn Fein hall was destroyed by fire, and shots were fired into five local houses—a complex reprisal. Two months later, Thomas Egan, “a well-known Sinn Feiner” was murdered in his home on the night of 24 October—a simple reprisal. A republican farmer's donkey trap was burned on the following night—another simple reprisal. Six days later, on the night of 31 October, three houses at Loughrea were burned as a reprisal for the killing of Constable Horan—another complex reprisal.

Another thing we can learn is that some reprisals were small in scale, and others large. The distinction between small-scale and large-scale reprisals is not always clear, but one useful way to distinguish them is by counting their victims, persons or things or both. A reprisal that had an immediate effect on five persons or things or both can be defined as large in scale.<sup>8</sup> This definition is not perfect, since a reprisal with an immediate effect on just one might have a mediate effect on many. Reprisals could have widespread economic effects: the burning of co-operative creameries, for example, could affect an entire district. When the Ballymote creamery was burned in county Sligo on 3 November, its destruction affected a co-operative society with 980 members.<sup>9</sup> We should also remember that the mediate, psychological impact of reprisals on the people of a district could far outweigh their immediate physical impact. This, after all, was the whole point of reprisals: to deter the many by punishing the few, or perhaps to deter the few by punishing the many. However, such indirect economic and psychological effects are almost impossible to measure. The best we can hope for is an accurate count of the persons and things that were damaged and destroyed.

And so, by this admittedly partial definition (five or more immediate victims), according to the register of crime, there were eleven large-scale reprisals in the province of Connaught in the summer and autumn of 1920 (see Table 6.1). Sligo was the worst county for large-scale reprisals: 82 per cent of the reprisals on property that occurred in this county were taken during three large-scale incidents. After District Inspector James Brady was ambushed and killed at Chaffpool on 30 September, police and soldiers ran amok in the Tubbercurry district, burning and wrecking two cooperative creameries and seventeen houses.<sup>10</sup> A month later, after four constables were ambushed and killed at Moneygold on 25 October, nine houses and another creamery were damaged and destroyed.<sup>11</sup> Finally, after Sergeant Patrick Fallon was shot dead at Ballymote Fair on 3

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<sup>8</sup> This follows the international definition of mass murder, i.e. “five or more homicides in a single event.” Jeffrey A Sluka, “‘For God and Ulster’: The Culture of Terror and Loyalist Death Squads in Northern Ireland,” in Jeffrey A Sluka (ed.), *Death Squad The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 152, note 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, pp. 15, 96.

<sup>10</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 331; “Sligo ‘Reprisals,’” *Manchester Guardian*, 2 October 1920, p. 9; “Tubbercurry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, pp. 7-8; “Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 7 October 1920, p. 8; “‘Black and Tan’ Force a Failure,” *Daily News*, 4 October 1920, p. 1; “Police Mad With Passion,” *Daily News*, 8 October 1920, p. 1; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 128-29.

<sup>11</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 336; “Reprisals in Sligo,” *Manchester Guardian*, 1 November 1920, p. 5; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 138-39. The *Guardian*'s report was late because these

November, the police broke out again, burning and wrecking fifteen homes and shops, along with yet another creamery.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the province's most violent county, Galway, had the lowest rate of damage and injury resulting from large-scale reprisals: 24 per cent; but remember that the Tuam and Galway police riots went unregistered. While in Sligo most reprisals were large-scale and complex, in Galway most reprisals were small-scale and simple.

There were five simple types of reprisals in the province of Connaught in the last half of 1920. Vengeful police were most likely to take reprisals on property. The register of crime mentions 226 attacks on republicans: out of this total, property was attacked in 190 cases, and persons in 36 (see Table 6.2). Arson was the most common type of reprisal on property, and the dwelling house was the most common target: homes were burned in forty-three out of ninety cases. After dwelling houses, the most common target for burning was farming stock, especially hay, but also turf, oats, and straw. Stock alone was burned in nineteen cases, while in seven additional cases it was burned along with a farmer's home.<sup>13</sup> Not surprisingly, Sinn Fein halls and meetinghouses were also very popular targets: sixteen halls and two houses used as halls were burned. In one case, the security forces marked Armistice Day by burning four Sinn Fein halls in the Mohill district of county Leitrim.

Only ten cases fell outside these three categories. Reprisals on creameries were widely publicized and condemned in the summer and fall of 1920. The *Report of the Labour Commission* listed forty-two cases in which co-operative creameries and other societies were destroyed or damaged by the security forces, including the raid on the Moycullen co-op in Galway's west riding on 18 October 1920.<sup>14</sup> However, this type of reprisal was not common in Connaught. Five creameries were burned, four of which were in one county, Sligo: Tubbercurry (1 October), Achonry (1 October), Ballintrillick (27 October), and Ballymote (3 November). The fifth creamery was burned on 27 November, in county Roscommon, at Carnadoe. The burning of shops and other businesses was also not common: there are only three registered cases, including the burning of a bakery near Ballymote on 3 November. (As we shall see, shops were looted rather than burned.) Finally, there were two cases of miscellaneous damage: the donkey trap destroyed in Galway's east riding in 25 October, and a nurse's furniture, burned at Ballymote on 3 November.

Property was also damaged by gunfire. There are seventeen cases in the register where buildings were "shot up," like the five houses near Caltra, in Galway's east riding, on 23 July. In another case, in the Manorhamilton district of county Leitrim on the night

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events were overshadowed by the death of Terence MacSwiney, lord mayor of Cork, on 25 October after a lengthy hunger strike.

<sup>12</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 338; "Irish Nights of Terror," *The Times*, 5 November 1920, p. 12; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 148. Once again, these events were crowded out of the news, this time by the burning of the town of Granard in county Longford.

<sup>13</sup> Even standing crops were burned in at least one case, at Moneygold on 25 October 1920: "Reprisals in Sligo," *Manchester Guardian*, 1 November 1920, p. 5

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, pp. 13-16, 90-98. The Commission itself investigated seven of these cases.

of 25 November, someone shot out the windows of five houses and shops, and set fire to two hayricks. (The victims' politics are not mentioned, but these crimes were neither described as agrarian, nor blamed on Sinn Fein—an eloquent silence.) There were two cases of animals being shot and killed—a heifer in Sligo (27 October) and a donkey in Roscommon, a month later. The last and most unusual form of destruction was bombing. There were only two cases listed where property was attacked with grenades: in one, the registrar complains that the female victim “is a rank Sinn Feiner and will give no information to the Police regarding the outrage.”<sup>15</sup> However, since police were seen and heard throwing bombs during mass reprisals like the Tuam police riot, this type of destruction was probably more common than the register indicates.

Forty-six of the remaining seventy-nine reprisals on property were cases of wrecking and looting. This type of reprisal was especially common in Galway: there were seventeen cases where shops were damaged and looted in September and October. In one case, when the grocery store of a “prominent Sinn Feiner” was damaged and robbed on the night of 2 October, even the registrar conceded: “it may be a reprisal.”<sup>16</sup> Later, Thomas Nolan told the American Commission how his Galway drapery shop was wrecked and looted on the night of 22 September: “when they were gone away in the morning at about five o’clock,” he said, “I came out and went into my shop and found the whole place looted. All the stuff was taken away, and what was not taken away was thrown into the street.” Nolan described himself as a “Republican Outfitter.” In addition to ready-made clothing, he sold “habits for dead people, and things that were needed like that.” When he went into his ruined shop that morning, he found the police had laid out a shroud for him, with a card that said: “You are a doomed man.”<sup>17</sup>

A remaining thirty-three were cases of theft and vandalism both. Windows and furniture were smashed in thirteen cases. Seven of these incidents took place on the night of 26/27 November, in the Strokestown district of county Roscommon, after a police constable was kidnapped. (Two Sinn Fein halls and Carnadoe creamery were burned in the same district on the same night.) There were fifteen cases of robbery, though some of these cases may not have been reprisals, and four were denounced as false reports by the registrars. The house of a farmer was reported robbed in the Strokestown district on 5 December. “In the opinion of the police,” in this case, “the whole thing is got up for newspaper publication and to enlist the sympathy of Sinn Feiners.”<sup>18</sup> Two days later, after Auxiliaries raided a Sligo creamery, the manager complained that the creamery had been robbed. “It is believed,” according to the register, “that the case was got up for the purpose of enabling the creamery officials to help themselves out of the funds at the

<sup>15</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 78.

<sup>16</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> Testimony of Thomas Nolan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 856, 858-59. Lady Gregory's journal corroborates Nolan's testimony. “The postman said a house nearly opposite Deasy's fish shop has been fired into,” she wrote on 27 September. “It is next door to Walsh's pub that had been attacked the night before and belonged to a man who left Brennan's Drapery and set up a drapery of his own and had ‘Outfitter to the Republicans’ over his door.” *Lady Gregory's Journals*, I, p. 187. In his testimony, Nolan described the raid on Michael Walsh's pub the night before his own shop was wrecked (p. 857). Walsh was later killed by a police death squad: see Chapter Two.

<sup>18</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 289.

expense of the Auxiliary police.”<sup>19</sup> But of course, these counter-accusations may have been lies themselves.

Two motorcars were stolen, one in Sligo (22 November) and one in Galway’s west riding (5 December). In the first case, the car was found later, damaged. “It is alleged that the damage was caused by ‘Black & Tans’ but this is without foundation,” says the register.<sup>20</sup> The second case involved a former member of the RIC, who had resigned in August, and also said his car had been stolen by Black and Tans. There were another two cases where police took drink without paying. On 25 November, in Oranmore, county Galway, the police broke into a pub, drank £50 worth of liquor, and left £1 in payment. “Local people are anxious to get rid of Mrs. Kane,” the proprietor, “and her son Joe Howley, leader of the assassin gang,” says the register.<sup>21</sup> The last case was unique. On 5 December a pair of armed men called on a Catholic priest, Reverend E Ryan, a resident of the Mohill district in county Leitrim. The reverend was ordered to surrender a shotgun to the police, and also to refund £110 to a gentleman in Ballinamore. A republican court had imposed a fine of £110 on the gentleman, for giving information to the constabulary. Ryan had served as the president of this court

Father Ryan went on the run soon after this visit, in fear perhaps of reprisals on his person: Father Michael Griffin’s body had been found in a shallow grave in county Galway two weeks before, and other Catholic priests had been threatened soon afterward. Father John Considine had been bitterly critical of the police. Ellen Quinn had been shot and killed in his parish. “What Turkish atrocity ever equalled this?” he asked. Someone replied with an anonymous letter on 24 November. “Your efforts to stir up the blood lust against the forces of the Crown are duly noted,” it said. “You will be duly compensated as well as all the friends of the hero Michael Collins.”<sup>22</sup> The bishop of Galway received a threatening letter the same day. “If any members of His Majesty’s forces are interfered with in Galway, you will meet with Father Griffin’s fate—Beware.”<sup>23</sup> Other threats were broadcast. On the night of 9 November the police had broken into the offices of a republican paper, the *Leitrim Observer*. They held the owner, Patrick Dunne, and his wife at gunpoint as they wrecked his printing presses, and then set the building on fire. Later, they visited the jewellery shop of Dunne’s brother John, and shot out its window. Afterwards, a skull and crossbones was found chalked on the walls, along with a message. “Three lives for one of ours. Take heed, Sinn Fein. Up the Black and Tans.”<sup>24</sup>

The police made good on threats like these in many cases. Five murders and twenty-nine assaults are listed among the reprisals recorded in the register. If they were lucky, victims were simply threatened in person. On the night of 27 October, for example, a Sinn Fein hall near Clonark was burned, and three local men were taken from

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<sup>19</sup> Register of Crime, PRO. CO 904/45, p. 346.

<sup>20</sup> Register of Crime, PRO. CO 904/45, p. 342.

<sup>21</sup> Register of Crime, PRO. CO 904/45, p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> Register of Crime, PRO. CO 904/45, p. 95.

<sup>23</sup> Register of Crime, PRO. CO 904/45, p. 96. These two cases, along with several others, were

later the subjects of an inconclusive investigation after they were mentioned in a report published by the *Chicago Herald & Examiner*, dated 15 May 1921: see documents in PRO, HO 351/136.

<sup>24</sup> “Newspaper Office Wrecked,” *The Times*, 11 November 1920, p. 11.

their homes, put on their knees, and made to swear that they would have nothing more to do with Sinn Fein. “The Black and Tans, at any rate in some places, appear to have taken to themselves the power to administer oaths,” the Labour Commission reported.<sup>25</sup>

More often, however, assaults involved beating, wounding, and mock executions. One well-documented case took place on the night of 14/15 October, in Galway’s west riding. Around midnight, the Furey family at Oranmore was awakened by two gunshots outside, and shouts of “Get up! Get up!” Roger Furey, the father, came to the door, but not quick enough to satisfy the raiders. They broke the door open, invaded the house, and demanded to know where Roger’s boys were sleeping. Patrick and Michael Furey were still in their bedroom. The invaders lit them up with flashlights, swore at them, accused them of being Sinn Feiners, and ordered them out of bed.

Patrick and Michael were both dragged outside in their shirts and beaten on the head with revolver butts. The raiders took the two young men to the road, pushed them against a wall, and gave them three minutes to say their prayers. While kneeling to pray, they were questioned about the shooting of a police constable in August, and had the barrels of revolvers forced into their mouths.<sup>26</sup> One raider threatened to kill Michael, and fired his revolver close to the young man’s ear. Then, after the brothers were told to stand up close together, one of the raiders fired a shotgun at them, hitting Michael in the left leg below the knee.

“They shouted to me to keep standing,” Michael said later. “Two more of the men came up and said, ‘Captain, you have done enough to these two men, let them go to bed.’ We were then told to go to bed, and as we were going into the house two revolver shots were fired at the door. ‘Put out any lights or we will call again in an hour’ was shouted at us.” Michael bound himself with strips of bed sheet. An hour later, he said, the raiders returned and threw a grenade in through the kitchen window, damaging the kitchen and shaking the whole house.<sup>27</sup> According to the register, four other inhabitants of Oranmore complained of being terrorised on the same night. Their raiders told them they were Black and Tans, and one victim said his attacker spoke with an English accent. “Motive for outrage seems to be agrarian,” says the register, bravely.<sup>28</sup>

This was not the last accusation of dirty tricks in the register. On the night of 15 December, John McGowan was shot dead by masked men in the house of Patrick Dyer, near Boyle, county Roscommon. The register describes McGowan as an Irish Volunteer Captain, and “in command of the S.F. police.” The death squad spoke with Irish accents. “Deceased was leader of a gang who terrorised the Country side in the name of the ‘Black & Tans,’” the register claims.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Constable Michael Foley was killed when an RIC bicycle patrol was ambushed at Oranmore on 21 August 1920: Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 112.

<sup>27</sup> “The Police Terror in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 22 October 1920, p. 9. “‘Pressure’ in Galway,” *Times*, 22 October 1920, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 86. Despite this remark, the report was not classified as an agrarian crime.

<sup>29</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 287.

The remaining four murders pass by with little comment. As we have seen, the Galway police executed Seamus Quirke on the night of 8 September. According to the register of crime, Quirke was merely “found dead by civilians near where the attack took place.”<sup>30</sup> When Michael Walsh was murdered, on the night of 19 October in Galway town, the registrar noted only that he was a “prominent” Sinn Féiner, “and his activities as such was probably the motive for his death.”<sup>31</sup> On the night of 24 October, in Galway’s east riding, Thomas Egan, a publican, farmer, and “well-known Sinn Féiner,” was murdered in his home near Athenry. Mrs. Egan said the killers were dressed as police, and one spoke with an English accent. The registrar made no remarks on this case, and was again silent after Father Griffin was killed on the night of 14 November. In cases like these, the register becomes a wall instead of a window. If we want a glimpse over this wall, we must pile up evidence from other sources to stand upon.

## B. Angry Mobs

Contemporary newspapers are the best sources of additional information about reprisals. The sites of mass reprisals, in particular, were often visited by British press correspondents, who saw the damage, interviewed the victims, and reported what they had seen and heard. In some cases, these news reports can be checked against others, and against additional sources, like the register of crime. One such case took place on the night of 30 September 1920, in Tubbercurry, county Sligo. This incident was reported by correspondents of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily News*, and put on record in the register. In addition, the report of Sligo’s RIC county inspector was later made public, and the case was discussed in the House of Commons. As a consequence, the Tubbercurry reprisals are very well documented, and can serve as a good example.<sup>32</sup>

The story begins on the late afternoon of 30 September 1920, in Sligo town. Tubbercurry’s temporary RIC district inspector, James Brady, had come to Sligo for duty that Thursday, taking the direct route, riding in a truck along with eight other police including Head Constable O’Hara. The district inspector’s party stayed in town until 4 p.m., when they left Sligo to go back to Tubbercurry. Instead of taking the same route back, they drove south to Ballymote, and then west. Despite this precaution, at about 5:30 p.m. the group was ambushed on the road between Bunnanadden and Tubbercurry.

The guerrillas opened fire from higher ground, using rifles and shotguns, aiming through loopholes in the walls on both sides of the road. “The spot was a regular death trap,” said the police report, “and afforded no chance of success to the police, even if they had been in a position to dismount and attack.” Brady was hit in the body. The head constable was hit in the right leg. Their ambushers were using dum-dum bullets, and both men suffered gruesome wounds. A third man, Constable Brown, was hit in the face

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<sup>30</sup> Register of Crime. PRO, CO 904/45, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Register of Crime. PRO, CO 904/45, p. 87.

<sup>32</sup> “Tubbercurry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, pp. 7-8; “‘Black and Tan’ Force a Failure,” *Daily News*, 4 October 1920, p. 1; “Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1920, p. 8; “Police Mad With Passion,” *Daily News*, 8 October 1920, p. 1.

by shotgun pellets. “The lorry drove on,” says the report, “under heavy fire to which the police replied as well as they could. They could not see their cowardly assailants, who were safely entrenched in strong numbers behind their loopholed walls.”<sup>33</sup>

The police made it back to Tubbercurry, but they could not call for help: the telegraph wires had been cut. Instead, a second police party drove back to Sligo that evening, arriving at 9:15 p.m. Some time after 11 p.m., Acting County Inspector Russell came to Tubbercurry with reinforcements: a district inspector and sixteen men, along with ten soldiers under the command of an army lieutenant. There was a fog that night, and the town was almost deserted. Many townspeople had left earlier that evening. Most of the remainder fled when the trucks arrived. The county inspector soon discovered why. District Inspector Brady had died of his wounds at around 8 p.m.

Here the two reports diverge. According to the few civilians who stayed in town, watching through the fog, the police and soldiers drove to Howley’s pub and broke down the door. “They spent half an hour drinking what they could and destroying what they couldn’t,” says the *Manchester Guardian*.<sup>34</sup> According to the *Daily News*, the police and soldiers “helped themselves to as much liquor as they could swallow, smashed the windows, wrecked the interior, and finally set it on fire.”<sup>35</sup>

The county inspector’s version was rather different. According to Russell, the police and soldiers drove to Tubbercurry barracks, where they learned of District Inspector Brady’s death.

His naked body was lying on the kitchen floor, being washed by one of his comrades. The three ghastly wounds made by the shots were in full evidence. Head Constable O’Hara was lying in a room near by moaning and suffering intense pain. Police Constable Brown, who had the pellet shots in the face, was wandering about the room in a state of pain.<sup>36</sup>

When the police from Sligo saw this, they became enraged. “They rushed out,” says the *Guardian*, “and the next moment the officer [County Inspector Russell] heard shots outside the barracks and the battering of doors.” Russell armed himself with a carbine and the three officers went outside. “They found the shop next to the barracks broken into and with soldiers and police inside it setting it on fire.” The county inspector and the lieutenant ordered their men to stop and come out. “The men obeyed the order sullenly and reluctantly,” and Russell told them “that there must be no damage done.” The police and soldiers obeyed at first, “but there was a good deal of grumbling and murmuring, and

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Street, *The Administration of Ireland*, p. 215. The report in the *Guardian* follows this original closely. “The spot was a regular death trap and offered no chance of resistance for the police... They could not even see their assailants, who were safely entrenched in strong numbers behind their loopholed walls.” “Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1920, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> “Tubbercurry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> “‘Black and Tan’ Force a Failure,” *Daily News*, 4 October 1920, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> “Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1920, p. 8.

after a short interval some of them broke away.” Their comrades followed, ignoring their officers’ orders, which soon became pleas.<sup>37</sup>

Now the reports converge again. The police and soldiers went on a rampage, firing rifles, throwing grenades, and shouting, “Come out Sinn Fein! Where are the murderers?”<sup>38</sup> Attacking the shops around the village’s three-sided marketplace, they burned three buildings and wrecked several more. The county inspector begged the police to spare the largest store in town. “The reply of one of his men was an oath.”<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the townsfolk shivered in the wet fields nearby, listening to the rioters curse and rage, and watching the fires glow through the fog. Hugh Martin saw the ruins a couple of days later. “Little spires of smoke were twisting up from three jagged stone skeletons,” he wrote, “and the breeze twirled ashes instead of autumn leaves across the open ground. Many shops—I counted eleven, and there may have been more between and beside the burnt-out buildings—had their fronts battered and broken, so that the whole triangle had the air of having barely survived an earthquake.”<sup>40</sup>

Finally, the county inspector got the police and soldiers from Sligo back under control. Assisted by some of the Tubbercurry police—the ones who had earlier been ambushed—he persuaded his men to get back in their trucks, and at this point the reports diverge again. According to his own statement, Russell went inside the barracks to give instructions to the district inspector, who was remaining in the village. While he was inside, the police trucks drove off without orders, heading for Tubbercurry creamery half a mile away.

The creamery manager, Murrigane, was a Sinn Feiner. Awakened by a neighbour, and warned of the reprisals in Tubbercurry, he left his home and hid outside. This was wise, for as the police and soldiers drove past his house they sprayed it with gunfire. While their comrades went on, setting fire to the creamery, four men came back to Murrigane’s house and fired in through the windows, narrowly missing the manager’s wife and children as they cowered in the kitchen. Finally, the gunmen called Mrs. Murrigane outside. “They all seemed to me to speak with an Irish accent,” she said.

The swearing was awful. The men asked me where my husband was, and I asked him what they wanted him for. They replied, ‘To shoot him.’ I said I didn’t know where he was, and they said, ‘We’ll make you tell,’ threatening me with their guns.<sup>41</sup>

The four men pushed past her and went through the house, looking for the manager. When they could not find him, they went back to the burning creamery.

So far, the two reports are in agreement. At this point, however, Russell wrote that the raiding party drove back to the village, where he finally persuaded them to return

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<sup>37</sup> “Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1920, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> “Tubbercurry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, p. 8; “‘Black and Tan’ Force a Failure,” *Daily News*, 4 October 1920, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> “Tubbercurry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> “‘Black and Tan’ Force a Failure,” *Daily News* 4 October 1920, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Tubbercurry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, p. 8.



to Sligo. The convoy started back at about five in the morning, with Russell in the rear. Along the way, the leading truck stopped when it arrived at Achonry cooperative creamery. By the time Russell's vehicle arrived on the scene, his men were setting fire to this establishment as well. "After a great deal of persuasion," says the *Guardian*, "he managed to get the men to resume their journey to Sligo."<sup>42</sup>

Civilian eyewitnesses remembered things differently. The people of Tubbercurry told reporters that all the police and military trucks left at the same time, two of them heading east, and the remaining two heading north, in the direction of Achonry. Residents of Achonry told reporters that they heard two trucks arrive that night, one after another, at about three o'clock in the morning. Because of the fog, they could not see what the raiders were doing, but they heard the sound of glass breaking, followed by shots and explosions, and then saw the creamery burning. In addition, a glance at a map of the county will raise a few questions about Russell's version of events. Achonry is not on the main road from Tubbercurry to Sligo. Unless the police and military convoy took a detour to lower their chances of being ambushed on the way back, the leading truck would have had to drive about a mile off the main road to reach Achonry.

Mass reprisals like the Tubbercurry police riot generally took place after police had been killed—not just attacked or wounded, but killed. Some followed the killing of officers and non-commissioned officers, like District Inspector Brady. The Templemore town hall and three local creameries were burned in county Tipperary after District Inspector William Wilson was killed on 16 August 1920.<sup>43</sup> The sack of Balbriggan, County Dublin on 20 September 1920 followed the killing of Head Constable Peter Burke and the wounding of his brother, a sergeant.<sup>44</sup> Reprisals in Granard, county Longford followed the killing of District Inspector Philip Kelleher on 31 October.<sup>45</sup> Sergeant Henry Cronin was killed on the same day, leading to reprisals in Tullamore, King's County.<sup>46</sup> The reprisals in the Ballymote district of county Sligo followed the

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<sup>42</sup> "Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals," *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1920, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> RIC Reports, CI Tipperary North, August 1920, PRO, CO 904/112; "Reprisals Terror in Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 18 August 1920, p. 7; "Murdered Inspector," *Daily News*, 18 August 1920, p. 3; "Scenes at Templemore," *The Times*, 18 August 1920, p. 12, Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 111.

<sup>44</sup> "Wild Police Excesses in County Dublin," *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1920, p. 7; Robert Lynd, "In Ruined Balbriggan," *Daily News*, 1 October 1920, p. 3; "Irish Town Raided," *The Times*, 22 September 1920, p. 11; "Police Reprisals in County Dublin," *Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1920, p. 11; "Panic Night in Irish Town," *Daily Mail*, 22 September 1920, p. 7; "Irish Seaport Town Sacked," *Daily Chronicle*, 22 September 1920, p. 1; "Fiery Trail of Reprisal," *Daily Express*, 22 September 1920, p. 5; "Irish Town's Terror," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 September 1920, p. 1; "Tragic Reprisal," *Leeds Mercury*, 22 September 1920, p. 7; "Ireland: Sequel to Shooting of Police: Co. Dublin Town Wrecked," *Glasgow Herald*, 22 September 1920, p. 9; D G Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), pp. 51-54; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>45</sup> Hugh Martin, "Ruins of Granard," *Daily News*, 6 November 1920, pp. 1, 3; "Granard," *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November, p. 9; "Story of Granard Reprisals," *The Times*, 6 November 1920, p. 12; "Irish Volunteers Awaiting Attack by Troops," *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1920, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> "Police Rioting in Tullamore," *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1920, p. 9.

killing of Sergeant Patrick Fallon on 3 November 1920: the register of crime says that “intense excitement prevailed” in the district after the sergeant’s death.<sup>47</sup>

In other cases, mass reprisals followed the killing of more than one police constable. The Tuam police riot, for example, followed the killing of two constables on the Tuam-Galway road.<sup>48</sup> Terrible reprisals in county Clare on the night of 22 September 1920 followed the massacre of six constables at Rineen, where the guerrillas were suspected of using dum-dum bullets and finishing off the wounded.<sup>49</sup> The mass reprisals near Moneygold, county Sligo came after three constables were killed and another three wounded on 25 October 1920.<sup>50</sup> (In this case, most of the damage was done after one of the wounded constables died on 27 October.) The constabulary took widespread reprisals and blockaded the town of Tralee, county Kerry for a week after five police were killed, eleven wounded, and two kidnapped in six attacks on a single day, 31 October 1920.<sup>51</sup> There was a police riot in Tipperary town after the battle at Inches Cross, in which four constables were killed.<sup>52</sup>

In most cases, the death of a single police constable was not enough to provoke a mass reprisal. The burning of Cork on the night of 11 December 1920 followed the death of a single man, but he was a temporary cadet, Spencer Chapman, killed in a grenade attack that wounded ten of his comrades.<sup>53</sup> However, there was at least one early exception to this rule. After Constable Luke Finegan was fatally wounded in Thurles, county Tipperary on the night of 20 January 1920, his comrades ran amok, smashing windows and firing in the streets—the first mass reprisal by police.<sup>54</sup> Denis Morgan and his family hid in the basement that night. He later told the American Commission that he first heard “isolated shots,” then “heavy volleys.” “We heard the glass going and the plaster falling off the ceiling,” when the police mob arrived at his house. In the morning Morgan saw that all the windows in his house had been shot, along with some of the doors. “Inside the rooms the ceilings were all torn and the woodwork was all shattered. There was debris lying on the floor all around.” The street “was littered with plate glass

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<sup>47</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 338; RIC Reports, CI Sligo, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113, “Irish Nights of Terror,” *The Times*, 5 November 1920, p. 12; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 148.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>49</sup> “Fatal Ambush in Clare,” *Manchester Guardian*, 23 September 1920, p. 7; “Three Men Shot Dead in Clare Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 24 September 1920, p. 7; “The Scourge of Clare,” *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1920, p. 7; “Eight Dead in Irish Fight,” *Daily News*, 24 September 1920, p. 1; “Five Irish Police Killed,” *The Times*, 24 September 1920, p. 10; “Irish Ambush,” *Daily Telegraph*, 24 September 1920, p. 9; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 123-26. Also, see Chapter Five.

<sup>50</sup> Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45, p. 336; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 138-39.

<sup>51</sup> “Murder Gangs in Kerry,” *Daily Telegraph*, 2 November 1920, p. 11; “Guerrilla Tactics,” *Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1920, p. 11; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 140-41, 311-12.

<sup>52</sup> “Tipperary Ambush,” *Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1920, p. 10; “The Reprisals in Tipperary,” *Manchester Guardian*, 18 November 1920, p. 7; “Tipperary Terror,” *Daily News*, 18 November 1920, p. 3; RIC Reports, IG, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>53</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 164.

<sup>54</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 51-52. There is an amusing typo here: “David Lloyd George wrote as follows to the *Daily* [*sic*] *Chronicle* about the incident. .” (p. 51)

shattered by shots along the side of the large square—both by breaking and by rifle shots.”<sup>55</sup>

In a few cases, mass reprisals followed provocation short of killing. Trim, county Meath suffered a mass reprisal on the night of 27 September 1920, after the police barrack was captured and burned in a daring raid that left a head constable wounded.<sup>56</sup> The police became especially violent when their comrades were kidnapped. The blockade of Tralee in early November 1920 was provoked as much by the kidnapping of two constables as it was by the killing and wounding of another fourteen. Constable Ernest Bright of London and Constable Patrick Waters of Galway were captured by the guerrillas on 31 October 1920 and never seen again.<sup>57</sup> The police posted notices the following day: “Take notice—Warning—Unless the two Tralee policemen in Sinn Fein custody are returned before ten a.m. on the 2nd inst., reprisals of a nature not yet heard of in Ireland will take place in Tralee and surroundings.”<sup>58</sup>

Word got around the following day that the dead bodies of the missing men had been found, riddled with bullets. The police ordered all businesses to close. When the report was disproved, the police began dragging the local canal and put up more posters: “Final notice. Take notice, that all business premises, factories, and shops in Tralee must be kept closed and work suspended until such time as the police in Sinn Fein custody are returned. Anyone disobeying this order will be dealt with in a drastic manner.”<sup>59</sup> The blockade was eventually lifted, but its effects lingered. When the Labour Commission visited the town a month later, on 9 December 1920, they were appalled. “Tralee, more than any other place visited by the Commission, exemplifies the demoralizing effects of coercion, repression and reprisals,” they reported. “The whole population seems to be sunk in the depths of morbid fear and contagious depression.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Testimony of Denis Morgan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 14-15. Morgan also said he received a threatening letter on 24 January, four days after the riot: “You will depart this life if you do not leave this town within twenty-four hours. (Signed) ‘Vengeance.’” Testimony of Denis Morgan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 20.

<sup>56</sup> “The Sack of Trim,” *Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1920, p. 9; “Sack of Trim,” *Daily News*, 28 September 1920, p. 1; “More Irish Reprisals,” *The Times*, 28 September 1920, p. 10; “Irish Police Reprisals,” *Daily Telegraph*, 28 September 1920, p. 11; “An Irish Town Wrecked,” *Morning Post*, 28 September 1920, p. 7; Seamus Finn, “Inside Information Acted on Efficiently led to the Fall of Trim Barrack, September 30 [sic] 1920,” in *With the I.R.A. in the Fight for Freedom*, pp. 89-90; Coogan, *Politics and War in Meath*, pp. 128-32.

<sup>57</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 311-12. Apparently, the two kidnapped constables were burned alive: Richard Bennett says they were “thrown alive into a gas retort and burned to death,” while Richard Abbott says they “had been thrown alive into the furnace of the Tralee Gas Works”; Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, p. 114; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 312.

<sup>58</sup> “Police Sway in Tralee,” *Manchester Guardian*, 3 November 1920, p. 7; Hugh Martin, “Ireland Under the Terror,” *Daily News*, 3 November 1920, p. 1; “Guerrilla Tactics,” *Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1920, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> “Guerrilla Tactics,” *Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1920, p. 11; “Terrorism at Tralee,” *The Times*, 5 November 1920, p. 12; “Wild Reprisals in Irish Towns,” *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1920, p. 9; “The Fate of Tralee,” *Daily News*, 5 November 1920, p. 3; “Reprisals in Tralee,” *Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 1920, p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 33.

Fortunately, the blockade of Tralee was unusual in many respects. Quite often, mass reprisals were not the work of local police forces. The police rioters in Tuam had come from Galway.<sup>61</sup> The police rioters in Tubbercurry had come from Sligo. Apparently, the police who took reprisals at Moneygold in late October came from Sligo too,<sup>62</sup> while those who took reprisals at Ballymote in early November came from Ballaghadereen.<sup>63</sup> Balbriggan was burned by Black and Tans from nearby Gormanstown, and the company of Auxiliaries that set fire to the commercial centre of Cork were newcomers to the city, stationed on its outskirts.<sup>64</sup> The mass reprisals in county Clare following the Rineen massacre swept across three communities, and the punitive expedition to Granard came from nearby Longford.

It seems that mass reprisals were taken by local police forces only when community relations were especially bitter. Thurles, county Tipperary was one of the Irish insurgency's first hot zones. By January 1920, when Constable Finegan was killed, the Thurles constabulary had already lost three men: a sergeant and a constable had been killed in the Knocklong railway station ambush of 13 May 1919, and the local district inspector had been assassinated in Thurles on 23 June in the Knocklong.<sup>65</sup> As we shall see, the first police death squad appeared in this district as well.

Nine months after the sacking of Thurles, in its report on the Tullamore police riot in King's County, the *Guardian* said that, "the police have keenly resented the attempt to boycott them." The day before Sergeant Cronin was shot; local Sinn Feiners and shopkeepers had received threatening letters with Tullamore postmarks. "Warning," they said. "Beware. You are a doomed man. Clear out." The letters were signed "Red hand," or with a skull and crossbones. On the same day, a notice was posted on the bridge, "warning traders that if the boycott were not removed within twelve hours they must take the consequences." After Sergeant Cronin died on the evening of 1 November, the Tullamore police went on a rampage, wrecking the local Sinn Fein club, ruining the printing presses of a nationalist paper, the *King's County Independent*, demolishing the Transport and General Workers Union hall, and bombing and burning the town cinema. "The houses of several prominent Irish Volunteers were also destroyed, and a number of business premises had their windows and exhibits smashed."<sup>66</sup>

Historians almost always portray mass reprisals as blind, idiotic, indiscriminate. After all, the burning of cooperative creameries had a blanket effect on entire districts: according to news reports, the creamery at Achonry, county Sligo received its milk and cream from eight hundred local smallholders.<sup>67</sup> During the sack of Balbriggan, the police

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<sup>61</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>62</sup> RIC Reports, CI Sligo, October 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>63</sup> "Inform all available Auxiliary force to proceed at once to Ballymote, where a sergeant has been shot." Telegram, District Inspector Sligo to Head Constable Constabulary Ballaghadereen, 3 November 1920, 4:28 p.m., reproduced in *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 14.

<sup>64</sup> Statement of District Inspector 1st Class O W Latimer, 16 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/88A, Part 3, p. 13

<sup>65</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 35-40.

<sup>66</sup> "Police Rioting in Tullamore." *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1920, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> "Tubbercurry," *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, p. 8; "'Black and Tan' Force a Failure," *Daily News*, 4 October 1920, p. 1.

mob destroyed a hosiery factory that was owned by a London firm and managed by an Englishman. Its destruction left at least a hundred people unemployed, and deprived at least another hundred people of income from outwork.<sup>68</sup> During the reprisals in Cork on the night of 11 December, the rioters burned and looted over sixty shops, including four large department stores, as well as the City Hall and the City Library.<sup>69</sup> An especially mean spirit was moving the men of H Company, ADRIC on the night of 19 April 1921, when they took reprisals once more on Tralee, county Kerry. As well as bombing nine houses and businesses, the cadets vandalized a monument commemorating the Rebellion of 1798.

The limestone figure of the Croppy Boy was pulled off the pedestal, smashed, and the body of the figure left in the street decapitated. The pike disappeared, as did the arms and legs of the figure. The trunk remains in the street a danger to the passing traffic.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly, there was no sense in reprisals like these. But a rather different picture emerges from a collage of contemporary sources. In many cases, the police chose their victims with care, even in the midst of a riot. John Derham was a Sinn Féin town commissioner in Balbriggan. On the night of the sack, the police arrested Derham, wrecked and burned his public house, and badly beat his older son Michael, left unconscious in the burning building. Derham himself was punched in the face and clubbed on the head with a rifle butt. Months later, the town councillor testified at the hearings of the American Commission. "They did not take everybody," he said. "They picked them out like they did me."<sup>71</sup>

This kind of discrimination is often mentioned in contemporary reports. The police attacked well-known republicans, and left other people alone. In at least one case, prominent local republicans were warned in advance that they would be punished if the police were attacked. An article in the *Manchester Guardian* for 2 November 1920 described how the police had posted threats on shop windows and walls in Buncrana, county Donegal. "Take warning in good time," they said, "that if any harm whatsoever

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<sup>68</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 17; Testimony of John Derham, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 111-12. The Labour Commission's Report said 109 factory hands and "at least 120" outworkers; Derham said 120 hands and 300 outworkers.

<sup>69</sup> Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, p. 141; testimony of Donal O'Callaghan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 828-33; Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 83; Townshend, *British Campaign*, pp. 138-39; Martin Seedorf, "The Lloyd George Government and the Strickland Report on the Burning of Cork, 1920," *Albion* 4, no. 2 (1972), pp. 60-61.

<sup>70</sup> "Destruction at Tralee," *Manchester Guardian*, 21 April 1921, p. 7; "Tralee Bombed," *The Times*, 21 April 1921, p. 10. The Pikeman Memorial on Denny Street was afterwards restored. The rebels of 1798 were nicknamed "croppies" for their short haircuts. The execution of a young rebel is described in a mournful ballad, "The Croppy Boy," which presumably gave the Pikeman Memorial its nickname; cf. the bloodthirsty loyalist song "Croppies Lie Down." Joost Augusteijn has recently emphasized the symbolic importance of the Rebellion of 1798 for early twentieth-century Irish republicans: "Motivation: Why Did They Fight for Ireland? The Motivation of Volunteers in the Irish Revolution," in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (London: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 112-13.

<sup>71</sup> Testimony of John Derham, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 102-4, 107-9, 117.

comes to any member of his Majesty's forces or to any person who chooses to associate with them five prominent Sinn Feiners in this locality will be shot. Balbriggan and Trim will be sufficient warning to the sober-minded." In a letter to General Macready, five Buncrana shopkeepers complained that they had been publicly marked as the men to be shot in reprisal. "Our doors have been numbered," they said, "the numerals 1 to 5 being painted on them. The dead walls and concrete footpaths have also been painted with inscriptions: 'Buncrana will follow Balbriggan! Up the Black and Tans!'"<sup>72</sup>

When reprisals were taken, it was marked men like these who suffered. The houses that were shot up in Thurles, county Tipperary on 20 January 1920 belonged to men "known to be associated with the movement for national independence."<sup>73</sup> When Trim, county Meath was attacked on 27 September, the police mob "singled out the shops and business establishments of those residents alleged to be in sympathy with Sinn Fein, and ransacked, pillaged, and burned all."<sup>74</sup> The same thing happened in Tubbercurry on the night of 30 September. "The reason these particular houses were attacked," according to the county inspector, "appears to have been because either the owner or the shop boys employed by him were active Sinn Feiners."<sup>75</sup> The *Guardian* summed up the Tullamore police riot of 1 November as "a tour of Sinn Feiners' houses."<sup>76</sup>

That same night, in Granard, the column of police and military trucks from Longford stopped at the local police barracks for information before starting their work. "Houses and shops were selected for destruction according to the politics of their owners and the work of burning carried out expeditiously by the use of petrol."<sup>77</sup> On the night of 3 November, after military curfew patrols had been withdrawn, the Tralee police went out and "set fire to business premises of well-known Sinn Feiners."<sup>78</sup> In at least one case, officers may have actively discouraged purely random destruction. One witness to the mass reprisal at Lahinch, county Clare on 22 September described how the Black and Tans began to burn the local post office, "but the officer came running up the street shouting '[Damn] you! Put out that fire at once. Can't you see that is the post office?'"<sup>79</sup>

Mass reprisals were often accompanied by shouting from the men as well as their officers. We have already heard the shouts of the rioters in Tuam and Tubbercurry.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "Death Warning in Donegal," *Manchester Guardian*, 2 November 1920, p. 7. According to the *Guardian*'s correspondent, "There is a persistent boycott of the police, and every day armed uniformed men enter the shops demanding supplies at the revolver point."

<sup>73</sup> Testimony of Denis Morgan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 17.

<sup>74</sup> "More Irish Reprisals," *The Times*, 28 September 1920, p. 10; "An Irish Town Wrecked," *Morning Post*, 28 September 1920, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> "Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals," *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1920, p. 8; "Police Mad With Passion," *Daily News*, 8 October 1920, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> "Police Rioting in Tullamore," *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1920, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> "Irish Volunteers Awaiting Attack by Troops," *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1920, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> "Terrorism at Tralee," *The Times*, 5 November 1920, p. 12; "Reprisals in Tralee," *Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 1920, p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> "An Irishwoman's Story of Reprisals," *Manchester Guardian*, 15 October 1920, p. 10. This article was reprinted from the *Irish Bulletin*. "Much of what is published in the 'Irish Bulletin' is of a propagandist character," says the *Guardian*, "but these documents appear to us to bear the clear impress of truth, and we think it right that they should be given publicity."

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter Two.

John Derham and his family were hiding in the back room of his Balbriggan pub on the night of the Sack. “You could hear them screeching and roaring,” he said, “and their voices got worse.”<sup>81</sup> “I was awakened by a sound of shots and the most fiendish yelling imaginable,” wrote the witness from Lahinch. The police were “yelling for the men to come out now and bring their rifles.” As the reprisals continued, “above all the din could be heard the hellish laughter and shouts of revenge of the raiders.”<sup>82</sup>

There are some references to cheering as well. The police rioters cheered when they set fire to the Tuam town hall.<sup>83</sup> “The incendiaries seem to have gloated over their evil work for they waved their caps and cheered,” said the *Report of the Labour Commission*, describing the sack of Balbriggan.<sup>84</sup> The police also cheered as they burned buildings at Ennistymon, County Clare,<sup>85</sup> and shouted, “That’s the stuff to give them!” as they were preparing to leave Granard in flames.<sup>86</sup>

In some cases, the police even called for Sinn Feiners and Volunteers by name. “Searches were made for young men with Sinn Fein connections whose names were shouted freely by the police,” during the reprisals at Milltown Malbay, County Clare.<sup>87</sup> The police also called for the Sinn Fein chairman of the Trim urban council when they burned his mineral water works on 27 September 1920.<sup>88</sup>

Few men answered these calls, for good reason. Mass reprisals on property were often accompanied by beatings and killings. The police executed Seamus Quirke on the night of the Galway police riot, and wounded another man.<sup>89</sup> The Labour Commission received an affidavit from Michael Derham, describing the beating he was given the night of the sack of Balbriggan. The police invaded his home, arrested his father, and threatened his younger brother. One of them flashed a lamp in his eyes to blind him. “Another then struck me on the face with his fist,” Derham’s affidavit says, “and releasing the other man’s grip I ran to the bed and lay face downwards, with the object of saving my face.”

The men followed me across the room and, raising the butts of their rifles, struck me several times on the back of the head. Then one of them caught me by the arm and turned me over and struck me several times on the top of the head and once on the upper lip also with the butt of his rifle. I implored them to shoot me, but one man answered, ‘Shooting is too good for a ... like you,’ using a terrible

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<sup>81</sup> Testimony of John Derham, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 102.

<sup>82</sup> “An Irishwoman’s Story of Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 15 October 1920, p. 10.

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>84</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 40.

<sup>85</sup> “The Scourge of Clare,” *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1920, p. 7.

<sup>86</sup> “Granard,” *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November, p. 9. According to *The Times*, the Black and Tans “returned to their lorries, yelling as they went” after burning two last houses. “Story of Granard Reprisals,” *The Times*, 6 November 1920, p. 12;

<sup>87</sup> “Three Men Shot Dead in Clare Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 24 September 1920, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup> “More Irish Reprisals,” *The Times*, 28 September 1920, p. 10; “An Irish Town Wrecked,” *Morning Post*, 28 September 1920, p. 7.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter Two.

oath, and accompanying his remark with a blow over the left eye with the butt of his rifle.<sup>90</sup>

There were other cases where the police decided that shooting (or shooting alone) was too good for their victims. Two men were stabbed to death during the sack of Balbriggan: according to the *Guardian*, “one was the chairman and the other the acting secretary of the Sinn Fein Volunteer movement in the town, and one at least of them was believed by the constabulary to have been implicated in the recent murder of Sergeant Finnerty, of the R.I.C.”<sup>91</sup> Another two men were killed in Ennistymon, county Clare two days later. Once again, both of them were ‘marked’ men—“men believed to have Sinn Fein connections.” One was caught while trying to put out a fire. “He appears to have been beaten first and shot afterwards.” The second man was Thomas Connole, secretary of the local transport and general workers’ union. The police dragged him out of his house, put him up against a wall, and executed him. Then they set fire to his house, dragged his body back, and threw it in the flames.<sup>92</sup>

### C. Night Riders

Reprisals, however, were not always the work of police lynch mobs. More commonly, lynch law was enforced by gangs, who dealt out punishment beatings, and levied fines in the form of property burned and wrecked. Although there were only nine small-scale reprisals in county Sligo (compared to forty-two during three police riots), the proportions in the rest of the province were very different. In Roscommon, there were 27 small-scale reprisals on property (48 per cent of the total). In Leitrim, there were 17 small-scale reprisals on property (71 per cent of the total). In Galway, 86 per cent of the registered attacks on republican property were small in scale. Moreover, most of the large-scale reprisals in Connaught were the work of small groups moving from place to place. They were spree reprisals by gangs, instead of mass reprisals by mobs.

Sometimes reprisal sprees were spread out over several nights. Outside of the province of Connaught, for example, there was a series of arson attacks in Cork city before the great fire of 11 December 1920. Between the night of 21 November and the

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<sup>90</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, pp. 84-85. This affidavit is unsigned, but describes events that occurred on 20 September 1920, and its contents correspond closely with John Derham’s testimony to the American Commission: *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 107-9.

<sup>91</sup> Testimony of John Derham, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 105-7; “Vengeance in Ireland,” *Manchester Guardian*, 23 September 1920, p. 7. The proceedings of the military court of inquiry on the deaths of the two men is not among those available at the PRO, but on 1 October 1920 Mark Sturgis recorded the following in his diary: “The Military Court sitting in place of Inquest on the two SF’s killed at Balbriggan has brought in a verdict that they were stabbed not by bayonets but by some sharp instrument like a knife by unknown members of the Police—this is pretty nasty. I wonder if it will be made public.” Hopkinson, *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 50. Sergeant Patrick Finnerty had been shot and fatally wounded in Balbriggan on 14 April 1920, dying two days later: Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>92</sup> “The Scourge of Clare,” *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1920, p. 7.



night of 30 November, the city fire brigade was called out a dozen times.<sup>93</sup> On the night of 27 November, for example, two buildings were burned in North Main Street: McGurk's curio shop and O'Connell's public house. There was a Sinn Fein club above McGurk's, and tenements above both. Damage was estimated at £25,000. The tenants living over O'Connell's pub had been warned in advance, receiving typed notices to evacuate. "Ignore this warning and you take the consequences," they read.<sup>94</sup> A few days before the fire, a friendly policeman alerted shopkeeper John McGurk that his building was in danger. "If you have any valuable goods there it would be better to shift them," the constable said. Later, both McGurk and O'Connell received written warnings as well: "It is extremely dangerous to be living in your premises at present."<sup>95</sup> The spree reached its climax on the night of 30 November, when the Thomas Ashe Sinn Fein club was bombed and burned, Egan's jewellery store on Patrick Street was looted and set on fire, and someone tried to burn the City Hall.<sup>96</sup> Like the blockade of Tralee, the reprisal fires in Cork were apparently sparked by kidnappings: in its 1 December article, the *Guardian* said that three Army officers had been kidnapped near Cork "ten days ago."<sup>97</sup>

Another spree reprisal took place on 25 October 1920, near the village of Lixnaw, county Kerry. News reports indicate that republicans had cut off the hair of a village girl about a fortnight before. The young woman was a suspected informer, and a 'bottle washer,' republican slang for women who were friendly toward the police. On the night of the 25th a truck full of police drove into Lixnaw, from the direction of Listowel. The men were in plain clothes. Some had their faces blackened, and some wore motor goggles.

The raiding party stopped first at the Brady home, looking for their son Steve, but the young man had fled out a back window. In Steve's absence, the gang settled for

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<sup>93</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>94</sup> "Curfew Fires in Cork," *Daily News*, 29 November 1920, p. 3; "Reprisal Fires in Cork," *Manchester Guardian*, 1 December 1920; "Reprisal Fires in Cork," *The Times*, 29 December 1920, p. 16; *Report of the Labour Commission*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>95</sup> Affidavit of John McGurk and testimony of Donal O'Callaghan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 818-19.

<sup>96</sup> "Reprisal Fires in Cork," *Manchester Guardian*, 1 December 1920; "More Burnings in Cork," *The Times*, 1 December 1920, p. 12. On the attempted burning of the City Hall, see affidavit of Captain Hutson and depositions of Timothy Ring and Timothy Ring Jr., *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 819-21. The Thomas Ashe Sinn Fein club had been raided frequently: see affidavit of Mrs Honan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 817-18. This appears to have been the second attempt on the City Hall: for the first, see "Cork City Hall set on Fire," *Manchester Guardian*, 11 October 1920, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> The following notice was posted on 24 November and attributed to the "Anti-Sinn Fein Society": "If Captain Green, Captain Chambers, and Captain Watts are not released unharmed within 48 hours, leading members of the I.R.A. will be suitably dealt with. Ignore this at your peril. Vengeance may be slow, but it will be sure." "Reprisal Fires in Cork," *Manchester Guardian*, 1 December 1920. The *Report of the Labour Commission* also mentions the following notice: "Constable Ryan kidnapped and his comrade robbed while attending divine service at St. Patrick's Church, Cork, on Sunday, November 21, 1920. If Constable Ryan is not returned within twenty-four hour hours, citizens of Cork beware of the consequences." (p. 87) There seems to be no record of these four men or their fate. On fires after 30 November, see "Shots at Fire Brigade," *Manchester Guardian*, 2 December 1920, p. 11; "Cork's Nightly Fire," *Manchester Guardian*, 3 December 1920, p. 10. On arson in county Cork generally, see Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, pp. 100-2.

beating another boy, John Nolan. Then they gave Bridget Brady a few minutes to dress before they dragged her outside and cut off her hair. Finally, they told Mrs Brady “that if her son had not cleared out of the place within 24 hours he would be doomed, and would be shot at sight.” From the Brady home, the police went on to burn the local co-operative creamery. The creamery’s office and its cheese-room were destroyed, along with its main roof and much of the stock. The damage was later estimated between £10,000 and £12,000.<sup>98</sup>

The burning of the creamery was followed by two more assaults. At the McElligott farmhouse the raiders called for their two sons John and Tom to come out. The young men asked for permission to put on their trousers. This was denied. They were implicated in the cutting of the Lixnaw girl’s hair, and the shooting of police, they were told.

“There have been no police shot here,” said McElligott.

“Shut up, you freezing ——,” the raiders replied. According to the news report, the noun was “a familiar Army word.” The two brothers were taken outside in the rain, where they stood in their shirts, faces to the wall, while they were beaten and kicked. The family’s two daughters were called out as well. The raiders were going to cut off the older girl’s hair, but she ran away.

The raiding party had more success at the Lovett family home, where they found young Maurice in bed. “This is the —— we want,” they said, as they beat him, kicked him, tore his shirt. “Come out to be shot,” they snarled: then they dragged him outside, knocked him down, and kicked him some more. Maurice’s sister Mary was living next door. “Don’t kill him,” she cried, alerting the police to her presence. They went into her house, lit her up with a lamp, and cut off her hair with scissors.

Then, finally, they left the village. A few days later, correspondents for the *Daily News* and the *Guardian* visited Lixnaw, taking statements from victims and witnesses. “The evidence of these events is perfectly clear,” said Hugh Martin of the *Daily News*, “and can be obtained on the spot by anyone not a soldier or policeman, even by a member of the Chief Secretary’s department, who cares to have it.” “I saw and spoke to the two girls whose hair had been bobbed,” said the *Guardian*’s correspondent, “and I can testify to the thoroughness, if not the artistry, with which it was done.”<sup>99</sup>

Episodes like these had at least one feature in common with mass reprisals like the Tubbercurry police riot. Aside from the burning of the creamery, the violence was not indiscriminate: instead, active republicans and their families were singled out for punishment. The McElligott brothers were both Volunteers, as was Maurice Lovett. When the police came to the Lovett home, they found a lodger as well: “All right, we don’t want you,” they told him. Steve Brady was described in the news as a “leading”

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<sup>98</sup> There had been at least one similar incident earlier in the year, in county Tipperary. After a young woman’s hair was cut off, to punish her for being friendly toward the police, the police retaliated by bombing and burning the Newport co-operative creamery on 25 July: “Anti Sinn Feiners,” *Daily News*, 27 July 1920, p. 3; “Irish Creamery Bombed,” *The Times*, 27 July 1920, p. 14; *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 91.

<sup>99</sup> Hugh Martin, “Kerry Scissor Outrages,” *Daily News*, 30 October 1920, p. 3; “The Burning of Irish Creameries,” *Manchester Guardian*, 30 October 1920, p. 11.

Volunteer, and this, along with his flight, and the frustration and threats of the raiding party when it missed him, indicates that he may have led the men who cut off the bottle washer's hair two weeks before. The raiders also chose their female victims with care. There were two McElligott girls, ages eighteen and fifteen. After the older girl escaped, "it was decided that her sister was too young to warrant the operation." Later, they asked Mary Lovett's widowed sister-in-law if she was married. When she said "yes," they left her alone.<sup>100</sup>

Haircutting was by far the most common form of reprisal against women. We have already seen how five Galway women had their hair cut off after Eileen Baker was attacked in the same way, for giving evidence to a military court of inquiry.<sup>101</sup> Besides the two cases reported by the *Manchester Guardian*, a third case of haircutting in county Kerry was reported in the *Daily News* and the *Cork Examiner*. On their way to Lixnaw, the gang stopped at the home of a farmer named O'Sullivan. The farmer's two sons were beaten with rifle butts, and his two daughters had their hair shorn.<sup>102</sup> The Cork paper mentioned other such incidents as well: on 2 November, for example, it reported that Agnes Daly had been attacked and had her hair cut off in Limerick. Agnes had a sister, Kathleen, who later described this incident in her memoirs. "They grabbed her, threw her on the ground, and dragged her to the gate on her face, by the hair," she wrote. "Then one of them put her foot on his back and stooping over, cut off her hair with a razor."<sup>103</sup>

Surprisingly, though, reprisals on the persons of women did not often go beyond this type of assault and humiliation. Women were never murdered in reprisals. In the few cases where police and soldiers murdered Irish women, their motives were non-political. On 24 May 1921, for example, a Black and Tan, Constable William Robinson, shot and killed Anne Dickson in Clones, county Monaghan. Robinson had been stationed in Clones until 13 May, when he was transferred to Ballybay. The constable had been keeping company with Dickson for three months, prior to his transfer, and came back to Clones to visit her on the 24th. In fact, Dickson and Robinson had been thinking of getting married. In a letter from Ballybay dated 14 May, Robinson wrote: "I wish I could get to know your Mother and Father because I would like to have a talk with them about a certain thing, I suppose you know what that is." However, the same letter shows that Robinson was jealous man. "I don't think you know how I love you," he wrote, "but I know that myself and I think you love me in return, if you do darling I can trust you not to walk out with any more boys, because you know I was always jealous of you when I

<sup>100</sup> "The Burning of Irish Creameries," *Manchester Guardian*, 30 October 1920, p. 11.

<sup>101</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>102</sup> Hugh Martin, "Kerry Scissor Outrages," *Daily News*, 30 October 1920, p. 3; Louise Ryan, "'Drunken Tans': Representations of Sex and Violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919-21)," *Feminist Review* no. 66 (Autumn 2000), p. 79. The report in the *Cork Examiner* mentions just one female victim. The *Guardian*'s correspondent mentions this case as well. "On their way they are said to have called at the house of the O'Sullivans, at Ballydonoghoe, two miles out of Listowel, beaten two youths, bobbed the hair of two girls, and burned hay and straw, but as I have not personally investigated that case I merely give the report guardedly." "The Burning of Irish Creameries," *Manchester Guardian*, 30 October 1920, p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> Ryan, "'Drunken Tans,'" p. 80.

was in Clones, I did not like to see anybody else with you.”<sup>104</sup> On 24 May, Robinson seems to have been angry that another police constable had come to see Dickson the same day.<sup>105</sup> Robinson said the shooting was unintentional.<sup>106</sup> The court of inquiry concurred, but found the constable guilty of “culpable negligence in so handling his revolver as to allow it to be discharged.”<sup>107</sup> He was tried and acquitted of murder, but found guilty of manslaughter on 15 August 1921.<sup>108</sup>

There were also surprisingly few reports of sexual assaults on Irish women by members of the security forces. This fact was remarked upon during the hearings of the American Commission. Ellen Wilkinson, for example, was a representative of the British branch of the Women’s International League.<sup>109</sup> Wilkinson had investigated conditions in Ireland with her colleague. Annot Erskine Robinson, a Manchester suffragist: the two Englishwomen were the sole British witnesses to give evidence to the commission. Wilkinson told the commission that, “when we were there, we made very careful investigation, and we found no cases whatever of outrages on women.”

We have been told since that such cases have occurred. We have been told by Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, for instance (she is a prejudiced witness, of course), that outrages have occurred on women. But we found no case at all where sexual outrages on women have occurred.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Robinson to Dickson, 14 May 1921, PRO, HO 351/167. In addition, Dickson told a witness that she was going to marry Bill Robinson: evidence of Charles Fyfe, 1 June 1921, PRO, HO 351/167.

<sup>105</sup> Evidence of Constable Henry Boyle, 1 June 1921, PRO, HO 351/167; evidence of Charles Fyfe, 1 June 1921, PRO, HO 351/167.

<sup>106</sup> “I started to go towards her & at the same time took the revolver out of my pocket.... After I had taken the revolver out of my pocket and was going towards Miss Dickson the revolver went off.... The revolver is not my own. I exchanged revolvers with Constable McNamee as his was smaller and easier to carry in plain clothes.... I have always used the same revolver, i.e. the one I gave Constable McNamee. The pull-off is much heavier than the one I borrowed. The reason I took my revolver out of my pocket was in case it should go off while I was going upstairs.” Evidence of Constable William Robinson, MCI (Anne Dickson), 26 May 1921, PRO, HO 351/167. There is a large question mark in the margin of this document, next to the final quoted sentence. General Macready reviewed this case, and made the following comment: “I presume he will be tried. The excuse for taking the revolver out of his pocket is evidently a lie.” Deputy Adjutant General to Under Secretary, 31 May 1921.

<sup>107</sup> Findings, MCI (Anne Dickson), 26 May 1921, PRO, HO 351/167.

<sup>108</sup> Robinson was sentenced to one year’s imprisonment without hard labour. The remainder of his sentence was remitted on 14 February 1922. The finding of manslaughter was probably due to the seeming lack of motive for the shooting. Sarah Kells saw Dickson and Robinson together just moments before Dickson was killed: though Robinson had the revolver in his hand, the two seemed “very friendly.” “I heard Miss Dickson laughing,” said Kells: evidence of Sarah Kells, MCI (Anne Dickson), 26 May 1921, PRO, HO 351/167. Given his insistence that the revolver’s trigger pull was unexpectedly light, and his lame excuse for taking the revolver from his pocket, Robinson may have pointed his weapon at Dickson as an imbecile joke. One interlocutor suggested that Dickson’s death might have been the result of “horseplay”: documents in PRO, HO 351/167.

<sup>109</sup> “Red Ellen” Wilkinson (1891-1947) later became a left-wing Labour MP. She organized the Jarrow Crusade in 1936 and in 1945 became Minister of Education in the Attlee Ministry.

<sup>110</sup> Testimony of Ellen Wilkinson, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 600. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946) was an Irish republican propagandist (author of *British Militarism as I Have*

Later, Donal O'Callaghan gave the commission an affidavit from Ellie Lane of Ballinhassig, county Cork, describing how she had suffered an attempted rape during a night raid. This prompted the chairman to ask: "is there much of what we call sex crime in connection with these raids?"

This is the first testimony we have had of that kind. And we were so accustomed to hearing of sex excess in the situation in Belgium that it has been in marked contrast to that. And I am wondering if there had been any charge in this connection in these raids in the treatment of the Irish people.

O'Callaghan replied:

This is the only case in which I have gotten a definite deposition, and it is the only case of which I know personally in Cork. There have been rumours of such cases throughout the country, but I do not know whether they are correct or not. I have no particulars about them. But I will say that that class of assaults is not very general in connection with raids.<sup>111</sup>

Finally, Caroline Townshend, an officer of the Gaelic League in county Cork, was asked if she had heard of any sex crimes. "I have not personally," she said. "Except that I have two reports of two cases of court-martials, one of a soldier and the other of a constable, where they were court-martialed for assaults on women; and one was sentenced for two years."

"Of course," she concluded, "it is very difficult to get facts about such cases."<sup>112</sup> This point was also stressed by the *Report of the Labour Commission*, which says it was "extremely difficult to obtain direct evidence of incidents affecting females, for the women of Ireland are reticent on such subjects."<sup>113</sup> Their families could be tight-lipped as well. "Dr. Foley here yesterday," wrote Lady Gregory, on 20 November 1920. "He says the family of the girls violated by the Black and Tans wish it hushed up. There has been another case of the same sort in Clare—but there also it is to be kept quiet."<sup>114</sup>

There is no question that some sexual violence took place during the First Irish War. But it seems the rape of women, like the murder of women, when it occurred, was not a political crime. Even death squads, it seems, had rules. Some types of almost ritualistic violence against women were allowed. Other types were not.

This restraint was absent from reprisals on men, who were lucky to get away with a simple beating. The police and auxiliaries in county Galway seem to have been especially savage. On the night of 16 October 1920, for example, uniformed men

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*Known It* (1917)) and a former suffragette. A British officer murdered her pacifist husband Francis in Dublin during the Rebellion of 1916.

<sup>111</sup> Testimony of Donal O'Callaghan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 750-51.

<sup>112</sup> Testimony of Caroline Townshend, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 1040.

<sup>113</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 29.

<sup>114</sup> *Lady Gregory's Journals*, I, p. 202.

wearing “Scotch caps,” some of them with blackened faces, invaded the home of a widow named Mrs. Feeney about three miles from Corofin. The house was searched, and Mrs. Feeney’s four boys were taken outside: her oldest son, Thomas, was caught by the hair on his way out and accused of being a rebel and a Volunteer.

“You have had your day,” said his captor: “now it is ours.”

Thomas and Martin Feeney were made to lower their trousers and were whipped with a rope on the bare skin. Thomas had a rope or halter put around his neck, by which he was pulled over a wall; his brother William was hit in the head with a gun butt and beaten down, stunned. All three were then kicked as they lay on the ground. Only the youngest brother, Patrick, was left unharmed.<sup>115</sup> A Corofin publican named John Raftery was attacked later that same night. He was accused of being a Sinn Féiner, beaten, and pushed into a wall of loose stones that gave way under his weight.<sup>116</sup>

We have already read about other cases of police cruelty from this county. The Furey brothers were beaten, mock-executed, and wounded with a shotgun. The Deveney brothers were given the same treatment a few nights later. Lawrence Tallan was wounded with shot as well, while his assistants were flogged. Assaults like these take us beyond mere terrorism, into the realm of sadism. There were nasty sexual undertones in some of these cases: the Furey brothers in County Galway were put on their knees and had revolver barrels thrust into their mouths, while reports of men being whipped after dropping their trousers may remind us of scenes from Edwardian pornography.<sup>117</sup> To be haltered like an animal, whipped like a naughty schoolboy, or forced into symbolic fellatio was more than just intimidating: it was humiliating, emasculating. One whipping victim told an English reporter that, “the indignity was worse than the pain.”<sup>118</sup> “To be beaten on the back, and the neck, and to have a prod of a rifle in the head, a man might as well be dead,” said a Galway man to Lady Gregory.<sup>119</sup>

Reprisals could scar the mind as well as the body. Nellie Craven told the American Commission that her brother was “terribly nervous” after being beaten twice in one day by the police. During the first attack, two of his teeth were knocked out. During

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<sup>115</sup> “Flogged by Police in Galway,” *Manchester Guardian*, 21 October 1920, p. 9; “Police Terrorism in Galway,” *Times*, 21 October 1920, p. 10; Hugh Martin, “Under the Knout in Ireland,” *Daily News*, 21 October 1920, p. 3. There is a certain amount of mystery surrounding this incident. Reports agree that these events occurred at a place called Corbally, but no such place could be found on any map of County Galway, or in any Gazetteer. British newspapers could not always be relied upon to report Irish place names accurately.

<sup>116</sup> “Police Terrorism in Galway,” *Times*, 21 October 1920, p. 10; Hugh Martin, “Under the Knout in Ireland,” *Daily News*, 21 October 1920, p. 3. An exaggerated, sensational version of this incident appeared in “Alleged Torture in West Ireland,” *Manchester Guardian*, 19 October 1920, p. 9, and in the Dublin papers. However, as its title clearly indicates, the *Guardian* had some doubts about this version of events, which was provided by “a Galway correspondent.” The correspondent for the *Times* was debunking these early reports: his article is subtitled, “A Report and the Facts.” Martin, who also investigated the matter personally, says only that the Auxiliaries assaulted Raftery and “left him to walk home as best he could at two in the morning.”

<sup>117</sup> For a sample of Edwardian S & M, see *Sadopaideia* (1907) (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1995).

<sup>118</sup> Hugh Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection* (London: Daniel O’Connor, 1921), p. 115.

<sup>119</sup> *Lady Gregory’s Journals*, I, p. 206.

the second attack, he had shots fired over his head, and then was undressed and beaten with a belt. Craven testified that her brother was in bed for five days afterward, and now “the sight of a lorry or a Black-and-Tan is too much for him.”<sup>120</sup> Other instances of apparent post-traumatic stress disorder can be found elsewhere.<sup>121</sup>

Even ‘simple’ beatings could have terrible consequences. A Limerick teenager, for example, was given “a prod of a rifle in the head” on New Year’s Eve, 1920. A police patrol stopped three young men in the street, including seventeen year-old John Lawlor. Apparently, Lawlor and the rest made a break for it. Witnesses heard shouts of “run,” then shouts of “halt.” Lawlor halted, and the Black and Tans caught up with him. “I saw a policeman strike him in the face with his hand,” said a witness, “and another hit him on the back of the head with the butt end of his rifle. He fell—A policeman told us to move on and we saw no more.”<sup>122</sup> Some other witnesses testified that Lawlor got up and ran towards his home. “We caught him up as he was leaning against a window (Scanlan’s) in Market Street, and the other person who was with me asked him how he felt. He said ‘Oh! my head, Oh! my back.’ The other person helped him home.”<sup>123</sup> Lawlor lost consciousness later that evening, and he died not long before midnight. A post-mortem examination found the cause of death was asphyxia due to compression of the brain’s respiratory centre. The compression was the result of a haemorrhage resulting from Lawlor’s head injury.<sup>124</sup>

#### D. ‘A Little Quiet Shooting’

It was deadly to flee from the police during the First Irish War. On 2 December 1920, Chief Secretary Greenwood told the House of Commons that eleven prisoners had been shot while trying to escape between 1 January and 30 November: two had been

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<sup>120</sup> Testimony of Nellie Craven, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 507-8.

<sup>121</sup> For example, Agnes King told the Commission that she was awakened in her Limerick hotel room by cries of “Halt,” “Hands up,” and “Fire” from a man in the room next door. “Never mind,” she was told. “That is a man who was on the run, and he was caught and escaped. His mind is a little shattered now, and he is resting in the next room. He does that now all through the night.” Testimony of Agnes King, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 135.

Some police were traumatized by their experiences as well. In one case, a Black and Tan, Constable William Muir, committed suicide on 27 December 1920 at Ballylongford RIC barracks, County Kerry by cutting his throat with a razor. “Muir, about a month previously, had been kidnapped by Sinn Féiners and held by them for three days. He was, on his return, in a nervous and shaky condition, he became silent and would only speak when spoken to.” Summarized findings of MCI (William Muir), January 1921, PRO, CO 904/189.

<sup>122</sup> Evidence of seventh witness, MCI (Thomas Lawlor), 8 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A.

<sup>123</sup> Evidence of fourth witness, MCI (Thomas Lawlor), 8 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A.

<sup>124</sup> Evidence of second witness (Dr. Timothy Buckley), MCI (Thomas Lawlor), 8 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A; evidence of third witness (Captain G S Livingstone, RAMC), MCI (Thomas Lawlor), 8 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A. The sergeant in charge of the police patrol testified that Lawlor had been detained and searched, and was then told to go home. “I saw no blow struck,” he said: evidence of tenth witness (Sergeant Watson, RIC), MCI (Thomas Lawlor), 8 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A.

wounded, nine had been killed.<sup>125</sup> On 3 March 1921 Sir Hamar said that forty-nine prisoners who had been shot and killed while trying to escape since 1 January 1919.<sup>126</sup> “I am unable to give the number wounded,” said the chief secretary. By counting since the beginning of January 1919, Sir Hamar was clearly trying to make it seem as if these killings had been spread out over two years. However, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, the secretary of state for war, had answered the same question on 24 February saying that forty-seven prisoners had been shot dead since 1 July 1920.<sup>127</sup> Worthington-Evans also gave no figure for the number of wounded, but this was probably quite low. According to the *Guardian*’s weekly reports, twenty-seven prisoners and suspects were shot while trying to escape between 1 February and 30 June 1921: five were wounded, twenty-two were killed.<sup>128</sup>

On the night of 27 February 1921, for example, the police came to Joseph Taylor’s house in county Kerry looking for Joseph Junior. The young man fled when the police arrived, but he was caught and arrested. While returning to their barracks on foot, the police patrol saw three men run off the road up ahead. They pursued, leaving two constables to guard their prisoner. Taylor took the chance to run, but his guards opened fire, and the young man fell, shot in the right thigh. The police gave their prisoner first aid and went for medical help, but it was too late: Taylor’s femoral artery had been severed, and he bled to death.<sup>129</sup>

In his testimony to the court of inquiry, the leader of the patrol admitted that the dead man had not been handcuffed after he was arrested. A similar incident occurred a couple of months later. On the night of 30 April 1921, District Inspector Captain Henry Gallogly led a police patrol to search Davis Street, looking for a suspect named Thomas Walsh. Walsh was caught and arrested, and the district inspector handed him over to three constables, with orders to take the prisoner back to barracks.<sup>130</sup> Later, at the court of inquiry, the three constables were identified by letters instead of names—A, B, and C. When Walsh came out of the house, Constable C caught him by the sleeve. “As senior constable,” said A, “I looked for my handcuffs when the prisoner was handed over to me, but I found that in the hurry of getting ready to go on this duty I had got the wrong belt on & that there were no handcuffs in the handcuff case. I then turned round & asked the other two constables for handcuffs & when I turned to the prisoner again I saw him running away.”<sup>131</sup> “I heard Constable ‘A’ ask for handcuffs and was feeling for my own,” said C, “when the prisoner wrenched himself from my grasp & started to run up Davis Street.”<sup>132</sup> This keystone-coppery might have been amusing if the consequences

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<sup>125</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 135, col. 1410.

<sup>126</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 138, col. 2023.

<sup>127</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 135, cols. 1154-55.

<sup>128</sup> “A Week of Ireland,” *Manchester Guardian*, Saturdays, 5 February to 2 July 1921, various pages. Note that 2/11 is 18 per cent, while 5/27 is 18.5 per cent—a remarkably consistent survival rate.

<sup>129</sup> MCI (Joseph Taylor), 14 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/160.

<sup>130</sup> 3rd Evidence (District Inspector Captain Henry Gallogly), MCI (Thomas Walsh), PRO, WO 35/160.

<sup>131</sup> 4th Evidence (Constable A), MCI (Thomas Walsh), PRO, WO 35/160.

<sup>132</sup> 6th Evidence (Constable C), MCI (Thomas Walsh), PRO, WO 35/160.



had been less tragic. The constables called on Walsh to halt, and opened fire when he kept running. Walsh fell mortally wounded. He died in the street a few minutes later.<sup>133</sup>

These cases were not unique. On 24 March 1921 Louis D'Arcy was shot and killed by police in county Galway.<sup>134</sup> A court of inquiry was held, and there is a note on the cover of its proceedings: "Civilian. Attempted escape from custody of RIC. Another case of handcuffs." Inside the cover, General Macready wrote: "DAG [Deputy Adjutant General]. This would not have occurred if the prisoner had been handcuffed or properly secured."<sup>135</sup> Another court was held in county Kerry on 28 March 1921, after William McCarthy was shot dead while trying to escape. Macready wrote on this file that it was "quite inexcusable" that McCarthy had not been handcuffed.<sup>136</sup> Two days later, Deputy Inspector General Walsh issued the following circular to the RIC:

In several cases recently prisoners have been shot, others recaptured.

In future prisoners must be handcuffed—The police all carry handcuffs, and a very full explanation will be required if any prisoners escaping—do so not handcuffed.

Should any prisoner attempt to escape and be shot in the attempt the Senior Police officer present will be held responsible.<sup>137</sup>

This rather ingenuous warning had no discernible effect: according to the *Guardian's* weekly reports, more prisoners were shot after 30 March 1921 than before. In addition, some records make it clear that "shot while trying to escape" was a code phrase for "executed." Sometimes, the wounds on the dead bodies of escaping prisoners appear to belie the statements of their captors. In one case, Thomas Collins was arrested on 18 January 1921 at Kilkeel, county Galway.<sup>138</sup> "Collins was walking in front of us about 5 yards," testified his captor, Sergeant Keeney: "he looked round suddenly and made a spring for the wall."

The wall was quite low & he hopped over it. I ordered him to halt but he did not comply. I fired first with my rifle & ordered the men to fire. He fell at the first shot, a volley being discharged as he fell. I went to him & found him groaning & practically dead.<sup>139</sup>

The medical examiner testified that there were ten gunshot wounds on the corpse. There was an entrance wound over the dead man's right temple, "with large exit wound in the

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<sup>133</sup> Constable B was asked if he knew that Walsh was an "extreme" republican. "I had heard he was a Sinn Féiner," B replied, "but I had not heard that he had taken part in any murders": 5th Evidence (Constable B), MCI (Thomas Walsh), PRO, WO 35/160.

<sup>134</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>135</sup> General Sir Nevil Macready, note on MCI (Louis D'Arcy), 26 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/148.

<sup>136</sup> General Sir Nevil Macready, note on MCI (William McCarthy), 28 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/148.

<sup>137</sup> Handcuffs for Prisoners. RIC Circular C.562/1921, 30 March 1921, PRO, HO 184/125, f.235.

<sup>138</sup> Collins was a suspect in the Kilroe Wood ambush case: see Chapter Two.

<sup>139</sup> Testimony of Sergeant Keeney, MCI (Thomas Collins), 20 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/147A.

left side of the head, fractured bone and cerebral matter extruding.” There was another entrance wound in the right groin, “with large exit wound in right loin with protrusion of the viscera.”<sup>140</sup> A third bullet had entered under the breastbone, injuring the heart and fracturing the spinal column. None of these wounds had been inflicted from behind.<sup>141</sup>

In another case, on 23 December 1920, Auxiliaries in county Kerry found incriminating documents in the house of a 43 year-old married farmer, Andrew Moynihan. Moynihan was arrested and put in the back of a Crossley tender in charge of Section Leader C Sutton. Later that evening, the auxiliaries were driving back to Tralee when, according to Sutton, “the party halted and at the prisoner’s request I took him a bit up the road to relieve nature.” Moynihan “made a dash so as to escape,” and Sutton called on him twice to halt: “as he was trying to get over a wall & the night was dark I ran after him & fired two shots in rapid succession with my revolver. The deceased fell & as far as I know he was killed instantly.”<sup>142</sup> The body was taken back to Tralee military barracks and examined the following day. The medical officer found three wounds, one on the chest and two on the face. “The two on the face were caused by the same bullet,” he said.<sup>143</sup>

Sometimes, police witnesses were condemned out of their own mouths. Sergeant Keeney said he let a prisoner walk alone, five yards in front of him, without handcuffs. Section Leader Sutton said he stopped his truck on a county road, in the dark of night, and walked “up the road a bit” with a prisoner, to let him urinate or defecate in private. When Louis D’Arcy was killed, he was being driven from Oranmore to Galway, guarded by three auxiliaries, riding in a Crossley tender, with a Ford car in convoy. The Ford broke down along the way, said the auxiliaries, forcing the Crossley to stop. “We pulled in to the left side of the road,” said one of D’Arcy’s guards, “and immediately the deceased put his foot on the opposite seat and jumped on to the ground and started running for a gap in the wall. We called out ‘Halt’; he did not halt and we fired at him. He fell to the ground.”<sup>144</sup>

A fourth case involved another police convoy, consisting this time of two Crossley tenders. On 30 December 1920, William Slattery was arrested in Emly, county Tipperary. The police were driving him back to Tipperary town. Slattery was riding in the lead vehicle, along with Defence of Barracks Sergeant Horace Pearson. “Owing to the fact that that the speed of our car was greater than that of the second car,” said Pearson, “I found that at ROSEBOROUGH our car had outdistanced the second car.”

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<sup>140</sup> The loin is “the part of the body on both sides of the spine between the false ribs and the hip bones.” Della Thompson (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995, p. 802. Thus, the bullet in question went through Collins’ body from front to back.

<sup>141</sup> Testimony of RAMC officer, MCI (Thomas Collins), 20 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/147A.

<sup>142</sup> 2nd Witness (Section Leader C. Sutton, ADRIC), MCI (Andrew Moynihan), 24 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/155A. Sutton’s evidence was corroborated by one of his men: 1st Witness (Temporary Cadet J. H. Jennings), MCI (Andrew Moynihan), 24 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/155A

<sup>143</sup> 3rd Witness (Dr. A A Hargrave), MCI (Andrew Moynihan), 24 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/155A

<sup>144</sup> Evidence of Temporary Cadet Lowe, MCI (Louis D’Arcy), 26 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/148

When I noticed this I ordered the driver to slow down to a speed of under ten miles an hour. A few minutes later than this we were going very slowly round a corner when WILLIAM SLATTERY jumped out of the car & reached a wall bordering the road.<sup>145</sup>

The police called ‘halt.’ Slattery kept running. The police opened fire, and Slattery fell. Country roads were dangerous places for prisoners.

These four shootings may not have been executions—we should never impute malice when stupidity would suffice. But other cases leave little room for doubt. Michael Tolan, for example was arrested on 18 April 1921 in county Mayo. He was detained in Ballina barracks until 7 May 1921, when he was handed over to Auxiliaries of D Company ADRIC, for transportation to Galway. The Auxiliaries made it back safely that night—without their prisoner. When a member of Dáil Eireann inquired into Tolan’s disappearance after the Truce of 11 July, he was told: “I am informed by my Authorities that owing to the transfer & absence on sick leave of some of the members of the Auxiliary police force who are concerned in this case it has not been possible as yet to complete inquiries into the matter.” Later, the missing man’s comrades learned that a badly decomposed body had been found about a week after Tolan disappeared, in a bog near Ballina. The remains had been taken to nearby League and buried in a plot marked “unknown.” On 12 October, Tolan’s brigade adjutant wrote Michael Collins for permission to disinter and examine this corpse.<sup>146</sup>

City streets could be fatal for prisoners as well. In one infamous case, the officer commanding F Company ADRIC was put on trial for the murder of a Dublin man, James Murphy. Auxiliaries arrested Murphy and his friend Patrick Kennedy in Talbot Street at about 9:30 in the evening of Thursday, 9 February 1921. A couple of hours later, at 11:30 p.m. the two men were discovered in Clonturk Park, Drumcondra by constables of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. Kennedy had been shot and killed. He was taken to the police barrack, where his father identified his body. Murphy had been shot as well, but he was not dead yet. He was taken to the Mater hospital, where he died on Saturday morning.<sup>147</sup> Murphy spoke to his brother before the end. According to his brother’s affidavit, James Murphy and his friend had first been questioned at Dublin Castle, and then driven to Clonturk Park by their Auxiliary captors.

They halted the motor lorry near a field, where there was unused and derelict ground. They took my brother and Patrick Kennedy out of the motor lorry, brought them into the field, put old tin cans over their heads, put them against the wall, and fired a number of shots at them. I believe Patrick Kennedy was killed

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<sup>145</sup> Evidence of Defence of Barracks Sergeant Horace Pearson, MCI (William Slattery), 31 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/159A.

<sup>146</sup> Adjutant North Mayo to Adjutant General, 12 October 1921, Collins Papers, IMA, A/0749/XIV

<sup>147</sup> “Found Shot After Arrest,” *Manchester Guardian*, 11 February 1921, p. 9; “Dublin Murder Mystery,” *The Times*, 11 February 1921, p. 11; “Dublin Murder Affidavit,” *Manchester Guardian*, 13 February 1921, p. 6.

almost instantaneously. My brother was hit through the tin can in his mouth on the right cheek, on the left cheek, and through the breast. Having done this the soldiers left them and went away.<sup>148</sup>

Murphy's dying declaration was read out in the House of Commons on 21 February 1921, but the scandal had already broken in Dublin. A court of inquiry had been held, and F Company's commander, Captain W L King, had been placed under arrest, along with two of his cadets.<sup>149</sup> Apparently, their friends were at work already preparing their defence. In his diary, Mark Sturgis wrote on 13 February that "Andy tells me that Basil Thomson's man in the Castle, Capt Hardy, has tried to intimidate witnesses against the authors of the Drumcondra affair."<sup>150</sup> On 15 February, General Macready wrote in a letter to Sir John Anderson: "I am informed that every effort is being made to prove alibis and such like in the case of Major [*sic*] King, but I have every hope that we shall circumvent any efforts in that direction and see that justice is done."<sup>151</sup> Macready's hopes were disappointed. Two months later, when King and his accomplices were tried by court martial,<sup>152</sup> a Dublin Metropolitan Police officer's evidence was ruled inadmissible,<sup>153</sup> and Auxiliary witnesses testified that King was directing a raid in Leeson Street when Kennedy and Murphy were murdered in Drumcondra.<sup>154</sup> All three

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<sup>148</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 138, cols. 662-63.

<sup>149</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, pp. 124-26.

<sup>150</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 125. Basil Thomson was head of Special Branch at Scotland Yard. Captain Jocelyn Hardy was Thomson's liaison officer in Dublin Castle: Michael Collins described him as a "notorious murderer."

<sup>151</sup> Macready to Anderson, 15 February 1921, Anderson Papers, PRO, CO 904/188.

<sup>152</sup> The trial opened on 12 April 1921. "Auxiliaries Charged With Murder," *Manchester Guardian*, 13 April 1921, p. 7; "Captain Accused of Murder," *Daily News*, 13 April 1921, p. 3. The reports in these two papers correspond so closely that they were probably based on the same document.

<sup>153</sup> "A D.M.P. witness who described the finding of the bodies of Kennedy and Murphy shortly after eleven o'clock on the night of the crime said Murphy, who was not then dead, made a statement to him, but after a legal argument the Court ruled that this statement was not admissible as evidence." "Killing of Prisoners at Dublin," *Manchester Guardian*, 14 April 1921, p. 7; "Army Captain on Trial," *Daily News*, 14 April 1921, p. 1.

It is likely that the defence argued successfully that any statement made by James Murphy to this police witness was hearsay rather than a dying declaration. "In a trial for murder or manslaughter a declaration by the person killed as to the cause of his death, or as to any of the circumstances of the transaction which resulted in his death, is admissible as evidence. But this exception is very strictly construed. It must be proved that the declarant, at the time of making the declaration, was in actual danger of death, and had given up all hope of recovery." "Evidence," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 11th ed., vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 17.

<sup>154</sup> These witnesses were an F Company platoon commander and the company intelligence officer. The platoon commander had signed the report on the Leeson Street raid, and admitted under cross-examination that by signing this report he was indicating that he was the officer in charge, rather than his company commander, Captain King. The intelligence officer admitted that his trial testimony contradicted the testimony that he had given at the court of inquiry back in February. "Auxiliaries' Defence in Murder Trial," *Manchester Guardian*, 15 April 1921, p. 9; "Drumcondra Murders," *Daily News*, 15 April 1921, p. 5; "End of Dublin Murder Court-Martial," *Manchester Guardian*, 16 April 1921, p. 10; "Acquitted of Murder," *Daily News*, 16 April 1921, p. 3.

Auxiliaries had been acquitted of the murder of James Murphy by 15 April.<sup>155</sup> The Kennedy case was never tried.

Other stories were just as horrific as Murphy's dying declaration. James and Patrick Ryan of Knockfune, county Tipperary were both Volunteers, though neither was a full-time guerrilla. James was limping from a bullet wound: in March 1921 police and soldiers had caught him cutting a road near Tour, chased him, and shot him.<sup>156</sup> At about one o'clock in the morning, on the night of 7 June 1921, the Ryan family was awakened by knocking at the door of their house, and by shouting outside. Patrick answered the door. James and a servant boy were still in bed when two masked men entered their room and told them to get up. "Paddy was brought out to the yard," said James.

I heard voices saying put your face to the wall or something like it. I heard several shots. I cannot say how many. Two or three more came in and shouted. All males to get out. I told my mother to ask them for mercy. The house was on fire and we all went outside. About 5 men were outside shouting when they seen me walking down the yard they called me come on here lame fellow what made you lame. I said I was wounded in Tour by the military and am lame since. They were shouting [illegible] again when you were not shot in Tour you will be shot now. Two shots were then fired at me but missed me. I turned round & ran & several shots were fired at me. One hit me in the back. I continued to run and after a bit fell.<sup>157</sup>

Patrick was killed. James was wounded but survived. Their home was burned. Their mother, Ellen Ryan, and her daughter Margaret both testified that they saw one man in a black uniform with a peaked cap, a second man in khaki, and a third man in dark plain clothes with a mask.<sup>158</sup> Often, women like Ellen and Margaret Ryan were the only witnesses left, after their male family members had been killed. James Coleman of Cork, for example, had been murdered in front of his wife seven months before, on the night of 18 November 1920. Knocking and bell ringing awakened Mrs Coleman at about three o'clock. When she asked who it was, she was told, "Military, open quickly please, open quickly please." Mr Coleman got dressed, went down to the door, and opened it. Someone asked if he was Coleman. Yes, he said. "There was then a loud report of shots as if at the door," his widow testified later.

During this time I was on my way down the stairs. When I arrived at the foot of the stairs I had a clear view of the door. The candle was still alight in the hall. There was no other light. I saw a very tall man wearing a large grey frieze coat and a cap similar to a policeman's. He fired two shots at my husband as he was

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<sup>155</sup> Cadet Welsh was acquitted on 13 April 1921, having been identified by just one witness.

<sup>156</sup> Evidence of Sergeant Patrick Brown, RIC, MCI (Patrick Ryan), 9 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/157B.

<sup>157</sup> Evidence of James Ryan, MCI (Patrick Ryan), 9 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/157B.

<sup>158</sup> Evidence of Ellen Ryan, MCI (Patrick Ryan), 9 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/157B; evidence of Margaret Ryan, MCI (Patrick Ryan), 9 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/157B.

falling to the ground. I didn't see his face as he had his cap pulled down and his coat collar turned up. He then left banging the door behind him leaving my husband in a pool of blood.<sup>159</sup>

Four months later, fifteen year-old Mary Horan of Srah, county Mayo watched as her father Tom Horan was executed right in front of her. On 7 March 1921 she was at home, sitting in the kitchen with her father, when three men came in, dressed in police uniforms. According to Mary, they said "good day, sir" three times. Tom Horan said "good day" twice, in reply. Then, Mary said, "I heard [*sic*] a bang, and he fell into the fire." One of the men had shot her father in the back of the head with a revolver.<sup>160</sup>

Three months after that, on the night of 12 June 1921, in Belfast, Alice Kerr was present when an Ulster Special Constabulary death squad led by an Auxiliary came to kill her married brother William. When Alice answered the fatal knock at the door that night, she met a tall man, dressed in a temporary cadet's uniform, and speaking with an English accent, along with two other men. They pushed past her and went upstairs, then came back down, dragging William Kerr along with them. "It was then I caught hold of the tall man," she said later, "and asked him 'For God's sake to take me in my brother's place.'"

He just laughed at me and all four went out of the back door. I still held on to the tall man and said 'If anything happens to my brother I can identify you.' He threw me off and said I should never see my brother again.<sup>161</sup>

Alice followed them out into the street, where a Crossley tender was waiting. A man with a handkerchief over his face pointed a revolver at Alice Kerr, telling her in a Belfast accent that if she did not go back he would put a bullet in her.<sup>162</sup> William Kerr was put into the back of the tender, taken away, and killed. Later that morning, Alice Kerr said she saw the death squad leader driving out of the local police barrack. "I threw up my hand & shouted there he is to the woman who was with me," she testified. "The man saw me & turned up the collar of his coat & turned away his head."<sup>163</sup>

Police death squads across Ireland had similar *modi operandi*. They struck first in the city of Cork, one of the two focuses of the war's ellipse, in the spring of 1920. Their first victim was the city's lord mayor, Tomas MacCurtain. Knocking at their door woke

<sup>159</sup> Evidence of Mrs M M Coleman, MCI (James Coleman), 19 & 22 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/147A; "Three Men Shot Dead," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 November 1920, p. 9; "Murder Orgy in Cork," *Daily News*, 19 November 1920, p. 3; Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>160</sup> Evidence of Mary Horan, MCI (Tom Horan), 9 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/152; evidence of Dr Edward Murphy, MCI (Tom Horan), 9 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/152.

<sup>161</sup> Evidence of 3rd Witness (Miss Alice Kerr), MCI (William Kerr), 13 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A. A number of Auxiliaries were seconded to the USC to serve as platoon commanders.

<sup>162</sup> William Kerr's wife was also present and corroborated her sister-in-law's evidence on events that night: evidence of 2nd Witness (Mrs William Kerr), MCI (William Kerr), 13 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A.

<sup>163</sup> Evidence of 3rd Witness (Miss Alice Kerr), MCI (William Kerr), 13 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A. Another Belfast man, Malachy Halfpenny, was murdered on the same night, possibly by the same death squad: see MCI (Malachy Halfpenny), 13 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/151A.

the MacCurtain household at about one o'clock in the morning on 20 March. Armed men with blackened faces forced a way in past Mrs. MacCurtain, and went upstairs to the Lord Mayor's bedroom door. "Come out, Curtain," they said. "Give me time to dress," he said. "I am not ready." When Mr. MacCurtain opened his door, they shot him twice, wounding him fatally. "Murder," a woman screamed as the gang departed. "Murder, the police are murdering us all!"<sup>164</sup>

Copycat killings followed the next week, in Thurles, county Tipperary. An urban councillor, Michael McCarthy, had been pressing for an inquiry into the January police riot. At about one a.m. on the night of 27 March, there was a knock at the door of the McCarthy house. When Michael's brother James opened the door, a pair of tall men in black overcoats asked him his name, shot him, and left.<sup>165</sup> The next night, a death squad came banging on Thomas Dwyer's door in Ragg, three miles from Thurles. When the door was opened, they pushed inside, went up to Dwyer's room, and shot him down. "Give him another," one of the gunmen said, as Dwyer lay wounded.<sup>166</sup>

In some cases, death squad victims were implicated in the shooting of police. Five men were shot in Cork on the night of 18 November, including James Coleman. The remaining four—Stephen Coleman (no relation), Charles O'Brien, Eugene O'Connell, and Patrick Hanley—were suspected of shooting and killing RIC Sergeant James O'Donoghue the previous evening. O'Connell and Hanley were killed along with James Coleman. O'Brien and Stephen Coleman were wounded but survived. According to Peter Hart, Charles O'Brien had indeed been one of the three men who shot Sergeant O'Donoghue.<sup>167</sup> Three nights after the Cork city shootings, James O'Neill and Michael Blake's brother were shot and killed on the way to Limerick, after O'Neill and Blake had been acquitted of the murder of Constable Walter Oakley.<sup>168</sup> Judge Lynch had set aside this verdict, it seems. Extra-judicial executions continued in the New Year. On 13 May 1921, for example, John McGee of Greenore, county Louth was taken from his bed and shot dead in a field near his home. According to the county inspector's report, McGee "had made a statement to police which did not agree with that of another sinn feinir who was suspected of having taken part in an ambush of police locally."<sup>169</sup>

Other men, like Thomas Dwyer and James McCarthy, were killed simply for being republicans, or for being part of republican families. Municipal politicians like Lord Mayor MacCurtain became choice targets for police death squads. A year after

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<sup>164</sup> Testimony of Susanna Walsh, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 634. Cf. Inquest on Thomas MacCurtain, PRO, CO 904/47B.

<sup>165</sup> "The Outrage at Thurles," *Manchester Guardian*, 29 March 1920, p. 9; "Baker Shot Dead at Thurles," *The Times*, 29 March 1920, p. 16; "'Worthless Verdict,'" *Manchester Guardian*, 14 April 1920, p. 9.

<sup>166</sup> "Another Murder at Thurles," *Manchester Guardian*, 30 March 1920, p. 9; "Another Tipperary Murder," *The Times*, 30 March 1920, p. 14; "Inquest Verdict of Murder Against 'Police Unknown,'" *Manchester Guardian*, 16 April 1920, p. 9.

<sup>167</sup> "Three Men Shot Dead," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 November 1920, p. 9; "Murder Orgy in Cork," *Daily News*, 19 November 1920, p. 3; Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>168</sup> See Introduction.

<sup>169</sup> RIC Reports, CI Louth, May 1921, PRO, CO 904/115; "Another Man Taken From Bed and Murdered," *Manchester Guardian*, 14 May 1920, p. 11.

MacCurtain was killed, on the night of 6/7 March 1921, the mayor of Limerick, George Clancy, was likewise assassinated in his home, though the Limerick death squad went one better than their counterparts in Cork, by killing a former mayor, Michael O'Callaghan, as well.<sup>170</sup> Alderman Thomas Halpin had earlier been taken from his home in Drogheda, county Louth and killed, along with another man, on the night of 8 February 1921.<sup>171</sup> We have already read about the murder of an urban councillor, Michael Walsh, in Galway on 19 October 1920,<sup>172</sup> and a district councillor, John Geoghegan at Moycullen on 20 February 1921.<sup>173</sup> Other marked men had narrow escapes. Death squads came for two republican city councillors in Belfast on the night of 25/26 September 1920, but they were sleeping elsewhere that night.<sup>174</sup> Two months later, before five in the morning on 27 November, a death squad came for Alderman Eamon Coughlan in Cork, but he too was not at home.<sup>175</sup>

In some cases, retaliation came quickly, tit for tat. A police constable, Joseph Murtagh, was killed in Cork on the evening of 19 March 1920, while returning from the funeral of another constable, Charles Healy, who had been killed in Tipperary.<sup>176</sup> This likely triggered the assassination of Lord Mayor MacCurtain later that night. A year later, Sergeant James Maguire was killed in county Limerick on 6 March 1921.<sup>177</sup> The Limerick city curfew murders followed. Three constables were wounded when their truck was ambushed on the road from Abbeyfeale to Limerick on 19 September 1920.

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<sup>170</sup> A third man, Volunteer Joseph O'Donoghue, was killed as well. "Mayor & Ex-Mayor Shot in their Homes," *Manchester Guardian*, 8 March 1921, p. 9; "Night of Murder," *The Times*, 8 March 1921, p. 12; Mrs. Clancy, Mrs. O'Callaghan, et al., "The Limerick City Curfew Murders of March 7th 1921," in *Limerick's Fighting Story* (Tralee: the Kerryman, 1949), pp. 115-39; MCI (George Clancy, Michael O'Callaghan, and Joseph O'Donoghue), PRO, WO 35/147A; on this inquiry, see "Inquiry into Limerick Murders," *Manchester Guardian*, 9 March 1921, p. 9; "Reopening a Chapter of Violence," *Manchester Guardian*, 11 March 1921, p. 9; "Inquiry into Murders at Limerick," *Manchester Guardian*, 12 March 1921, p. 6.

Forty years later, Richard Bennett discovered that the three men had been killed by a British intelligence agent, assisted by an Auxiliary from G Company, which was headquartered at Killaloe, county Clare. The shooter, George Nathan, had become in 1918 the only Jewish officer in the Brigade of Guards. Nathan went on to command a British company of the International Brigades in Spain, where his unit included some former IRA guerrillas. He was killed in action in July 1937. Richard Bennett, "Portrait of a Killer," *New Statesman*, 24 March 1961, pp. 471-72.

<sup>171</sup> "Men Taken Out of Bed and Shot," *Manchester Guardian*, 10 February 1921, p. 7; "More Irish Murders," *The Times*, 10 February 1921, p. 11; MCI (Thomas Halpin), 9 February 1921, PRO, WO 35/151A; MCI (James Moran), 10 February 1921, PRO WO 35/155A; "Military Inquiry in Drogheda," (letter to the editor by Philip Monahan, mayor of Drogheda), *Manchester Guardian*, 17 March 1921, p. 8.

<sup>172</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>173</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>174</sup> "Shots at Police in Belfast Streets," *Daily Telegraph*, 27 September 1920, p. 11; "Police Reprisals in Belfast," *Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1920, p. 7; "The Belfast Murders," *The Times*, 28 September 1920, p. 10.

<sup>175</sup> Affidavit of Mrs Eamon Coughlan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 741. The Lord Mayor of Cork testified that Alderman Coughlan "had proposed—proposed or seconded a resolution of the corporation refusing to submit our accounts to audit by the English Local Government Board." Testimony of Donal O'Callaghan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 742.

<sup>176</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>177</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 205.



Constable James Donohoe died of his wounds on 20 September 1920.<sup>178</sup> That evening, two young men from Abbeyfeale, Patrick Harnett and Jeremiah Healy, were shot and killed.<sup>179</sup> Five days later, on the evening of 25 September 1920, Constable Thomas Leonard was walking his beat in Belfast when he was shot and killed.<sup>180</sup> Just a couple of hours later, a police death squad executed three men: John McFadden, Thomas Gaynor, and Samuel Trodden. Gaynor and Trodden were both Sinn Feiners, but according to reports, McFadden took no part in politics.<sup>181</sup>

In other cases, the police waited a long time before settling accounts. In county Galway's east riding, Thomas Egan was killed on the night of 24 October 1920, for being an accomplice to the murder of Frank Shawe-Taylor in March of that year.<sup>182</sup> Patrick Cloonan was killed in the west riding on 6 April 1921, for his part in an ambush eleven months earlier.<sup>183</sup> And of course, Constable Oakley had been dead for five months before his comrades avenged him by shooting James O'Neill and Michael Blake on the way to Limerick in November 1920. Police vengeance was neither swift nor sure sometimes, but it was often deadly.

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<sup>178</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 121-22. Another constable, John Mahony, had been shot in the face. He died some time later.

<sup>179</sup> "Four More Deaths," *Daily News*, 22 September 1920, p. 3. According to the report in the *Manchester Guardian*, the two men were shot and killed when they ran away from a patrol: "Police 'Reprisals,'" *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1920, p. 9. Later, a report in the weekly *Observer* said that, "two young men, unarmed, were shot dead in Abbeyfeale by a 'Black and Tan.' According to the evidence of a head constable, this man acted on his own motive from a suspicion, pursuing the boys who had made no hostile movement." "The Week's Reprisals," *The Observer*, 26 September 1920, p. 9.

It seems this evidence came from a military court of inquiry, the first of its kind in Abbeyfeale district, described in J D H. "Black-and-Tans in West Limerick," in *Limerick's Fighting Story 1916-21* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1949), pp. 164-67. J D H says the two young men were pursued and shot by a Black and Tan named Huckerby, who gave the following testimony: "I was standing at the barrack gate and said 'good evening' to two young men who were passing. They took no notice and as they looked suspicious I followed them. The men kept looking back and then broke into a run. I dashed after them and they ran through a gap in the hedge to the right of the road. I called on them to halt and as they would not do so I shot them." (pp. 165-66)

Constable Huckerby is described elsewhere in *Limerick's Fighting Story* as a "fiend in human shape." According to this author, the newly formed West Limerick flying column was trying to kill Huckerby when it ambushed the police outside Abbeyfeale on 19 September 1920: "Volunteer," "The IRA Campaign in West Limerick," in *Limerick's Fighting Story*, p. 149.

<sup>180</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 126-27.

<sup>181</sup> "Shots at Police in Belfast Streets," *Daily Telegraph*, 27 September 1920, p. 11; "Police Reprisals in Belfast," *Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1920, p. 7; "The Belfast Murders," *The Times*, 28 September 1920, p. 10.

<sup>182</sup> RIC Reports, CI Galway East, October 1920. PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>183</sup> See Chapter Two.

## TABLES

Table 6.1. *Large-scale reprisals on the persons and property of republicans in the province of Connaught, July 1920 to December 1920.*

| <u>Date</u>  | <u>Location</u>      | <u>County</u> | <u>Damage and Destruction</u> |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 23 July      | Caltra               | Galway ER     | 6 buildings                   |
| 2 September  | Ballaghadereen       | Roscommon     | 10 buildings                  |
| 30 September | Tubbercurry          | Sligo         | 17 buildings                  |
| 8 October    | Oranmore District    | Galway WR     | 4 persons, 2 buildings        |
| 14 October   | Oranmore District    | Galway WR     | 7 persons                     |
| 27 October   | Moneygolden          | Sligo         | 10 buildings                  |
| 28 October   | Ballinrobe District  | Mayo          | 6 buildings, 3 people         |
| 3 November   | Ballymote            | Sligo         | 15 buildings                  |
| 25 November  | Manorhamilton Dist   | Leitrim       | 7 buildings                   |
| 26 November  | Strokestown District | Roscommon     | 11 buildings                  |
| 29 November  | Strokestown District | Roscommon     | 8 buildings robbed            |

Table 6.2. *Reports of attacks on the persons and property of republicans in the province of Connaught, July 1920 to December 1920.*

|                  | <b>Galway<br/>E Riding</b> | <b>Galway<br/>W Riding</b> | <b>Leitrim</b> | <b>Mayo</b> | <b>Roscommon</b> | <b>Sligo</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>July</b>      |                            |                            |                |             |                  |              |              |
| Property         | 5                          | --                         | --             | --          | --               | --           | 5            |
| Persons          | 1                          | --                         | --             | --          | --               | --           | 1            |
| <b>August</b>    |                            |                            |                |             |                  |              |              |
| Property         | --                         | --                         | --             | --          | --               | --           | --           |
| Persons          | --                         | --                         | --             | --          | 1                | --           | 1            |
| <b>September</b> |                            |                            |                |             |                  |              |              |
| Property         | --                         | 22                         | 1              | --          | 12               | 20           | 55           |
| Persons          | 1                          | 1                          | --             | --          | --               | --           | 2            |
| <b>October</b>   |                            |                            |                |             |                  |              |              |
| Property         | 4                          | 12                         | 2              | 7           | 5                | 11           | 41           |
| Persons          | 1                          | 13                         | --             | 3           | 5                | --           | 22           |
| <b>November</b>  |                            |                            |                |             |                  |              |              |
| Property         | --                         | 9                          | 18             | 2           | 26               | 19           | 74           |
| Persons          | --                         | 4                          | 1              | --          | 1                | --           | 6            |
| <b>December</b>  |                            |                            |                |             |                  |              |              |
| Property         | 1                          | 6                          | 3              | 1           | 3                | 1            | 15           |
| Persons          | --                         | --                         | 2              | --          | 2                | --           | 4            |
| <b>Total</b>     |                            |                            |                |             |                  |              |              |
| Property         | 10                         | 49                         | 24             | 10          | 46               | 51           | 190          |
| Persons          | 3                          | 18                         | 3              | 3           | 9                | --           | 36           |

(Source: Register of Crime, PRO, CO 904/45.)

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DEVIL'S ISLAND Explaining Police Reprisals

In the tumult of civil discord, the laws of society lose their force, and their place is seldom supplied by those of humanity. The ardour of contention, the pride of victory, the despair of success, the memory of past injuries, and the fear of future dangers, all contribute to inflame the mind, and silence the voice of pity.

EDWARD GIBBON<sup>1</sup>

Reprisals are easier to describe than explain, but once again, if we study contemporary news reports and official documents, their causes become clear. During the First Irish War, and especially in the late summer and autumn of 1920, lynch law prevailed in many parts of Ireland. Frustrated by their inability to defeat their enemies in battle, and embittered by their inability to convict them in court; terrorized by the guerrillas, and shunned by the people; enraged by the deaths of their comrades, and inflamed by drink; incited by their officers, and encouraged by faint official censure, the police took to reprisals as a form of rough justice. Police mobs destroyed the homes and shops of republicans, and police death squads executed known and suspected insurgents. These crimes have been blamed on the RIC's British recruits, but evidence indicates that Peelers were just as likely to take reprisals as Black and Tans. When British police and auxiliaries took reprisals, they were following the bad example set by their Irish comrades.

#### A. Vicious Peelers

Who took reprisals, and why? After the sack of Balbriggan, reprisals were blamed on the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. However, this blame came from different quarters, and was laid for different reasons. Irish republicans understood the conflict of 1920-21 as an external war between the British Empire and the Irish Republic, rather than a civil war within the United Kingdom. In the minds of republicans, the war was a battle between Ireland and England, us and them, good and evil. But England's Irish collaborators—the “black-coated rascals” of the Royal Irish Constabulary—did not fit into this republican dichotomy.<sup>2</sup> Inconceivably, Peelers were both ‘we’ and ‘they’—

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. I (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> “They are Irishmen, with Irish blood in their veins. They have forsworn the allegiance they owe to their own land, they sworn allegiance to the enemy of their country, they have degraded their manhood, and, like lost souls who have sold themselves to the devil, they are eager to do the devil's work in Ireland.”

Irishmen who fought on the side of England. Though described as black, their uniforms were bottle green, and their badge was a harp and crown.

Black and Tans were hybrids in appearance, but Peelers were hybrids in substance, and it seems that Irish separatists were not entirely happy to be fighting their half-brothers. The rules of engagement were unclear. The guerrillas' orders reflected this uncertainty: "No peelers to be shot without battalion officer present or some other men," they say. "All peelers acting as spies to be shot, and also all vicious peelers and any that attempt to fight."<sup>3</sup> The coming of the Black and Tans made things much simpler, at least in republican minds. By blaming reprisals on its British recruits and auxiliaries, republicans could bypass the RIC's inconvenient liminality, push its Irish members to the margins of discourse, and think of the conflict in properly binary terms. This desire to simplify the war can be seen in the work of republican propagandist Erskine Childers:

The main instrument of the executive is—or rather used to be—the Royal Irish Constabulary, a centralised armed force, with a military training, under the direct control of the Castle. This home-bred Irish force, which in quieter times used to perform ordinary civil duties with fair efficiency (though it never bore any resemblance to the locally controlled English civil police), has been ruined by wanton and cruel misuse, and should in common humanity be reorganised, if it is kept at all, as the Royal English Constabulary. Mercifully, it is being recruited mainly from Englishmen now; for, of all expedients for subduing a recalcitrant nation, that of arming it against itself is the most cruel. You set up a fratricidal vendetta in which each side is compelled to regard the other as traitors, and which only becomes clean and chivalrous when conditions permit of open war.<sup>4</sup>

The same urge to marginalize the 'old RIC' can be discerned in the testimony of Mary MacSwiney to the American Commission. On 8 December 1920, MacSwiney denied that IRA gunmen had shot Sergeant James O'Donoghue in Cork on 17 November. "I know that that was murder," she said, "and was not done by any of our people."

He was an inoffensive old man and within a few months of his pension time. He had not committed a single act of aggression against our people. He was not acting as a spy. He was doing no harm to anybody, and not a single Irish Volunteer would have shot him. And this man was to have his pension and retire from the force in a very short time. He had not taken part in the work of the Black-and-Tans. And he was found shot. The Black-and-Tans have shot several

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Speech of TD Patrick Maloney, public session of Dail Eireann, 10 April 1919, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0385/1

<sup>3</sup> Document produced at the court-martial of William O'Mara, 21 September 1920; quoted in "Balbriggan Outbreak," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 September 1920, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Erskine Childers, *Military Rule in Ireland* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1920), p. 39. This passage was originally published as part of an article in the *Daily News* on 20 May 1920.

men like that who would not act as spies, in the hope of throwing further odium on Sinn Fein, as they call it.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, as we know, three Volunteers killed O'Donoghue: one of the sergeant's killers only just escaped execution by a police death squad later that night.<sup>6</sup> MacSwiney might have known this, and lied; or she might have been misinformed. Either way, her desire to represent the First Irish War as a conflict between "our people" and the British is clear.

British 'progressives' (Labourites, Asquithian Liberals, and Irish Parliamentary Party remnants) also publicized reprisals by the British police forces, but for different reasons. Like Irish separatists, British progressives thought in terms of 'us' and 'them.' But in their case, 'we' were the peaceful and parliamentary British, rulers of an empire both civilised and civilising, while 'they' were the militaristic Prussian and the barbarous Turk. Progressives were dismayed by the violence of Irish republican guerrillas, but they were doubly dismayed by the violence of British police and Auxiliaries, which reminded them of German atrocities in Belgium, or Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria and Armenia—or for that matter, the crimes of the republican 'murder club' in Ireland (see Figure 1). How could British fighters behave like bashibazouks? How could 'we' be like 'them'? In a speech on 20 October 1920 the veteran Irish nationalist MP T P O'Connor summed up the progressive position:

Shall we be faithful to the almost unbroken tradition of this great free and constitutional country that law shall be supreme and the protection of the law shall follow even those charged with the most heinous crime, or shall we adopt the opposite principle of Prussianism, that the innocent must suffer for the guilty? It is British justice or Prussian frightfulness: that is the issue.

"That is my complaint," he concluded, "that you have the Prussian or the Bolshevik system in Ireland and not the English system."<sup>7</sup>

In the minds of British progressives, the system was to blame, not the men. Conservative and Unionist Junkers were experimenting with Prussian frightfulness in Ireland. These un-British policies had produced un-British atrocities. In its report, the Labour Commission to Ireland warned:

Things are being done in the name of Britain which must make her name stink in the nostrils of the whole world. The honour of our people has been gravely compromised. Not only is there a reign of terror in Ireland which should bring a blush of shame to the cheek of every British citizen, but a nation is being held in subjection by an empire which has proudly boasted that it is the friend of small nations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Testimony of Mary MacSwiney, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 262.

<sup>6</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, pp. 6-8

<sup>7</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 133, cols 1015-16, 1019.

<sup>8</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 56.

However, progressives did not condemn the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. These men were veterans, even heroes of the Great War. “I do not believe,” wrote progressive journalist Hugh Martin, “that the British ‘Tommy,’ when he wears ‘Black and Tan’ in Ireland, becomes a ‘hired bravo’ or delights in bullying peaceable men and women.”<sup>9</sup> By rights, the blame should fall on the pashas of Whitehall. Pustules of brutality like the sack of Balbriggan were merely symptoms of a poxy government policy. “Yes,” wrote Robert Lynd, correspondent for the *Daily News*, in his report on the Sack: “the White Terror is in full swing, and it is not ignorant Black and Tans, but British Cabinet Ministers and their own advisers that are responsible for it.”

Is it not time that Liberal leaders and the Christian Churches stood forth boldly and denounced this ‘negation of God elevated into a system of government?’ A Gladstone would not have been silent. Nor a Bright. Nor a Fox.<sup>10</sup>

For their different reasons, then, both Irish republicans and progressive Britons agreed that reprisals were the work of British police recruits and auxiliaries. However, the evidence makes it clear that the Black and Tans have borne more than their share of the blame for police reprisals. “As a matter of fact,” said the *Guardian*’s correspondent, after visiting Gormanstown depot, “like most popular judgments, the condemnation of the English recruits of the R.I.C., which the Black-and-Tans are, has been much too thorough-going, and they are not responsible for many of the crimes frequently brought against them. They have certainly taken part in a number of reprisals, but an equal number of the participants were Irish members of the R.I.C.”<sup>11</sup> In some cases, the numbers were more than equal. There were no Black and Tans involved in the Tuam police riot of 20 July 1920, and there were no living Black and Tans in Galway when the police rioted on 8 September 1920: Constable Krumm had been the lone Black and Tan at Eglinton Street barracks, and he was dead before the riot began.<sup>12</sup> No Black and Tans took part in the Tubbercurry police riot of 30 September 1920.<sup>13</sup> “Tullamore may stand as a type of reprisal by the old R.I.C.,” says the *Guardian*’s report on the riot of 1 November 1920.<sup>14</sup>

In other cases, Peelers put the finger on republicans, and led the Black and Tans to their victims. The sack of Balbriggan was “organised and countenanced” by the Black and Tans’ Irish officers, and led by their non-commissioned officers—Irishmen all.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Lynd, “In Ruined Balbriggan. Residents Compare Black & Tan Havoc to Invasion of Belgium. British Cabinet Responsibility,” *Daily News*, 1 October 1920, p. 3. The ‘negation of God’ phrase was a (mis)quote of Gladstone’s famous verdict on the Bourbon regime in the Kingdom of Naples.

<sup>11</sup> “Black-and-Tans’ Camp Visited,” *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1920, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 415; “The Galway Outbreak,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly Edition*, 17 September 1920, p. 238.

<sup>13</sup> “Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 7 October 1920, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> “Police Rioting in Tullamore,” *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1920, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 46; “Balbriggan Raid. Punishment of N.C.O.s Who Took Part In It,” *Daily News*, 10 November 1920, p. 3.

Writing decades later, the commandant's adjutant at Gormanstown made it clear that the Black and Tans did not go to Balbriggan on their own initiative that night:

As Adjutant I sent a couple of tenders of men into the town to help the local police. Two civilians were killed and a number of houses burned. It was stated in newspapers and books that the Gormanstown police got out of hand and broke out of Barracks. That is certainly not true. I told off the party and saw them loaded in the lorries or tenders and start off. No men broke out of Barracks.<sup>16</sup>

Not all Irish police were willing to do this kind of work, of course. Two former constables told the American Commission how they saved a Sinn Féiner from death in Clogheen, county Tipperary. Clogheen was a small station, with a sergeant, five Irish constables, and three British constables. Not long before he resigned, Daniel Galvin was part of a night patrol consisting of three Peelers and a pair of Black and Tans by the name of Gillette and Richards. Later, in front of the commission, Galvin testified that Richards wanted to be shown to the house of a prominent local republican, Maurice Walsh. "We wanted to know what he wanted with Walsh," said Galvin: "he said he was going to shoot him."

And we refused to show him where Walsh lived. And he turned around to us and demanded that we do our duty and show him the place. And we reminded him that he was not in the army now; that he was on a police force. And he said that when he left the training depot he was told that he would not be subjected to any discipline whatever if he shot any Sinn Féiners. He went about ten yards down the road and turned and said he would shoot me if I didn't show him where Walsh lived. Then we turned back to the barracks. We had not gone far when Richards fired at us. When I got back to the barracks with the men, I reported him to the sergeant, and he said he had committed a felony by threatening the lives of three men.

Luckily for Maurice Walsh, the Clogheen district was a quiet place, and Galvin and his fellow Irishmen were unwilling to cooperate with Richards that night. If this patrol had gone out later in the year—if police had been boycotted or shot in Clogheen—if Galvin had been a 'vicious peeler,' embittered against republicans like many of his comrades—then Walsh might have been killed as a reprisal.

Many 'vicious peelers' did more than just identify potential victims for death squads. After the burning of Tubbercurry creamery, the manager's wife told reporters that her attackers had Irish accents. On the night of 24 October 1920, near Thurles, county Tipperary, a police death squad executed two "young men members of the Irish Republican Army," Michael Ryan and William Gleeson. Ryan, the registrar of the local

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<sup>16</sup> V H Scott to J R W Goulden, 21 February 1967, TCD, Goulden Papers 7382A/68.

republican court, was in bed with pneumonia when he was killed.<sup>17</sup> According to the *Daily News*, the killers “told Miss Margaret Ryan, a girl of 18 whose word cannot seriously be doubted: ‘We are secret service men over from England.’ They spoke, however, with the usual Irish accent.”<sup>18</sup> The police who set fire to the co-operative creamery in Abbeydorney, county Kerry on 18 November 1920 were “chiefly men in R.I.C. uniform, and the rest were ‘Black and Tans’ of the usual type—men in khaki with police caps.”<sup>19</sup> The men who killed John McGowan in a house near Boyle, county Roscommon on 15 December 1920 spoke like Irishmen. About the same time, an Irish ex-soldier was telling the Labour Commission that he had been kicked and beaten by police who accused him of training the guerrillas to use machine-guns. “These men were not English,” he said; “they all spoke with an Irish accent, and one who spoke with a strong brogue served me worst.”<sup>20</sup>

In one extraordinary case, both Irish and English police threatened a journalist in Tralee, during the blockade in early November 1920. Their victim in this case was a married man, Thomas Quirke. According to Mrs. Quirke, a group of eight police came to their house on 6 November. Some of the men were in RIC uniform, and some of them were in khaki. When they were told that Mr. Quirke was not at home, they replied that they had “a bullet for him for sending lies about the police,” then went away. Thomas was home when the police came back on 9 November. The second group apologized for the first and its threats, but insisted that Quirke retract one of his reports that police with fixed bayonets were keeping the Tralee poor away from the bakery. Quirke agreed, under protest, hoping to spare himself and his family further trouble. The following day, however, two more police came to the Quirke house. One of the pair was Irish. His partner was a Black and Tan. They were upset with Thomas Quirke over a different story, which said that police in North Kerry had shot pigs and fowl.

“It is all lies,” the Peeler said. “We don’t kill pigs or any animals. We don’t kill swine, but we shoot Kerry swine, and we shall shoot more. The Sinn Feiners have declared war on us, and we are up against them.”

Mrs. Quirke asked him if he was an Irishman and a Catholic, speaking to a woman that way. “He said he was, but had no conscience and would not think it necessary to call a priest if he shot a man.” My husband is just earning a living, said Mrs. Quirke. He gets his information from all sources. “We know where he gets his information from,” said the Peeler. “He gets it from the Sinn Feiners. Didn’t he get a warning from us? Why doesn’t he come to us for his information? Why doesn’t he get an honest living as we are doing?” The Black and Tan spoke up at this point. “He is tarnishing our reputation,” he said. “He is educating the country into being Sinn Feiners

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<sup>17</sup> “The Murders at Thurles,” *Manchester Guardian*, 28 October 1920, p. 7; “Crimes in Cold Blood,” *Daily News*, 28 October 1920, p. 3

<sup>18</sup> “Crimes in Cold Blood,” *Daily News*, 28 October 1920, p. 3

<sup>19</sup> “The Burning of Irish Creameries,” *Manchester Guardian*, 30 October 1920, p. 11

<sup>20</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission*, p. 26.



by his writings.” The Peeler then waved his revolver. “We will give him a dose of this,” he warned, “and you will be a widow before morning.”<sup>21</sup>

There are negative indications of Irish guilt as well. Police were almost never prosecuted for taking part in reprisals, mostly because they would not give evidence against each other. At least one observer understood this Irish *omertà* very well. On 20 October 1920, Sir J D Rees told the House of Commons that while everyone in Westport, county Mayo knew the person responsible for shooting a resident magistrate the year before, “not one of them would come forward and give evidence. Is it to be supposed that when similar occurrences occur among those responsible for the maintenance of law and order that anyone is going to inform upon them on their own side.”<sup>22</sup> Yet we know that in some cases Black and Tans were tried, found guilty, and put in prison for crimes against Irish people. Constable Wilton was imprisoned for killing Thomas Lawless in Maryborough, Queen’s County. Constable Robinson was imprisoned for killing Anne Dickson in Clones, county Monaghan. Four constables—Chester, Gibson, Hollins, and Skinner—were imprisoned for robbing a bank in Strokestown, county Roscommon. Constable Myers and Constable O’Hara were convicted of housebreaking in county Wexford. Constable Knight and Constable Edwards were convicted of unlawful possession in county Roscommon.

What made Irish policemen break the code of silence in these cases? Peter Hart has recently shown that most of the ‘spies and informers’ who were ‘executed’ by the Cork IRA were social deviants and outsiders.<sup>23</sup> “They were killed,” says Hart, “not for what they did but for who they were: Protestants, ex-soldiers, tramps and so on down the communal blacklist.”<sup>24</sup> On the whole, Black and Tans caught and punished for criminal offences were social deviants and outsiders as well. They committed crimes against civilians (i.e. non-republicans), and committed these crimes in places where they were strangers, unknown to the local police. Wilton killed a former Irish Guardsman in Queen’s County, while on his way to a station in county Cork. Robinson killed a woman, while he was away from his barracks in Ballybay. Chester, Gibson, Skinner, and Hollins robbed a bank, in a strange town, in a neighbouring county. Myers and O’Hara broke into houses only nine days after they were stationed in county Wexford. Johnson was caught with stolen goods only two weeks after he was allocated to county Roscommon.

Other cases followed a similar pattern. On 2 February 1921 George Dixon JP was robbed and murdered in Dunlavin, county Wicklow by “newly joined English RIC recruits.” Two Black and Tans named Hardie and Mitchell were arrested the same day. In his monthly report, the county inspector mentioned that this crime “aroused intense feeling for a time in Dunlavin neighbourhood against the so-called ‘Black & Tans’ on the part of the loyal & Unionist Section especially as Mr. Dixon & his family had been very kind to the police—particularly to the newly joined ‘strangers.’”<sup>25</sup> Constable Hardie

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<sup>21</sup> “Journalist Threatened in Tralee,” *Manchester Guardian*, 11 December 1920, p. 15;  
“Pressmen’s Perils,” *Daily News*, 1 December 1920, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 133, cols. 994-95.

<sup>23</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, pp. 308-15.

<sup>24</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, p. 311.

<sup>25</sup> RIC Reports, C1 Wicklow, February 1921, PRO, CO 904/114.

killed himself in Dunlavin barracks on 3 February. Constable Mitchell was tried, found guilty, and hanged on 7 June 1921—the sole Black and Tan to hang for murder during the First Irish War.<sup>26</sup>

An even more interesting case comes from Galway's West Riding. In the early hours of 15 May 1921 a gang of police kidnapped a medical student named John Green from his hotel room at Salthill. As Green tried to put on his trousers, he was hit on the head, dragged outside in his nightshirt, and beaten with a truncheon. His kidnappers then took him down to the seaside, where after a brief discussion one of them told Green to say his prayers. "He then drew his revolver and loaded it," said Green.

He then fired and seemed to graze the back of my neck. I stumbled and fell to the left. As I was falling a bullet struck me on the hip, he again fired and struck me on the back. I was still conscious and he said 'Are you dead'? I neither moved nor spoke, he then turned and going towards the road I heard the words 'He is gone.'<sup>27</sup>

The motive for this attack is mysterious. Green was a war veteran and friendly toward the police. Unlike most victims of police and auxiliary death squads, the young medical student survived, and reported the incident to the local constabulary before noon. Both County Inspector Sidley and his superior, Divisional Commissioner Cruise, investigated the case. Green was able to identify two of his attackers, and as a result, Constable John Murphy and Constable Richard Orford were arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.<sup>28</sup>

This case had a few characteristics in common with other, non-political crimes. Murphy and Orford were not strangers—Green recognized both of them, and called Murphy by his nickname, Spud—but they had not been serving long in the west riding: Murphy had joined the force in late February, and Orford in early March. According to Green and other witnesses, both Murphy and Orford had been drinking. In his report on their arrest, the local district inspector wrote:

The only motive that can be assigned for the outrage, if committed by the Constables is, that they were under the influence of drink, and while in this state, and owing to very high tension under which the police are living at the present time, and to the fact that on morning of 14th inst. a police patrol was attacked at

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<sup>26</sup> RIC Reports, CI Wicklow, February 1921, PRO CO 904/114; "Three Executions in Dublin," *Manchester Guardian*, 8 June 1921, p. 9; "Three Executions," *The Times*, 8 June 1921, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Statement of John P. Green, 15 May 1921, PRO, CO 904/44.

<sup>28</sup> Report of Outrage, County Galway WR, District of Galway, Sub-District of Salthill, 15 May 1921, PRO, CO 904/44; Galway District Inspector to Galway West County Inspector, 15 May 1921, PRO, CO 904/44. Murphy and Orford had the remainder of their sentences remitted on 14 March 1922, and were released from prison on 17 March: Irish Secretary to Under Secretary, Home Office, 14 March 1922, PRO, CO 904/44; Under Secretary of State, Home Office to Irish Secretary, 28 March 1922, PRO, CO 904/44.

Spiddal, their nerves being highly strung, they may have committed an act which they would not have attempted while in a calmer temper.<sup>29</sup>

This explanation is very similar to those offered for the Strokestown bank robbery. In one of his petitions, Harvey Skinner pleaded that he was not in his right mind when the crime was committed.

The condition of the country at the time of my arrest was very abnormal & was the indirect cause of my being concerned in the unfortunate affair that led to my arrest later. Through being under the influence of drink that was only too easy of access at the time, this combined with the highly strung condition of my nerves at the time rendering me incapable of my actions.<sup>30</sup>

When the chief Crown solicitor recommended clemency for the Strokestown bank robbers in February 1922, he clearly found these arguments convincing. “The case is difficult to understand if they were in a normal condition,” he wrote.<sup>31</sup>

Whatever their motives, the crimes these men committed were illegal even under lynch law. Crimes like these exceeded what Michel Foucault has called “the margin of tolerated illegality,”<sup>32</sup> and their perpetrators were quickly caught and punished—some of them. Orford and Murphy were not the only ones who took part in the attack on John Green. They were not even the ones who beat and shot the young medical student. The remaining members of the death squad were never identified.

## B. Blood Feud

Why, then, did both Irish and British police take reprisals? In some cases, their chief motive was obvious: revenge; revenge for a dead officer; revenge for their dead comrades; revenge on their “cowardly assailants,” guerrillas in overwhelming numbers, attacking by surprise, from ambush, firing from behind cover, giving their victims no chance to fight back; revenge on the communities who sheltered these ‘murder gangs.’ In a few cases, police just went berserk. In his book *Achilles in Vietnam*, psychiatrist Jonathan Shay devotes a chapter to the “berserk state” among soldiers in war, and identifies the death of a “special comrade” as its leading cause.<sup>33</sup> On 5 June 1921, another police patrol was ambushed in Abbeyfeale, county Limerick and Robert Jolly, a Black and Tan from Kent, was killed. A republican source describes what happened

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<sup>29</sup> Galway District Inspector to Galway West County Inspector, 15 May 1921, PRO, CO 904/44.

<sup>30</sup> Harvey Skinner, Petition to the Lord Lieutenant, 28 November 1921, PRO, HO 351/69.

<sup>31</sup> Opinion of Chief Crown Solicitor on case of Tom Chester, 16 February 1922, PRO, HO 351/69.

<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 82-83.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), p. 81. Shay’s classical model is of course the grief and rage of Achilles after the death of Patroclus.

afterward. “Head Constable Casey saved the writer from a Black-and-Tan named Nolan, who, seemingly insane, discharged his rifle repeatedly into Jimmy Joy’s house before being disarmed by his comrades. He was carried away, still shouting in frenzy that he would have revenge for his chum Jolly.”<sup>34</sup>

A much more disturbing case took place in county Cork on 15 December 1920, just four days after the centre of the city was burned. Two trucks full of Auxiliaries were driving from Dunmanway to Cork city for the funeral of Cadet Chapman, who had been killed in the grenade ambush at Dillons Cross on 11 December. Along the way, they met a group of three men: an elderly priest, Canon Magner, and the son of a farmer, Timothy Crowley, were helping a resident magistrate fix his car after a breakdown. Cadet Harte was in charge of the rear truck. He stopped his vehicle, got out, and started questioning the priest and the countryman. As the magistrate and the remaining Auxiliaries watched, Harte started abusing the two men, and finally shot both of them dead. “He was clean off his head then,” said a witness: “absolutely as mad as a hatter.” At the subsequent military court of inquiry, testimony revealed that Cadet Harte had been “a particular friend” of Cadet Chapman, and had been drinking “steadily” since Chapman’s death.<sup>35</sup> Harte was later put on trial for these two murders and was found guilty, but insane.<sup>36</sup>

There were other, less murderous cases where police went berserk. Acting County Inspector Russell reported that his men were uncontrollable after they saw their dead and wounded comrades in Tubbercurry: “they were simply mad with passion,” he said, “and all restraints of discipline were thrown to the winds.”<sup>37</sup> However, incidents like these were comparatively few. As we know, police who took reprisals were often strangers—reinforcements or marauders from district or county headquarters, with no clear personal connection to the victims of guerrilla violence.

In addition, many reprisals took place after comparatively small provocation. On the early morning of 2 October 1920, for example, a guerrilla band assaulted Frenchpark RIC barracks, midway between the towns of Boyle and Castlereagh in the north of county Roscommon. The battle ended in victory for the police: the barrack was held, and its garrison suffered no casualties. The following night, however, a gang of police and soldiers from Castlereagh went on a reprisal spree. They burned and bombed a pair of shops in the nearby village of Ballinagare; then they drove through the country, setting

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<sup>34</sup> “Volunteer,” “The IRA Campaign in West Limerick,” in *Limerick’s Fighting Story*, p. 167; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 253-54.

<sup>35</sup> “Parish Priest Shot in West Cork,” *Manchester Guardian*, 16 December 1920, p. 9; “Canon Shot Dead,” *Daily News*, 16 December 1920, p. 1; “Murdered Priest,” *Daily News*, 17 December 1920, pp. 1, 3; *The Times*, 17 December 1920, p. 13; “The Shooting of Canon Magner,” *Manchester Guardian*, 20 December 1920, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 138, cols. 244-46. This case resembled the murder of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington in Dublin during the Rebellion of 1916. The man responsible for Sheehy-Skeffington’s death, Captain J Bowen-Colthurst, was also found guilty but insane: Caulfield, *The Easter Rebellion*, pp. 153-54, 166-67, 187-88, 291-92. When the House was told the verdict in the Harte case, one cynical MP replied: “Has it been decided by the medical authorities how long this cadet will remain insane?”

<sup>37</sup> “Police Report on Tubbercurry Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1920, p. 8.

fire to haystacks and farmhouses.<sup>38</sup> One young man suffered a mock execution along the way. When Patrick Flynn was told he had five minutes to live, he requested a priest. “You are not going to have any damned priest,” he was told. “The priests are worse than you are, and we are going to clear them out next.”<sup>39</sup> In his report on these reprisals, Hugh Martin laid stress on the fact that no police had been killed or even wounded at Frenchpark. “The excuse of uncontrollable fury caused by some dastardly outrage is thus altogether absent,” he concluded. “Intense provocation, at any rate at the moment, must be ruled out.”<sup>40</sup>

The causes of reprisals like these were complex. One element was ‘nerves’—the nervous boredom of policing insurgency. Each day, police patrols wandered around for hours, looking for the guerrillas, putting themselves in danger. “We were basically looking for the IRA,” said one old Peeler. “No still of poteen, no light on your bicycle, no tail lamp, no anything, nobody bothered, the police didn’t bother. It was just the police and the IRA.”<sup>41</sup> In many districts, lack of information made patrol work almost pointless. The police were merely showing the flag. “We’d go gawkying down the road and look round and see if anything was suspicious or unusual, and interview somebody who could tell you something,” said another old Peeler. “It didn’t serve much useful purpose as far as I could see, you just were there.”<sup>42</sup> The police had been objectified. Constabulary sub-districts became the cells of Bentham’s Panopticon. The guerrillas could see the police. The police could not see the guerrillas. Only their shuttered stations gave them refuge from the rebel gaze.<sup>43</sup>

Lack of rest and recreation was a serious problem as well. In his application for a bonus, dated 13 January 1921, a district inspector in Armagh emphasized how tedious and anxious constabulary life had become, even in one of the safest counties of Ireland. “I submit that regular warfare would be less trying than the condition of affairs that prevails at present,” he wrote.

In such warfare officers and men get long periods of rest to recuperate. They are then well looked after, amusements and other luxuries are provided, and their enemies are in front only. They can usually travel free, and everywhere are admitted and entertained as honoured guests. In this country there is no rest, the enemy is in front, rear, and flank, no amusements are provided, there is no free travelling or entertainment, friendly people only speak to us by stealth, and we are practically living all the time behind sandbags and steel shutters, peering round corners with alert eyes for assassins when we go abroad, and financially unable to

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<sup>38</sup> “Reprisals Still,” *Manchester Guardian*, 5 October 1920, p. 5; Hugh Martin, “Terrorism in Spate,” *Daily News*, 6 October 1920, pp. 1, 3; Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, 106-15.

<sup>39</sup> Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 115.

<sup>40</sup> Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 107.

<sup>41</sup> Brewer, *Oral History*, p. 72.

<sup>42</sup> Brewer, *Oral History*, p. 75.

<sup>43</sup> On the Panopticon and “panopticism,” see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 200-9. Charles Townshend has described the “intelligence gap” in Ireland as “a two-way mirror behind which the rebels moved with almost complete assurance.” (Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 125.)

get anywhere for a holiday, or give our wives and families a much needed change.<sup>44</sup>

The whole country was no man's land. Police were always in danger, even when they were not on duty. It could be fatal to go for a drink, for example. Constable Peter Fahie had a "very narrow escape" one afternoon in Ballingear, county Cork. "There was only one public house in the village," he recalled, "it was right across the road from the barrack. Myself & another of the boys we went across & in the back way & we noticed the place was packed on our way in this man was coming out against us." Someone whispered a warning to the two constables. The pub was full of armed Volunteers.

We at once sensed there was something wrong locked up the Bks [barracks] to await results. Nothing happened & towards night we saw Mr. Shorter the local publican come out & stand outside the door we concluded he wanted to contact us. The Sergeant went out the back way & over he told him his experience & could do nothing to help. This Mr. & Mrs. Shorter were great friends of the Police. He said they were there all the afternoon [illegible] the back way all armed & almost drank the place out.

In this case, it seems, the local curate persuaded the guerrillas to spare the constabulary.<sup>45</sup> Other police were not as lucky. Nineteen were shot and killed in licensed premises, or nearby.<sup>46</sup> Constable Frederick Sterland of Birmingham, for example, was followed out of a Cork city hotel bar and shot dead on 8 May 1921.<sup>47</sup> In another, more bizarre incident on 17 April 1921, three police in plain clothes were drinking while off duty at a hotel in Castleconnell, county Limerick when it was raided by Auxiliaries, also dressed in plain clothes. The two groups mistook each other for guerrillas and opened fire. By the time the battle was over, a police sergeant, a temporary cadet, and the hotelier had been killed.<sup>48</sup>

Walking out with Irish women could also be dangerous, for both parties. Women who kept company with police were liable to suffer threats or violence or both. On 21 April 1921, for example, two armed and masked men assaulted Rose Logue of Meenacladdy, county Donegal. After accusing her of being friendly to the police, her attackers cut off her hair. "This was merely a caution as they told her that if she again came unfavourably under notice she would be shot. This lady placed a wreath over the remains of a constable." Two days later, in Grattanstown, county Louth, three armed and masked men called at the home of John Carroll and cut off the hair of his sister Kate.

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<sup>44</sup> Application for a bonus for District Inspectors: DI Ryan, Lurgan, County Armagh, 13 January 1921, PRO, HO 351/81.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Fahie to J. R. W. Goulden, June 1970, TCD, Goulden Papers, 7382A/157.

<sup>46</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, passim.

<sup>47</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 233.

<sup>48</sup> Townshend, *Brinsh Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 166-68; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 317-19

“They also threatened to shoot her if she continued keeping company with a policeman from Dunleer.”<sup>49</sup>

Police were always liable to be shot, even in a woman’s company. As we have seen, Constable Hubbard and Constable McKibbin were almost assassinated while out on a double date in county Roscommon.<sup>50</sup> Other men were not so lucky. On 17 April 1921, Constable John MacDonald of London was out walking with a woman in Cork city when he was attacked, shot and wounded. His companion helped him to a nearby house, and then hurried to the fire station for an ambulance. When she came back, she met the wounded Black and Tan wandering down the street. “She helped him to the ambulance outside the fire station and then went with him to the police barracks from which he was conveyed to the military hospital.”

Another constable who was a patient in the same ward as MacDonald stated that the latter told him that he was walking along with a girl friend when two men jumped on his back, pinned his arms behind him and took his revolver away from him.

Another civilian stood by him pointing a revolver but he (the deceased) tried to knock it away and in doing so he was shot in the face. He collapsed on the ground and the civilians fired shots all round his head but none took effect.

Medical evidence was given that the deceased had received a gunshot wound in the face which fractured the lower jaw and the spine at the neck. He died five days later.<sup>51</sup>

Other police were dying for a moment’s relaxation. The commander of H Company ADRIC, Major John Alister Mackinnon, was assassinated while playing golf.<sup>52</sup> Another temporary cadet, William Hunt, was shot and killed in the dining room of the Mayfair Hotel, Dublin while taking tea with his wife.<sup>53</sup> Constable William Smith and

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<sup>49</sup> Outrage Reports, May 1921, PRO, CO 904/150; there are numerous other examples of threats and violence against women in these weekly summaries. For a detailed example from the republican viewpoint, see the report on the (brief) boycott of the Murphy family near Millstreet, county Cork: Commandant, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 4 Brigade to Adjutant, Cork No. 4 Brigade, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0668/XII: in this case, Miss Murphy had been keeping company with an Auxiliary from nearby Millstreet.

<sup>50</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>51</sup> Summarized findings of MCI (John MacDonald), Dublin Castle, 28 May 1921, PRO, CO 904/189/2; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 222. For another example, see summary of police report on the death of Wilfred Jones, 22 April 1921, PRO, CO 904/189/2; Abbot, *Police Casualties*, p. 222.

<sup>52</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 221-22; “Fianna,” “The Fatal Challenge of Major McKinnon,” in *Kerry’s Fighting Story*, pp. 142-46; see also documents in PRO, T 192/155, in which one official comments: “The fact is that the Auxiliaries are serving under war conditions, & it is a breach of discipline on their part to expose themselves to danger wilfully to amuse themselves.” (unsigned, 6 July 1921) According to legend, Mackinnon’s dying words were: “Burn Ballymac...” (Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 126.)

<sup>53</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 259; MCI (William F. Hunt), PRO, WO 35/152; documents in PRO, T 192/155. Mrs Hunt was initially denied a pension because her husband was not killed while on duty (Waterfield to Under Secretary, 29 July 1921, PRO, T 192/155). Later, however, it was decided to

Constable John Webb were killed while fishing near Castlemartyr, county Cork.<sup>54</sup> Constable George Cuthberton and Constable Walter Shaw were killed while walking.<sup>55</sup>

Their more prudent comrades remained in their stations, behind sandbags and steel shutters. In disturbed areas, the police were almost imprisoned in their barracks. In Tralee, county Kerry their barracks was an actual prison: the police lived in the cells. Being in the force was being in a jail, with a chance of being shot. As a result, some reprisals were almost like violent carnivals, in which police enjoyed an escape from house arrest. Rough music was heard in Balbriggan, the day after the sack. The *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent saw three trucks full of Black and Tans drive through Balbriggan, "shouting and jeering as they passed the ruined buildings and lustily banging tin cans." A few moments later, he heard rifle shots, "as if, Oriental fashion, they fired a volley into the air for sheer exultation."<sup>56</sup> During the burning of Granard, county Longford on 4 November 1920, a few police played melodeons and mouth organs while others burned the town hall, courthouse, and 13 shops and public houses.<sup>57</sup>

The police were sober at Granard, but alcohol abuse played a part in many reprisals.<sup>58</sup> "Some of the Black and Tans were bad enough too," said one old Peeler, "particularly when they had drink taken."<sup>59</sup> "They'd been through the army and all around, and if they got a drop of drink, like," said another;<sup>60</sup> "there was a lot of ex-servicemen, they started drinking very much and then, it went down hill."<sup>61</sup> Sometimes, drinking was a policeman's only recreation: "there was a lot of these small stations, you know, way out in the country—there were only one or two houses near the Barrack—they'd nothing else to do when they were off duty."<sup>62</sup>

The situation was much the same in larger towns, like Galway. John Caddan told the American Commission that a canteen opened in Eglinton Street barracks in late 1919. There was no limit on the number of drinks police could buy. "They were up, some of

grant pensions in cases like Hunt's, "where there is a reasonable presumption that they were injured or killed because they were policemen" (Silbert to Cross, 26 November 1921, PRO, T 164/13/15—on this decision, see documents in PRO, T 192/155). Cadet Hunt had previously served as a policeman in Hertfordshire. As a consequence, his widow was able to take advantage of a loophole in the Police (Pensions) Act, 1918 that allowed her to claim two pensions for one dead husband. One official called this "altogether preposterous," but in the end, both pensions were paid (Correspondence in PRO, T 164/13/15).

<sup>54</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 227. See General Macready's angry comments on MCI (William Smith and John Webb), PRO, WO 35/159A.

<sup>55</sup> Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp. 227-28; MCI (George Cuthberton and William Shaw), PRO, WO 35/147B.

<sup>56</sup> "Wild Police Excesses in County Dublin," *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1920, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> Hugh Martin, "Ruins of Granard," *Daily News*, 6 November 1920, pp. 1, 3; "Story of Granard Reprisals," *The Times*, 6 November 1920, p. 12; "Irish Volunteers Awaiting Attack by Troops," *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1920, p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> On drinking and violence, see Mark W Lipsey et al, "Is there a Causal Relationship between Alcohol Use and Violence? A Synthesis of Evidence," in Marc Galanter (ed.), *Recent Developments in Alcoholism*, vol. 13: *Alcohol and Violence* (New York: Plenum Press, 1997), pp. 245-82.

<sup>59</sup> Brewer, *Oral History*, p. 103.

<sup>60</sup> Brewer, *Oral History*, p. 113.

<sup>61</sup> Brewer, *Oral History*, p. 114.

<sup>62</sup> Brewer, *Oral History*, p. 63.



them, most of the night drinking,” he said. Men drank before going on duty, and “during their idle time. Some of them had only four hours’ duty during the day. The rest of the time they usually had liquor in them.”<sup>63</sup> Auxiliary companies had their own canteens as well. According to David Neligan, the cadets of F Company ADRIC were “hard drinkers and drank all hard liquor. Gin, whiskey and brandy consumed most of their pay.” Night after night, Neligan saw the commander of another company “being frog-marched to a Crossley tender by two section leaders. He was so drunk that the only thing he could say was that he wanted to ‘have a crack at the Shinnners.’”<sup>64</sup> Commandant Crozier took his fateful trip to Galway on 22 November to discipline another drunken company commander. He later estimated that, on average, the division spent £5 per man per week on drinks in their canteens alone. They would extort free drinks from publicans as well.<sup>65</sup>

Police rioters frequently began by looting licensed houses, and those police who were prosecuted were almost always drunk when they broke the law. In one case, Dennis O’Donnell was shot and killed by a police patrol in Meadstown, county Cork on the night of 23 November 1920. Unusually, the three constables involved were cross-examined by a civilian solicitor for the next of kin at the court of inquiry. The results were eye-opening. The police had not only been drinking that day, but had also been drinking in public houses during their night patrol, after hours. Constable Wood admitted having “one or two” in Lyne’s pub and “about the same” in Welsh’s before closing time. He then admitted having three while on duty, for a total between five and seven. Nonetheless, he testified that he was “quite sober” that night. When asked if he knew it was illegal for him to drink in pubs after hours, he said, “Yes. But there does seem to be any law now.”<sup>66</sup> One of Wood’s accomplices, Constable Coe, admitted having a couple of “small whiskies” on duty that night. Asked if he knew he was breaking the law by drinking after hours, he said: “I decline to answer.” Like Wood, Coe began with a couple of drinks at Lyne’s before going on duty. “Q. Were you in any other public houses that day? A. Yes. Q. Which one? A. I decline to answer.”<sup>67</sup> The third constable, Gray, would not answer questions from the solicitor, but was cross-examined by the court. “We understand you visited some public houses just after leaving barracks and had some drinks, did you pay for them,” they asked.<sup>68</sup> The trio paid for their whiskey that night in Meadstown, but police were known to steal drinks, especially from ‘enemy’ publicans like Mrs. Kane in Oranmore, county Galway.

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<sup>63</sup> “Q. So their life consisted of doing their duty on the streets of the city and spending their spare time in the liquor store in the barracks and in bed? A. Yes, and in bed.” Testimony of John Caddan, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 416.

<sup>64</sup> Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, p. 88.

<sup>65</sup> Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, pp. 107, 198-99. Recall that a temporary cadet’s pay was only £7 or £7 7s. per week plus allowances.

<sup>66</sup> Cross-examination of 6th witness (Constable A E Wood, RIC), MCI (Dennis O’Donnell), 26 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/157B.

<sup>67</sup> Cross-examination of 7th witness (Constable S W Coe, RIC), MCI (Dennis O’Donnell), 26 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/157B.

<sup>68</sup> Cross-examination of 8th witness (Constable A Gray), MCI (Dennis O’Donnell), 26 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/157B.

Police were not confined to barracks by fear alone: in many places they were boycotted as well. Boycotts became especially widespread and severe in the summer of 1920. They began with IRA notices like the following, circulated in the Boyle district of county Roscommon in mid-July 1920:

Irish Republican Army, Brigade Headquarters, North Roscommon

Notice is hereby given that all intercourse of any kind whatsoever is strictly forbidden between citizens of the Irish Republic and that portion of the Army of Occupation known as the R.I.C.; that a general boycott of the said force is ordered and that you shall cease as from Wednesday, 14th July to transact any business of any nature with said force. All persons infringing this order will be included in the said boycott.

Signed Competent Military Authority.

The police report concludes: “The boycott has been started and is being rigorously carried out.”<sup>69</sup>

Some police did not blame their communities for shunning them. Boycott orders were enforced with violence and threats. Two cases from county Wexford will serve as examples of how the guerrillas intimidated ‘collaborators.’ J Redmond, a motor driver and carpenter in the Gorey district, made the mistake of driving police to the site of a republican court. He suffered a punishment beating for this on the evening of 18 September 1920, when a gang of 7 or 9 young men attacked him. Redmond fought his attackers, and bit one of their fingers in the struggle, but he was badly beaten, his face and clothes were tarred, and he was warned: “if he ever drove the police or soldiers again he would be shot.”<sup>70</sup> Another Wexford man, Patrick Cullen, was kidnapped on the following evening. A gang of armed and masked men took him from his home, blindfolded him, put him in a car, and then drove him to a churchyard, where his abductors put him on trial and convicted him of informing and “being friendly” toward the security forces. “He was told to prepare for death, that his grave was dug, and made to place his hand on the tombstone,” but his captors then tied his hands behind his back, took away his coat and vest, hat, boots, and socks, and left him, warning him to remain in the graveyard for an hour. Cullen made his way to a local farmhouse, borrowed some clothes, and returned home by morning.<sup>71</sup>

As a result, some police were philosophical about boycotts. Constable Fahie remembered how the boycott came to Ballingear, county Cork.

Our housemaid withdrew her services. We had to go and take what we wanted. We petitioned the powers that be & weren’t we excited the day we got this wire [illegible] it read your Barracks will be evacuated tomorrow. I would say though

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<sup>69</sup> Outrage Reports, week ending 25 July 1920, PRO, CO 904/149.

<sup>70</sup> Summary of police reports, 22 September 1920, PRO, CO 904/142.

<sup>71</sup> Summary of police reports, 23 September 1920, PRO, CO 904/142.

all those services were denied us through fear we had many well wishers at the back of all that but were afraid.<sup>72</sup>

In this case, the police met avoidance with avoidance. In other cases, however, police were infuriated by this type of passive-aggressive resistance.<sup>73</sup> Being threatened was one thing. Being despised was quite another. As a result, boycotts were sometimes mentioned in connection with early police reprisals. As we have seen, the police “keenly resented” the boycott in Tullamore, King’s County, before the reprisals on 31 October 1920.<sup>74</sup> After the police riot, “the boycott against them died down considerably.”<sup>75</sup> Earlier, in his first report on the Tubbercurry riot, the *Guardian*’s correspondent wrote: “It is to be mentioned that in Tubbercurry the police have been rigidly boycotted by the tradespeople, and they have had to fetch their supplies of food from towns at a distance. Mr. E. J. Cooke, who was the chief sufferer by the sacking of the town, was accused of playing a part in the boycott.”<sup>76</sup> Boycotting also seems to have provoked reprisals by gangs. The reprisals following the attack on Frenchpark barracks in October 1920 took place in the same area covered by the boycott notice above: northern Roscommon. By month’s end, the county inspector wrote in his report that the boycott of the police “has been killed by the vigorous action of the police themselves.”<sup>77</sup>

### C. ‘Courage Wears a Uniform’

Another cause of reprisals was the police conception of the conflict. Irish republicans argued it was not murder to kill police. In their minds, the Irish Republic was at war with the United Kingdom. The RIC was part of the enemy’s army of occupation. Its uniformed constables were enemy soldiers. Its plainclothes constables were spies. It was not murder to kill enemy soldiers in battle, and all nations were agreed on the fate of spies in wartime. During her testimony, Mary MacSwiney was questioned about the murder of policemen. “Here it is called the shooting of policemen,” she said. “I will simply take the murders of policemen by denying that there ever has been a policeman murdered in Ireland.”<sup>78</sup> Executions of captured guerrillas, on the other hand, were denounced as judicial murder, and condemned along with reprisals as violations of the laws of war. The IRA wore no uniforms, and often did not carry arms openly, as the Hague Regulations required, but this was excused on the grounds of necessity.<sup>79</sup> In

<sup>72</sup> Peter Fahie to J. R. W. Goulden, June 1970, TCD, Goulden Papers, 7382A/157.

<sup>73</sup> Working-class wives often used silence and other forms of non-confrontational resistance as tactics in disputes with their husbands: Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 78.

<sup>74</sup> “Police Rioting in Tullamore,” *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1920, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> RIC Reports, IG, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>76</sup> “Tubbercurry,” *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1920, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> RIC Reports, C1 Roscommon, October 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>78</sup> Testimony of Mary MacSwiney, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 256.

<sup>79</sup> See Giovanni Costigan, “The Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1919-1922: A War of Independence or Systematized Murder,” *University Review* 5, no. 1 (1968): pp. 64-86 for an Irish republican apologia. To

addition, the laws of war applied only to conflicts between parties to the Hague Convention, but this inconvenient fact was overlooked as well.<sup>80</sup>

Some police, it seems, thought along the same lines as MacSwiney. “The Sinn Feiners have declared war on us, and we are up against them,” said the Peeler to Mrs. Quirke, in Tralee. If it was war, then let it be war—on both sides. If the guerrillas could ‘shoot’ police, then the police could ‘shoot’ guerrillas. If the guerrillas could execute captured police for ‘spying’ in plainclothes, then the police could execute guerrillas for doing the same. If the guerrillas could burn the homes and shops of police—i.e., their barracks—then the police could burn the homes and shops of republicans.

This kind of reasoning was encouraged by the police newspaper, the *Weekly Summary*, distributed freely to police barracks by the office of the chief secretary for Ireland. Its 3 September 1920 issue quoted the verdict of a coroner’s inquest on the bodies of two Volunteers, killed in battle with police and soldiers on 16 August 1920. The jury found that the pair had been “brutally and deliberately murdered by the military, accompanied by the police.” The *Summary* scoffed at this verdict. “If the Irish Volunteers are at war,” it asked, “how can they be ‘brutally and deliberately murdered by the military’? They are soldiers, it would appear, when they are not captured but merely harmless civilians (with five revolvers) when they meet a force of police or military able to deal with them.”<sup>81</sup>

Three months later, the paper published an editorial on the same theme, entitled “WAR—AS WE LIKE IT. THE REPUBLICAN’S POINT OF VIEW.”

They said—

‘Let us have War.  
‘Let us have War, as we understand it.  
‘Let us shoot the unsuspecting.  
‘Let us shoot from behind hedges and walls.  
‘Let us shoot policemen when they don’t expect us.  
‘Let us ambush soldiers unawares.  
‘Let us murder unarmed men in their beds.  
‘In a word, let us have a one-sided war.

‘But if they hit back—that will not be fair.  
‘We will whine then.  
‘We will make the world ring with the injustice of being caught red-handed.  
‘We will show how unjust it is.

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be fair, the British refusal to treat captured guerrillas as prisoners of war did not encourage the guerrillas to follow these rules.

<sup>80</sup> *Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land* (1907), Article 2: “The provisions contained in the Regulations referred to in Article 1, as well as in the present Convention, do not apply except between Contracting Powers, and then only if all the belligerents are parties to the Convention.” Curiously, this would seem to mean that the Hague Regulations were not in force during the Great War after 1916, when Portugal joined the Allies: Portugal was not a party to the Hague Convention.

<sup>81</sup> *Weekly Summary*, 3 September 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

‘We don’t want a war of that kind.  
 ‘We want a war in which all is safe for us.  
 ‘We want a war with all the casualties on the side of the enemy.  
 ‘We want the impossible—but then we are impossibilists.  
 ‘We are the Irish Republican Army.’<sup>82</sup>

Clearly, some police were embittered by this ‘one-sided war.’ News reports of mass reprisals often mention rioters calling for the guerrillas to come out and fight them fairly.<sup>83</sup> In the minds of many police, guerrilla bands were just ‘murder gangs’ of cowardly, back-shooting punks. It is worth noting that “punk” means both “a hoodlum or ruffian” and “a passive male homosexual,” since police rhetoric was often highly gendered. The first of the *Weekly Summary*’s rat-a-tat editorials is a good example:

Courage and cowardice.  
 They are in sharp contrast in the Green isle of Erin to-day.  
 Courage does its duty and all the world can see it.  
 Courage wears a uniform.  
 Cowardice obeys the behests of terrorism—a terrorism without a name.  
 Cowardice wears no badge, it is unrecognized, anonymous.  
 Courage sticks to its job—twenty-four hours a day out of every twenty-four.  
 Cowardice walks disguised for weeks: reveals itself for a moment and then is  
     disguised again.  
 Courage is the quality of a man doing a man’s job.  
 Cowardice is the quality of a skulker; a secret assassin; a marauder by night.  
 Courage and cowardice.  
 They are in sharp contrast in the Green Isle of Erin to-day.<sup>84</sup>

This was official propaganda, but there is evidence that the police themselves understood the conflict in similar terms. The police were manly—brave and forthright. The guerrillas were womanish—cowardly and hypocritical. In one revealing case, four Volunteers were captured in county Kerry on 4th April 1920. One of them reported that he was “taken out of the lock-up four times & beaten with the rifle & automatic pistol.” The sergeant in charge “then threw his tunic on the floor & asked me to fight him.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> “War—As We Like It,” *Weekly Summary*, 3 December 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

Government propaganda was surprisingly impersonal. Republican leaders were almost never mentioned: instead, the enemy was referred to simply as “republicans,” “shinners,” the “murder gang,” etc. Police would steal drinks and tell outraged publicans to ‘send the bill to De Valera,’ and in a speech given on 23 March 1921, a Conservative MP compared the republican leader to Jack the Ripper. “If you had a person like Jack the Ripper writing letters to the papers complaining of the bloodthirstiness of the police in hunting him down...everybody would think it was extraordinary,” he said: *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 139, col. 2651. Overall, however, the Government and its forces do not seem to have personalized the conflict.

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>84</sup> “Courage and Cowardice,” *Weekly Summary*, 13 August 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>85</sup> Report re Sergeant Restruck, Abbeydorney, 31 May 1920, IMA, Collins Papers, A/0494/VIII/14.

Later, the American Commission received an affidavit in which a young man, James Murphy, described being beaten by “three British officers,” possibly Auxiliaries. “Vengeance is mine,” said one of them, “and I will repay. These are our Lord’s words.” Murphy was knocked down, picked up, and knocked down again. “If you are a man,” said one of his attackers, “get up and fight; don’t be getting behind ditches and hedges to us. Come on! Come on! Get up and fight!”<sup>86</sup> Later still, in one of his monthly reports, Deputy Inspector General Walsh mentioned another case in county Cork. On 23 June 1921 a police and military convoy was driving from Cork to Queenstown when they hit a road mine.

Fortunately the result of the explosion did little damage beyond what occurred to the car; the occupants escaped. Three women were seen running through the fields from the vicinity of where the battery was discovered; they were arrested and have since been tried by F. G. C. M. [field general court martial] and are awaiting promulgation of sentence.

This outrage is indicative of the low morale of the I.R.A. in the area. They were not present to protect or assist the women assassins who had apparently greater courage than the men.<sup>87</sup>

Policemen who could not live up to this masculine ideal were scorned. Resigners were seen by some as deserters. The *Weekly Summary* called them “rats.”<sup>88</sup> “No men—worthy of the name of men—will desert their posts in the face of gangs of ditch-grovvelling, hedge-hidden assassins,” it thundered.<sup>89</sup> Again, some ordinary police agreed. In at least one case, a Galway constable who resigned and took a job with a Sinn Fein town council was beaten and whipped on 25 September 1920, then threatened on 4 October when he refused to leave his home in Tuam as ordered.<sup>90</sup> Another former constable in the same county had his car stolen.

Of course, the police themselves often showed “the quality of a skulker, a secret assassin, a marauder by night.” This contradiction between ‘courageous’ ideal and ‘cowardly’ reality was resolved by blaming the guerrillas for police reprisals. Once again, the *Weekly Summary* provides a succinct expression of this view:

Reprisals are wrong.

They are bad for the discipline of the Force.

They are bad for Ireland, especially if the wholly innocent suffer.

Reprisals are wrong, but reprisals do not happen wholly by accident.

They are the result of the brutal, cowardly murder of police officers by assassins, who take shelter behind the screen of terrorism and intimidation which they have created.

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<sup>86</sup> Affidavit of James Murphy, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, p. 779.

<sup>87</sup> RIC Reports, IG, May 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

<sup>88</sup> “An Echo of the Bad Days.” *Weekly Summary*, 3 June 1921, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>89</sup> *Weekly Summary*, 11 March 1921, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>90</sup> Statements of H Ruddy, *Evidence on Conditions in Ireland*, pp. 1061-62.

Police murder produces reprisals.  
Stop murdering policemen.<sup>91</sup>

Police violence was ‘defensive.’ Reprisals would cease when murder ceased. Arguments like this appeared repeatedly, cut from the pages of Irish and British papers and pasted into the *Weekly Summary*. General Macready’s views had already been printed the previous week.

Formerly, in Ireland, if a police officer were murdered there was no thought of direct reprisals by the R.I.C. They thought only of bringing the murderer to justice, confident that he would be dealt with quickly and adequately by the courts. But now, the machinery of the law having been broken down, they feel there is no certain means of redress and punishment, and it is only human that they should act on their own initiative.<sup>92</sup>

Civilians agreed. “No body of men could be expected to stand by and see their officers and comrades murdered in cold blood, without being given a chance in most cases to defend their lives, while the population, actively or tacitly, defeated every legitimate attempt to bring the criminals to justice.”<sup>93</sup> “Is it unnatural that the men, who have a shrewd suspicion of the source of the trouble, but know that the law will be unable to trace or punish the murderers—since the King’s writ practically no longer runs in a large part of Ireland—should take the law into their own hands, and administer a rough, blind, and reckless justice?”<sup>94</sup>

To be fair, the *Weekly Summary* also published a number of editorials urging police to show restraint. “The police exists,” it said, “for the welfare of Ireland and to lift her from the terror of the pistol. The destruction of factories, houses, and other buildings only impoverishes Ireland. Do not hurt Ireland. Put out the ‘murder gang’ and free her from the thralldom of terror.”<sup>95</sup> It was “war to the death” against the guerrillas, but “every consideration must be shown” to civilians, likewise “victims of this appalling scourge.” “Arson, looting and all indiscipline are offences against the people of Ireland. Their

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<sup>91</sup> “What Causes Reprisals,” *Weekly Summary*, 8 October 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>92</sup> “Reprisals the Outcome of Police Murders,” *Weekly Summary*, 1 October 1920, p. 2, PRO, CO 906/38, reprinted from the *Irish Independent*.

<sup>93</sup> “The Policy of Hitting Back,” *Weekly Summary*, 8 October 1920, p. 2, PRO, CO 906/38, reprinted from the *Birmingham Daily Mail*.

<sup>94</sup> “One-Sided Arguments,” *Weekly Summary*, 8 October 1920, p. 2, PRO, CO 906/38, reprinted from the *Evening Standard*. Cf. “How Reprisals Arise,” *Weekly Summary*, 12 November 1920, p. 2, PRO, CO 906/38, reprinted from the *Pail Mall Gazette*; “No Murders Means No Reprisals,” *Weekly Summary*, 12 November 1920, p. 2, PRO, CO 906/38, reprinted from the *Freeman’s Journal*; “How to Stop Reprisals,” *Weekly Summary*, 12 November 1920, p. 3, PRO, CO 906/38, reprinted from the *Morning Post*. For an especially vivid and imaginative example, reprinted from *The Woman’s Leader*, see “The First Reprisal,” *Weekly Summary*, 29 October 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38, parts of which are quoted in Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, p. 101.

<sup>95</sup> “Police and Public,” *Weekly Summary*, 1 October 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

persons and their property are sacred.”<sup>96</sup> “Although the sworn enemy of evil-doers, every constable is the Friend of the Public,” said yet another leader. “His duty is the protection of their property and persons, just as much as it is his duty to overcome and apprehend those who break the public peace.”<sup>97</sup>

Nonetheless, the message of this “weekly hate sheet”<sup>98</sup> was clear: guerrilla violence justified or at least excused police violence; reprisals were vengeance, not revenge. In some cases, police reprisals were blamed on rebel dirty tricks. The burning of a Sinn Fein hall and the wrecking and shooting of houses near Caltra, county Galway on 24 July 1920 was blamed on a feud between rival guerrilla factions. “These feuds among the ‘Murder Gang’ grow increasingly, and are true to type.”<sup>99</sup> The murder of Thomas Egan in the same district on 24 October 1920 was blamed on guerrillas wearing stolen police capes. “About three months ago the capes were taken from a party of police who attended Divine Service at Lackagh. The capes had never been returned.”<sup>100</sup>

In addition, the *Weekly Summary* reprinted the bloodthirsty notices of the Anti-Sinn Fein Society in Cork, and others, threatening reprisals for the murder of police. “DROGHEDA BEWARE,” says one. “If in the vicinity a policeman is shot, five leading Sinn Feiners will be shot. It is not coercion—it is an eye for an eye.”<sup>101</sup> Amazingly, it even published approving descriptions of German reprisals against francs-tireurs in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71).

The honest German soldier was all the more embittered by this behaviour of the francs-tireurs because they were wont at need to hastily assume the appearance of inoffensive peasants by throwing away and hiding their arms and getting rid of every badge indicative of military service. That under such circumstances the Germans gave ‘short shrift’ to such fellows taken red-handed will be thought only reasonable, even though it is quite possible that at times innocent men may have suffered. The German authorities and troops along the lines of communication had nothing for it but to punish the parishes where outrages against German

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<sup>96</sup> “The Duty of the Hour,” *Weekly Summary*, 12 November 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>97</sup> “A Policeman’s Duty,” *Weekly Summary*, 18 February 1921, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38. This editorial also describes a policeman’s duty as “a full-size man’s job,” which calls for “all that is best in big-hearted men.”

<sup>98</sup> “This paper has been called a ‘weekly hate sheet.’ It is. It hates murder.” “A Weekly Hate Sheet,” *Weekly Summary*, 19 November 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>99</sup> *Weekly Summary*, 3 September 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>100</sup> “Abominable Assassination in Galway,” *Weekly Summary*, 12 November 1920, p. 2, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>101</sup> “London Newspaper’s Story. Black and Tan Manifesto,” *Weekly Summary*, 15 October 1920, p. 3, PRO, CO 906/38, reprinted from the *Westminster Gazette*, and reproduced in full in Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, pp. 98-99. For other examples, see “An Anti-Sinn Fein Society” and “Sinn Fein Must Stop Murders,” *Weekly Summary*, 29 October 1920, p. 3, PRO, CO 906/38; “The Aftermath of Murder” and “An Anti-Sinn Fein Society at Work,” *Weekly Summary*, 12 November 1920, p. 3, PRO, CO 906/38.



soldiers or destruction of railways and telegraphs had occurred by levying money contributions or by burning down one or two houses.<sup>102</sup>

#### D. State of Siege

These articles in the *Weekly Summary* bring us to the final few causes of police reprisals in Ireland. In Shay's analysis, combat trauma begins with betrayal—the betrayal of “what's right,” a betrayal that produces “indignant rage” and the shrinkage of moral and social space—that is, a rejection of loyalties and commitments.<sup>103</sup> Twice in the First Irish War, the Royal Irish Constabulary suffered a betrayal of “what's right”: when republican hunger strikers were freed in the spring of 1920; and again later, when the summer assizes failed. In the spring, the police felt betrayed by the government. In the summer, they felt betrayed by the people. The result was “indignant rage” against both, and a narrowing of police moral and social horizons. After the Tuam police riot, for example, jurors were summoned for a coroner's inquest on the two dead constables, Burke and Carey. None of them attended, and without a jury, the inquest fell through. The police response was bitter.

Head Constable Bowles, who represented the authorities, said from their action in absenting themselves as jurors it might be accepted that the people of Tuam took it to be the right course to murder the police. ‘We must take it that that is the general feeling in the town. It looks as if they had no more regard for a policeman's life than a dog's.’<sup>104</sup>

Isolated, alienated, some constables rejected the force itself: they resigned, they retired, or they became passive, “useless.” Others rejected the government and the people, but remained loyal to their fellow police, turning to self-help in place of due process—vengeance in place of justice. “Suspicion was equivalent to proof; trial to condemnation.”<sup>105</sup> The seed of what Peter Hart calls “a spirit of murderous self-reliance” was planted in the spring, and flourished in the late summer.<sup>106</sup> In mid-April 1920, the

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<sup>102</sup> “Francs-Tireurs in the Seventies,” *Weekly Summary*, 26 November 1920, p. 1, PRO, CO 906/38; see also “Murderers Who Ought to be Hung,” *Weekly Summary*, 3 December 1920, p. 2, PRO, CO 906/38.

<sup>103</sup> Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, pp. 3-37. “What's right” and “indignant rage” are Shay's translations of the Greek words *thémis* and *ménis*. In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon betrays *thémis* by depriving Achilles of his rightful prize, the slave Briseïs. Achilles then withdraws to his tent, filled with *ménis* at Agamemnon's betrayal. In Shay's reading, Achilles' moral and social space contracts until it includes only a single “special comrade,” Patroclus. When Hector kills Patroclus, Achilles goes berserk and returns to the battlefield, where he kills Hector, then desecrates the Trojan's corpse out of grief and rage.

<sup>104</sup> “Sir N. Macready and the Tuam Outbreak,” *Morning Post*, 22 July 1920, p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, I, p. 100.

<sup>106</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, pp. 78-79. Hart emphasizes the first of these betrayals, but seems to have overlooked the second: instead, he blames the “reprisal movement” on the Black and Tans. “These British ex-soldiers began arriving at the Constabulary depot in Gormanstown in January 1920, and this

*Manchester Guardian*'s correspondent was reporting that there was "an unofficial vendetta gang in the Royal Irish Constabulary." "One can only hope," he wrote, "that there will be no attempt at violent reprisals on the 'state of war' lines."<sup>107</sup> The 'violent reprisals' began that summer, after the legal system fell apart. Hugh Martin of the *Daily News* was clear on this point. The police, he said, "know that the State is utterly powerless to punish. No one will be, or can be, brought to book for murder or insult so long as the murdered or the insulted is a servant of the Crown."<sup>108</sup>

Conscious of its own weakness, and fearful that its politically vital Irish constabulary would go to pieces, the State itself connived at police reprisals during the summer and fall of 1920. During this period, the British government, the Irish executive, the British army, and the constabulary's own officers all tolerated and even encouraged reprisals. Some RIC county inspectors were as alienated as their men. "There is an underlying hatred amongst the inhabitants against law and order," one concluded, "and the rooted desire in the minds of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population is to commit crimes against the guardians of law and order, when that can be done with impunity, or at least with small chances of detection."<sup>109</sup> Their approval of reprisals is clear from their monthly reports in the fall of 1920. Mayo's county inspector was particularly bloodthirsty.

I beg to report that the dread of reprisals combined with a more active cooperation of the military in these parts with the Police is exercising a very salutary effect and if quietly and systematically continued will knock the bottom out of the Sinn Fein movement in a short time. People generally are beginning to see whither the Sinn Fein programme is dragging them and to what danger and trouble it exposes them and would for the most part gladly welcome a return to the old status quo with the feeling of safety and security that accompanied it. Sinn Fein never counted on it being possible that reprisals would ever overtake them and they have become much exercised in mind and body at the very suggestion of the application to themselves of a little of their own ointment. That it has seriously crippled Sinn Fein prestige and power already there is no room for doubt.<sup>110</sup>

Some officers did more than just write approving reports. On 24 August 1920 Mark Sturgis met the RIC district inspector for Thurles, County Tipperary. In his diary,

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trickle became a flood in the summer." (p. 81) But as we know, the Gormanstown sub-depot was not opened until June 1920, and the 'flood' of Black and Tans came in the fall, not the summer. Peelers took a much larger part in reprisals that summer than Hart seems to think.

<sup>107</sup> "Police and People in Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 April 1920, p. 8. The subheadings are worth quoting here: "Suspicion of a Counter-Vendetta—The Drift to Lynch Law—Vicious Circle of Violence."

<sup>108</sup> Hugh Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 60.

<sup>109</sup> RIC Reports, CI Leitrim, June 1921, PRO, CO 904/115.

<sup>110</sup> RIC Reports, CI Mayo, October 1920, PRO, CO 904/113. See also RIC Reports, CI Clare, CI Galway West, and CI Kildare, October 1920, PRO, CO 904/113; RIC Reports, CI Cavan, CI Clare, CI Galway West, CI Leitrim, and CI Mayo, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113; RIC Reports, CI Kildare & Carlow and CI Wicklow, December 1920; and RIC Reports, CI Monaghan and CI Westmeath, January 1921, PRO, CO 904/114.

Sturgis referred to this police officer as “a professional ‘Reprisaler.’” “His explanation of the comparative quiet of his district is that his police have the local blackguards marked—and they know it and know that they personally will pay the price if a policeman is shot.”<sup>111</sup> A couple of months later, the discrepancies between official and unofficial versions of the Tubbercurry police riot indicate that the county inspector may have played a more active role in the reprisals than he later admitted.<sup>112</sup> Soon after Tubbercurry, another county inspector blamed the guerrillas for the burning of Granard on 4 November 1920. “On night of 3rd and early morning of 4th,” he wrote, “a large number of persons gathered in Granard. The police were reinforced by military and police from Longford and as long as the extra force remained all was quiet but upon its withdrawal numerous cases of arson and looting occurred.”<sup>113</sup> This ridiculous lie was contradicted both by civilian witnesses and by the military officer commanding the soldiers escorting the police punitive column that night.<sup>114</sup>

Higher authorities also permitted, encouraged, and even ordered reprisals. In March 1921, police reprisals in Clifden, county Galway and Westport, county Mayo were ‘authorized’ by the local divisional commissioner, County Inspector Cruise. General Tudor approved of these actions, even though the divisional commissioner had exceeded his authority.<sup>115</sup> The chief of police himself was himself notoriously soft on reprisals. His address to the police at Eglinton Street barracks in Galway, the night after the police riot of 8 September 1920, was full of encouragement.<sup>116</sup> Tudor’s memorandum on discipline, dated 12 November 1920, was in the same vein. “The Royal Irish

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<sup>111</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 28.

<sup>112</sup> Recall the stress that Acting CI Russell’s report laid on the sight of the dead and wounded police, which he saw first, before his men.

<sup>113</sup> RIC Reports, CI Longford, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>114</sup> “Ruins of Granard,” *Daily News*, 6 November 1920, pp. 1, 3; “Story of Granard Reprisals,” *The Times*, 6 November 1920, p. 12; “Irish Volunteers Awaiting Attack by Troops,” *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1920, p. 11. These reports confirm each other in almost every detail. The county inspector’s version was accepted and passed on to the British cabinet by the RIC’s deputy inspector general. (RIC Reports, IG, November 1920, PRO, CO 904/113) Cases like this led some Castle officials to conclude that: “every report of every single policeman *must* be lies from start to finish.” (Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 136.) For the background to the burning of Granard and the subsequent ‘Battle of Ballinalee’ see Coleman, “County Longford,” Chapter 5, pp. 16-19

<sup>115</sup> “Houses Burned at Clifden,” *Manchester Guardian*, 18 March 1921, p. 9; “16 Houses Burned in Galway Reprisals,” *Manchester Guardian*, 19 March 1921, p. 9; “More Houses and Furniture Destroyed,” *Manchester Guardian*, 28 March 1921, p. 6; “Irish Town Under the Terror,” *Daily News*, 28 March 1921, p. 1, *The Times*, 28 March 1921, p. 8; Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 150; Macready to Anderson, 28 March 1921, Anderson Papers, PRO, CO 904/188; Macready to Anderson, 29 March 1921, Anderson Papers, PRO, CO 904/188; Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 166.

The reprisals at Westport, county Mayo were taken to revenge the death of Sergeant John Coughlan on 22 March 1921: for somewhat conflicting versions of this incident, see Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 136; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p. 213. During the Westport reprisals, republicans were beaten, painted red, white, and blue, and threatened with death: Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 238-39.

According to Castle gossip, Divisional Commissioner Cruise was an ambitious officer who was hoping to become the RIC’s Inspector General: Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 122.

<sup>116</sup> See Chapter Two.

Constabulary has shown unparalleled fortitude in standing up to a diabolical murder campaign,” he wrote. “Discipline has been maintained at a very high level.”

The R.I.C. will have the fullest support in the most drastic action against that band of assassins, the so-called I.R.A. These murderers must be pursued relentlessly and their organisation ruthlessly suppressed. The initiative must be seized, the ambushers must be ambushed. The leaders and members of the criminal gang are mostly known to us. They must be given no rest. They must be hunted down. But, for the effectual performance of these duties, the highest discipline is essential.

Tudor’s memorandum went on to forbid “wild firing from lorries,” “arson and looting,” and assaults on women. “Just because the cowardly blackguards of the I.R.A. cut women’s hair, it is no reason why the R.I.C. should retaliate by similar action,” he said.<sup>117</sup> This was a mild admonition, at best. The chief of police was also quick to defend his men, and slow to believe reports of police reprisals. “Stories are buzzing about as usual of the almost childlike simplicity of Tudor,” Sturgis noted on 13 January 1921. “He does not consciously deceive but his belief in all that’s good of his Black and Tans and his inability to believe a word against them is super human.”<sup>118</sup> Earlier, in his diary for 19 December 1920, Sturgis had laid some of the blame for the murder of Canon Magner on the chief of police: he felt sorry for Cadet Harte, he said, “as these men have undoubtedly been influenced by what they have taken to be the passive approval of their officers from Tudor downwards to believe they will never be punished for anything.”<sup>119</sup>

However, police officials were not alone responsible. Soldiers were generally sympathetic toward the constabulary, and suspicious of Irish civilians.<sup>120</sup> As a result, military courts of inquiry were often lenient with police, returning verdicts of justifiable homicide, or murder “by persons unknown,” after overlooking implausible or contradictory police testimony.<sup>121</sup> One officer later described in his memoirs just how

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<sup>117</sup> Discipline: RIC Circular D.446/1920, 12 November 1920, PRO, HO 184/125, f. 149. The deputy inspector general had written a similar message six weeks before: *Alleged Acts of Reprisal by Police and Soldiers*: RIC Circular D.403/1920, 28 September 1920, PRO HO 184/125, f. 118. Tudor had earlier proposed a special penalty of flogging for men who cut women’s hair: see Chapter One.

<sup>118</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 110. Tudor’s faith in his men was finally shaken by the Drumcondra murders of 9 February 1921: Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, pp. 124-25.

<sup>119</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 95.

<sup>120</sup> Douglas Wimberley MS, Vol. I, IWM, PP/MCR/182, p. 149; E M Ransford MS, IWM, 80/29/1; Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 205.

<sup>121</sup> See the findings of MCI (Louis D’Arcy), 26 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/148; MCI (Denis Carey), 2 December 1920, WO 35/147A; MCI (Thomas Collins), 20 January 1921, PRO, WO 35/147A; MCI (Michael Ferrell), 7 February 1921, PRO, WO 35/150; MCI (William Kerr), 13 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/153A; MCI (Thomas Lawlor), 8 January 192, PRO, WO 35/153A; MCI (Andrew Moynihan), 24 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/155A; MCI (Dennis O’Donnell), 26 November 1920, PRO, WO 35/157B; MCI (Patrick Ryan), 9 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/157B; MCI (William Slattery), 31 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/159A. As well, see the cases below. In his analysis of the findings of these courts of inquiry, Townshend noted that “the tendency to exculpate Crown Forces for deaths caused ‘in the execution of their

misguided these verdicts could be. As adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, Cameron Highlanders in Queenstown, county Cork, it was Captain Douglas Wimberley's duty to preside over courts of inquiry.

Another inquest I held was in a village nearby called Carrigtowell, on the corpse of a man, who was laid out in a cottage surrounded by lighted candles, while a lot of Irish women were holding a wake, and wailing around the body. I came to the conclusion that the man had been murdered by some opposing Irish faction and I returned a verdict of murder by an unknown hand. Many years later, it was revealed to me that the man had in fact been shot, or even murdered, by a certain Cameron, who had been out on his own secretly by night.<sup>122</sup>

In another case, two Volunteers, John Lean and Maurice Reidy, were shot and killed by Auxiliaries in Ballymacelligott, county Kerry on the evening of 25 December 1920. In his monthly report, the deputy inspector general described this as a "murder case." "However, it is possible that this case may prove to be, not murder, but justifiable homicide," he wrote.<sup>123</sup> Sure enough, the police were exonerated by the military court of inquiry, held on 27 December. Major J A Mackinnon, commander of H Company ADRIC, gave the following evidence.

On the December 25th at about 7 P.M. I went with a small party to try and find two or three wanted men whom I thought might come in on Christmas night. On arriving at the house of one Byrne at Ballymacelligott, late manager of the creamery there, I went to the door while the remainder of my party surrounded the house. As I entered I heard a misfire. There were two men in the room. I ordered them at once to put up their hands. Neither of them made any attempt to do so and as I moved across the room I heard a revolver being cocked. I immediately opened fire, hitting Maurice Reidy in the face, who collapsed in his chair, and shooting Lean, who was standing up and firing at me across the table, through the heart. His shot and mine were practically simultaneous, but I think he was hit just before he pulled the trigger. His bullet went past me into the ceiling. Captain Wilkinson then came into the house and took the revolver out of Lean's hand it contained one misfired cartridge one expended round and four unexpended rounds. I then went and fetched the Parish Priest.<sup>124</sup>

Mackinnon's testimony was absurd: standing in a room, facing a man with a cocked revolver, he shot another, unarmed man sitting in a chair, then fired again, before his enemy could fire. To make matters worse, the men in the major's party that night

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duty' is, as one would expect, clear, and the finding that victims 'attempted to escape' or 'failed to halt' often covered culpable laxity in the use of weapons": Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 107.

<sup>122</sup> Wimberley, "Memoirs," I, p. 152.

<sup>123</sup> RIC Reports, IG, December 1920, PRO, CO 904/113.

<sup>124</sup> Evidence of 1st Witness (Major J A Mackinnon, OC H Coy Auxiliary Division RIC), MCI (John Lean and Maurice Reidy). 27 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/153A.

gave evidence contradicting both Mackinnon and each other.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, the court found that Lean and Reidy were to blame for their own deaths: Lean had “used fire arms against the forces of the Crown in the execution of their duty”; for his part, “when fire arms were attempted to be used against the forces of the Crown,” Reidy “had refused to hold up his hands when called upon to do so.”<sup>126</sup>

Occasionally, higher authorities told military courts to make further inquiries. A nearby police patrol was not even questioned by the first court of inquiry into the death of Tom Horan, executed in front of his daughter on 7 March 1921 in county Mayo. The court’s verdict was murder by persons unknown, dressed in police uniforms. This did not satisfy the high command. The court was ordered to reconvene, and the members of the police patrol were questioned. After the police denied any part in Horan’s murder, the court, “having considered the further evidence,” saw “no reason to alter their original verdict.”<sup>127</sup>

In another case, Volunteer Michael Mullooly was shot and killed in his farmyard near Strokestown, county Roscommon on 24 March 1921, the day after the ambush at Scramogue. The shooting took place after Auxiliaries raided Mullooly’s house. According to the testimony of a head constable, Michael “was suspected of having taken part in the ambush, & cutting trenches in the road & cutting wires. He was an active Sinn Féiner. His brother was taken into custody the previous day March 23rd charged with being implicated in the ambush”.<sup>128</sup> Once again, however, the court of inquiry did not even question the Auxiliaries involved, concluding that Mullooly had been killed “by a member or members unknown belonging to the Crown Forces the motive for it being unknown.”<sup>129</sup>

The divisional commander, Major-General Jeudwine, called these proceedings “farcical and useless,” and the court was ordered to reconvene.<sup>130</sup> On 4 April, an anonymous Auxiliary testified that, as the raiding party was leaving, he found he had lost a glove, so he jumped out of his Crossley tender and went back alone looking for it. When he got back to the farmyard, he saw Mullooly, challenged him, and ordered him to put up his hands. “Instead of which he made a quick movement towards his pocket

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<sup>125</sup> Evidence of 2nd Witness (Captain H Wilkinson), 3rd Witness (DI 3 G Livingston Shaw) and 4th Witness (DI 3 R B Robb), MCI (John Lean and Maurice Reidy), 27 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/153A. All three of these men said they were the first into the house after they heard shots fired. Robb, for example, said he followed Mackinnon into the room, saw Reidy draw his revolver and point it at the major, heard two shots, and saw Lean fall. He then went further into the room, where he saw Reidy dead in the chair. Only then did Wilkinson come in, he said.

<sup>126</sup> Findings, MCI (John Lean and Maurice Reidy), 27 December 1920, PRO, WO 35/153A: Brigadier-General Cumming concurred on 4 January 1921; Major-General Strickland concurred on 9 January 1921.

<sup>127</sup> Proceedings of MCI (Tom Horan), 9 March 1921; DAG to Under Secretary, 26 March 1921; Jeudwine to GHQ Ireland, 7 April 1921; proceedings of MCI (Tom Horan), 19 April 1921, PRO, WO 35/152.

<sup>128</sup> Evidence of 5th witness (Head Constable John Clarke RIC, Strokestown), MCI (Michael Mullooly), 28 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/155A.

<sup>129</sup> Opinion, MCI (Michael Mullooly), 28 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/155A.

<sup>130</sup> Major-General H S Jeudwine to GHQ Ireland, 7 April 1921, MCI (Michael Mullooly), 28 March 1921, PRO, WO 35/155A.

whereupon I fired,” he said, shooting the Volunteer in the neck. The Auxiliaries then left the scene, leaving Mullooly where he lay.<sup>131</sup> These proceedings were sent back to Major-General Jeudwine, with the following comments.

Here is the further evidence in the case of Mullooly.

Original Court and your remarks flagged.

Not a very convincing story.

The man does not appear to have been searched for arms to see if he was carrying anything, and the Police seem to have pushed off in a light-hearted way without even waiting to see if he was dead.

You will note that the President of the Inquest did not know that these two men would give evidence and apparently therefore the Police made no report until things began to look awkward...

The whole thing looks very bad viewed in cold blood from an office chair!<sup>132</sup>

No further action was taken in either case. To be fair, Irish people were sometimes unhelpful, even obstructive to these military courts of inquiry. Republicans would not recognize the jurisdiction of these courts. Civilians were probably just afraid of reprisals.<sup>133</sup> After the assassination of Alderman Thomas Halpin and James Moran in Drogheda, county Louth on the night of 8 February 1921, witnesses refused to give evidence at a closed court of inquiry. Unwilling either to set a precedent by holding a public hearing, or to risk a public relations disaster by prosecuting these witnesses for contempt of court, the military simply let the matter drop.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Evidence of 6th Witness (anonymous, E Coy ADRIK), 9 April 1921, PRO, WO 35/155A. Another Auxiliary testified as well, but was unable to corroborate the first cadet's evidence: he did not see the shooting. Nonetheless, the court amended its findings to read: "Michael Mullooly 25 male was shot by a member of the Auxiliary Division in the execution of his duty on March 24th 1921 at Kiltristan."

<sup>132</sup> O Dalrymple to GOC, 20 April 1921, PRO, WO 35/155A.

<sup>133</sup> This fear cut both ways: many police would not identify republican suspects either. Police witnesses at courts of inquiry were often anonymous, and in his memoirs, Wimberley mentions taking elaborate precautions to protect the identities of police witnesses at identification parades: Wimberley MS, I, p. 149.

<sup>134</sup> Proceedings of MCI (Thomas Halpin and James Moran), 10 February 1921; statement by Captain E W Avenell (president of court of inquiry), 19 March 1921; DI Drogheda to Lieutenant F O Virsin, 20 March 1921; Major-General Boyce to GHQ Ireland, 22 March 1921; DAG to Headquarters, Dublin District, 1 April 1921; copy of letter from Meredith Egan re Report Published in "Drogheda Independent," undated, forwarded to HQ Dublin District, 23 April 1921; letter from Philip Monahan, mayor of Drogheda, 24 April 1921. statement by Lieutenant H R Chandler, undated; Major-General Boyce to General Headquarters, 28 April 1921, PRO, WO 35/155A.

(After the Limerick curfew murders of March 1921, the mayor of Drogheda sent a letter to the editor of the *Drogheda Independent*, accusing the authorities of covering up the murders of Halpin and Moran: "Military Inquiry in Drogheda," (letter to the editor by Philip Monahan, mayor of Drogheda), *Manchester Guardian*, 17 March 1921, p. 8. Most of the paperwork relating to this case was generated in response to the mayor's letter.)

A few months later, two buildings were burned in Abbesside, Dungarvan, county Waterford on the night of 15 April 1921, in reprisal for an attack on the police that evening. Bridget Fahey later swore out an affidavit, claiming that vengeful police had set her public house on fire. She could identify one of the men responsible, and her barmaid, Bridget O'Neill, corroborated her statement. A constable named Cady was arrested and eventually put on trial, but Mrs Fahey refused to testify at the constable's court-martial, or even attend a line-up. As a result, Cady was acquitted on 1 July 1921.<sup>135</sup> Anticipating this verdict, a disgusted Major-General Strickland complained about Fahey's attitude in a letter to GHQ on 30 June:

It always seems that such people as these are only too willing to make any kind of statements on paper, but when they are asked to attend in person at a parade of this sort [for identification], they always refuse to do it. This is no help to us, and one would have thought that they would have appreciated the fact that, if only they would do what they are asked on these occasions, cases would be more fully thrashed out to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

I cannot help thinking that the attitude adopted by civilians, in most of the cases which they bring to notice, is such as to warrant little trouble or action being taken on our part to investigate and bring to justice those against whom allegations are made.<sup>36</sup>

Civil servants and politicians played a part in police reprisals as well. Some members of the Irish executive were not opposed to reprisals in principle: after the sack of Balbriggan, Sturgis complained only that, "it is tragic that these men cannot see that indiscriminate burning is idiotic and a little quiet shooting equally effective—and to shoot a known bad man who, if he hasn't just shot your comrade, has no doubt shot somebody else, is morally much more defensible than this stupid blind work."<sup>137</sup> Members of the cabinet, including the prime minister, took this view as well.<sup>138</sup> In the Sturgis diary for 5 October 1920, "T. says L.G. is all against burning but not gunning, and told him as much himself."<sup>139</sup> Wittingly or unwittingly, Chief Secretary Greenwood

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<sup>135</sup> OC Troops Dungarvan to Commandeth GHQ, 14 April 1921 ("About 2300 hours three Black and Tans were bombed and fired at."); GHQ Ireland to 6th Division, 14 April 1921 ("Your attention is drawn to the use of the words 'Black and Tans.' This expression should not be used in official correspondence or telegrams."); HQ Fermoy Brigade to Commandeth Dublin, 17 April 1921 ("About 2300 hours 14th three constables walking out in abbey side dungarvan were bombed and fired on."); Cope to DAG, 10 May 1921; DAG to HQ 6th Division, 13 May 1921; DAG to Ass't Under secretary 13 May 1921; Whiskard to DAG, 6 July 1921 (re "Complaint of Mrs. Bridget Fahey and her barmaid Bridget O'Neill as to the conduct of two 'Black and Tans' on night of 3rd April 1921 and burning of premises at Abbesside, Dungarvan on morning of 14th April."); DAG to Under Secretary, 7 July 1921; DAG to Under Secretary, 22 August 1921, PRO, WO 35/88/4.

<sup>136</sup> GOC 6th Division to GHQ, 30 June 1921, PRO, WO 35/88/4.

<sup>137</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>138</sup> D G Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, pp. 55-56; Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, p. 120.

<sup>139</sup> Hopkinson (ed.), *The Last Days of Dublin Castle*, p. 52; cf. Townshend, *British Campaign in Ireland*, pp. 82, 100, 163-64, 184; Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, pp. 79, 82.



lied repeatedly to the House of Commons. “Granard was not done under officers,” he said on 24 November 1920, referring to the burning on the night of 4 November. “When you have Sinn Feiners stealing uniforms, and when the supposedly popular cry—I think it is not—the supposedly popular cry against the Government is ‘Reprisals,’ it pays Sinn Feiners to burn a house or a creamery.”<sup>140</sup> When a military court of inquiry reported that the police had burned the commercial centre of Cork city on the night of 11th December 1920, its findings were suppressed.<sup>141</sup> In other cases, when military courts exonerated the police, their findings were blazed abroad.<sup>142</sup>

However, to the police in Ireland, speeches in Parliament probably mattered less than a “good evening” from a passer-by.<sup>143</sup> Five decades later, in the early 1970s, three social scientists conducted a famous experiment. They built a simulated prison in the basement of the psychology building at Stanford University; then, they chose two-dozen carefully screened undergraduates as test subjects. Some of the participants became ‘guards.’ The rest became ‘prisoners.’ The experiment was going to last for two weeks, but conditions became so inhumane so quickly that it was ended after just six days. Both groups reacted pathologically to the prison environment. Day by day, the behaviour of the ‘guards’ grew more tyrannical and brutal. As a result, half the ‘prisoners’ suffered emotional breakdowns and had to be released early. The researchers were shocked by the impact of the simulated prison environment on their volunteers. “The inherently pathological characteristics of the prison situation itself,” they concluded, “were a *sufficient* condition to produce aberrant, anti-social behaviour.”<sup>144</sup> The simulation absorbed both ‘guards’ and ‘prisoners’: 90 per cent of the time, they spoke of nothing else. “This excessive concentration on the vicissitudes of their current situation helped to make the prison experience more oppressive for the prisoners because, instead of escaping from it when they had a chance to do so in the privacy of their cells, the prisoners continued to allow it to dominate their thoughts and social relations.”<sup>145</sup>

During the First Irish War, the British government conducted its own twisted version of the Stanford Prison Experiment, in Ireland, where police and rebels fought over the roles of guard and prisoner, punisher and offender, killer and victim. Until the

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<sup>140</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 135, cols. 503-4; on Sir Hamar’s role as apologist-in-chief, see Martin Seedorf, “Defending Reprisals: Sir Hamar Greenwood and the ‘Troubles,’” *Eire-Ireland* 25, no. 4 (1990): pp. 77-92.

<sup>141</sup> Seedorf, “Strickland Report,” pp. 59-66. For the report itself, see PRO, WO 35/88A. Historians have overlooked the fact that the government also suppressed the findings of two military courts of inquiry into the Croke Park Massacre of 21 November 1920: for these reports, see PRO, WO 35/88B, released to the public only in 1999; on the massacre itself, see Leeson, “Death in the Afternoon”. Sir Hamar also refused to publish the findings of the court of inquiry into the sack of Balbriggan: *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 139, col. 686.

<sup>142</sup> United Kingdom, Parliament, *Report of Mallow Court of Inquiry*, Cmd. 1220 (1921). The findings of the court of inquiry into the Castleconnell shootings were presented to the House of Lords, along with a summary of the evidence: *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 45, cols. 267-61.

<sup>143</sup> Recall that Patrick Harnett and Jeremiah Healy were shot and killed in Abbeyfeale, County Limerick after ignoring Constable Huckerby’s ‘good evening.’

<sup>144</sup> Craig Haney, Curtis Banks and Philip Zimbardo, “Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison,” *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* no. 1 (1973), p. 90.

<sup>145</sup> Haney et al., “Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison,” p. 92.

Truce of 11 July 1921, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries lived and worked in a looking-glass world of crimes without criminals, police without laws, trials without judges or juries, and sentences without appeal. The Isle of the Saints became Devil's Island.

## CONCLUSION

After so much violence, we should probably pause, take a step back, and remember that the First Irish War was a very small conflict—indeed, in terms of battle deaths per year it only just qualified as a war. Fourteen hundred men were small change on almost any front of the Great War, and even by post-war standards, the British and Irish let each other off lightly. Consider, for example, the Russo-Polish War of 1920-21. While guerrillas were skirmishing with police in Ireland, the Polish army invaded Ukraine in April 1920, and captured Kiev in May. Soon afterward, however, the Red Army counterattacked, driving deep into Polish territory, till it was defeated at the Battle of Warsaw in August. The Russians then retreated, suffering another severe defeat at the Battle of the Niemen in September. Hostilities were suspended by an armistice in October, and the Treaty of Riga concluded the war in March 1921. At the decisive Battle of Warsaw, the Polish and Red armies each lost an estimated forty thousand killed and wounded, while at least fifty thousand Russians were captured by the Poles or interned by the Germans.<sup>1</sup> Compared to the Russo-Polish conflict, or the Turkish War of Independence, or the Riff War, the First Irish War was a bagatelle.

The Irish conflict was unremarkable by the standards of colonial warfare as well. About five hundred British and Indian soldiers and six thousand Iraqis were killed in the Mesopotamian rebellion of 1920.<sup>2</sup> The next year, in Malabar, twenty-three hundred insurgents were killed in the Moplah rebellion, along with 137 Indian Army soldiers and “great numbers” of Hindu civilians, murdered by the Muslim rebels.<sup>3</sup> Even in peaceful countries, there was bloodshed beyond the worst excesses of the First Irish War. On 16 September 1920, a terrorist bomb exploded on Wall Street in New York City, wounding more than four hundred people and killing thirty-three.<sup>4</sup> Eight months later, on 1 June 1921, more than a thousand Black homes were burned by mobs of White rioters in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The death toll of the Tulsa race riot will never be known: officially, ten Whites and twenty-six Blacks were killed; later estimates put the number of dead close to three hundred.<sup>5</sup>

So, then: so what? Why should we study the First Irish War—this cul-de-sac in the suburbs of European history? So what if Constable Edward Krumm was killed in Galway town on the night of 8 September 1920? So what if his comrades executed Volunteer Seamus Quirke as a reprisal? “In the general calamities of mankind the death of an individual, however exalted, the ruin of an edifice, however famous, are passed

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star. The Soviet-Polish War, 1919-20* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1972), p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Gwynn, *Imperial Policing* (London: Macmillan, 1939).

<sup>4</sup> See contemporary news reports. The bombers were never apprehended, or even identified.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Madigan, *The Burning Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2003).

over with careless inattention.”<sup>6</sup> Why not pass over these less exalted individuals as well?

The skirmishes (and skirmishers) of the First Irish War deserve study for a number of reasons: first, because the war and its outcome have embittered Anglo-Irish relations down to this day; second, because conventional conflicts like the Russo-Polish War have become less common over time; third, because we can learn as much or more from small events as we can from their larger counterparts; and fourth, because for such a small war, the First Irish War engendered a very large number of documents.

Until the late 1960s, British historians took a favourable view of the First Irish War's outcome. In 1965, A J P Taylor concluded that, “the settlement with Ireland was a great achievement, despite its faults. The Irish question had baffled and ruined the greatest statesmen. Lloyd George conjured it out of existence with a solution which was accepted by all except rigorous extremists in the I.R.A.”<sup>7</sup> As late as 1971, D G Boyce thought that, “however much historians differ in their assessment of Lloyd George's career, and their evaluation of his character, few would deny his achievement in disposing of one of the most distracting problems in British politics—the Irish question”.<sup>8</sup> Complacent, anglocentric verdicts like these glossed over the fact that the Treaty did not stop the bloodshed in Ireland: fighting continued unabated in the six counties of Northern Ireland until the summer of 1922, when the Second Irish War broke out between pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces in the remaining twenty-six counties. The Second Irish War was briefer and less bloody than the First, but its unresolved issues dominated Irish politics throughout the 1920s and 30s.

In addition, Taylor's “rigorous extremists” kept fighting their desultory war after 1923: they set off a series of bombs in Britain in 1939, and skirmished with the Royal Ulster and Ulster Special Constabularies during the Border Campaign of 1956-62. Finally, just as Boyce was praising Lloyd George's achievement, Northern Ireland's Troubles were making it clear that partition had alleviated Anglo-Irish conflict, only to reproduce it in a more intractable form fifty years later.<sup>9</sup> Nowadays, after thirty years of both loyalist and republican terrorism, and thousands of deaths, historians take a much dimmer view of the First Irish War and its authors.

Small wars and insurgencies like the Troubles have never been popular subjects for military historians. Traditional military history concentrated on great wars and great men. After social historians invaded the field in the 1970s, they too showed very little interest in low-intensity warfare. They rejected ‘history from above’ and studied the masses instead of the classes, but their interest in masses has ensured that great wars continue to dominate the study of ‘war and society’, even if great men do not.

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<sup>6</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, I, p. 296.

<sup>7</sup> A J P Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, paperback ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965; 2001), p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> Boyce, “Lloyd George and Ireland,” p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> When I first visited the Imperial War Museum in London in the summer of 2000, its Northern Ireland exhibit included a loyalist poster of a Black and Tan: “BRING BACK THE TANS,” it said. Clearly, Northern Ireland's nationalist and unionist communities had rather different ‘popular memories’ of the First Irish War.

Nowadays, of course, cultural historians are making inroads into the field as well, and if nothing else their historiographical preoccupations have revealed another possible reason for the lack of interest in low-intensity warfare: namely, that these wars are uncomfortable to write as well as fight. If history is fiction of a sort, then small wars and insurgencies may be neglected because they make poor stories; guerrilla warfare does not often follow fiction's familiar sequence of initial incident, rising action, climax, and falling action.

However, it seems the paradigm is finally shifting: for example, small wars and insurgencies now have their own journal, a sure sign of academic respectability. The reasons for this are obvious. If the first half of the twentieth century was an age of total war, then the second half was an age of partial war. High-intensity conflicts flashed across the sky, like the meteoric Gulf War of 1991, or passed more slowly, like the cometary war between Iraq and Iran (1980-88); meanwhile, the stars of low-intensity conflict glittered cruelly, numberless, endless, night after night. This pattern shows no sign of changing in the early twenty-first century: Operation Enduring Freedom is over, but the War on Terror continues; the United States crushed Saddam Hussein's conventional forces with ease, but almost every day brings news of American soldiers being ambushed and killed by guerrillas in Iraq; meanwhile, yet another Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire has ended, and the two sides have resumed their unequal struggle. As a result, the First Irish War seems quite modern these days, quite close, like the moon, while its contemporaries are distant, like the sun, eclipsed. In the twilight, the Coalition forces combing Afghanistan's Shah-i-Kot Valley for Taliban and al-Qaeda guerrillas during Operation Anaconda (March 2002) might easily have been mistaken for Auxiliaries of D Company, from eighty years before, searching the wilderness of Connemara for Irish Volunteers.

Of course, more than a thousand soldiers took part in Operation Anaconda, while there were just a hundred temporary cadets in D Company ADRIC. But size does not always matter. One of the most interesting new forms of historical writing since the 1970s has been microhistory, which focuses on villages, families, and individuals. Small wars and insurgencies lend themselves well to this approach: instead of studying formless clouds, military historians can study their individual droplets, for just as great battles look small and simple from a distance, petty skirmishes look large and complex when viewed up close. Above all, by studying small bands instead of large armies, we can learn much about the *passions* of war: "the ardour of contention, the pride of victory, the despair of success, the memory of past injuries, and the fear of future dangers."

Some of the most useful sources for microhistorical research are judicial documents. As we have seen, the First Irish War produced such documents in abundance: indeed, it seems the government forces did as much writing as fighting. Research among the papers and microfilms preserved at the Public Record Office has revealed a number of "typical exceptions," particular cases like the Strokestown bank robbery of 23 December 1920, which, flaring briefly, throw light on the general darkness. There are woodpiles of evidence to fuel the fires of more conventional approaches as well: registers and returns for the social historian, minutes and memoranda for the political historian—something for everyone, in fact. This work offers just a sample of

what lies in store: many documents that are passed over quickly here, like the register of crime for the province of Connaught, would surely reward careful study by themselves. History is written in sand rather than stone, and I for one expect, even hope to see my conclusions revised by researchers after me.

For now, though, my conclusions are briefly these. The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were not the savages of Irish republican folklore. Most of them were quite ordinary men, who nonetheless did sometimes behave in savage ways. The Auxiliaries were somewhat less ordinary than the Black and Tans, and behaved with greater licence, but this was merely the privilege of rank. Some Black and Tans may indeed have been “men of really bad character.” Many of these men may have been old soldiers who had served in the army before the Great War. However, it seems that such men quickly broke the Royal Irish Constabulary’s unwritten rules, which allowed violence against republicans but not against civilians. This deviant minority was dismissed and even imprisoned, but most of the Black and Tans continued to serve alongside Irish bitter-enders—men who were fighting a vicious gang war with the IRA. General Tudor’s beast folk in the ADRIC were less likely to be punished for exceeding the “margins of tolerated illegality,” but once again, rank has its privileges. Under the constant stress of guerrilla warfare, relieved only by drinking, many Black and Tans either quit the Force or followed the bad example of their alienated Irish comrades. Operating independently, free from oversight and restraint, and even from the sometimes moderate influence of the RIC’s Irish majority, some Auxiliaries behaved with even greater cruelty than the Black and Tans. The violence of both forces was overlooked and even encouraged by the British government, which was anxious to keep up the pretence that the Irish insurgency was a “policeman’s job”. This created a climate of lawlessness, which seems to have encouraged both political and non-political crimes. The results are now legendary: the popular memory of a force of ex-convicts and violent veterans endures to this day.

In April 1921, Lloyd George wrote: “I venture to believe that when the history of the past nine months comes to be written, and the authentic acts of misconduct can be disentangled from the vastly greater mass of reckless and lying accusations, the general record of patience and forbearance displayed, by the Auxiliaries as well as the ordinary Constabulary, will command not the condemnation, but the admiration of posterity.”<sup>10</sup> Lloyd George was a poor prophet. During the nine months in question, the Peelers, Black and Tans, and Auxiliaries displayed anything but patience and forbearance. Still, we should reserve some of our condemnation for their political masters and their enemies, both of whose intransigence led to war. Later in life, Tom Barry came to the conclusion that Dominion Home Rule could have been achieved without violence: “Redmond could probably have got that for us without a drop of blood being spilt,” he said.<sup>11</sup> It was both sides’ unwillingness to meet each other half way—to consider the compromise of dominion status—a compromise that seems natural, even obvious to a Canadian, like myself—that created the conditions in which black-and-tannery flourished.

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, pp. 193-94.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Griffith and O’Grady, *Ireland’s Unfinished Revolution*, p. 266.

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