THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The British Army in Ireland 1916-1921: A Social and Cultural History

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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by

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Synopsis

The primary aim of this work is to provide a social and a cultural history of British soldiers who served in Ireland during the revolutionary period stretching from the Easter Rising of 1916 to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921. As such, it represents the first concerted attempt to view the period though the eyes of the soldiery and both challenge and corroborate 'received' views of the military's role in the conflict. Previous accounts have tended to cast the military in a peripheral role; this study restores troops to the centre ground. In so doing, it will demonstrate that soldiers had a crucial role to play in shaping both military policy and (by reaction) the nature of the rebel campaign. It will also reveal the military's part in influencing Anglo-Irish relations for the worse by contributing to a culture of vigilantism in the Crown forces.

By tapping into a wealth of previously unexploited sources including soldiers' memoirs, letters, war diaries and regimental journals, the study will explore soldiers' quotidian service life and bring fresh perspectives to the military history of the period. It will explore central themes such as isolation, endurance, recrimination and revenge. A further chapter (incorporating post-conflict analyses) will uncover how these experiences formed the soldiers' assessments of the political and military aspects of the period, as well as their opinion of the Irish nation and people.

Above all, this study will build on approaches which move away from the paradigm of (narrative based) military-political studies of the period which have tended to obscure the role both of individuals and of non-elites. In so doing, it will restore the importance of 'fighting' and 'front-line' experience as a major determinant of the conflict and the period.

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The National Archives; Imperial War Museum; National Army Museum; Liddell-Hart Centre for Military Studies; House of Lords Record Office; British Library, Boston Spa; British Library, London; Brotherton Library, Leeds University; Midleton Library, Glasgow; The Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull; Archives of the Border Regiment, Carlisle; Cameron Highlanders' Regimental Archives, Fort George; Duke Of Wellington Regiment Archives, Halifax; East Yorkshire Regiment Archives, York; Green Howards' Regimental Archives, Trinity Church, Richmond; Kings Own Scottish Borderers (K.O.S.B) Regimental Archive, Berwick Upon Tweed; Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (K.O.Y.L.I) Regimental Archive, Doncaster; Royal Scots' Fusiliers Regimental Archive, Glasgow; King's Liverpool Regiment Archive, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside; Lincolnshire Regiment Archives, Museum of Lincolnshire Life; Museum of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, Manchester Regiment Archives, Tameside Local Studies Library.

List of Abbreviations

ORGANIZATIONAL, PERSONAL AND REGIMENTAL TITLES/MISCELLANEOUS:

A.D.R.I.C. – Auxiliary Division Royal Irish Constabulary.

CAB – Cabinet Office.

C.I.G.S. – Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

C.M.A. – Collection Management Authority.

C.O. – Colonial Office.

C.O. – Commanding Officer.

Coy. – Company.

D.C.I.G.S. – Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

D.C.L.I. – Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

D.C.L.I. – Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

D.I. – District Inspector, R.I.C.

D.M.O. – Director of Military Operations.

D.M.P. – Dublin Metropolitan Police.

D.O.R.A. – Defence of the Realm Act.

D.O.R.R. – Defence of the Realm Regulations.

Div. – Division.

G.H.Q. – General Headquarters.

G.H.Q. – General Headquarters.

G.O.C. – General Officer Commanding.

G.O.C.-in-C. – General Officer Commanding-in-Chief.

G.P.O. – General Post Office.

G.S. – General Support.

G.S.I.C. – General Staff Irish Command.

H.Q. – Headquarters.

I.A.O.S. – Irish Agricultural Organization Society.

I.C.A. – Irish Citizen Army.

I.R.A. – Irish Republican Army.

I.R.B. – Irish Republican Brotherhood.

I.V. – Irish Volunteers.

J.A.G. – Judge Advocate General.

J.P. – Justice of the Peace.

K.O.S.B. – King's Own Scottish Borderers.

K.O.Y.L.I. – King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

MS – Manuscript.

N.C.O. – Non-Commissioned Officer.

O.B.L.I. – Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

O.C. – Officer Commanding

P.R.O. – Public Record Office.

R.A.F. – Royal Air Force.

R.A.S.C. – Royal Army Service Corps

R.I.C. – Royal Irish Constabulary.

R.O.I.A. – Restoration of Order in Ireland Act.

R.O.I.R. – Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations.

TS – Typescript.

T.U.C. – Trade Union Congress

U.V.F. – Ulster Volunteer Force.

W.O. – War Office.

Introduction

The rich and flourishing tradition of biographical and scholarly investigation into the Irish War of Independence has provided students of the period with a solid foundation upon which to develop fresh lines of enquiry. In recent years, a number of eminent historians working in the field have stressed the need for new thematic and methodological approaches to tackle, amongst other issues, the relationship of Ulster to the war, the basis for a violent conflict, the necessity for violence in achieving a settlement, and the comparative dimensions linking the Irish War of Independence to later conflicts and revolutionary episodes.[1]

There can be little doubt that pioneering studies in these areas would greatly enrich our understanding of the period (particularly in relation to the 'unfinished' aspects of the War). However, it is difficult to imagine how we can strive towards new understandings, particularly in relation to comparative studies, when several of the key players in the conflict, notably the military, have yet to fully engage the attention of scholars.[2] With this in mind, this thesis will seek to restore the regular army to the centre-ground of the conflict. In so doing it will demonstrate an approach that emphasises the importance of front-line 'cultural' and 'social' experiences as a determining factor in conflict. It will further explore the motivating factors that drove soldiers' actions, and establish how these were influenced by core factors such as

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[1] Michael Hopkinson has suggested that 'partitionist attitudes on both sides of the border' have been an obstacle to a more holistic approach that would establish the conflict as more than 'a twenty six county affair'. He has also called for further investigation into the relationship between a violent conflict and the eventual scope of the Treaty that established the Irish Free State. See *The Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2004) pp. xix – xx; 'Negotiation: The Anglo-Irish War and the Revolution' in J.Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution 1913-23* (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 123-4; Both Peter Hart and Charles Townshend have stressed the need to produce further comparative studies of the conflict. Townshend has suggested this as a means by which to assess the extent to which 'revolution' is a useful or problematic term when applied to the Irish War of Independence, see 'Historiography: Telling the Irish Revolution' in Augusteijn, *Ibid*, pp.1-2, 4, 7, 13. Peter Hart has asserted that the comparative study of other 'mass movements, citizens' revolts, and guerrilla wars of liberation' should be utilised 'to generate new questions and answers' and restore Ireland to 'the analytical canon' of revolution studies, see *The I.R.A. at War 1916-23* (Oxford, 2003) pp 6, 29.

[2] In terms of published works there have been very few attempts to link the Irish War of Independence to other conflicts. One notable exception is T.Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security: The Case of Ireland 1916-21 and Palestine 1936-39* (London, 1977) in which the author contrasts the relative success of the Irish uprising, based on robust fighting, intelligence, communication, and propaganda networks, with the failure of Palestinian rebels to develop a similarly comprehensive organisational structure.

government policy, operational strategy, living conditions, insurgency, community relations and political and ethnic identities.

For example, in the case of military reprisals it is clear that soldiers' motivations cannot simply be extrapolated from statements issued by a government and military authority that singularly failed to understand or control reprisals throughout the period. Rather, it is argued, a whole range of political, cultural, psychological and sociological factors need to be invoked. What is needed here is a more holistic approach linking policy and front-line experience and establishing the order of action and reaction, from top to bottom and vice versa.

The role of the military has often been demonised in contemporary and nationalist accounts or, less forgivably, ignored altogether by more objective historians.[3] Even many traditional 'sensational fighting narratives' with their pungent presentations of revolutionary violence, have often failed to find a place amongst the revolutionary crowd for the British "Tommy".[4] Seemingly outperformed in terms of aggression and brutality by their colleagues in the new R.I.C., soldiers have usually failed to make the final cut for a role in the nationalist foundation epic and, despite some pioneering research, they have never quite engaged the full attention of students or scholars of the period.[5] For example, historian Richard English in his engaging narrative account *Armed Struggle: The History of the I.R.A.* failed even to mention the British Army in relation to the I.R.A. until the deployment of British troops to Northern Ireland in August 1969 following clashes between the police and the Catholic community in Derry. For the early period he focused almost exclusively on the development of the I.R.A. via an antagonism against the civil authority.[6]

It is hoped that the themes explored in this study will help to restore some balance: this study will be the first to provide a dedicated analysis of the British army in Ireland during the period in question. The need to understand the motivations of

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[3] With reference to the demonisation of the military, see in particular, Tom Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Tralee, 1971) and Sean Moylan, *In His Own Words: His Memoir of the Irish War of Independence*, (Aubane, 2004). Moylan focused his criticism solely on the military, sometimes in part exoneration of the R.I.C.

[4] The phrase 'sensational fighting narrative' is borrowed from Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. xix.

[5] Alvin Jackson commenting on unionist and republican literature of the 1920's and 30's observed how the 'Irish Free State was...supplied with a revolutionary mythology and hagiography by its scholarly and polemical defenders...reaching a literary apex with Ernie O'Malley's, *On Another Man's Wound* (1936)' this process has been variously referred to as the 'creation myth' or 'foundation epic' of modern Ireland. See 'Irish Unionism' in D.G.Boyce and Alan O'Day, *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996) p. 126.

[6] R.English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the I.R.A.* (London, 2003)

soldiers and how these were determined by their quotidian service life will provide the rationale for the research presented in this thesis. By exploring the culture of service life in Ireland, this study will engage a methodological and conceptual approach that will seek to define culture via categories of enquiry based on issues such as 'ethnicity', 'race', 'violence', 'power', 'relationships' 'community', 'geography', 'class', 'periodization' and even 'social psychology'. All of which are burgeoning elements in the recent historiography of the period.[7]

Sources

The conflict is remarkable for the volume and the variety of source material that was generated. This richness of detail has allowed the likes of Fitzpatrick, Hart, Farry and Coleman to produce detailed micro-studies of communities, families and even low-profile individuals within specific localities.[8] Indeed, the conflict has proved to be especially fertile ground for the meticulous researcher, as Hart has claimed: 'practically the only limit to enquiry is that created by the historian's imagination.'[9]

In the interest of providing an imaginative and analytical approach to the available material, this study will bring to light several under-exploited sources, including a number of unpublished diaries and memoirs generated by troops during this period. Through a diachronic analysis of previously unexplored regimental journals, digests of service and war diaries, this study will trace the development of a culture of fear and discontent in the Irish garrison. A careful reading of official service records, regimental histories and War Office and Cabinet Office files should also lend support to this analysis. These sources should also allow further connections to be established between official policy, military strategy and front-line experience. By contrasting

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[7] Many of these elements have formed lines of enquiry in the work of (amongst others) Coleman, Farry, Hart and Fitzpatrick (see footnote 8). In particular, Peter Hart has recently highlighted the potential for a 'a new revolutionary history' based around these categories of enquiry which would make full use of the broad range of source materials originating from the period. See Hart, *The I.R.A. at War*, pp. 3 –29.

[8] See D.Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution,* (Dublin, 1977); Peter Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies, Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-23* (Oxford, 1998); Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921: A Chronicle of Conflict* (Trim, 1992); *The Aftermath of Revolution: Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin, 2000) and Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution, 1919-1923* (Dublin, 2003).

[9] Hart, *The I.R.A. at War*, p. 6.

and supplementing sources in this way, this study will espouse the cultural aspects of military life in Ireland as a determining factor in shaping the pattern of hostilities.

This study will also bring fresh perspectives by incorporating contemporary investigative journalism as a tool of analysis. By harnessing the most penetrating journalistic enquiries from the time it should be possible to establish a counterpoint to the wealth of military source material.[10] In addition, a balance of adroit journalistic sources should allow for a greater appreciation of background events; in a war driven by rumour, mythology, speculation and polished propaganda, it is important to examine the background to the lofty claims made by participants on both sides.

Despite the quantity and the diversity of the sources available for a study of this kind, it would be unwise to proceed without considering their limitations. The most obvious drawback to the use of diaries and memoirs is the (rather self evident) fact that they restrict the researcher to accounts compiled by those who chose to record their experiences. Those who did were usually motivated by the exceptional nature of their period of service, and consequently any qualitative analysis of diaries and memoirs will always exhibit bias towards a sensationalized view of events. This factor will also make the study more area specific, with a disproportionate amount of recorded material arising from the most active areas such as West Cork or Dublin District. Added to this, a sharp escalation in rebel activity in the final year of the conflict has tended to detract attention from the formative events of the earlier period. It is also important to recognize that many soldiers, especially those recalling an earlier period, were likely to have regarded Irish service as an unremarkable interval in their military careers and certainly not one that inspired them to record their experiences for posterity. Those who did probably had very personal reasons for doing so and, we can fairly assume, would be unlikely to make their memoirs available in public archives.

The Anglocentric nature of military sources is another important consideration for a study of this kind, especially so given that very few of the many Irish soldiers who served in the British army appear to have left written records of the period. It is not altogether clear whether this resulted from a conflict of emotions or whether Irish ex-servicemen were simply loath to dwell on their service with the British army.

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[10] See (in particular) reports, editorials and articles published in *The Times*, 1919-1921; also H.Martin *Ireland in Insurrection* (London, 1921); H.W.Nevinson, *Last Changes, Last Chances* (Plymouth, 1928) and Wilfred Ewart, *A Journey in Ireland, 1921* (London, 1922).

Certainly, those who remained were an especially conspicuous group in post-Treaty Ireland, and a common target for militant republicans.[11]

Many accounts of the period were also compiled several years after the events that they describe which tends to create both constraints and advantages for researchers. On the one hand, this phenomenon can contribute towards more dispassionate and considered accounts, on the other, a delayed retrospective analysis also has the potential to misrepresent a person's true feelings or experiences during the period in question. The delay between an event being experienced and being recorded tends to increase the fallibility of memory, and reliability is further compromised by a condition of memory known as 'paramnesia', in which events become 'distorted, telescoped, transposed or otherwise confused' over time.[12] It is hoped that a diligent approach involving a broad range of source materials can help to limit the potentially misleading effects of bias and false memory. Furthermore, the legacy of previous research, particularly the detailed reconstructions of both major and minor events, should allow for an appropriate use of secondary literature as a means by which to eliminate some of these inherent problems.

Historiographical context

General

In terms of research and scholarship, the period has been subject to the detailed analysis of participants and historians alike. These works (varying greatly in quality) have tended to approach the period from a biographical perspective or via a particular narrative thread. Therefore, students of the period are first struck by the lack of any general narrative text reconciling the political, military, social and economic aspects of the period into a coherent whole.[13] This lack of an interconnected narrative has

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[11] See J.Leonard 'Getting Them at Last: The I.R.A. and Ex-servicemen' in D.Fitzpatrick (ed) *Revolution? Ireland 1917-23* (Dublin, 1999), and Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies*, pp. 293-315.
[12] In the foreword to his memoir, *Dublin Made Me* (Dublin, 1979), C.S.Andrews acknowledged that his account was written mainly from memory. He therefore disclaimed 'any intention of writing a historical account of these years', p. 7.
[13] Hopkinson's *The Irish War of Independence*, J.M.Curran's *The Birth of the Irish Free State 1921-23* (Alabama 1980) and C.Townshend's *The British Campaign 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford, 1975) are probably the most comprehensive accounts of the period currently available.

often compelled the student to approach the period largely through a reading of specialized monographs, localised studies, biographies and memoirs.[14]

The dominant (auto)biographical history of the period looks set to be further boosted by the recent release of 1,800 statements made to the [Irish] Bureau of Military History between 1947 and 1957. Established by the de Valera government in order to capture the everyday experiences of participants in the conflict, this collection was, after a number of delays, finally opened by the Taoiseach in March 2003. In terms of published material, the first fruit of this release was Sean Moylan's brilliantly readable account *In His Own Words.*[15]

In terms of secondary literature, historians, military strategists and social geographers have, amongst others, scoured the period for insights and produced an abundance of published works. This diverse output has included studies of the machinations of irregular conflict, as in Taber's *Study of Guerrilla Warfare,* or a chronicle of governmental failure as in O`Halpin's *The Decline of the Union* or John McColgan`s *British Policy and the Irish Administration.*[16] Other authors have isolated disparate groups in the struggle, for example, Buckland's account centred on the experiences of unionists, Conlan provided a valuable study of women revolutionaries and Bradley focused on the history of farm labourers in the struggle.[17] In contrast, Michael Hopkinson has provided the most complete (multi-dimensional) account of the conflict in his study *The Irish War of Independence*. The strength of Hopkinson`s

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[14] Particularly useful specialized monographs have included A.D.Harvey, 'Who were the Auxiliaries?, *Historical Journal* (Sept, 1992); J.Leonard 'Getting Them at Last'; P.Hart, 'The Thompson Submachine Gun in Ireland revisited', *Irish Sword* (Summer, 1995). For a list of the most prominent regional studies (see footnote 8). Recommended biographical accounts include T.P.Coogan, *Michael Collins: A Biography*, (London, 1990); D.Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2003); R.English, *Ernie O'Malley, I.R.A. Intellectual* (Oxford, 1998); T.Ryle Dwyer, *Big Fellow, Long Fellow: A Joint Biography of Collins and de Valera* (Dublin, 1999); M.G.Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary: General Sir Richard Mulcahy and the Founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992). The most famous memoirs to emerge from the period include: General Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, Two Volumes (London, 1924); Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Tralee 1964) [possibly ghostwritten]; Michael Brennan, *The War in Clare 1911-1921: Personal Memoirs of the War of Independence* (Dublin, 1980); Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*; Andrews, *Dublin Made Me,* and Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, (Dublin, 1979).

[15] Moylan, *In His Own Words*. Although these contributions were recorded as Witness Statements to the Bureau of Military History, they did, in some cases provide lengthy overviews of the period as a whole and sometimes ran to several hundred pages. Moylan's account, for example, is 136 pages long and covers all the major milestones in his life from childhood to the truce of July 1921.

[16] R.Taber, *The War of the Flea. A study of Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice.* See chapter VII 'The Irish Troubles and the Role of the Black and Tans' (New York, 1965); E.O'Halpin, *The Decline of the Union: British Government in Ireland 1892-1920* (Dublin, 1987); J.McColgan, *British Policy and the Irish Administration* (London, 1983).

[17] P.Buckland, *The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland 1885-1922*, (Dublin, 1972); L.Conlan, *Cumann na mban and the women of Ireland 1913-25*, (Kilkenny, 1969); D.Bradley, *Farm Labourers and the Irish Struggle 1900-1976*, (Belfast, 1988).

work lies in his ability to portray the outstanding characters and events of the conflict whilst simultaneously highlighting more oblique and specialized themes.[18] Therefore, despite the broad ambition of his study, his focus on regional variations in the experience of conflict, and his concern for the minutiae of local events, has allied his work with the very best regional studies to emerge in recent years. The use of themed chapters with relevant chronologies also provides a narrative and thematic strength that, combined with an impressive scope of research, should establish the account as a general text for students of the period.

Of particular relevance to this study is a chapter exploring the uneasy deployment of the British forces during this period. The evacuation of R.I.C. barracks in rural areas in late 1919 and early 1920 is recognised as a mistaken withdrawal of British power from active areas at a time when military reinforcement could have relieved the situation for the police. To Hopkinson, it was this retreat that allowed republican militias to become the *de facto* civil authority in rural areas and, as such, represented 'the most decisive development of the War of Independence' necessitating the later introduction of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries, to win back the ground lost by the R.I.C.[19] However, this 'ground…could never be fully recovered' due to 'half measures' in government policy arising from a consistent failure to place the conflict on a war footing.[20] Therefore, despite the more 'military' character of the conflict in the later period, the army were never elevated far beyond a subordinate role to the civil authority.

Hopkinson highlighted two significant events that could be said to illustrate the military's ambiguous role in the conflict. The first concerned the government's failure to capitalise on search and arrest operations during the early part of 1920. New powers aimed at securing the arrest and deportation of suspects, were continually undermined by flawed police intelligence and by the government's retreat from its own policy. The most significant *volte face* on the part of the government eventually resulted in the release of convicted prisoners following a series of hunger strikes in April 1920. The second notable event concerned was the capture and imprisonment of Brigadier General Lucas in June 1920. To Hopkinson, this episode highlighted all the

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[18] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*. The broad scope of Hopkinson's study is demonstrated by a wide variety of chapters including (among others) studies of the background to the Irish revolution, British administration, the Dáil government, the British security forces, guerrilla warfare and the pro-republican relationship between Ireland and America.
[19] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 47.
[20] *Ibid*, pp. 50-51.

key elements of the army's irregular role in the conflict. As a respected military figure, the ease with which Lucas was captured, his failure to take adequate precautions, his time spent enjoying the hospitality of his captors, and finally, his calamitous escape, were a deep source of embarrassment for the military. His treatment also highlighted the differential status of policeman and soldiers at this stage of the conflict. As Hopkinson asserted, it became (after the capture of Lucas) 'inconceivable that senior military personnel should be unprotected when off duty.' This situation heralded the military's total immersion in the conflict from mid 1920.[21]

Hopkinson's observations concerning the military (though insightful) were less developed than his analysis of the geographical spread of the conflict and the psychological purpose of guerrilla warfare. His account suggests that the uneven dispersal and the sporadic nature of I.R.A. operations (both between and within districts) was no real impediment to the success of a guerrilla campaign that made great currency from small-scale individual actions. In a rebuke to the traditional presentation, Hopkinson suggested that the scale or frequency of operations was not crucial to success in the conflict, but rather that 'the success of a guerrilla force is partly built on myth: from a British perspective it was a sinister, shadowy, intangible and ubiquitous presence threatening them anywhere and at any time.'[22]

Regional Studies

Equally valuable regional and intra-regional studies have proliferated in the last 15 years. These studies have tended to focus on the general experience of conflict within specific regions and, via event based reconstructions and analytical narratives, have yielded valuable insights into the variety of military experiences in Ireland. This historiographical strain was largely inspired by the publication of David Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life* in 1977. Fitzpatrick set out to understand the interaction of politics and social experience at a provincial level and, despite his main focus on Irish political behaviour in County Clare, was careful not to separate members of the Crown forces from 'the psychological power that popular movements exert upon the individual.'[23] His account also highlighted the diminishing status of the soldiery in

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[21] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence,* p. 53.
[22] *Ibid*, p.201.
[23] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-21*, p. 22.

Clare, as it developed from an 'insider' status to eventual isolation from the bulk of the community. Despite this, he claimed that active rebels proved less willing to engage the army in combat than the police, and soldiers were, until 1921, able to patrol the streets without fear of molestation. To Fitzpatrick, their estrangement from the Irish people resulted from self-imposed isolation rather than 'cruel social ostracism' and this separation led to a general malaise that seriously undermined their professionalism.[24] As republican violence intensified during 1921 much of the resulting frustration gave rise to revenge attacks.

Fitzpatrick's study was an early attempt to relate political developments to community life. His thematic approach opened up the social, psychological and anthropological aspects of the period, and these strands have allowed later scholars to reach a new appreciation of the period. In particular, Peter Hart (a student of Fitzpatrick) has provided important provincial perspectives in respect of the socio-political aspects of the period. His account, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies* captured the experiences of Irish volunteers, civilians, policemen and soldiers in the flashpoints of County Cork. Like Fitzpatrick, he was primarily concerned with the motivating factors behind insurgency, and yet his book serves as a 'wake-up call' for historians of the British army. Unlike Fitzpatrick's presentation of a military detached from the main experience, Hart described how, from an early stage, the army became embroiled in a cycle of terror and counter-terror. Furthermore, he highlighted the processes by which an irregular conflict resulted in a disparity of advantage in favour of the rebels, a factor which had serious implications for military professionalism.

Hart was also anxious to convey the similarity of experiences between British infantrymen and Irish guerrillas, particularly in relation to the shared sense of isolation resulting from a hostile climate. To both sides, the landscape was 'suffused with danger' and this compound of fear, isolation and chronic fatigue manifested itself in the form of reprisals, death squads and revenge attacks which converged to create a 'dynamic of escalation' driven by a 'reciprocal siege mentality.'[25]

A strikingly different revolutionary experience was suggested by Michael Farry for County Sligo both during and after the Anglo-Irish conflict. Farry described how the military (in common with the civil population) never became as deeply involved in the revolutionary cycle as their colleagues in Tipperary, Cork or Dublin. This

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[24] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-21*, p. 26.
[25] Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies,* pp. 96, 102, 108.

resulted, largely, from the unwillingness of local Volunteers to organise and combine against British forces in the area. During 1918, when arms raids on R.I.C barracks became commonplace in active areas, Volunteers in Sligo were not yet sufficiently numerous to mount a parallel campaign. By the time that adequate battalion strength had been established for this purpose, the R.I.C. had already abandoned their outposts and the Sligo I.R.A. had effectively 'missed the boat.'[26] Despite the best efforts of local republican activist Frank Carty, the Volunteers were never to recover from this deficiency of armaments and the Crown forces were subject to fewer enemy attacks than in other areas. In turn, a dearth of significant I.R.A. actions against the forces of the Crown produced fewer notable reprisals: 'When attacks and deaths did take place the reprisals were limited in area and intensity. None resulted in loss of life, nor was there any civilian death as a result of other Crown forces activity.'[27] Consequently, there was no real escalation in the cycle of violence which may have converted local republican sympathies into more active rebellion against the Crown forces. Unlike Hart's description of the situation in West Cork, the relationship between local republicans and British soldiers was never defined by a murderous animosity.

A very different experience again was suggested by Marie Coleman in her account *County Longford and the Irish Revolution 1910-1923*. In her introduction, Coleman stated her intention to produce an exclusive 'study of Irish nationalism' within a specific county, and yet her account did 'in passing' offer some particularly useful insights into the predicament of the Crown forces within a specific and anomalous locality.[28]

Coleman claimed that 'proportionate to its population, Longford was more violent than any other county in Leinster…and was the most violent county in the country outside Munster.'[29] For the military, the rebels' impressive work-rate prompted a response in kind; troops were engaged in a variety of counter measures consisting mainly of raids, arrests, patrols and area searches. By far the most significant operation was launched in May 1921 when joint police and military patrols scoured the 5th Division area for I.R.A. suspects and secured 600 arrests of which twenty-eight were detained.[30] Despite these successes, troops were subject to a

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[26] Farry, *The Aftermath of Revolution*, pp. 8-9.
[27] *Ibid*, p.16.
[28] Coleman, *County Longford*, p. 7.
[29] *Ibid*, p. 5.
[30] *Ibid*, p. 131.

relentless campaign by a numerically deficient I.R.A. battalion and the combined efforts of the military and the local I.R.A. eventually led the military to impose a curfew order in January 1921, in preference to full martial law.

Joost Augusteijn placed regional studies of the conflict on a new level by highlighting important local perspectives, and establishing a valuable comparative dimension. Particularly useful for this study was his attempt to understand how soldiers and policemen reacted to the demands of conflict. Of the police, he claimed 'they either resigned, stayed but attempted to remain out of trouble or, or met violence with violence' an assessment that could easily be extended to the military if 'resignation' were understand to mean 'desertion' or 'forced incapacity.'[31]

Augusteijn also forwarded his own theory to explain differential levels of violence between counties. Unlike Hart's later description of escalating violence in County Cork, he recognised that a 'tit for tat' pattern of violence in some areas co-existed with 'downward spirals' in the level of violence in others. Where violence escalated further violence in County Cork – in the counties of Mayo, Wexford and Derry violent incidents met with a cautious response on both sides. Augusteijn also demonstrated how violence could also diminish violence where news of police, military or rebel atrocities in active areas discouraged similar actions on the part of troops, policemen and nationalists in quiet areas. Therefore, rather than nurture violent tendencies, the most common reaction to violence was a heightened survival instinct:

> Volunteers everywhere were well aware that violence against the Crown forces would engender violence against them, and many consequently remained inactive…The attempts by many Volunteer officers to keep killings to a minimum stimulated similar diligence on the other side. This was occasionally the start of a downward spiral in the level of violence, leading eventually to an unofficial stand off.[32]

Anxiety, fear, hesitancy and self-preservation are much overlooked elements in the study of conflict and their effect on combatants is crucial in determining the nature of

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[31] J.Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare – The Experiences of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence*, (Dublin, 1996) p. 222.
[32] *Ibid*, p. 223.

engagements. In Ireland, a fear of the consequences of violence had the effect of drawing many areas into a military stalemate.

Despite this, in areas where the pattern of violence did become established, all combatants became prone to violent offensives as a means by which to eliminate any further threat:

> Fear guided the behaviour of many in the Crown forces. Minor sniping attacks often resulted in an indiscriminate fusillade from the barracks. The men cooped up inside, scared by stories of attacks elsewhere were extremely nervous. When caught in an ambush, their reaction was similarly indiscriminate.[33]

According to Augusteijn, many Crown troops graduated from defending their positions to rampaging through towns and villages in an effort to eliminate their opponents. Whether in attack or retreat, their actions usually resulted from a heightened sense of self-preservation, which in turn lead to a 'growing familiarity with bloodshed.'[34]

Military Studies

Whereas the role of the military is threaded through many regional studies, it has never formed the main focus of study. Nonetheless, Con Costello's meticulous account *A Most Delightful Station: The British Army on the Curragh of Kildare, 1855-1922*, despite being mainly concerned with the historic links between the military and civilians in Irish garrison towns, did provide an exclusive military perspective on the period. The emphasis of Costello's account differed greatly from other treatments of the military during the period. His account covers the development of military culture and barrack life from the establishment of a camp at the Curragh in March 1855 to the final withdrawal of British forces in May 1922. A lively description of the social scene that developed between the military and the local populace is particularly vivid in his account. Costello revealed how Kildare's traditionally gentrified social life, (involving racing, polo, cricket and shooting) was boosted by the influx of 'gentlemanly' officers who immersed themselves in a virtual

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[33] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 227.
[34] *Ibid*, p. 246.

colonial playground. Likewise, the lower ranks (more restricted by the demands of training and the drill season) embraced 'the sporting [and educational] opportunities of the district' including 'reading-rooms and libraries, cricket and football matches, with shooting clubs and all other attractions enumerated therein.'[35] Costello's account also recalled how the military acquired an entourage of civilians of all classes attracted by 'military revues, field days, manoeuvres, or ceremonial celebrations for royal birthdays.'[36] Despite the burgeoning conflict, the most remarkable feature of Costello's account is the sense of continuity that he conveys between periods in the history of the British army on the Curragh. Despite the 'troubles', Costello wrote that the 'the British military did not neglect its traditions or its sporting events…Nery Sports Day at Newbridge in September 1920…attracted a large audience of military and civilian friends.'[37] Even as late as April 1921, a military football match held at Newbridge attracted an enthusiastic civilian crowd and officers felt secure enough to continue to attend the Curragh races.[38] Above all, Costello's account of life on the Curragh suggested that the rebel campaign was never determined enough to splinter the historic links between the civilian population of Kildare and the British army.

Costello's account provided a valuable insight into the experiences of the army in a unique area of traditional military influence during a period of rapid political and social change. By contrast, Charles Townshend's account of *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-21*, (though not a dedicated analysis of the regular army) was the first and still the most important account of the wider employment of British military and paramilitary forces in response to the I.R.A. campaign.[39] It also represented 'the first proper institutional and policy study' of the period 'and the first to register bureaucratic and political structures and decision making as a systematic focus of investigation'.[40] Townshend's main purpose was to demonstrate that modern state power had failed to respond adequately to the republican challenge. To this end, his study presented official discourses and disputes between (and within) the government and the military authorities, in response to an effective republican guerrilla campaign.

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[35] C.Costello, *A Most Delightful Station: The British Army on the Curragh of Kildare, Ireland, 1855-1922* (Cork, 1999) p. 177.
[36] *Ibid*, p. 178.
[37] Nery Sports day was held to commemorate a heroic action by L. Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery which resulted in the capture of German guns at Nery in Belgium in September 1914. *Ibid*, p. 317.
[38] *Ibid*, pp. 321, 315.
[39] Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland.*
[40] Hart, *The I.R.A. at War*, p. 7.

In so doing, Townshend catalogued the indecision and the inadequacy of the British response. His portrait of the exigencies of British military policy in relation to the spiral of republican dissent and confrontation has never been surpassed. Less prominent in his account was the extent to which the vacillations in military command (on a high political level) filtered down to the soldiers and policemen at the sharp end of the conflict. Townshend made only cursory references to the experiences of soldiers and suggested that the problem of morale amongst the army and R.I.C. never became critical, in fact, both displayed remarkable 'forbearance' and an 'easy going attitude' to their service.[41]

However, he did relate a number of instances where the pressures of service produced a violent reaction from soldiers. Furthermore, he drew attention to the physical and psychological privations of army service in Ireland and established how troop shortages created a heavy burden for those who remained. This frustration was also heightened by the complex nature of combat, which took the form of ambushes and isolated attacks as opposed to traditional forms of combat such as trench warfare and frontal assault, with which veterans were familiar. With no front line, or a designated arena for combat, the soldiers' experience in Ireland was one of military professionalism thwarted and this tended to have a profound effect upon his experience of service. Other aspects of military life were also suggested in Townshend's account, particularly the co-operative problems between the police and the armed forces and the friction that resulted from their mutual distrust. Townshend's account also provided a useful reference for the two way relationship between official policy and military requirements. Despite this, his references to the social aspects of soldierly life were kept to a minimum, or were left to be gleaned from the presentation of official sources.

Aims, Content and Methodology

Previous work on the subject has demonstrated that military life in Ireland involved considerable privations resulting from a determined rebel campaign and the failure of military policy to adapt to the situation. Shortages of troops, transport, and other equipment also resulted in the army being under-supported in a material as well as a

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[41] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 158.

tactical sense. This study will explore the harshness of service life (arising from this situation) in order to shed new light on the violence and the recrimination that followed. 'Authorized punishments' and unofficial punitive measures will be considered as components of broader official and unofficial military strategies. In taking this approach, this study will be careful to avoid over-concentrating on the most sensational features of the period; many scholars still labour under the influence of republican propaganda regarding the unchecked violence of the Crown forces in Ireland. This account will be careful not to overlook the more 'mundane' aspects of service, such as the conditions of barrack life or the experience of civil-military relations. Rather, it will seek to recognise their qualities as catalysts for some of the brutalities that followed, and establish their contribution to a culture in which violence flourished.

Part I, comprising two chapters, will examine the constraints that followed from post-war demobilization and troop withdrawal, and consider how this affected the lives of soldiers who remained in Ireland at the sharp end of the conflict. It will also consider how this shortfall increased the intensity of duties for remaining soldiers. The second chapter will constitute the first serious attempt to understand the detail of military operations in Ireland. In so doing, it will further demonstrate how a failure to unite command in the Crown forces contributed to a lack of success in combating disorder, particularly in the field of military intelligence.

The next two chapters will explore the physical and psychological rift that developed between soldiers and civilians during this period. The first will demonstrate the ways and means by which soldiers became isolated in their barracks and consider how this contributed towards a 'defensive' military culture. The second will consider how this reinforced the separation of soldiers and civilians and examine the means by which Irish communities expressed their hostility towards the military. This chapter will also introduce previously unexplored counter-evidence demonstrating how this form of mutual antagonism could be overcome and how this tended to favour the military.

The final part will establish how this combination of frustration, drudgery and isolation contributed to the falling off of discipline in the later period. A fifth chapter will examine frailties. weaknesses and brutalisation in the Irish garrison, and attempt to categorise the various forms of reprisals that followed, in the process shedding new light on their motives and underlying purpose. A final chapter will examine soldiers'

views of the political and military aspects of the period and consider how troops were pushed towards extremes of both thought and action.

By applying a holistic approach and employing mainly qualitative methods this study will elucidate a core of social experience that can contribute to the burgeoning social history of Anglo-Irish conflict. It will seek to fill the hiatus that has emerged in previous accounts; the gap between the regular army and its 'competent authority' will be bridged with the thoughts, the feelings and the actions of soldiers. It will also provide a reference point for historians interested in the cultural and psychological aspects of conflict. Above all, it will represent a plea for further social investigation into the conflict, and a further move away from the existing paradigm of military and political studies.

Part I

Soldiering

1. Difficulties and Privations

In his memoir, veteran soldier turned I.R.A. column leader, Tom Barry, portrayed the Irish garrison as the cutting-edge of a powerful imperial force:

> Armed with the most modern weapons, they had plentiful supply of machine guns, field artillery, armoured cars, engineering material, signalling equipment and motor transport. The finances of the world's largest empire were behind them.[1]

While military policy from mid-1919 onwards demanded that troops make themselves increasingly visible, Barry's description of a highly potent military force in Ireland fails to mesh with the actual numerical, tactical, material and financial weaknesses of the post-war British army. Rather, it was an imbalance between requirement and provision that actually prevented the military in Ireland from attaining the degree of control to which the government aspired. This chapter will highlight the negative consequences of post-war reform, demobilization and 'imperial overstretch' on the Irish garrison, both in terms of its overall capacity and the effect on individual battalions. It will further consider the impact of a shortage of ancillary staff and equipment, and examine how inadequate or inappropriate training compounded these general shortages. Finally, it will set these difficulties against the backdrop of a concerted propaganda campaign against the Crown forces and examine the difficulties that arose from an unfamiliar and hostile station. Together with the second chapter, this section will provide context for the remaining chapters, which will tend to focus more heavily on particular aspects of service life.

In the formative years of the conflict the armed forces were beset by major structural problems, most of which can be attributed directly to a sharp transition from war to peace. Public imagination and political enthusiasm struggled to accommodate the parallel development of peace in Europe with the possibility of a new threat in Ireland. Consequently, troops stationed there were placed in the peculiar position of combating growing disorder within the frameworks and philosophies of peacetime

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[1] Barry, *Guerrilla Days*, p. 93.

soldiering. In the administrative sphere, this emphasis proved to be particularly intractable: one observer, writing in June 1921 (shortly before the truce) recorded that 'a great deal of distress, delay and discontent is caused by the fact that the "war" has to be run with the peace time machinery of administration.'[2] Likewise, the 'History of the 5th Division' recalled how 'even when the troops were officially declared to be on "active" service in December 1920, administration and establishments were on the "Home" or "Peace" basis.'[3]

"Peace" for the military spelt a reversion to efficiency, to invisibility and to aiding the civil power. In line with this, the British garrison (overall) diminished sharply after 1919 from 200,000 bayonets in November to just 25,000 in March 1920.[4] In Ireland, corresponding shortages, coupled with an exponential growth in rebel activity, created an inverse relationship between battalion strength and military requirements. However, post-war retrenchment was to severely affect the military – both materially and in terms of unit size; given the need for economy in all aspects of government spending, war-weary public opinion could hardly be expected to tolerate an army swollen well beyond its base size. Certainly, letter writers to *The Times* between 1918 and 1919, were lining up to wield the 'Geddes Axe' against the British garrison in Ireland. One correspondent, writing under the pseudonym 'Hard Hit' asked:

> Are we to believe that there is such an imminent peril of armed rebellion in Ireland that a force of 60,000 men supported by air fleets, tanks and armoured motor cars, must be held in continual readiness for its suppression?[5]

Another questioned how the government could justify 'expenditure on or by…gigantic armies' during a time of necessary economy, when every item of public expenditure demanded the most rigorous scrutiny.[6] However, despite the public perception of a copious and under-employed garrison, the majority of soldiers in

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[2] National Archives (hereafter 'N.A.') Records of the War Office (hereafter W.O.) 32/9572. Anonymous report – '36 Hours in Dublin', (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis). 16 June 1921.
[3] General Staff, 5th Division, 'History of the 5th Division in Ireland: November 1919 – March 1922.' (hereafter Hist. 5th Div.), Jeudwine Papers, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 9.
[4] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, pp. 43-4.
[5] *The Times*, 14 Aug. 1919, p. 6.
[6] *Ibid*, 10 Sept. 1919, p. 6.

Ireland at this time were undergoing training for overseas drafts or otherwise convalescing. Of 111,222 troops in Ireland in August 1918, a mere 9,919 were actually available for internal security work. This was despite (G.O.C.-in-C.) Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Shaw's request for a minimum of 22,800 effective infantry in Ireland in December 1918. By January 1920 the actual number of troops still only amounted to 19,000, still well below Shaw's revised request in November 1919 for an establishment of 25,000. In Dublin District, a division with a combined strength of 7,726 with just 4,270 troops available for operations was up against an IRA formation, divided into 12 battalions with 80 companies and boasting an estimated operational strength of 5,560.[7]

Throughout the conflict it proved to be extremely difficult for military commanders to secure troop commitments for any brigade area outside Ulster. The 'History of the 5th Division' recalled how the 'south' and particularly the 'west of Ireland' were starved of adequate manpower and yet 'there was no hesitation in supplying battalions from England to Ulster.'[8] This situation further contributed towards the difficulties faced by battalions in Southern Ireland, many of whom were struggling to 'raise 300 officers and men' and who, for short periods could 'consist of [just] a headquarters and the band.'[9] Therefore, even at this early stage, it was extremely difficult for the army to perform its primary function in aiding the civil power, and in many cases detachments were forced to withdraw from outlying police outposts leaving the police dangerously exposed. In most cases, battalions could only muster very small companies to fulfil civil-military policing duties, Colonel C.R.B.Knight of the Buffs remembered that these isolated detachments could be as small as 'an N.C.O. and six men…billeted in a tumble-down house.'[10]

Naturally, a shortage of manpower affected the army's ability to perform its normal functions and fill all necessary garrison and regimental employments. In particular, communications were hampered by an endemic shortage of signalling personnel. Indeed, by May 1920 the shortfall was such that the whole section was

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[7] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, Appendix VIII, p. 218; Figures for Dublin District calculated from individual unit figures listed in 'A Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-1, and the part played by the Army in Dealing with it (Intelligence)' reproduced (with the omission of the introduction) in P.Hart (ed) *British Intelligence in Ireland, 1920-21, The Final Reports* (Cork, 2002) p. 50.

[8] Hist. 5th Div., p. 52.

[9] *Ibid*, p. 9.

[10] Colonel C.R.B.Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) 3rd Foot 1919-1948* (London, 1951), chapter 1, p. 2.

practically inoperable. At this time the signalling section had only 106 of the 643 staff required to make it effective. This included just 23 drivers and batmen (a deficiency of 107), 12 motorcyclists, and not even a single cable man, harness maker, saddler or instrument repairer. Initiatives aimed at solving these problems included recruitment campaigns and proposals for the 'employment of reliable ex-soldiers on non-military duties', both of which were hampered by the inexperience of new recruits and the generally poor state of health of veterans.[11]

A lack of signalling, combined with a scarcity of wireless technology, placed great emphasis on pigeons as a means of communication. The majority of military stations established pigeon depots, which were supplied by larger regional lofts at the Curragh, Belfast, Enniskillen, Derry and Claremorris. However, even in this method of communication, the army were hampered by a shortage of military loft-men. This resulted in N.C.O.s and selected other ranks being required to attend a three day course in 'the care and management of birds'.[12]

Motor mechanics were also scarce, and this situation had obvious knock-on effects for military offensives that relied upon the speed and efficiency of motor transport. Administrative personal were similarly thin on the ground: Major-General G.F.Boyd, then commander of the Dublin District, found his two Brigade H.Q.s to be severely understaffed in terms of clerical personnel. As a result, specialised staffs such as 'air force, artillery and education officers' were sometimes seconded to battalions as a hasty solution to the growing skills gap.[13]

The experience of the 1st Buffs (East Kent Regiment) in the immediate post-war years provides an interesting case study of the impact of army reform on a regiment stationed in Ireland. Initially, demobilization stripped the Buffs of all their service and territorial battalions, leaving just three regular battalions. Subsequent to their arrival in Ireland in the autumn of 1919 '1st Battalion absorbed the personnel of 3rd

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[11] N.A., W.O. 32/9522, Figures compiled from tables contained in a letter from J.Brind, G.H.Q. to Lieutenant Colonel H.E.Braine, Proposed Garrison in Ireland; Branch Memorandum regarding the deficiency in personnel (Infantry) in Ireland, 25 Feb. 1920.

[12] Though inconvenient, this form of training had the advantage of enabling officers to take out pigeons on convoys and patrols and quickly relay messages to base, which had obvious importance in the case of S.O.S. messages (pigeons returning to base with no message attached were understood to be an S.O.S. signal). The 'History of the 5th Division' recalled one occasion when 21 pickets were established along the Ulster border to prevent two I.R.A. battalions (from Cork and Tipperary) travelling northwards to assist their 'co-religionists' during an episode of rioting in Ulster in July 1920. Throughout the operation, the positioning and the movement of troops was co-ordinated via pigeon communication. Hist. 5th Div., pp. 30,52.

[13] N.A., W.O. 35/90/1, Dublin District War Diary 'A', 24 Feb. 1920.

Battalion, which henceforth remained a unit on paper only'. The remaining battalion was broken up into small detachments 'spread out as far as Mallow in the west and Rosslare in the east.' The new deployment left a small remnant of the battalion to 'reorganize on the new peace establishment, which was supposed to include a machine-gun platoon of two sections of four guns each.' This arrangement was intended to satisfy the military authorities' drive for economy and efficiency, and yet the result was hampered by material shortages. C.R.B.Knight remembered that the guns 'were not provided until shortly after the time came to leave Ireland in 1922.'[14] In addition, 206 soldiers of the regiment had been drafted for service in Mesopotamia by January 1921, and a further 185 men had been demobilised by March 1921, a loss that was barely offset by the introduction of 63 new recruits. Taking the period from June 1920 to March 1921 (the most intense period of the conflict) in isolation, the regiment's operational strength was reduced from 947 to 681.[15]

The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (O.B.L.I.) stationed in Dublin witnessed a similar reduction in battalion strength and, according to the author of their *Chronicle*, the 'axe' fell particularly severely on officers: 'The Regiment, as a whole, lost involuntarily two captains and fourteen subalterns…This…gave the officers' profession a feeling of insecurity that it had never previously known.'[16] Similarly, the Border Regiment stationed in Roscommon, Mayo and Galway witnessed a 35 per cent reduction in ranks from 1,091 in September 1919 to just 709 in December 1920, and a 37 per cent reduction in officers from 43 to 29. Service notes also suggest that the 'task of demobilizing personnel serving on duration of war engagements' was 'rendered more difficult' owing to the fact that the battalion was 'destined to be split up into many detachments…a fact which severely handicapped it in the process of reformation.'[17] Likewise, the King's Liverpool Regiment lost 400 of their 621 soldiers to drafts and demobilization, to be replaced by just 195 new recruits.[18]

Clearly post-war Britain was infertile as far as military recruitment was concerned, and neither did Irish conditions encourage the furtherance of military

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[14] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs*, chapter 1, p. 1-2.
[15] Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies*, p. 90.
[16] Anon, *Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Chronicle, 1921* (London, 1922), p. 34.
[17] Digest of Service of the 2nd Battalion Border Regiment entry dated 9 July 1919, Carlisle Castle, Carlisle.
[18] Digest of Service of the 1st Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment, Kings (Liverpool) Regiment Collection, Regional History Department, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

careers. In March 1921 the correspondent of the *Green Howards' Gazette* observed that 'our station and the exciting life of rebel hunting is not a great incentive to the extension of service with Colours [sic] or in aid of the recruiting sergeant.'[19] This feeling was intensified as experienced men continued to be lost to overseas drafts and demobilization (under the 'first in, first out' principle) which increased the burden on those who remained. However, even prior to the intense military routine that defined the later period, units were already suffering the privations of a decline in recruitment that was failing to offset demobilization or meet required draft numbers. In February 1920, a memorandum from G.H.Q. to the War Office warned that of the 34 infantry units that comprised the Irish garrison, 25 were below the establishment strength of 933. Of these, some were more seriously depleted than others, for example, the Cameronians had a strength of only 647, the O.B.L.I. just 576, and the Yorkshire Regiment could only muster 537 infantry. The respective estimates for reaching a strength of 900 (based on the current rates of recruitment and drafts under order to proceed) were six, seven and five months.

To further illustrate just how sluggish post-war recruitment had become, the 2nd Berkshire Regiment with a strength of just 738 (excluding drafts orders) was, at this time, recruiting an average of just two soldiers a week and had a further draft commitment of 119 for Mesopotamia.[20] Naturally, the increased pressure of service for those who remained, made the prospect of being drafted for an overseas campaign a desirable alternative for soldiers on Irish service. The correspondent of *"The Snapper"* noted that plans for a second draft to go out to Mesopotamia were warmly received by beleaguered troops in the 1st Battalion: 'There are strong rumours of a large draft, which is to go out after Christmas to swell the 2nd Battalion in "Mespot." There will be lots of volunteers to get away from this distressful country.'[21] Likewise, in December 1919, the *Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry Chronicle* recalled how the battalion (then stationed in Portobello Barracks, Dublin) were relieved to be ordered to take up new posts in East Prussia. In this case, even the prospect of 'a harsh North European winter' was insufficient to daunt the soldiers, who became 'uncommonly

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[19] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Journal of the Green Howards' Regiment, March 1921, Regimental Museum of the Green Howards, Richmond, North Yorkshire, pp. 5-6.
[20] N.A., W.O. 32/9522, Figures compiled from minute sheet and a G.H.Q. Branch Memorandum entitled Deficiency in Personnel (Infantry) in Ireland, Proposed Garrison in Ireland; Branch Memorandum regarding the deficiency in personnel (Infantry) in Ireland, 25 Feb. 1920.
[21] Major K.A.Plimpton, "*The Snapper*", Journal of the East Yorkshire Regiment, The Prince of Wales' Own Regiment of Yorkshire Museum, York, Oct. 1920, p. 171.

cheerful, not to say excited', however, 'just as packing was completed it was cancelled as suddenly as it had been ordered.'[22]

Between October 1920 and March 1921, over 9,000 troops were drafted to other overseas stations and a further 10 battalions were held in readiness to meet the threat of industrial unrest in Britain should they be required. To add to the uncertainty, the situation in Britain had the potential to deprive the Irish army of numbers and experience should the issue of homeland security require a concentration of troops on the mainland. In the event, although four battalions were transferred and placed on strike duty in Britain, industrial unrest in Britain never reached a level that actually required the active intervention of the army. In addition, the threat of agitation was recognised to have diminished significantly by November 1920. The alleviation of this threat was particularly fortunate for the military authorities; Mark Sturgis (Assistant Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle) had warned of dire consequences for the Irish garrison, should the situation require the removal of battalions of infantry:

> It will so weaken our garrison that we must leave isolated battalions in towns which they will be too weak to control if trouble breaks out, or else abandon whole areas altogether – say west of the Shannon – to the I.R.A.[23]

In any case, the contingencies involved had made the efficient employment of already strained resources much more difficult and 'the loss of activities for this period, though unavoidable, was a serious waste of valuable time.'[24] In April 1920, four battalions were actually transferred to Liverpool and a further two were placed on 12

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[22] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 34.

[23] N.A., Domestic Records of the Public Record Office (hereafter P.R.O.) 30/59/1, Mark Sturgis Diaries, 19 Aug. 1920. Castle Official Mark Sturgis kept a remarkably frank diary of his liaisons, experiences and opinions between July 1920 and January 1922. His diary is the most evocative account that we have of the twilight days of Dublin Castle following the purge in the summer of 1920. According to Hopkinson, his [often humorous] descriptions vividly convey a 'clublike atmosphere' and offer colourful insights into the relationships between officials from the various branches of the British administration in Ireland. To Fitzpatrick, his account 'whiff[ed] of Wodehouse'. Similarly, Tim Pat Coogan wrote of Sturgis that he was able to observe just about 'everything that passed, not merely in the Castle itself, but in the big houses and on the racecourse.' An Etonian and a graduate of Oxford, his 'vivid and breezy writing style' and 'appealingly cynical view of humanity in general' give his diaries an edge of sardonic humour, that, on the surface, appears to belie their real historical importance. M.Hopkinson (ed.). *The Last Days of Dublin Castle: The Diaries of Mark Sturgis* (Dublin, 1999) p.7; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, Bibliography, p.288; Hopkinson, *Ibid*, pp. vii – viii, 9.

[24] 'A Record of the Rebellion in Ireland and the Part Played by the Army in Dealing with it (Operations)', this account is a particularly rich source for the detail of military operations during the conflict. It was compiled and written by G.H.Q. staff responsible for the particular subjects recorded in the various branches of the Irish Administration and is contained within the papers of Lieutenant General Sir Hugh Jeudwine, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 13.

hour standby for over a month.[25] This was a severe blow to regimental commanders who were struggling to implement military policy in Ireland. It did, however, please those soldiers who were fortunate enough to be posted to a 'home' station. Recalling the news of his imminent transfer back to England, Lieutenant E.J.A.H.Brush of the 3rd Rifle Brigade wrote:

> Thank God, respite came when the Battalion was sent to Liverpool on strike duty. The dockers had come out and there were deep fears in those days, that the Bolsheviks from Russia were infiltrating the Trade Unions and that soldiers must be near at hand in case anything happened.[26]

For Brush, being 'near at hand' meant being quartered in a static train carriage beside Aintree Racecourse, an experience which he contrasted favourably with the misery and the drudgery of Irish service. Echoing his sentiments, men of the Green Howards stated their preference for an English station over the extension of service in Ireland and craved 'the comparative peace and quietness of England, in spite of all its industrial unrest and wave of Bolshevism.'[27] For those who remained in Ireland, the situation was only partially alleviated in late May 1920 when fresh (but inexperienced) troops were sent to make up a portion of the shortfall. Nevertheless, the prospect of an open rebellion in Britain's coalfields also had a further knock-on effect for troops who remained in Ireland. The Digest of Service of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment recalled how on 16 October 1920 '2 Coys' at 'Kilbride Camp' were withdrawn from a 'muscatry course' to be placed in readiness for the 'coal crisis.' Consequently 'all leave was cancelled' for remaining troops.[28] Similarly, in November 1920, 'A' Company of the 2nd Green Howards waited in vain for the prompt return of their colleagues: 'we only hope that the threatened coal strike will not prevent their return to this unfortunate country, as we are next on the leave roster.'[29]

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[25] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 109.
[26] Lieutenant E.J.A.H.Brush, 'Rifle Green/Orange Flash', TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 14.
[27] *Green Howards' Gazette*, "A" Company notes, July 1920, p. 99.
[28] Digest of Service of the 2nd Battalion Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 16 Nov. 1920, Bankfield Museum, Halifax.
[29] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Vol XXVIII, November 1920, p. 109.

By December 1920, there was general widespread support in the War Office and across the Cabinet for the diversion of battalions back to the Irish front. This represented a partial recognition on the part of the government that the threat of civil unrest created by the Irish insurgency was more realistic than that posed by industrial malcontent. Risks had to be taken:

> From the military point of view it is vital for us to avoid the mistake which lost the Germans the war, namely the failure to be quite strong enough to ensure a decision on one front through fear of taking the necessary risk on the other.[30]

Nonetheless, events overseas, together with a dearth of experienced troops and deteriorating conditions in Ireland continued to diminish troops' leave entitlement. Commenting on the closing months of 1920, Major-General Douglas Wimberley recalled how 'all leave for officers was stopped for a time' adding 'I think it was after a lot of officers had been murdered one night in Dublin.'[31] Wilfred Ewart, a former officer of the Scots Guards, visiting Victoria Barracks, Cork, in May 1921 found a garrison in a state of physical and mental exhaustion due to the demands of service. He spoke to a young subaltern who had served a whole nine months in conditions approximating war, having received 'only one leave since August.'[32] Long periods of unalleviated service on the part of his troops were a real concern for (G.O.C.-in-C.) General Sir Nevil Macready (whose correspondence provides an important link between the Cabinet, military policy, and the soldiery) who feared that the strain would render the majority of his garrison unfit for service. In an impassioned plea, he issued a memorandum in July 1920 to the effect that:

> The men are deprived under present conditions of their amusements and those restrictions which are so necessary for the contentment and health of young men, and many officers have been serving in conditions which are even worse than actual

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[30] N.A., W.O. 32/9521, Memo from Major-General Radcliffe, (Director of Military Operations - D.M.O.) to Winston Churchill, (Secretary of State for War), Ireland. Reinforcements in certain contingencies, 2 Dec. 1920.
[31] Major-General Douglas Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', Chapter 13 'Ireland and the Troubles', TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 149.
[32] Ewart, *A Journey in Ireland*, p. 71.

> warfare for nearly a year with practically no leave. This cannot continue without deterioration setting in.[33]

Having received no assurances regarding troops' leave on this occasion, Macready reasserted his position in May 1921:

> The present state of affairs in Ireland so far as regards the troops serving there must be brought to a conclusion by October or steps must be taken to relieve practically the whole of the troops together with the great majority of commanders and their staffs. I am quite aware that troops do not exist to do this, but this does not alter in any way the opinion I have formed in regard to the officers and troops for whom I am responsible.[34]

Clearly the nature of the conflict combined with the persistent problem of troop shortages did not favour soldiers being able to take adequate respite from their duties. Furthermore, as Macready's entreaty indicates, the problem was to remain largely unresolved throughout the period of the conflict. It was the timeliness of the July truce that eventually relieved a desperate situation for a beleaguered garrison.

In spite of the restrictions on leave entitlement, Macready could still only muster 25,000 infantry effectives from the existing garrison at the beginning of 1921, of whom a substantial portion were required for guard duties or peacekeeping initiatives in Belfast. Added to this, a lack of appropriate training (particularly amongst the lower ranks) left just 15,000 men who were actually capable of carrying out counterinsurgency operations. As Curran has observed, this force may have significantly outnumbered the total number of active guerrillas in Ireland but, given the context of a brigade area that comprised 'over 30,000 square miles' there was very little possibility of establishing the close control that was required.[35] This concurs with observations made by General Staff Irish Command (G.S.I.C.) in their 'Record of the Rebellion':

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[33]N.A., W.O. 32/9520, G.O.C.-in-C. to G.H.Q., Memorandum on present military situation and general proposals in regard to troops during coming winter, 26 July 1920.
[34] N.A., W.O. 32//9572. Memorandum from G.O.C.-in-C. to C.I.G.S., (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis). 23 May 1921.
[35] Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State*, pp. 48-9.

Ireland consists of some 30,000 square miles, in every part of which lawlessness and disorder might and did occur. The 51 battalions which at this time (December 1920-July 1921) were in Ireland, even with the addition of the R.I.C. and Auxiliary Division, were obviously insufficient for dealing rapidly with the whole of this area, especially as the battalions were very weak, averaging roughly 250-300 men for offensive action after deducting barrack guards and other essential duties.[36]

The numerous constraints on operational strength went hand-in-hand with serious material shortages, which were most evident in the perennial transport problems that beset the military. Owing to a lack of mechanics, the maintenance of vehicles was extremely poor, and only a limited number of the earmarked vehicles were actually fit for military use at any one time. The 'History of the 5th Division' claimed that:

> The Disposals Board appeared to have sold out all the best vehicles and to have retained those which were nearly worn out, or which were deficient in the necessary spare parts. The repair of the vehicles already part worn could not be carried out because at first there were no workshops…Those were bad days in 1920 and the inefficiency of the motor transport was a daily cause for complaint.[37]

With inadequate provision for maintenance, depreciation was particularly rapid amongst the heavier vehicles. These included three-ton and 15-cwt lorries of which 35 and 20 per cent respectively were off the road by March 1921.[38] In addition, problems arising from a dearth of motor transport were little remedied by an inexplicable shortage of bicycles in the early period, of which no unit in the 5th Division could boast more than 10 by January 1920.[39] Added to this, a railway embargo from May 1920, ensured that existing army transport was employed mainly for supply purposes, severely limiting its use during operations. The 'defensive' and 'offensive' use of motor transport was further imbalanced when the weakened fleet

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[36] Record of the Rebellion, p. 33.
[37] Hist. 5th Div., p. 28.
[38] *Ibid*, p. 89.
[39] *Ibid*, p. 27.

became increasingly utilised by the R.I.C. to carry defence stores and to assist in the evacuation of barracks.

To soldiers facing an increased threat of attack during motor patrols, the logistic rather than operational use of vehicles was rather fortunate given that the government were slow to equip the vehicles with standard military defences. The majority of lorries lacked armour plating and, of those that were so equipped, very few were of the 'pistol proof' specification that was deemed necessary. As a result, Irish Command entered the period of martial law, with just 25 armoured and 15 protected lorries, together with 54 Peerless and two Rolls-Royce Armoured Cars.[40] By the spring of 1921, armoured cars had increased to 70 Peerless, with a vastly improved quota of 34 Rolls-Royce. However, these proved to be little use in the absence of specialized personnel to maintain and to operate the vehicles. The only real expertise in this area was provided by a skeleton Tank Corps working in tandem with officers of the 5th Armoured Car Company. In the majority of cases, drivers and mechanics were drawn, as required, from infantry and cavalry regiments. Ambitious proposals for Armoured Car Companies attached to each of the four divisions never came to fruition.[41] As a consequence, military motor convoys were rarely able to provide the imposing spectacle that had been anticipated by military command. Added to this, the effectiveness of armour plating on vehicles was severely limited, especially in cases where armed rebels approached in numbers:

> In country districts, where a larger proportion of the rebels were armed with rifles, the usefulness of these lorries was not so great…as the training of lorry patrols insisted on the necessity, when attacked of getting quickly out of the lorry, therefore the armouring ceased to be of much value after the rebels had fired the first volley.[42]

Military lorries were also ill-suited to country lanes, especially those burdened with the extra weight of armour plating. Major A.E.Percival of the 1st Essex Regiment, recalled how:

> Experiments were made with armour plating on lorries, but though useful for town work, it was found that lorries became

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[40] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, pp. 143-4; Record of the Rebellion, p. 32.
[41] Record of the Rebellion, p. 32.
[42] *Ibid*, p. 32.

too heavy for work on the country roads. Most lorries were, however, provided with plating to protect the drivers.[43]

The lack of adequate provision for motor patrols was readily apparent to those soldiers who were unfortunate enough to depend upon motorized transport. The slow progress of these convoys was ridiculed in a poem by 'E.N.' a contributor to *The 79th News*:

The cars were standing waiting
In case we'd be too slow;
But when the drivers took their seats
The damned things wouldn't go

It now was after four, sir,
We started off all right
But going out the gate we found
We had no Very light

So back we came again, sir,
And got one from the store:
We tried to get some petrol,
But they hadn't any more.[44]

As the poem suggests, transport shortages were compounded by shortfalls in other areas: this was particularly telling for small military detachments who often lacked the wireless technology necessary to maintain lines of communication with the main body of their battalion. A want of communication between brigades, regiments and isolated detachments was further compounded by a lack of attendance at remote outposts on the part of senior officers. Brigadier F.A.S.Clarke of the 1st Essex Regiment recalled being billeted for a month in a lighthouse at the Old Head of Kinsale, during which time he was 'never visited by a senior officer' and had 'no means of contact with the outer world except by patrols.' Brigade orders were received via a 'telephone...in the local post office cum – public house [sic] about a mile down the track towards Kinsale.' Clarke also realised that from 'the point of view of security' this arrangement was 'useless.' Henceforth, he communicated with

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[43] Major A.E.Percival, Lecture: Guerrilla Warfare – Ireland 1920-21 (1), 1920 to Spring 1921. p. 19.
[44] *The 79th News*, Journal of the Cameron Highlanders, Cameron Highlanders' Regimental Museum, Fort George, Ardersier, (near Inverness), June 1921, pp. 207-8.

other officers in 'kitchen Urdu' to avoid detection, and the inherent communication difficulties almost resulted in him misinterpreting a brigade order.[45] The 'History of the 5th Division' recalled that:

> It was very difficult to get additional wireless sets and the trained personnel for their working. The arrival of wireless transmission sets, charging sets, spare bulbs etc., was a slow business, and instrument repairers were few and far between. At the Curragh means could be found for training only 12 men every 3 months in wireless…There still remained 22 military stations without wireless in the 5th Division area.[46]

Typewriters and typists were similarly lacking across all levels and departments of Irish command. Until April 1920, Dublin District Brigade H.Q. lacked a single typewriter, and even the office of Lord French, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, was lacking in this respect. However, the useful effect of greater provision after April 1920, was nullified by the government's seeming inability to balance material requirements with required injections of human capital: as the 'History of the 5th Division' recalled, 'trained clerks and typists were practically non-existent.' [47] Added to this, shortfalls in ancillary staff usually resulted in infantry battalions being plundered for men to perform clerical duties for which they had little training and even less appetite. In the early months of 1920, even telephone offices and exchanges came to be staffed by young soldiers more acquainted with the demands of musketry and field training than plug boards and panel switches.[48]

Commenting on troop shortages in Ireland in May 1920, a correspondent of *The Times* reported that 'the opinion in well informed circles is that Sir Neville Macready will depend less on weight on numbers than on vigilance, organization and mobility.[49] For troops on Irish service these watchwords spelt increased duties. The three major planks of military policy in Ireland were the proclamation of Clare, Kerry and West Cork as Special Military Areas under the D.O.R.A. in February 1918, and of South Tipperary in January 1919; the introduction of R.O.I.A. in August 1920; and Martial

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[45] Brigadier F.A.S.Clarke, 'The Memoirs of a Professional Soldier in Peace and War', TS memoir, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Studies, King's College, London, Chapter 6, pp. 5-6.
[46] Hist. 5th Div., p. 91.
[47] Hist. 5th Div., p.29.
[48] *Ibid*, p29.
[49] *The Times* 19 May 1920, p. 16.

Law in late December 1920. Each of these legislative steps required the army to take to the field and to maintain an offensive spirit against their rebel counterparts, whilst creating an illusion of control over the general population. Soldiers had to adapt to a wearying routine of enforcing curfews, prohibiting gatherings, maintaining pickets and cordons, patrolling large areas, providing guards and escorts, taking part in round ups, searches, sweeps and raids as well as providing assistance to a besieged R.I.C. This seemingly constant pulse of military activity from mid-1920 onwards was only achieved by the sheer weight of combined physical effort. With few exceptions, all military sources from the period give a strong indication of the spiralling workload: the Digest of Service of the Duke Of Wellington's Regiment reveals that between 22 November 1920 and 6 April 1921, the regiment performed 199 raids and almost daily rounds of patrols, yielding 106 arrests, each of which required guards, escorts or convoys.[50] During the year 1920, the South Lancashire Regiment, with an operational strength of just 262, had several encounters with rebels and carried out no less than 274 separate raids, arresting 146 people. In addition, the regiment was also utilized in several large-scale sweeps organized at brigade level.[51] Over the course of just five days between 26 and 30 November, 1920, the combined forces of the 24th and 25th Brigades mounted 354 raids in Dublin District, securing the arrest of 274 persons. This was followed in December by a further 879 raids and 569 arrests. The onslaught may well have continued had it not been abruptly curtailed by the complete 'congestion of civil and military prisons' in January 1921.[52] Even in the relatively benign 5th Divisional area, nine battalions of troops (covering an area of 12,000 miles) were able to secure the arrest of 1,600 'I.R.A. officers and "wanted" men' in the first half of 1921.[53]

The Manchester Regiment, operating in the fractious West Cork district, managed to secure 152 arrests through the mobility and frequency of their operations. An examination of their 'Record of Arrests' reveals just how deeply they penetrated West Cork society. Their arrests were extremely hard-gained and the trivial nature of

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[50] Quantified from the Digest of Service of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, Nov. 1920 to April 1921.
[51] Colonel B.R.Mullaly, *The South Lancashire Regiment – Prince of Wales' Volunteers* (Bristol, 1955), p. 59.
[52] N.A., W.O. 35/90. Figures compiled from 'Preparation of Daily Operation Reports' and entries between 1 Dec. and 31 Dec. 1920, (1) War Diary – General Staff H.Q. Dublin District – December 1920; (2) War Diary – General Staff H.Q. Dublin District – January 1921. The 24th and 25th Brigades comprised 12 battalions in January 1921.
[53] Hist. 5th Div., p. 86.

some of the offences indicated that the Regiment must have established a certain omnipresence in the district. To illustrate the point, their 'Record' reveals that of the arrested persons, 12 were found in possession of seditious leaflets, and a further 22 were observed consorting with armed rebels, of whom 27 were arrested for illegal assembly. A further 19 were detained on suspicion of being I.R.A. officers. Two people were caught destroying bridges, 13 breaking the curfew, 17 carrying arms, two were found to be sleeping in a house unregistered, one man persisted in 'shouting at the Crown forces' until his eventual arrest, and another was arrested for giving a 'false destination for his recent holiday.'[54]

The Manchesters' blanket presence in West Cork belied their actual numerical strength. In July 1920, the Regiment had an operational strength of 594, woefully inadequate to cover their brigade area, which comprised 240 square miles of the Lee valley. Similarly, the Essex Regiment, comprising some 600 men, were responsible for an area of 'thick and intricate country' criss-crossed by innumerable 'borheens'[55] stretching from 'Queenstown to Castletownbere, a distance of approximately 100 miles in length'.[56]

Given the vastness of brigade areas and the closeness of control demanded by military commanders, the real cost of maintaining a façade of military supremacy fell heavily upon the regular foot soldier. Often the result was physical and mental exhaustion: the *Gazette's* resigned summary of the military routine as 'hard and depressing' is echoed throughout military accounts from the period.[57] In November 1921, Private D.E.Griffin of the 1st Manchesters wrote a letter to his father complaining that 'last week every man in the company had two nights on guard to one in bed and some did three nights running.'[58] Similarly, the South Staffordshire Regiment Digest of Service reported that:

> The total number of duty N.C.O.s and men was less than 200, which meant, owing to the numbers of duties to be found, no

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[54] Record of Arrests – 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, Ireland 1921, Tameside Local Studies Library, Manchester.
[55] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), A 'Borheen' is Cork dialect for a small track. p. 5.
[56] *Ibid*, pp. 11, 22.
[57] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Dec. 1920, p. 116.
[58] D.E.Griffin, undated letter to his father, Imperial War Museum, London.

> duty man got more than two consecutive nights in bed, and sometimes only one night in bed.[59]

Likewise, E.J.A.H.Brush recalled bitter memories of gruelling service in Dublin during the closing months of 1920:

> Guards were on almost every portion of Dublin. One came off the North Wall guard to get one night in bed before going on the Bank of Ireland guard. Another night in bed and then either on foot patrol around Dublin or on curfew enforcement.

Concerns were raised at G.H.Q. that 'the small number of nights in bed was a serious drain on the health of the young and immature troops.'[60] Indeed, for some, the physical demands of service (coupled with the risks involved) contributed to a state of nervous exhaustion: an officer's wife stationed in Dublin remembered that 'a great deal of the soldiers' work is done at night. He is often short of sleep and the strain on his nerves is appalling.' She also questioned how soldiers could be expected to shoulder the excessive workload and cope with the parallel threat of attack: 'I cannot understand how men can go on, week after week, month after month, motoring, living, sleeping, always in danger.'[61] Macready was also generally sympathetic to the plight of overworked soldiers and made continual representations on their behalf in his Weekly Situation Report. In July 1920, in response to criticisms from G.H.Q. that military guards were ineffective in preventing raids, he retorted that 'the capacity to afford protection depends upon the limitation of numbers, and the "nights in bed" which it is possible to obtain for troops.'[62]

Clearly, incessant military duties crowded out opportunities for leave, leisure and, most significantly, training. As early as July 1920, *"The Snapper"* commented that 'the ordinary training and daily routine of a soldier is being somewhat marred in Mullingar…Not a day passes in which troops are not needed for some stunt.'[63] Similarly, Brigadier E.M.Ransford, stationed in Boyle, County Roscommon (a relatively quiet district), found that 'there was practically no opportunity for training' due to the demands of service and the 'frequent S.O.S calls (by pigeon or cyclist!)'

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[59] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 92.
[60] Record of the Rebellion, p. 17.
[61] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, pp. 24-25.
[62] Memorandum from G.O.C. in C. to G.H.Q., 26 July 1920.
[63] Plimpton, 1st Battalion, 'D' Company notes in *"The Snapper"*, July 1920, p. 106.

from police barracks or from military patrols.[64] The Buffs were similarly concerned that their normal training routine was being displaced by an unfamiliar civil-military policing role:

> With a battalion composed mainly of young soldiers the primary need was for training, but little or no opportunity was to be granted for this, for the time had now arrived for the regular employment of troops in support of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

After the regiment had been broken up and dispersed to their various outposts, Lieutenant Colonel L.W.Lucas was given sole responsibility for the training of new recruits: 'at times more than two hundred in number.' This was besides his other responsibility as commander of 'A' Company.[65]

As Sir John Anderson, reflecting on his initial appointment as Joint Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle, observed 'the military forces in the country were insufficient in numbers and so far as rank and file were concerned quite raw.'[66] Likewise, troops themselves were similarly concerned by the lack of suitable training provision for themselves and the new recruits. Despite this, a minority formed the opinion that the experience of Irish service was the perfect induction to military life. In mitigation for a lack of formal training provision (certainly from mid-1920 onwards) *The 79th News* suggested:

> However unpleasant life in Ireland may be, it affords unrivalled training for the young soldier, every day teaches him to be alert and vigilant on duty, and indeed, at all times to have confidence in his rifle and himself and to take care of both.[67]

Although Irish service was a steep learning curve for young recruits, experience gained in the field during dangerous manoeuvres, in lieu of appropriate training, was clearly unsatisfactory. In June 1920 it emerged that 'of the 23,000 'effectives'

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[64] Brigadier E.M.Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 19.
[65] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs,* chapter 1, pp. 1-2.
[66] Sir John Anderson to Hamar Greenwood (Chief Secretary for Ireland) letter dated 20 July 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/19/2/14.
[67] *The 79th News*, 2nd Battalion notes, April 1921, p. 141. It should be noted however, that regimental journals were produced as a morale boosting exercise, and this was especially true of *The 79th News* which (with rare exceptional articles) was usually written in a rather light-hearted military mien.

available in Ireland '3,000 had never even fired a musketry course.'[68] This was particularly significant in the context of the guerrilla conflict in Ireland, as indicated by Percival in his post-conflict lectures on guerrilla warfare in which he asserted that 'troops taking part in such warfare should have very thorough musketry training as each individual man really becomes a sniper.'[69]

Likewise, officers in Ireland (especially N.C.O.s) were heavily criticised for their lack of organization and tactical uncertainty. Shortly after his appointment in April 1920, Macready had formed the opinion that 'there is a shortage of good company officers, and when it comes to N.C.O.s, the weakness of the army is woefully apparent.'[70] Similarly, 'The History of the 5th Division' claimed that the majority of N.C.O.s lacked either the background, in terms of relevant training, or the battle experience to justify their seniority over lower ranks:

> …the material in officers, N.C.O.s and men was indifferent. Few senior officers of battalions had at that time rejoined their units, and the junior officers with war experience had themselves not been properly trained except in a limited knowledge of trench warfare. The majority of N.C.O.s had exactly the same amount of service as the men who were practically untrained.[71]

The lack of basic skills such as marksmanship, skirmishing and sniping was often brought into sharper relief by an absence of guerrilla training. This shortfall partly resulted from the events of Bloody Sunday and the later declaration of martial law, which effectively scuppered the army's limited plan to offer training in this area. By the time of the truce, only 5th Division had received this form of instruction and the little training that was given lasted only three days and, according to Townshend, consisted of 'first day, cycle patrols; second day, lorry convoys in ambush; third day, daylight lorry raids.'[72] As this study will demonstrate, this was a great missed opportunity given that soldiers were to become engaged in this form of activity on a daily basis.

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[68] Imperial General Staff, Note on the Garrison in Ireland, 15 June 1920, quoted in Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 53.
[69] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 5.
[70] N.A., W.O. 32/9520. G.O.C.-in-C. to G.H.Q., Memorandum on present military situation and general proposals in regard to troops during coming winter, 26 July 1920.
[71] Hist. 5th Div., p. 134.
[72] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 146.

The military also faced further difficulties arising from a concerted republican campaign of provocation and propaganda, with (in the latter case) little in the way of a counter-effort on the part of the military authorities. The deliberate provocation of troops was a feature of community life in Ireland at this stage, but there was also a sense amongst the soldiery that any enemy action constituted provocation. Few (if any) accepted rebel actions within the context of war, and in this respect their attitudes were akin to those of the government.[73] In addition, non-violent provocation was also a consistent feature of the period (see Chapter 4). However, despite highlighting provocation as a feature of service life, very few soldiers detailed the typical forms of aggravation to which they were subjected. K.A.Plimpton made one sketchy reference to the 'periodical attack of wind-up' to which the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment were exposed to in Longford.[74] Others regarded the refusal of the native population to observe Armistice Day silences (or to remove their hats for the national anthem at the end of military displays) as a form of provocation.[75] More serious were allegations that rebel gunmen were using ammunition outlawed by the Hague Convention of 1899, including 'dum-dum', 'soft-nosed', 'expanding', 'jacketed' or 'split nose' bullets, as a means by which to cause maximum damage and provoke retaliation.[76] However, the most frequently visited form of provocation would appear to be the relentless campaign of propaganda against Crown force troops. For soldiers, this was aggravated by the perception that their own countrymen were prone to subscribe to (as well as to corroborate and contribute to) Dáil propaganda concerning their conduct. Indeed, British and Irish propagandists played a crucial role in shaping the conflict, as Roy Foster has asserted:

> The war itself was conducted by means of public opinion – aided by engagé British Liberals as much as by Erskine Childers' tersely efficient propaganda machine (brilliant at scaling up any military activity into a notorious looting or sacking.)[77]

Under Childers' guidance the production and dissemination of anti-military and anti-British propaganda became the primary task of the Dáil's Propaganda Department.

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[73] For a more detailed analysis of the government approach to classifying the conflict see pp. 71-72
[74] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion, 'D' Company notes, May 1920, p. 7.
[75] *Green Howards' Gazette*, 2nd Battalion notes, Dec. 1920, p. 116.
[76] See interview with Colonel R.H.G.Wilson, contained in a *Daily Chronicle* report, 'Split-Bullets at Pettigo!', 8 June 1921, Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers, Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Lincoln.
[77] R.Foster, *Modern Ireland* (London, 1988) p. 499.

Independent press support for these propaganda efforts from Ireland's two biggest daily papers, the *Irish Independent* and the *Freeman's Journal* ensured that the message was propagated effectively. As Tom Bowden has stressed: 'through the vitally important and often neglected revolutionary medium of rumour, the terror and the Irish cause reached a mass audience through the medium of the press.'[78] This system of filtration was combined to good effect with the production of a regular newssheet, *The Irish Bulletin*, which first appeared in November 1919. Through publications of this kind, the Dáil were able to reinforce the notion of the I.R.A. campaign as the defence of Ireland against a foreign aggressor (despite the legitimate constitutional arrangement between Britain and Ireland). The important factor in republican propaganda was the public perception of Ireland as an independent nation. Despite its annexation by Britain, the Irish nation retained legitimacy in the perception and minds of people in Britain and Ireland alike. Thus, soldiers and other servants of the Crown (as the face of British rule) became the principle target for demonisation by Dáil propaganda.

The efforts of republican propagandists were never sufficiently counteracted by elements of the 'doped' English press who, with wide circulation in Britain, Ireland and abroad, had the potential to seriously undermine Dáil propaganda via a basic enquiry into the actual detail of events. This situation greatly contributed to bitterness in the Irish garrison:

> There started amongst the troops the feeling that there was no understanding in England and Scotland of their difficulties in Ireland, and that no efforts were being made across the channel to put the real facts of the situation before the British public.[79]

Even a cursory glance at soldiers' accounts suggests that the single-mindedness of rebel propaganda, combined with a lack of objective reporting, was a deep source of frustration for professional soldiers. As one general recalled:

> If the troops fired on or wounded a civilian, or killed him whatever the circumstances, a dozen civilian witnesses were always ready to come forward to state that the man concerned

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[78] Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security*, p. 64.
[79] Hist. 5th Div., pp. 38, 44. The phrase "doped press" was used to describe the press' attitude towards hunger strikers which, it was claimed, had influenced public opinion to support the strikers' cause thereby contributing to their release.

> was invariably one of the most loyal inhabitants in all County Cork, and as often as not the unfortunate officer or N.C.O. in charge of the army party concerned would then receive an official reprimand, while the local Irish press fulminated over the actions of the brutal and licentious Cameron Highlanders! [80]

Troops were also acutely aware that large elements of the Irish public carried and transmitted these propaganda claims or, as Lloyd George claimed 'every Irishman is a natural propagandist for his country.'[81] Macready recounted an incident in Cork which he felt had resulted from the willingness of civilian witnesses to grossly misrepresent the actions of the Crown forces. The incident occurred during an execution at Cork prison when an armoured car and crew on duty outside the prison were engaged in making repairs to their vehicle. This was taken by the gathered crowd as a demonstration of their lack of respect for 'the solemnity of the occasion.' Later it was claimed in the press that the soldiers had 'danced around their car singing ribald songs among the people who were kneeling down praying' – allegations that Macready later dismissed as a complete 'fabrication'.[82]

Writing in March 1921, the correspondent of the *Green Howards' Gazette* claimed that the 'scurrilous campaign of propaganda' that followed any major or minor incident involving the military was an 'attempt to exasperate and tempt the troops to break the bonds of discipline.'[83] Indeed, the 'Record of the Rebellion' later concurred (based on information received in July 1920) that rebel leaders had developed the propaganda weapon as 'systematic attempt to irritate troops into rebellion.' Thus, troops were provoked to add 'fuel to the fire' in order to make the propaganda campaign a self-perpetuating system. One main facet of this campaign was the attempt to represent all outrages committed by the I.R.A. as 'counter-action.'[84] Another tactic involved encouraging the public to exaggerate damages and personal injury claims following crown force raids in order to convert (often uneventful) routine operations into acts of military terrorism. Colonial Office records indicate that, in County Cork alone, 207 criminal injury claims were filed against the

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[80] Wimberley 'Scottish Soldier', p. 147.
[81] Lloyd George to Greenwood, letter dated 21 April 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/19/3/17.
[82] Macready – *Annals*, Volume II pp. 544-545.
[83] *Green Howards' Gazette*, March 1921, p. 116.
[84] Record of the Rebellion, p. 15.

Crown forces between July 1920 and November 1921, of which 148 were eventually determined in favour of the claimant.[85]

By mid-1920, republican propaganda had achieved such an influence on the national mind in both Britain and Ireland that even objective journalistic reporting would have been unlikely to deviate opinion from the accepted version of events. The only solution lay in the suppression of the republican press and the development of effective counter-propaganda. Comprehensive press censorship had proved problematic owing to 'the difficulty of obtaining adequate staff', by which Sturgis understood that it was difficult to recruit 'civilians, since there are not soldiers enough to censor the press.'[86] A better option was to promote counter-propaganda as a means by which to 'neutralise news items and descriptions of events that might be harmful to the British Government' and to 'boost morale and discipline the 'wild boys' of the Crown forces.'[87] Macready had established a press section at G.H.Q. for this purpose shortly after his arrival, but it was not until the appointment of Basil Clarke as head of the News Bureau in August 1920 that a government department actually became operational for this purpose. However, Clarke's 'failure to counter in any coherent way the wave of propaganda resulting from the deaths of Terence Macswiney and Kevin Barry' provided immediate evidence of his unsuitability for this role.[88] Thereafter, British counter-propaganda came to be characterised a lack conviction and urgency, as Macready testified:

> Day after day scandalous and lying statements appear, and no action is ever taken beyond somewhat feeble contradictions which appear some days after the original statement has been published and which have little or no effect.[89]

Bowden has provided a vivid illustration of the hesitancy with which the Castle's News Bureau approached their task. He also exposed just how easily their counterparts were able to outflank them. Following the capture of an I.R.A. document in November 1920 which appeared to describe the best methods by which to conduct germ warfare against British troops, Bureau staff sensed an opportunity to create

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[85] N.A., Records of the Colonial Office (herafter C.O.) 905/15. Figures compiled from individual entries in Ireland – Criminal Injuries to Private Persons – 1920 – 1922.
[86] Strurgis Diaries, 4 Jan. 1921.
[87] Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security*, p. 112.
[88] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 45.
[89] Macready, *Annals*, Volume II, p. 504.

mass public revulsion against I.R.A. methods. As Bowden observed '[whether authentic or not] the furore in the press over British reprisals would have palled alongside the use of germ warfare.' However, a dilatory response from the Bureau allowed the I.R.A. to neutralise the outcome 'by releasing information to the Press which implied that the whole affair was staged.' Despite, at the last minute, a British messenger being despatched in a hurry across Dublin, the I.R.A. were able bring their statement to press first thereby 'nullifying the potential impact of the document by casting doubts about its parentage.'[90]

Not all the difficulties that faced British troops can be attributed to the arena of human relations or organisational decrepitude. A strong sense of discontent with location and climate also contributed towards a general malaise throughout the garrison. In fact, the psychological and physical limits imposed by the landscape and the natural or urban environment are burgeoning elements in the fields of history and cultural or historical geography, and the sources generated by Crown soldiers certainly bear witness to the influence of place and environment on human experience.[91] Indeed, some soldiers saw their opinions of a hostile and aloof public as being reflected in the environment itself:

> Limerick is largely a city of decayed Georgian houses which were once impressive, but now have the look of having seen better days, a look then characteristic of so many people as well as houses in Southern Ireland.[92]

Similarly, the *Green Howards' Gazette* reported that: 'everything in Ireland is sad looking, the weather remains truly Irish and there is always a look of depression on the face of an Irishman.[93] Many soldiers saw bleakness, melancholy and decay in the rural and urban environment and tended to project this back on aspects of their experience, their duties, the Irish people, and even Irish nationalist aspirations:

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[90] Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security*, pp. 127-131. The document, allegedly sent by Richard Mulcahy (Commander in Chief of the I.R.A.) to Michael Collins, proposed troops' milk supplies as the 'best means of conveying [typhoid bacillus]'

[91] See examples: D.Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, 1998) or F.Driver & L.Martins (eds) *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (Chicago, 2005).

[92] Captain J.B.Arnold, 'Against the Stream in Ireland', MS memoir, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University, p. 132.

[93] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Nov. 1920, p. 142.

> After leaving the pass, Kilbeggan appears in sight and gives one a nasty jar. Kilbeggan seems in a crumbling state of decay, the buildings badly neglected like the people who walk about listlessly and appear to have no object in life (except to blame the government for their wretched conditions).[94]

Some soldiers (whilst not drawing parallels between location and the Irish people) wrote of the bleakness and quietness of Irish provincial life. C.Hendy, serving with the 1st Manchester Regiment in Cork between 1919 and 1922, captured his discontent with the location in doggerel form:

> Of all the places in this land
> That have been made by human hand
> There is one I can ne'er understand
> That's Ballincollig.
>
> There are no shop or market stalls,
> There are no clubs or music halls,
> But when it rains the water falls
> At Ballincollig. [95]

The sentiment is typical of soldiers' feelings towards their location during this period. Many battalions were dispersed in small detachments in towns and villages far removed from any major urban centre. Compared to barrack life in large self-contained military communities back home, the sparse population centres of rural Ireland were 'backwaters' offering few entertainments to the soldier. Consequently, the bleakness of location, the adverse weather and the apparent inactivity of Irish provincial towns became for many some of the most trying aspects of service.

The various hardships arising from a lack of basic training, insufficient unit size and a general discontent with service conditions came to be reflected in pressures on the operational effectiveness of the Irish garrison. These limiting factors, arising from the post-war climate and from weak government, greatly added to the demands placed

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[94] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, Oct. 1920, p. 46.
[95] C.Hendy in *Manchester Regiment Gazette*, July 1921, p. 133.

upon the troops, arising from both military policy and rebel determination. As the Irish army entered the final and most intense year of the conflict, it remained undermanned, untrained, inexperienced, and ill-equipped to meet the demands of an irregular conflict. Henceforth, military commanders could only remedy the shortfall by increasing the burden of duty for the troops at their disposal.

2. Military Operations

The individual or 'front-line' experiences of soldiers involved in military operations in Ireland have been largely neglected by previous studies of the period. Ill-defined general terms such as 'raid', 'patrol', 'sweep', 'picket' and 'guard' have often been used to describe the operational routine of the military, with few attempts made to elaborate on these terms, to discover their meaning within the context of Irish service, or assess their contribution to a failed campaign. Therefore, a more complete picture of military life in Ireland is requiring of a more detailed description of the everyday activities that came to define it. During this period, the army was also beset by difficulties arising from its obligation to co-ordinate operations with the R.I.C. Therefore, this chapter will provide the first concerted attempt to analyse the fractured relationships in the Crown forces. This analysis will also highlight the significance of the government's failure to unite the command of the security forces, and the impact of this failure will be related back to soldiers' experience of civil-military policing. A further detailed study of the difficulties encountered by military intelligence officers in the course of their duties will provide a case study for the major arguments laid down in this chapter.

Military sources from the period suggest that 'raiding' was the primary duty of troops in Ireland. The author of the *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* wrote at length on the subject, recalling how:

> A list of places to be raided each night was received daily from Brigade Headquarters. It might consist of five or six tasks, including the raiding of buildings suspected of being the headquarters of organizations, printing presses, bomb factories, and those containing stores of enemy arms and ammunition: sometimes it involved the arrest of individuals wanted for murder or lesser crimes, particularly Sinn Féiners on the 'run.'

Typically, small parties of two to three travelling in lorries or armoured vehicles performed the majority of raids, although larger operations could involve:

> The cordoning off of a village, or an extensive area, while a house to house search was made within the dark pool segregated by the searchlights. If armed resistance was expected the troops might be accompanied by armoured cars, or tanks, two of which were permanently attached to the battalion.[1]

For example, a large-scale search of all 'the country within ten miles of Kilbrittain' in June 1920 occupied most of the operational resources of 6th Division and resulted in 'one hundred and fifty houses being searched, without result' in just one night.[2] Raiding could also be time-consuming, with efforts usually being directed towards the seizure of arms, wanted persons, and seditious literature. To locate these targets raiding parties usually had to make thorough and exhaustive searches of houses and their contents. Douglas Wimberley recalled a raid on the house of a suspected rebel in Queenstown, County Cork in August 1920, during which his party struggled to uncover any incriminating evidence, even in the absence of the occupant. Through sheer persistence, Wimberley discovered a cavity beneath an unsecured floorboard, which revealed a document containing a 'hate poem' that ran:

> "God curse the British Empire,
> May he wither the flag that flies
> May he shatter the strength that still remains
> Of that father of sin and lies
> May he strengthen the hands of its enemies
> May he hasten its dying gasp
> May Satan rise from the depths of Hell
> That ulcer of earth to grasp."[3]

Despite failing to find arms or capture any documents betraying the plans or tactics of the local I.R.A., the operation ended on a note of satisfaction for Wimberley whose haul of seditious literature was sufficient to secure the arrest of the occupant.

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[1] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, pp. 29-30.
[2] J.W.Burrows, *Essex Units in the War 1914-19*, (Southend on Sea, 1920) p. 189.
[3] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 148.

Wimberley's account demonstrated how professionalism and persistence could yield worthwhile results. Similarly, an officer's wife based in Dublin provided a frank description of the thoroughness with which soldiers approached their raiding duties:

> Beds, cupboards, chimneys were searched and carpets raised. Ladies' clothing hanging in wardrobes was always carefully investigated. This was often a favourite hiding place for revolvers, ammunition, or seditious documents.[4]

Likewise, intelligence reports highlight the careful planning and organization that preceded a successful raid. Raid operations were rarely based on speculation or opportunism alone, usually they followed thorough reconnaissance:

> As a general principle it was desirable to make a previous reconnaissance and if a house in a town was likely to lead to important results to raid another and, as far as possible, similar house in the street in the same street so as to ascertain the type of building. Not only was previous reconnaissance desirable but a clear and definite plan for searching and guarding during the search was essential. In important raids personal and thorough searches should be made of every inmate in the house, unless they were so numerous that it was inconvenient or impossible. Documents and weapons were hidden in most unexpected places, and in many instances were overlooked owing to sheer bluff. It was therefore necessary that those who conducted a search should have studied beforehand all available notes on the various types of hiding places.[5]

Despite its thoroughness and the grave risk to those involved, from a military point of view raiding was a largely fruitless activity in Ireland. Careful planning could easily identify the premises of suspected rebels, but such reconnaissance was highly unlikely to secure arrests. Military communication was never able to keep pace with the rapidity of republican information networks: Percival recalled how his opponents developed 'an extraordinary way of getting their orders circulated' that involved

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[4] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 63.
[5] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed) *British Intelligence* p. 50.

leaving 'verbal instructions at fixed meeting places' such as farmhouses or public houses. This network, comprising numerous outposts and spanning large areas of remote country, facilitated the rapid deployment (or withdrawal) of republican units during the course of military operations. The continual thwarting of targeted raids encouraged Percival and his men to shift their focus to raiding these meeting places, which quickly became 'one of our main objects to find and surprise.'[6] Shaw was similarly aware that co-ordinated raids aimed at multiple targets were also hampered by the velocity of basic 'word of mouth' communication: 'it is difficult…in a country district to concentrate the troops necessary to raid the houses of half a dozen I.V. officers living in different villages without attracting attention.'[7] Likewise, in Dublin District men of the O.B.L.I. described how the mobility of their opponents created difficulties in tracking wanted persons during the course of a raid:

> The Sinn Féiners rarely slept in the same place twice, tonight a city tenement, tomorrow a cabin on some lonely hillside. Sometimes the soldiers won, more often not. Information was scrappy and came at unexpected times and places.[8]

This often led to a form of 'blind hitting-out' which posed serious problems for troop morale since 'raids on houses on insufficient information raised resentment for which the results obtained did not compensate.'[9] Augusteijn has claimed that 'without sufficient local information' the key sites believed to host prominent republicans were 'continuously raided even when most of the men concerned were on the run.' His 'self-preservation' thesis also works well here if we accept his claim that soldiers and policemen were fully aware that they 'would not find anyone in these houses' which meant that 'they would avoid getting into a fight.'[10] Therefore, arrest raids on premises known to be vacant may have been entirely counter-productive in a military sense, yet it presented soldiers with the rare opportunity to remove themselves to a safe location and to avoid potentially dangerous operations elsewhere.

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[6] Sir Warren Fisher (Head of the Civil Service) to Lloyd George, Bonar Law (Lord Privy Seal) and Chamberlain (Chancellor of the Exchequer) letter dated 15 May 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/1/33; Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 9.
[7] Statement from G.O.C.-in-C. on the present state of affairs in Ireland, 27 March 1920, p. 19.
[8] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 29.
[9] Record of the Rebellion, p. 7.
[10] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 229.

One particular aspect of raiding that drew heavy comment from soldiers stemmed from their first contact with the poverty of rural and provincial Irish households during this period. Douglas Wimberley regarded this 'clash of worlds' as the most 'distasteful and unpleasant' aspect of raiding duties. He recalled that most of the houses he entered: 'were literally swarming with fleas, which we then invariably picked up…as soon as I got back to camp I used to bathe myself and change my clothes.'[11] Likewise, F.A.S.Clarke was similarly unnerved by his first sight of Irish rural poverty, his description of the search of a farmhouse near Kinsale conjures an image of grotesquery: 'We searched a so-called farm and found one old woman in a bed sharing the one room with fowls, pigs and traces of a cow. The stink was awful.' The raiding party then moved on to a neighbouring farmhouse 'a better farm with two storeys' though his first impressions were challenged when his sergeant 'rushed downstairs and was violently sick outside…[he] would never tell me what horrid sight he had seen upstairs.'[12]

An officers' wife expressed her distaste for raiding (on the part of her husband) in terms of the unwanted insight it offered into the lives of Dublin's urban poor: 'the occupants of the house usually presented a curious appearance in various odd deshabilles…If the house was moderately clean this work was bearable, though unpleasant.' She further recalled how some unfortunate soldiers were charged with raiding 'the filthy tenement houses of the Dublin slums.'[13]

Some soldiers were particularly uncomfortable regarding the intrusive aspects of raiding: E.J.A.H.Brush regarded it as 'distasteful for soldiers to have to pry into other people's private houses and private possessions.[14] Despite this, some raiding parties relished such rude incursions into Irish domestic life; the correspondent of the *Green Howards' Gazette* reported that:

> The searching of houses at all hours of the day or night still continues, and if an unpleasant job, it nevertheless presents some humorous aspects. Usually we are treated well but at times the

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[11] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 148.
[12] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, pp. 3-4.
[13] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 63.
[14] Brush, 'Rifle Green/Orange Flash', p. 16.

> youthful beauty of the house becomes truculent – in which case quiet sarcasm is most assuredly the remedy.[15]

An officers' wife (despite her account of the decrepit state of the Dublin slums) recalled how raiding became a popular duty because it sometimes provoked a confrontation to relieve the boredom of military service:

> ...it was a break in the monotony of the everlasting guards. There was always the hope of a scrap, of getting a little of their own back. When volunteers were called for the whole regiment usually responded.[16]

Therefore, innate curiosity and the possibility of a violent encounter attracted many soldiers to raiding duties. Even greater excitement was generated by the prospect of a valuable haul. The *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* remembered that:

> …late one evening a note was handed through the barrack fence by a girl who then disappeared. It purported to give the address at which Michael Collins, the Sinn Féin leader, would spend the following night...it was decided to visit the address during the course of the night's operations. The house specified in the note was quietly surrounded and entered. Almost at once success appeared imminent, for there in the bedroom a man was sleeping of whom the remainder of the household claimed they knew nothing; they had never seen him before, they said, excitement became intense. By now, the man was very much awake, but apparently was unwilling to talk. Someone turned back the bedclothes, disclosing the fact that he wore a long, ginger beard – a most excellent disguise in Dublin. A quick tug failed to remove it…if the assault had no other effect it induced loquacity…the man explained…exactly who he was: the N.C.O. verified the full statement, and apologized handsomely…The

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[15] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Nov. 1920, p. 99.
[16] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 60.

girl and her motive? No one knew. It was like that in Dublin in those days.[17]

If raiding evoked a mixture of anticipation and apprehension, military patrols were almost universally disliked. Of all military duties, they probably posed the biggest safety threat to troops. During patrols the element of surprise that occasionally allowed the military to gain the upper hand during raids, was reversed in favour of the enemy. Therefore, mobile I.R.A. units were able to co-ordinate their attacks in accordance with the predictable pattern of motor, foot and cycle patrols. Indeed, Percival claimed that an 'unnecessary routine movement' was a key contributory factor to the Kilmichael ambush of 28 November 1920.[18] Likewise, the Manchester Regiment's Record of Service detailed how a cyclist unit was attacked by '40 men, disguised with beards, black faces etc…' during their regular patrol of the West Cork village of Ballyvourney.[19] The attack claimed the life of one officer and left four other ranks wounded. On another occasion, a party of armed rebels surprised the same regiment as they patrolled their regular route along the Dripsey Road, near Ballincollig. This time the ambushing party (being well aware of the size and structure of the motor patrol) had allowed another Crossley van 'which was about a mile ahead to pass through the ambush.' As the second Crossley approached 'an attempt was made to drop a tree in front of it' and the ambushing party 'was extended along the sides of the road for a distance of 200 yards' where they discharged over a 100 rounds in the direction of the immobilized tender.[20]

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[17] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle,* pp. 29-30. Anonymous letters of this kind were common throughout the period. For the most part they were intended to create a diversion or add to the frustration of raiding parties, however Percival claimed that these false leads were sometimes the result 'of one family trying to get a bit of its own back on a neighbouring family.', Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 15.

[18] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II) p. 17. This attack by a flying column of the West Cork Brigade I.R.A. under the leadership of Tom Barry resulted in the death of 17 Auxiliaries on 28 November 1920, detailed accounts of the ambush and its aftermath can be found in Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, pp. 21-38 and Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, pp. 74, 110.

[19] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment 1919-22, 18 Aug. 1920, Tameside Local Studies Library, Stalybridge, Greater Manchester. This particular incident, which has not had wide coverage in accounts of the period should not be confused with the 'Ballyvourney ambush' of July 1918 during which two armed constables were attacked by armed Volunteers who shot one and beat the other until he became unconscious, see Hart, *The I.R.A. and it's Enemies*, p. 62.

[20] *Ibid*, 1 Sept. 1920. This incident, which led to a substantial exchange of fire between the opposing sides, has been largely neglected in surviving military records from the period and was left completely unrecorded in the detailed tally of incidents contained within the army's own 'The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area: From After the 1916 Rebellion to December 1921.' General Staff, 6th Division, (hereafter 'Rebellion. 6th Div.') Strickland Papers, Imperial War Museum, London.

The success of ambushing parties largely depended upon ingenuity, patience, preparation, organization and steely determination. Sean Moylan provided one of the most vivid accounts of an I.R.A. ambush in his description of the Clonbannin ambush of February 1921:

> Courage and enthusiasm are at a low ebb in the hours before dawn. It was bitterly cold and we trudged along in grim silence across the sodden fields to our destination…as necessity arose men were engaged in cutting holes in the thick hedges with billhooks. When this work was done there was nothing to do but wait…the hours seemed endless. At eleven o'clock we were still crouching beneath the fence and still there was no sign of the British. Suddenly we heard the sound of a lorry and the order went down the line: "Let the first one well in before you fire." On it came. We waited for the second lorry. Out through the gate swung the farm cart; those who propelled it scuttled back. We opened fire. In five minutes the fight was over. By some mischance there was only one lorry on the road that morning… Those English boys showed grit but they were outnumbered and caught in a trap. All of them were wounded; their driver was killed. I looked at the young driver as he lay dead across the wheel. I am no soldier. I hate killing and violence. The thought ran through my mind:- "*God help his mother*."[21]

However, not all successful rebel operations depended upon such meticulous preparation: random or even targeted patrols were usually too bulky and too slow moving to retain the element of surprise for long, and their torpid movements created excellent spot chances for opportunist attackers. The chronicler of the Royal Scots Fusiliers recalled:

> …frequent patrolling in box-bodied Ford cars, Crossley 18-cwt. tenders and 3-ton lorries. Two peerless armoured cars each

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[21] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 68.

> mounting two Hotchkiss guns were also available for assistance but proved clumsy and unreliable.[22]

F.A.S.Clarke also observed that:

> …movement in trucks was unsatisfactory, not only did it give the game away, but one soon heard that the most successful ambushes of troops and police were when [they were] riding in vehicles.[23]

These ponderous and awkward patrols were in sharp relief to the mobility of their opponents whom one soldier observed as being able 'to travel great distances with astonishing speed.' They also manipulated the terrain to further the mobility gap between themselves and their opponents by 'turning off the main roads, and using the innumerable tracks and lanes with which the country was intersected' thereby 'continuing their journey at top speed.'[24] Contrast this with Sean Moylan's description of a military motor patrol of the Gloucester Regiment that was so awkwardly large (and so thorough in its coverage of the North Cork area) that it generally proceeded 'at a rate of not greater than one mile an hour.' This allowed him to watch it from his vantage point for 'several hours [until] it passed out of sight.'[25] Only on rare occasions did military patrols retain the element of surprise long enough to anticipate an ambushing party. A good example was provided by a joint 6th Division military patrol near Bandon in August 1920 which was reported to 'have surprised a large party of men who were ambushing near Brinny, about four miles from Bandon.'[26] Such incidents undoubtedly brought a measure of satisfaction to those involved, and yet they were far too infrequent to alleviate the irritation of labour intensive, fruitless operations. Some patrolling parties experimented with a combination of motorised transport and foot advances as a means by which to confuse and disorientate the enemy.[27] However, the only genuine defensive tactic for military motor patrols was simple weight of numbers. Marie Coleman observed how.

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[22] Anon, *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers*, (Glasgow, 1954), Midleton Library, Glasgow. p. 5.
[23] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, p. 3.
[24] Brevet Major T.A.Lowe, 'Some Reflections of a Junior Commander upon "The Campaign" in Ireland 1920 and 1921.' *Army Quarterly* (Oct., 1922) pp. 56-7.
[25] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 130.
[26] *The Times*, 31 Aug. 1920, p. 11.
[27] Brennan, *The War in Clare*, pp. 46-7. Brennan recalled how 'the British adopted a plan of sending out strong detachments at night and dropping them at strategic points on the roads…often they came in lorries which left them and then drove on.'

in Longford 'they became more successful at evading the I.R.A., travelling in much larger convoys, thus making it increasingly difficult for the I.R.A. to initiate engagements with them.'[28] In Sligo, Farry cited an incident whereby a large planned ambush was averted by the presence of a formidable military convoy: 'They [the ambushing party] stayed until 5pm…when four loads of military came along and they were let go through…Carty [Sligo I.R.A. leader] was unwilling to engage such a large number of soldiers.'[29] Sean Moylan was similarly aware that a greater number of lorries, created a better opportunity for the military to spread out during an attack, which sometimes 'permitted the British to outflank our position'. As he recalled, the Gloucester Regiment stationed in North Cork (despite their torpor) were a constant source of frustration for an operationally-minded I.R.A. leader: 'they always moved in such large bodies that it would be madness for us to think of attacking them.'[30] The risks created by smaller patrolling parties and by the 'bunching' of military vehicles were well known to soldiers of the Essex Regiment. Their 1st Battalion established clear guidelines stating that 'lorry convoys should consist of not less than 6 lorries with a suitable escort', they were also careful 'to avoid all being ambushed simultaneously' by dividing lorries into 'two or more groups which moved at 300 or 400 yards interval.'[31]

Inevitably, the susceptibility of patrolling parties arose in connection with their main purpose which was to establish a visible presence in remote districts. Their use as an 'imposing spectacle' was recognised by Captain E.F.Chapman who was billeted in Killarney, County Kerry at the time of the Easter Rising in Dublin. He recalled how he spent much of this period of upheaval: 'march[ing] about the country to make a wholesome impression on people's minds.'[32] In the later period however, smaller isolated patrols (emanating from detached units) tended to convey an impression of vulnerability that invited assault. F.A.S.Clarke recalled how he was required to take 'small patrols round the streets of the town [Bandon]' a routine which encouraged local rebels 'contrary to their usual tactics' to take the 'offensive against us and several other of the Regiment's detachments.'[33] Foot patrols were especially vulnerable and their safety usually depended upon both their weight of numbers and

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[28] Coleman, *County Longford*, p. 131.
[29] Farry, *Sligo 1914-21*, p. 251.
[30] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, pp. 88, 130.
[31] Percival, Guerilla Warfare (I), p. 12.
[32] Captain E.F.Chapman, letter to a friend, dated 30 April 1916, Imperial War Museum, London.
[33] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, p. 8.

their ability to maintain a regular military formation. A visiting journalist observed an organized patrol through Limerick city in May 1921, in which he recalled:

> …soldiers walking through the streets in their curious patrol formation. A line of six men with arms at the trail comes first, followed by a file of men on opposite sides of the street, then the officer and his N.C.O. in the centre of the roadway, another file of men and another line. They advance in a leisurely manner, the officer occasionally pulling up somebody crossing the road and questioning him.[34]

Soldiers of the Essex Regiment also made frequent use of foot patrols as a means to exhaust itinerant rebel groups:

> Local patrolling was carried out by each detachment, so as to keep the enemy on the move, and prevent him from resting, in any quiet area. The general idea was that there should be no quiet areas, and that the enemy columns should be constantly harassed.[35]

Alongside the constant threat of ambush, patrols had to contend with felled trees, land mines, exploded bridges and innumerable road trenches intended to impede the passage of motor patrols (cycle patrols were usually stopped in their tracks by the laying down of 'tin tacks' across the roads.) [36] On occasions these practices were intended to stall patrols in order that insurgents could ambush the immobilised vehicles and their occupants. In this way:

> [men of the Lincoln Regiment] travelling in two motor lorries from Fermoy to Tipperary were ambushed by a large party of men who fired on them from both sides of the road. A tree had been felled and thrown across the road, and when the lorries pulled up shots were fired at them.[37]

On most occasions, these measures were designed to inconvenience and frustrate the military or to hamper their mobility and reduce their operational effectiveness.

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[34] *The Times*, 23 May 1921, p. 14.
[35] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), pp. 2-3.
[36] *The 79th News*, 'Our trek in Ould [sic] Ireland', July 1921, p. 187.
[37] *The Times*, 20 Dec. 1920, p. 10.

The Record of Service of the Manchester Regiment contained a series of weary entries regarding the problems encountered by patrols: on 6 August '…a patrol found a trench dug across the Macroom-Garrane-Ballyvourney road, they refilled it'; On 20 August: 'various roads had trenches dug across them in this area [Ballymakeery].'[38] Trenching was by far the most common ploy used to impede the free passage of Crown Force patrols. One very plausible explanation for this was provided by the 'Record of the Rebellion' which claimed that trench digging was a suitable outlet for the energies of moderates in the ranks of Sinn Féin: 'The practice provided a safe way for the less bold spirits of the rebels to show some form of activity, and local units of the I.R.A. became responsible for this action.'[39]

This form of interference with the transport infrastructure was a severe logistical problem for the Crown forces. It also ran parallel to a determined 'transport boycott' which meant that the military were reliant entirely upon their own transport (see Chapter 4).

The I.R.A. also experimented with land mines as a means by which to cause maximum material and human damage to Crown Force patrols. During this period, I.R.A. explosives were fairly rudimentary, and usually posed more of a risk to those engaged in their production than to their intended target. While the vast majority of these crude contraptions failed to detonate on impact, those that did tended to have a devastating effect. On 31 May 1921, a musketry party of the Hampshire Regiment, marching along a road near Youghal, County Cork came into contact with a number of mines 'fired mechanically across the road' resulting in the death of 'seven soldiers [mainly bandsmen]' with '19 wounded.'[40]

To further illustrate the problem of road obstacles, it is worth quoting from the account of a visiting reporter in May 1921 who chose to walk the 20 miles from Cork to Mallow by road in order to 'discover the realities of the countryside':

> There were sometimes loose places in the surface of the road, as though it had been dug up and replaced. But not until I had covered more than half the journey and passed through a straggling village of white and grey cottages did I come upon a definite reminder of the realities of the countryside. Where an

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[38] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, 6 Aug., 20 Aug. 1920.
[39] Record of the Rebellion, p. 38.
[40] Record of the Rebellion, p. 42; Rebellion. 6th Div. p. 29.

> old grey stone bridge crossed a stream which sang and rippled down a narrow ravine, a neat trench four foot deep by three broad had been dug across the road.[41]

On another excursion along the Tullamore road from Birr he discovered that:

> Three miles out a wide, deep trench had been dug across the road – a trench just wide enough and just deep enough to wreck any vehicle that should try to compass it. A long empty stretch between the bog and the hillside followed at the end of which three holes, of the size and depth of shell holes, had been dug triangular wise in the roadway leaving a narrow pathway for the foot passenger but ensuring certain perdition to bicycle or car.[42]

These 'realities' were an everyday obstacle to military patrols, and were sometimes used as a means by which to funnel military traffic to planned ambush sites. Through strategic road cutting and the exploding of bridges, I.R.A. units (with the aid of forced civilian labour) were able to obstruct 'all roads except one or two selected main roads which they left open for the ordinary civilian traffic and also with a view to catching lorry convoys in ambushes on these roads.'[43] These strategic patterns were evident in the 5th Division area, especially in the area surrounding the Curragh: 'The map on which were marked up the "road obstacles reported", showed a distinct attempt to cut off the Curragh from direct communication with the north west, west and south west.'[44]

Many of the initiatives designed to overcome these obstacles proved to be clumsy and time consuming, not to mention futile. Refilled trenches could easily be re-opened and bridging materials such as planks were cumbersome and liable to break. On the other hand, road blockages could usually be dealt with adequately via the use of Stokes mortar bombs. In the case of road trenches, soldiers of the Cameron Highlanders became so exasperated that they used forced 'civilian labour...collected in the customary way' to remove obstructions and level road surfaces.[45] The Buffs

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[41] *The Times*, 19 May 1921, p. 12.
[42] *Ibid*, 20 May 1921, p. 14.
[43] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare, p. 17.
[44] Hist. 5th Div., p. 80.
[45] *The 79th News*, 2nd Battalion notes, April 1921, p. 141. For more in-depth analysis of the Cameron's use of coercive measures see Chapter 4. The use of forced civilian labour to refill trenches appears to have been widespread throughout all divisional areas. The collection of civilians for this purpose was

even devised an ingenious counter-obstruction tactic that involved a 'road block' being 'converted into a booby trap', a ploy that reportedly 'caused many Sinn Féin casualties.'[46] Late in the period, training was provided to enable soldiers to surmount obstacles more effectively and an astonishing variety of materials were provided to assist them to do so. These included 'cross-out saws', 'felling axes', 'hawsers', 'portable bridging materials', 'artillery mats', 'strips of expanded metal' and the intriguingly named 'ammonal sausages' apparently used for 'blowing up trees'.[47] Nonetheless, these counter-obstruction aids (however elaborate) were simply surplus to requirement in cases where road obstructions had been so placed to create opportunities for ambushing parties. Sean Moylan recalled one occasion when a group of soldiers travelling by car approached his party who were in the process of digging a trench near Shinanagh, North Cork. Unable to turn the vehicle around and faced with an armed I.R.A. unit, the driver of the car, already under fire:

> …saw the twelve feet wide trench yawning before him, trod on the accelerator, charged it and almost got away. But the car was too heavily laden, its back wheels struck the face of the trench on the far side and it toppled back into the trench almost on top of the men who had been digging.[48]

Searches were also impeded by disruptions to travel and communications, especially in the aftermath of the Fermoy incident (see Chapter 5). In this case, the attackers made preparations for their flight by cutting telegraph wires in the neighbourhood thereby reducing the army's potential for a rapid response. The assailants fled the scene in motorcars and the military were hampered in their pursuit owing to the roads being blocked with felled trees. As a result they were 'forced to abandon the pursuit' and despatch aircraft to track down the raiders. However, even this initiative proved unsuccessful on account of fact that 'the telephone wires

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sometimes recorded in war diaries as though a regular military operation. For example an entry in the War Diary of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade revealed that '1 officer and 25 other ranks of the Carbiniers' set out to 'collect civilians to repairs roads.' This entry also suggests that gathering civilian labour was labour intensive on the part of the military as well as being time-consuming. It is also fair to assume that civilian parties under instruction from the military were neither the most co-operative, nor efficient workers for this task. N.A., W.O. 35/93/2, War Diary – 3rd Cavalry Brigade (5th Division) – May – July 1921.

[46] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs*, chapter 1, p. 3.

[47] Hist. 5th Div., p. 136.

[48] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 89.

between Fermoy and the neighbouring aerodrome were also cut.'[49] This disruption led to a slow response on the part of the R.A.F. who were unable to further assist the army in their pursuit.

The proliferation of attacks on patrols, convoys and search parties necessitated some extreme (even inhumane) measures on the part of the military, the most notorious of which involved the use of I.R.A. hostages either strapped to or contained in military vehicles to deter would-be attackers. Nonetheless, these measures were insufficient to prevent an ambush of the Crown forces at Macroom in February 1921. In this case, the carrying of 'a Sinn Féin hostage' failed to deter the attack, and the unfortunate hostage was reportedly 'killed during the fight.' All told, the battle at Macroom was reported to have lasted two hours during which time military reinforcements from Bantry and Glengariff were unable to assist the besieged patrol owing to the familiar reason that transport was obstructed by the destruction of bridges. In particular, 'a large bridge spanning the Cork and Bandon railway line at Aughaville was blown up by republicans' and 'rail transport was brought to a standstill by a blocked railway line.'[50]

The threat to motor patrols was so serious that it prompted commanders in the 5th Division area to establish a series of standing orders for armed parties moving by lorry. The fulfilment of these requirements was often complex, and always labour intensive, as the following extract demonstrates:

> (6) Every lorry which carries armed personnel will have the following minimum number specially told off for look-out duty and for 'immediate action':
>
> (a) A "Forward Look out" consisting of an Officer or N.C.O., or man, sitting beside the driver.
>
> (b) Two "Side Look-outs one on each side of the lorry.
>
> (c) A "Rear Look-out" by the tail-board.
>
> Note – The "Side Look-outs" will be doubled if there are more than 10 men in the lorry.

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[49] *The Times*, 8 Sept. 1921, p. 11; 9 Sept. 1921, p. 12.
[50] *The Times*, 26 Feb. 1921, p. 10. On 25 February, 1921, 70 Auxiliary Cadets travelling by lorry from Macroom to Ballyvourney were ambushed by an I.R.A. battalion reported as being '500 strong' resulting in the death of 10 Auxiliaries and a civilian.

> (9) In addition to the "Look-outs" one or two men will be told off specially to drop the tail board of the lorry if required.[51]

Despite the most stringent precautions, the inertia of large, cumbersome military patrols was always likely to make them a target for attack. By way of response, the government had, as early as May 1919, touted plans to switch to a system of 'garrison posts and flying columns' for the purpose of 'carrying out a relentless pursuit of the terrorists.'[52] However, it was not until May 1920 that troop numbers allowed regiments to form into flying squadrons of cavalry. At this time, the Cabinet were determined to promote a military solution involving flying columns as a means of avoiding the need to introduce full martial law.[53] In May 1920, *The Times* began to report that mobile troops had begun patrolling the mountainous districts of Counties Dublin and Wicklow.[54] However (according to intelligence reports) in spite of the influx of fresh troops in May 1920 'military forces…were not yet strong enough to form mobile columns of any strength or to do more than raid and patrol in the vicinity of their stations throughout the country.'[55]

Despite their limitations, the new arrangement proved to be much more effective than bulky motorized patrols. A new initiative involving small foot columns accompanied by cycle sections was, as Townshend has maintained 'perhaps the only true counter-guerrilla tactic employed during the whole conflict.'[56] However, while these columns sometimes lent themselves to tactical flexibility, concerns remained about the true alacrity of their response. The *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers* recalled how:

> …flying squads were held in readiness to deal with "incidents" but were always absurdly late in their arrival on the scene; the quarry had struck long since and melted away, to re-appear elsewhere at some unguarded spot.[57]

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[51] Hist. 5th Div., Colonel W.Maxwell Scott, General Staff, 5th Division – Appendix X – Standing Orders for Armed Parties Moving by Lorry and for Lorry Convoys.
[52] *The Times*, 19 May 1920, p. 16.
[53] N.A., Cabinet Papers (hereafter CAB) 23/037, Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers held at 10 Downing Street on Monday 31st May 1920 – General Policy in Ireland. At the conference, Greenwood 'expressed himself against the introduction of martial law at the present moment, but would prefer to await the result of a new method of putting down outrages by the use of mobile troops.'
[54] *The Times*, p. 16.
[55] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence* p. 24.
[56] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 177.
[57] Anon, *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers*, p. 5.

Similarly, Peter Hart has claimed that mobile units 'were still sometimes awkwardly large' citing the example of the multi-platoon columns 'devised by Major Percival of the Essex Regiment' nicknamed 'Percival's mule column' by local republicans.[58]

An article in *The 79th News* provided a frank description of life on a mobile column. Written by a serving soldier, the account suggests that bare comfort, monotony, long hours and danger were the most salient features of column life. The author 'J.C.T' recalled a typical morning with his colleagues in 'C' Company on the Cameron Highlander's Flying Column:

> Breakfast 04.00 hrs, Nos. 1, 2 and 4 Platoons proceeded to Aghada, dealing with all the intervening country *en route*. On arrival they embarked on a steam launch and proceeded to Queenstown. At 06.15 hours Horse Transport and No.3 Platoon as escort marched via Middleton to Queenstown, a distance of 17 miles.[59]

The 'History of the 5th Division' also provided detailed accounts of the activities of flying columns or "Circus" patrols as they were sometimes described. These descriptions suggest that mobile operations had a multiple purpose in providing training for young soldiers, creating a visible presence in remote areas, and pursuing targeted arrests:

> A "Circus" patrol consisted of a party of 20-30 cavalry, or artillery, or infantry, mounted on horseback, bicycles or in lorries, which went out into the country for not less than two and not more than seven days. The party billeted or bivouacked for the night, and was either self-supporting or else requisitioned food and forage from the inhabitants. These patrols afforded most useful instruction for all ranks, they "showed the flag" in out of way districts, and very often they had definite objectives such as the arrest of one or more "wanted men".[60]

Curiously, most official sources give few indications of the success of these initiatives. Nevertheless, flying columns could be quietly effective in mapping rural

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[58] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 95.
[59] *The 79th News*, 'Our Trek in Ould [sic] Ireland', June 1921, p. 187.
[60] Hist. 5th Div., p.68.

areas. They also acquainted troops with the tactics of counter-insurgency. Intelligence notes recalled how (in common with experiences in the 5th Division):

> mobile columns did not achieve any tangible or sensational results, beyond improving our knowledge of the country and training the troops to a system of tactics which were quite new to them after their experience of the war in Europe.[61]

The responsibility for providing escorts and guards also transferred from the police to the military. This need was created by the disturbed state of the country, and escorts were employed to convey military stores in the absence of a reliable transport infrastructure. Sometimes the movement of civilians (especially prominent loyalists) necessitated the use of military escorts for protection. These duties naturally exposed soldiers to an increased threat of rebel attack. By definition, an escort (in the military sense) is placed to protect a potential target, and to form an effective human barrier between the target and the assailant. Such a responsibility could be costly for soldiers, even when the persons or items being escorted were seemingly innocuous. The Digest of Service of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment recorded a famous incident when, on 20 September 1920, 'an attack [was] made on a bread lorry and escort in Church Street, Dublin' during which two soldiers were killed and one wounded.'[62]

In a rare and fascinating account, A.C.Hannant, stationed in Dublin at the time of the Easter Rising recalled how a detachment of his squadron were detailed to escort a cargo of ammunition from Dublin's North Wall Docks to Marlborough Barracks adjoining Phoenix Park. The journey took them through the flashpoints of a city in the grip of rebellion:

> The detachment moved out under the command of Lieutenant Sheppard and half troop as escort. As they proceeded along the North Circular Road firing could be heard over the City towards Jacobs Biscuit Factory, and around the area of Dublin Castle. As they took some back turns to the Docks crossing Talbot Street they saw armed men running towards the G.P.O in Sackville

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[61] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence*, p. 29.
[62] Digest of Service of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 20 Sept. 1920. The ambush described here became a 'famous incident' because it led to the capture and (later) execution of 18 year old medical student, Kevin Barry. For further biographical detail regarding Kevin Barry see p. 225.

> Street…There was confusion at the docks, but Lieutenant Shepard managed to load the ammunition and get away.

At this point, one of the escorting party, Private S.S.Scarlet, was detailed to go ahead as a 'scout' with a 'connecting file between him and the detachment':

> They crossed Sackville Street and as they came up the Liffey armed men could be seen on the roofs of houses. S.S.Scarlet called up his connecting file to report, he galloped up but was turned back by heavy rifle fire, and S.S.Scarlet was shot dead. As they came up to the Four Courts the fire became very heavy and Lieutenant Sheppard decided to save the ammunition and his men, he cut the horses loose, saving saddles and blankets, got the ammunition and everything into an empty house in Church Street and turned over the G.S. wagons in the narrow street.

With just 'five rounds of ammunition per man', the detachment managed to hold out in their position 'until the following Friday' when they were finally liberated by men of the Dublin Fusiliers. The escorting party survived the ordeal, except for the heroic Lieutenant Shepard who 'was found dead in upstairs room.'[63]

Though the majority of escorts were unlikely to encounter the extreme adversity witnessed in Dublin in 1916, the escorting of arms, ammunition or republican prisoners was always a hazardous duty. In addition, after May 1920, cyclist escorts were required for military foot and motor patrols to provide advance warning of attack. Although these units had the security of knowing that large ambushing parties were less prone to attack them because this would betray their position, they nevertheless provided ideal fodder for lone gunmen.

Armed escorts were also required for vehicles carrying military stores, particularly after July 1920 when the raiding of trains carrying ammunition became a favoured tactic. However, given that armed escorts were usually provided on trains to prevent rebels from gaining access to transitory military stores, ambushing parties became increasingly interested in troop trains. The I.R.A. was quick to realise the potential for attacking military escorts on trains. and many rebels took full advantage of the certainty of location, the element of surprise and the practical difficulties of

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[63] A.C.Hannant, untitled TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, pp. 5-6.

returning fire. On 11 February 1921, an incident remembered as the Dishanebeg train ambush saw a highly successful ambushing party near Mallow, County Cork opening fire on a train carrying fare-paying passengers as well as a military escort. In the battle that ensued one officer was killed and another five ranks were wounded, rifles and other equipment were also seized, with no casualties being inflicted upon the attacking party.[64] During the Upton train ambush of February 1921, a party of 18 men of the 1st King's Liverpool Regiment were ambushed at Upton Station near Bantry whilst escorting mails and stores from Cork. On this occasion, none of the escorting party were killed but three were wounded: 'Bandsmen Blundell subsequently had to have his leg amputated.' In the crossfire, six civilians were killed and ten injured and the attacking party lost three men.[65]

Escort duties were also consuming of manpower. In particular, the escorting of prisoners tended to absorb a large number of officers and other ranks, and available sources suggest that the soldier to prisoner ratio was usually far greater than 1:1. The 1st Prince of Wales' Volunteers' War Diary recalled one occasion when 'a party consisting of five officers and 48 other ranks were employed removing 30 civilian prisoners from Arbour Hill detention barracks to Mountjoy prison.'[66]

Guard duties could be similarly labour intensive: it has been estimated that an average of five battalions were required to guard internment camps alone.[67] Added to this, in accordance with custom, the military were also required to supply guards of honour, to 'His Majesty's judges proceeding on their official duties.'[68] This role was particularly disagreeable to soldiers because it combined extremes of inactivity with the constant threat of attack, and this combination could produce both nervousness and tedium. This placed a great 'strain…upon the troops' as training opportunities were curtailed by the need to provide a guard for every 'military establishment' and prominent public building.[69] In his diary, Private J.P.Swindlehurst of the Lancashire Fusiliers recorded how he was quite unable to see beyond the military routine to which he had become resigned: 'little has happened that we know of, it just seems to

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[64] *The Times*, 14 Feb. 1921, p. 10.
[65] Digest of Service of the 1st Battalion Kings Liverpool Regiment, entry dated 19 Feb. 1921.
[66] N.A., W.O. 35/93/2, entry dated 16 Feb. 1921, War Diary – 1st Battalion Prince of Wales' Volunteers – Dec. 1920 – March 1922.
[67] G.Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question: A Study in Anglo-Irish Relations* (London, 1977) p. 323.
[68] N.A., W.O. 32/3006, Shaw to The Secretary W.O., Guards of Honour to be furnished for HM judges proceeding on official duties – request for covering approval, 9 July 1919.
[69] Record of the Rebellion, p. 9.

be a constant repetition of guards and other duties.'[70] Similarly, E.J.A.H.Brush recalled frustratingly long nights guarding some of Dublin's most prominent civic buildings. In June 1921, he was detailed to guard the burnt-out shell of the Custom House following its partial destruction by incendiaries of the Second Brigade of the Dublin I.R.A.:

> There were some guards which were more palatable than others – the Customs House was not one which came in the pleasant category, the I.R.A. set fire to all the documents, a great deal of bonded liquor and a great deal of money in notes, and most upsetting the public and private records which were indispensable to the people of Ireland and the legal profession, but which they had to learn to do without. The buildings were smelling of burning rubble and the guard was uncomfortable. I remember it was my first opportunity of exchanging fire with the I.R.A.[71]

Large operations aimed at securing arrests were commonly referred to as 'drives', 'sweeps' or 'round ups'. These tended to follow a more random pattern than regular patrolling or the escorting of military stores. In addition, they were usually organized on a more ambitious scale, sometimes involving co-operation between battalion, regimental, brigade, and even divisional commanders. The first major operation of this kind took place in Dublin District in January 1920 and enlisted the support of the Royal Navy who stationed their destroyers at regional ports in readiness to transport prisoners to Britain. In the 5th Division, the first such operation (undertaken in May 1920) focused on the Mullingar-Tullamore District and involved 'four cavalry regiments…assisted by local infantry units' under the orders of the Colonel Commandant of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade. This form of operation also allowed military units to focus their efforts within a defined theatre of war, with designated areas being driven each day and all exits blocked by 'infantry picquets.' This particular initiative was to last seven days owing to the fact that the units were 'self contained as regards supplies' and were therefore able to remain in the field at all times. The operation resulted in the arrest of 1,800 men of whom only a small

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[70] Private J.P.Swindlehurst, MS diary, 13 Jan. 1921. Imperial War Museum, London.
[71] Brush, 'Rifle Green/Orange Flash' p. 10.

number were detained.[72] A similar operation in the Clydagh Valley, County Kerry on 6 June was described by General Staff in the 6th Division as 'The most extensive and elaborately organised operation…ever attempted' during the campaign.[73] This particular initiative involved six columns of infantry 'numbering about 1,800 men', together with a contingent of Auxiliary police aided by aerial mapping and reconnaissance provided by the R.A.F. On this occasion, only 100 arrests were made, and yet the visible effort was enough to secure a place in republican folklore as 'the big round up.'[74]

The success of these initiatives is difficult to ascertain from military sources, although the balance of opinion suggested that ambition usually outweighed success: Percival claimed that the visual impact of these operations was in disproportion to their material success:

> The troops carried out a great number of searches for arms, but usually without result. It is so easy in a country of this nature to hide arms and ammunition that it is almost impossible to find them and I am of the opinion that it is a waste of time to carry out too many searches unless very definite information has been obtained.

When it came to wanted individuals, Percival's Essex units were naturally keen to avoid fruitless, and labour intensive 'drives' and preferred the use of 'bloodhounds…to track down culprits.'[75]

Alongside search and arrest initiatives and a regular routine of patrols, soldiers were also charged with enforcing curfews and supervising markets and fairs, as well as enforcing proclamations and prohibition orders. In the case of prohibited markets, the military enforced orders via the creation of pickets, which restricted access to and from markets and fairs. E.M.Warmington of the K.O.Y.L.I. remembered his experience in Kinsale, County Tipperary where a serious outrage 'elsewhere in the county' resulted in the battalion receiving 'orders to prohibit markets for a period'. Warmington recalled how all roads into the town 'were picketed against entry…in order to stop all unauthorised people intending to come to the market [which was itself picketed].' He also recalled being 'uneasy about the policy as being more

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[72] Record of the Rebellion, p. 43; Hart, *The I.R.A. and It's Enemies*, p. 94.
[73] Rebellion. 6th Div., p. 113.
[74] Record of the Rebellion, p. 43.
[75] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 16.

provocative of ill will than preventative of ill deeds.'[76] Certainly, available military sources suggest that pickets were rigorously enforced and, as such, proved to be a serious impediment to the free movement of civilians. Extracts from a series of instructions issued to officers in Dublin District give us a flavour of the organisational exactitude that characterised the military's approach to these tasks:

> 1. In the event of necessity arising for picqueting the roads leading out of Dublin, the code word "RASTA" followed by the numbers of the picquets which are to be posted will be sent out from the Office.
>
> 2. No picquet will number less than 15 other ranks with the addition of at least one constable.
>
> 3. Picquets will act as examining posts, but as far as possible the actual control and examination of civilians will be carried out by the Police with the assistance of Troops.
>
> 4. All vehicles will be stopped, and any which appear suspicious searched for arms, ammunition, illegal stores and documents.
>
> 5. A proper system for stopping vehicles must be arranged, and where necessary the road must be partially blocked. Where this is done the picquet must be provided with a lamp to warn vehicles approaching the post at night that the road is blocked. A proportion of the picquet should be under cover ready to deal with any persons who attempt to rush through.[77]

Troops were also given the widest latitude to disrupt or outlaw potentially seditious gatherings. However, their attempts to interdict illegal gatherings organised by Sinn Féin often provoked a violent response. Tensions during Lady Day in August 1919 led to a number of Sinn Féin led demonstrations notably at Stewartstown, Coalisland and Dungannon being prohibited by the military. On this occasion, the Highland Cyclist Brigade based in Omagh were given the task of enforcing the prohibition and were quickly brought into the action when prominent republican

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[76] E.M.Warmington, 'Diaries of War Service 1914-19', MS memoir, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University, p. 44.

[77] N.A., W.O. 35 90/1, "Schedule D", 'Instructions for Picqueting Roads', 4 Schedules "A", "B", "C" & "D" to accompany G.S. Dublin District War Diary, 24 June 1920,

orators addressed crowds in Coalisland in defiance of the military proclamation. The brigade were able to disperse the demonstrators but their actions prompted a retaliation from the crowd who launched 'volleys of stones and other missiles at the soldiers'[78] Similarly, a commemorative gathering to mark the anniversary of the execution of the 'Manchester Martyrs' degenerated into a riot when the military interrupted a procession through Cork. This intervention provoked 'stone throwing' which was answered with 'police baton charges.'[79]

Curfew orders also created difficulties for soldiers because they necessitated 'constant night patrols in order to enforce the curfew regulations.'[80] Such patrols were carried out in a variety of ways: some military commanders chose to drive heavy motor patrols through the streets in order that the military could be both 'seen' and 'heard' to impose the order. Other companies chose more subtle tactics to surprise curfew offenders. The *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* described the full spectrum of tactics employed by the military to enforce curfews in Dublin, ranging from small secretive patrols to highly visible collaborative efforts. Writing in 1922, the author remembered how:

> At this time a curfew was imposed on Dublin from 10pm until 6am and its enforcement was one of the many tasks that fell on the battalion. It was a difficult and wearisome affair, but very necessary. Normally it was carried out by patrols, moving sometimes on foot, wearing rubber-soled shoes, at other times on bicycles, and on occasions in lorries, supported by armoured cars and searchlights.[81]

J.P.Swindlehurst recalled one occasion when he was ordered out 'on "Curfew Patrol" in a big army lorry' just as he was 'thinking of getting to bed'. His account gives us a rare insight into the work of a typical curfew patrol despatched to 'round up the stragglers...after 10 o'clock.' Indeed, his description suggests that the [often considerable] tally of arrests achieved by curfew patrols was no real indication of their success as a counter-insurgency operation aimed at securing arrests. Of the 'twenty men and women' arrested on his patrol in Dublin on the night of 20 January

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[78] *The Times*, 18 Aug. 1919, p. 10.
[79] *Ibid*, 24 Nov. 1919, p. 14.
[80] Mullaly, *The South Lancashire Regiment*, p. 350.
[81] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 29.

1921, Swindlehurst recalled how the majority were 'men without homes', 'women of the streets' or 'drunken cabbies' and 'all were unarmed.'[82]

The enforcement of curfew orders tended to become more and more sophisticated as the conflict progressed. Sporadic outbreaks of rioting in Derry from mid to late 1920 prompted the army to employ the strongest measures available to them. Following four days of serious rioting between loyalists and republicans in June 1920 (an outbreak that claimed the lives of 17 people) Brigadier General Carter Campbell announced a curfew order in the city 'under which every man in the streets would be searched for firearms, and if they had any they would be taken from him. If he resisted he would be shot instantly [sic].' A proclamation was issued stating that '…all citizens must remain indoors between 11 o'clock at night and five in the morning unless provided with a permit.' The peace-keeping initiative was backed by naval destroyers, strategically located in the Foyle. To demonstrate their total control the military paraded their full arsenal along the empty streets:

> At the hour of the curfew cyclist patrols of soldiers, fully equipped, appeared on the streets. Armoured cars began their rounds and large patrols of military in a kind of skirmishing order moved in the twilight, while now and then the beams of the destroyer searchlights in the Foyle swept over the city and surrounding hills.[83]

However, despite these shows of strength, curfews were extremely difficult to enforce upon an unwilling population. Townshend has pointed out that 'curfew patrols were very active and made many arrests, but they could not hope to stop all nocturnal activity, nor could they work effectively over a wide area.'[84] Inevitably, the difficulty of maintaining tight control over large brigade areas tended to militate against the blanket presence that was required of the military throughout the later period.

Amongst the more unusual activities that troops were required to perform during the period were initiatives that aimed at tackling cattle driving. Here (unlike other areas of military strategy) army commanders displayed considerable ingenuity in their approach to tackle problems arising from insurgents' attempts to 'drive cattle from the land of loyalists and replace it with the cattle of Sinn Féin supporters.' Troops

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[82] Swindlehurst, MS Diary, 20 Jan. 1921.
[83] *The Times*, 25 June 1920 p.17; 28 June 1920, p. 17.
[84] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 87.

responded by establishing a series of enclosures throughout the country which were then 'legalized as "pounds."' This allowed the military to drive 'driven' cattle into the "pound" and post notices for the owner advising them to apply to the military to recover the cattle (which, of course, they were reluctant to do). The success of these initiatives could be said to have been absolute: a "pound" constructed by troops of the 9th Lancers near Castlerea was utilised in a successful 'drive' by the same regiment on May 29th and resulted in 'the impounding of 804 head of cattle, horses, sheeps, goats and donkeys.'[85]

Certainly troops in Ireland were pressed upon to perform a variety of tasks that were not only distinctly 'non-military' in character, but provided an unwelcome distraction to their substantive 'military' duties. Thus, the responsibility for implementing government initiatives aimed at tracking the ownership and possession of motor vehicles also fell on troops. The army were required to issue military permits for all motor vehicles and enforce the restrictions by means of 'patrols, examining posts, and the visiting of garages.'[86] In the latter case, the military demanded that every garage proprietor keep a 'log of hirings' to be 'inspected on demand by any military or police officer.'[87] Soldiers were even required to perform duties normally reserved for navy personnel. These included arms searches on remote river islands, especially on the inland waterways and lakes along the length of the Shannon. These searches were particularly hazardous because searching parties relied upon small, slow-moving and unarmed vessels in order to carry out their work, and this made them an easy target for snipers prowling the shores. The 'History of the 5th Division' described one occasion when a 'party of officers and men under Major C.F.Adams, Brigade Major of the 13th Infantry Brigade' embarked on a search of islands in Lough Ree near Athlone but ran into difficulties on the return journey: 'when the boat was in the river close to the latter's debouchment from the Lough, fire was opened on it by a party of rebels concealed on the banks.' This incident led to a successful application to the Admiralty for the provision of armed naval launches for use on the Shannon and Loughs Ree, Derg and Corrib, although the plan never came to fruition and was later abandoned.[88]

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[85] Hist. 5th Div., p. 36.
[86] Record of the Rebellion, p. 30.
[87] Hist. 5th Div., p. 60.
[88] *Ibid*, p. 70.

The nature of the conflict also necessitated other diverse roles for soldiers. In particular, the extension of civil-policing duties brought them into unfamiliar territory. Initially, the military had proved reluctant to undertake these duties, and some commanders 'made it clear that they did not want to become any more closely involved than in the emergency of 1880-2 and the strikes of 1911 and 1913-14.'[89] Despite these well-founded objections, a shortage of troops to effectively quell the rebellion tended to throw soldiers and policemen together for strategic and defensive reasons.

The ambiguous relationship between civil and military authorities was largely defined by the inconsistencies and incongruities of the Irish policy pursued by the Coalition government during this period. Throughout the conflict, the government had consistently failed to recognize the conflict as a situation approximating 'war', clinging imperviously to an abstract 'murder gang' theory.[90] To have accepted that a state of war existed would 'have conferred belligerent status to the rebels and acknowledged that resistance was not confined to a small group of terrorists.'[91] Thus, 'the operations of insurgents' were treated as 'criminal activities [that] were so widespread that the military was obliged to act in support of the civil power.'[92] This presentation reduced the pressure to make 'a bold decision between peace and war, between civil administration and martial law' and allowed the government to pursue a course that incorporated elements of both.[93] The inconsistency of government policy in Ireland has been roundly condemned by historians of the period as representing a 'savage and calculated arbitrariness', or being 'muddled and self defeating' or 'an erratic coercion policy.'[94] In fact, Lloyd George's doggedly maintained assertion that 'you do not declare war on rebels', together with a commitment to suppressing crime and implementing the Government of Ireland Bill emerge as the only real discernible areas of consistency in government policy.[95] McColgan has claimed that the government's failure to achieve a settled policy resulted from antagonism in the

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[89] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 29.
[90] *Ibid*, p. 57. The 'murder gang' theory (now largely discredited) held that the conflict arose entirely from the actions of small knots of men and was not indicative of any wider hostility amongst the populace.
[91] Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State*, p. 36.
[92] D.G.Boyce, 'How to Settle the Irish Question' in A.J.P.Taylor (ed) *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London, 1971).
[93] McColgan, *British Policy*, p. 18.
[94] D.Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland Since 1870' in R.Foster (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ireland* (Oxford 1989) p. 209; Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State*, p. 28; Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 65.
[95] CAB. 23/21, Quote from Lloyd George, Minute Sheet on Ireland, 30 April 1920.

Cabinet between a majority Conservative pro-Ulster element and a Liberal minority who advocated the granting of Dominion Home Rule status to Ireland as a means by which to split the nationalist movement and quell rebellion. To McColgan, a 'splintered' Cabinet 'could only fail to adopt bold measures on any definite line of policy or fixity of purpose.'[96] However, as Hopkinson has pointed out, any claim that Irish policy was restricted by divisions within the Cabinet ignores the presence of several 'leading Conservatives, notably Lord Curzon and Austen Chamberlain [who] were supportive of conciliation.'[97]

Undoubtedly, inner divisions within the Cabinet did act as a brake on reform and contributed towards a general atrophy of policy and yet, arguably, the main obstacle remained the government's emphasis in combating disorder. The continual failure to promote a conciliatory position, or, alternatively to apply a determined and ruthless coercive aspect to military policy led to the persistence of a civil-military policing approach. Unfortunately, the working relationship between the respective authorities was never clearly defined. Henceforth, an elementary failure to decide who would establish the 'order of battle' effectively torpedoed many of the sterner measures to which the Cabinet had committed themselves. The Restoration of Order in Ireland Act which gained royal assent on 9 August 1920 should have pleased the 'hard-liners' in the Cabinet and the military, through the establishment of "extraordinary immunities and extensive powers" These included 'the power to intern anyone, without charge or trial, for an indefinite period, and the power to try any prisoner by court martial and without legal advice except in cases requiring the death penalty.'[98] However, the extra powers granted to the military under R.O.I.A. still fell way short of martial law, and divided authority between the police and the military was maintained under the act. Greater operational manoeuvrability was a poor substitute for a more efficient tactical grouping of the Crown forces that could only be achieved by the command of a single authority. The eventual establishment of martial law in December 1921 (whilst placing the conflict on a firmer military footing) did little to promote unity of command in the Crown forces, despite the appointment of officers as military governors. Civil courts continued to function, sometimes upholding appeals against decisions made by military courts, and the scope was restricted to the

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[96] McColgan, *British Policy*, pp. 17-18.
[97] Hopkinson, 'Negotiation' in Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution*, p. 126.
[98] Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, p. 320.

counties of Munster. Furthermore, disciplinary control of the police remained outside military hands and several key measures anticipated by the military including comprehensive press censorship and a system of passport controls were overlooked in the final proclamation.[99]

Therefore it would seem that government policy was ill defined in terms of both 'political ends' and 'military means'. As Curran has claimed 'the Cabinet would sanction stern measures, yet deny the means to implement them effectively' and this central contradiction meant that the tactical and disciplinary organisation of the army was further compromised.

With regard to this lack of 'means', soldiers were, arguably, the most important 'front-line' witnesses to the fraught (and unresolved) relationship between civil and military forces. Their traditional roles were compromised by the need to act in aid of a civil power to which, operationally at least, they were subordinate for much of the period in question. It is surprising then that their role in this respect has never been studied through an examination of their operational experiences, a study of which highlights all the major difficulties arising from a clash of policies, institutions, purposes, and personalities.

Initially, reactions to the army's relegated role evoked a combination of surprise, confusion and deep uncertainty: Brigadier F.H.Vinden of the 2nd Suffolk Regiment recalled his arrival in Boyle, County Roscommon in January 1921, following which he realised that his regiment's primary function was:

> …to assist the R.I.C…The help we gave to the police took the form of sweeps of an area chosen by the R.I.C. and two companies would be lorried out to the select spot and circle an area of some square miles. On a signal all would gradually close in with police officers questioning all the inhabitants and making some arrests of able-bodied males about whom they probably had information.[100]

However, the early relationship between policemen and soldiers was unbalanced by the fact that the R.I.C. were the priority target for armed rebels. Consequently, the defensive relationship usually required that the military protect the R.I.C. rather than

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[99] See note dated 1 Dec. 1920, Jeudwine Papers.
[100] Brigadier F.H.Vinden, 'By Chance a Soldier', TS memoir, Chapter 4 'Ireland. 1920-1923', p. 30. Imperial War Museum, London.

vice versa. On occasions, offensive operations aimed at enforcing civil law came to be led by the military, with R.I.C. assistance found to be lacking. Such was the case in November 1920, when the *Green Howards' Gazette* recalled an 'exceptionally busy month' involving 'many important arrests…the result being that the joy-rides of certain individuals have been very frequent' and yet the boost to morale was tempered by a bitterness that '…the company got no assistance whatever from the police.'[101] In the 5th Division military commanders claimed of the local police that:

> …their musketry training was almost non-existent, their fire discipline nil, and our officers had to go round their barracks to help them as much as possible in the effective use of the rifle, hand and rifle grenades, rockets and Verey light signals, and in the defence arrangements of their barracks.[102]

Some soldiers demonstrated a sympathetic recognition that the imbalance of the relationship resulted from the onslaught to which the R.I.C. had been subject from 1918 onwards. This was evidenced by the widespread destruction of R.I.C. barracks during this period. During the month of April 1920, 258 police barracks were burned and the first week of May alone saw the destruction of 90 police barracks either by fire or explosives.[103] Attacks on military barracks never occurred in any great frequency and where they did, they rarely had such devastating intent beyond a handful of opportunist shots at sentries. Consequently, many soldiers felt duty bound to defend their weakened allies. A report in *The Times* in June 1920 described the military's defence of Farran Police Barracks:

> They [the police] were roused from sleep by a heavy explosion and shaking of the entire building, followed by a fusillade of revolver, rifle, and bomb fire, which shattered their windows. The sergeant and his six men who returned the fire, and sent up Verey lights, found that one gable of the barracks had been demolished by gelignite. Their signals for help were observed at Ballincollig cavalry barracks, six miles distant, and a small patrol set out to their relief…The relief forces were obstructed

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[101] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Nov. 1920, p. 99.
[102] Hist. 5th Div., p. 33.
[103] *The Times*, 17 May 1920, p. 8.

by the usual obstructions across the road, but arrived in time to prevent the capture of the barracks.[104]

Despite these notable acts, greater co-operation between the R.I.C. and the military continued to be dogged by disunity of command. Furthermore, as Jeffery has asserted 'relations between the military, the police and the civil authority had never been clearly defined and were at times quite acrimonious.'[105] Improvements in this area were little encouraged by the refusal of Macready to take up joint command of both forces. Despite his background in both police work and soldiering, he reasoned that the organization of the R.I.C. had so broken down that all his energies would be spent on reforming the police, to the detriment of the military. Macready's position was curious, especially when we consider that his selection had anticipated his ability to co-ordinate command. Nevertheless, he asserted (justifiably) that he could never have effectively combined the operations of both forces because the government had failed to define the nature of the relationship, nor had they indicated how combined forces could contribute towards the restoration of order. This argument is certainly borne out in military sources: E.M.Ransford of the Suffolk Regiment, stationed in the barracks of the Connaught Rangers, remembered being asked to co-operate with the R.I.C. but experienced great difficulty in doing so, he remembered: '…we were supposed to co-operate…but no unity of command, discipline or plan existed!'[106] Evidence from the 5th Division suggested that the command of the Crown forces was even more complex and unwieldy than a simple division in terms of civil and military forces 'suffering as it was from a quadruple control of troops, R.I.C., Auxiliaries and of Royal Marine Detachments on the West Coast [who were] under the Admiral at Queenstown.'[107]

The failure to unite command created huge complications for the military who were required to seek police assistance in order to carry out raids for suspects. The government issued arrest warrants for I.R.A. suspects, and the authorities had a stated preference for these arrests being made by the police wherever possible. However, in practice, troops often took direct action based on information supplied by the Military Intelligence Section, and in accordance with orders issued by the competent military

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[104] *Ibid*, 21 June 1920, p. 15.
[105] Keith Jeffery, 'The British Army and Ireland' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery, *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge 1996) p. 435.
[106] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', p. 18.
[107] Hist. 5th Div., p. 45.

authority under R.O.I.R. In the martial law area, the police fell under the orders of the Military Governor who also lent troop support for operations carried out by the R.I.C. as required. This system was capable of achieving results provided that the chain of command and relative spheres of responsibility were strictly adhered to. However, after 'two months experience of martial law' military commanders became exasperated by the 'practice of the police authorities at Dublin issuing instructions direct to their subordinate police officials and commanders of companies of the Auxiliary Division, for the carrying out of operations.'[108] R.I.C. District Commanders tended to follow the same practice; given the vagueness of their role 'within the R.I.C., and their position vis á vis the military authorities' they usually failed to co-operate fully with either, in the process becoming 'virtually independent warlords.'[109]

From December 1920, martial law had tended to release the military from its obligation to work co-operatively with the R.I.C. with the result that 'operations assumed a military aspect'.[110] Nonetheless, in terms of overall strategy, the reluctance of R.I.C. commanders to submit to military authority, led to the possibility that operations could be disrupted or duplicated by two branches of the Crown forces operating under their own authority. At the very least, this disunity led to a 'lack of coordination and wasted effort.'[111] Where coordination was established on a local level (through personal initiative) it was often undermined at a district level by commanders with little appetite for joined-up strategies. Lord Desart, a Unionist Peer, recalled a meeting with the County Inspector of the Kilkenny R.I.C. in which he discovered that a highly successful local arrangement between the County Inspector and the C.O. of the 15th Hussars for joint patrols in the area, was outlawed by General Sir Peter Strickland (G.O.C. 6th Division) despite the fact that it mirrored operational strategies that were being pursued by the military at the time.[112] Further co-operative difficulties between civil and military forces tended to arise from the fact that two branches of the armed forces were under different heads, resulting in the purpose of the command structure never being defined in terms of overall strategy

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[108] Record of the Rebellion, p. 36.
[109] Townshend, *The British Campaign,* p. 139.
[110] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 20.
[111] Record of the Rebellion, p. 36.
[112] N.A., P.R.O. 30/67/42, Letter from Lord Desart to the Earl of Midleton, Earl of Midleton papers, 27 March 1920, Lord Desart wrote that 'the effect [of the joint patrol] was to keep ill-disposed people at home' and prevent 'mischief'. It is therefore curious that Strickland chose to put an end to the practice given that there was no real divergence from the military policy of the time.

(beyond the preference for a restoration of order by the civil authority). As has been noted, the failure to establish overall command of the Crown forces also reflected various disputes and disagreements that arose during this period between senior Cabinet officials and military commanders. These centred on question of the autonomy of the military vis á vis the government and the civil authority. One such dispute erupted in early 1920 between Lord Birkenhead (the Lord Chancellor) and Shaw regarding Lord Birkenhead's claim that he, in the absence of the Lord Lieutenant, had the authority to call out the military in aid of the civil power if he deemed it to be necessary. In a chain of correspondence between the two men Shaw asserted that 'the military authority' would retain a 'discretionary power' in these circumstances. The matter was eventually settled by the former Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Sir James Campbell who mediated to the effect that 'the military authority is entitled…by law…to exercise discretion' if such a requisition was received from the Lord Chancellor acting alone, but that 'immediate compliances' would be required if any such order were issued by government.'[113]

Operational difficulties aside, an exposed R.I.C. was also a growing burden on military resources. E.M.Ransford was concerned that opportunities 'for training' were being marred by continual 'S.O.S calls' from police barracks.[114] As a result, the R.I.C. and military sometimes cohabited in military barracks. This afforded a greater degree of protection to policemen. Douglas Wimberley recalled how many policemen had, by this time, been reduced to a state of nervous agitation due to the loss of their colleagues and concerns for their own safety: 'The survivors naturally became nervous, and the morale of the force quite disappeared.' As a result, many policemen became withdrawn from the military and from their duties in general. This tended to create further co-operative difficulties between the two forces:

> Soon they would no longer identify suspicious rebels we produced before them, as they knew that to do so meant revenge, and generally death later for them…We therefore used to arrange to parade our prisoners in the courtyard of the Guard room, and

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[113] N.A., W.O. 32/18919, File of correspondence between Sir James Campbell, Lord Birkenhead and Shaw, Ireland: Military Aid to Civil Power., Jan. – March 1920.
[114] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', p. 20.

> we secreted a local R.I.C. Constable, where he could see the prisoners through a small peep hole.[115]

Clearly the loss of morale had serious consequences for the operational effectiveness of police forces. Percival recalled how, as the conflict progressed, 'their morale, with very few exceptions, gave way and thereafter they were of little assistance except as local guides.'[116] Some soldiers even witnessed the external pressures on the R.I.C. leading to internal problems, such as infighting. Army Pensions Inspector, Malcolm Bickle recorded a conversation with an army officer stationed in Bantry, County Cork:

> He seemed to think the police are getting pretty demoralised….He also described how they went to some houses. In one, the brother of a suspected murderer was in bed. The officer heard a huge row upstairs and went to find the police having a fine fight some raining blows down on the bed and one policeman wanting to shoot another.[117]

Despite the disunity of command and the R.I.C.'s growing dependence on the military, some soldiers' accounts suggest that relations with the old R.I.C. were cordial and many regarded the policemen of the R.I.C. and D.M.P. as being the real victims of the conflict. E.M.Ransford recalled how 'our sympathies were with the R.I.C. and the "Loyalist" Irish.'[118] These sympathies could sometimes result in a well-defined working relationship: the *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* recalled that 'relations between the civil and military forces were uniformly excellent.'[119] Even further up the chain of command, Macready (who consistently advocated a military solution) claimed that there was 'no want of cordiality between Civil and Military Authority in any branch of either service.'[120] The Royal Scots Fusiliers, stationed in Tullamore, enjoyed the full co-operation of the R.I.C., and were able to organize arrests in line with information furnished by the R.I.C. Through this collaborative effort, the Scots Fusiliers secured 80 arrests, and the regiment's historian remembered

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[115] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 149.
[116] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 10.
[117] Bickle Diary, 1 June 1920, Peter Liddle Collection. Brotherton Library, University of Leeds
[118] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', p. 19.
[119] Anon, *Oxford and Buck Chronicle*, p. 30.
[120] N.A., W.O. 32/9520. Macready to G.H.Q, Memorandum on the present military situation and proposals for the accommodation of troops over winter, 26 July 1920.

that the battalion had received the utmost support from the R.I.C. 'under their County Inspector, Mr Ross, who was made a member of the officers' mess.'[121]

The majority of these successes were a function of personal relationships between individual police and military staff, relationships that were little encouraged by ambiguous government policy that usually amounted to little more than 'patchwork legislation' - responsive rather than consistent.[122] As Ulster Unionist leader, Sir James Craig suggested to the Cabinet at a conference held on 23 July 1920, in a broad sense: 'no overhead policy from which the government would not deviate appeared to exist.' Craig further condemned the government for 'more or less drifting on various lines without co-ordination.'[123] Later in the period, the perennial problem of co-ordinating the command of the forces on a higher political level was to be further complicated by problems arising within the military concerning the arrival of Auxiliary and later Black and Tan troops to reinforce the R.I.C. Where political vagueness had prevailed in police-military relations, the discipline of new R.I.C. recruits was soon to become a major concern for many soldiers (see Chapter 5).[124]

Ambiguous government policy, combined with the failure to integrate the command of the Crown forces, also seriously hampered the gathering and effective use of intelligence. Indeed, a consideration of the experience of military intelligence officers in Ireland highlights many of the key difficulties that prevented them from gaining the upper hand in the conflict. Furthermore, intelligence staffs were acquainted with the most trying aspects of military policy (or the lack of it) and their struggle to overcome these obstacles provides an excellent case study for a consideration of the difficulties of Irish service (as well as providing ample evidence for a critique of government policy).

Prior to December 1919, the R.I.C. had largely taken responsibility for intelligence work in Ireland, and it was police information that serviced the military. As the police became weakened by persistent attacks upon their most active members, it was the military that were required to make up most of the resulting intelligence shortfall. As Augusteijn has noted, a lack of credible police intelligence

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[121] Anon, *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers*, p. 5.
[122] N.A., CAB. 24/1693, W.E.Wylie to Cabinet, Notes of conference - Officers of the Irish Government – held 10 Downing Street 23 July 1920.
[123] *Ibid*, Sir James Craig to Cabinet.
[124] Whilst many soldiers were alarmed by renegade tendencies in the R.I.C., others became engaged in these activities and regarded retaliation as a source of comradeship or a binding factor in the Crown forces (see chapter 5).

also resulted from a failure on the part of R.I.C. intelligence officers to keep pace with the development of the conflict and its increasingly youthful protagonists: 'attention during official raids was directed at the houses of well known Volunteers. Men who had been among the earliest activists, but who were not necessarily active fighters.'[125] Therefore, whilst the police pursued 'yesterday's heroes', the need for a shift of responsibility became further underlined by the rebels' increasing willingness to target the military. Furthermore, a transfer of responsibility for intelligence gathering from the police to the military reflected a general (if sometimes erratic) shift in policy that gradually transferred previous police duties to the military. The military's expanded role met with immediate success when a search and arrest operation in January 1920 (based almost entirely on military intelligence) secured the arrest of 60 known rebels. By 14 April 1920, 317 arrests had been made, a total that was in large part 'facilitated by a military raid [based purely on military information] on a Sinn Féin office in Dublin.' During the course of the operation, the raiding party seized 'the receipts of *An T'Oglach*, the journal of the I.R.A…which disclosed the names of many I.R.A. brigade and battalion commanders.'[126]

Given this credible supply of information, intelligence officers were able to successfully penetrate rebel circles and identify wanted men, besides exposing the I.R.A.'s operational intentions. However, the progress in intelligence work in early 1920 was quickly halted by the release of hunger striking prisoners on 14 April. This capitulation had the effect of demoralising an increasingly confident and successful intelligence service. During the course of the conflict, intelligence officers were to discover that exigencies in government policy would continually hamper their efforts to plug the intelligence gap between the military and their rebel counterparts. Such was the case when the Irish government decided that the R.I.C. (who were by this time sheltered by the military) should be restored to their primary role as intelligence gatherers. In line with this, an office of the Chief of Police was established in May 1920 with the main Intelligence Branch as a component part. The purpose of this reorganization was to form an effective police counterpart to military intelligence, upon which the military could rely. In the event of martial law being proclaimed it was envisaged that the two systems could be easily amalgamated. However, this

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[125] Augusteijn also claims that the police concentrated their efforts on previously arrested Volunteers and their families whilst ignoring the most active volunteers many of whom had not even surpassed their teen years. *From Public Defiance*, p. 229.
[126] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence*, p. 20.

future ideal was a dwindling prospect, and one that seemed even more remote given the initial delay in establishing the branch. When the new system was finalised, an official report on military intelligence from 1921 denounced the new police intelligence system as 'an extraordinarily complicated and involved organisation.'[127] At this stage, Macready's reservations ensured that the military continued to expand its responsibility in the field of intelligence gathering: staffs were increased and almost every battalion employed an intelligence officer and sometimes a scout officer to assist in raids and searches. This expanded effort, coupled with the morale boost that followed from the government's renewed determination to 'break the hunger strike weapon' meant that by October 1920 many of the most pro-active rebels had either been arrested or were 'on the run' and dependent upon the security of I.R.A. flying columns. However, as Macready recalled, this situation was 'an unfortunate corollary of the wholesale arrests of I.R.A. officers' as 'hunted men [were] driven to form themselves into "commandos" in the districts where their arrest is most difficult.'[128] The operational effectiveness of mobile columns resulted in a sharp increase in the frequency of attacks on intelligence officers and efforts were redoubled to break up mobile columns through effective intelligence and duplicate military flying columns.

Parallel to these developments, R.I.C. intelligence was on the offensive, bolstered by a wave of new recruits and much greater material resources. Consequently, the government were keen to link up police and military intelligence. Staff were employed by divisional commanders to bridge some of the gaps and to bolster provincial police intelligence as it expanded outwards from the Central Office in Dublin. Eight local centres were formed to furnish information to the Central Office. However, despite claims made by Brigadier General Ormonde Winter, as Director of Intelligence, that these 'local centres formed the necessary connecting link between the two services' they were soon hampered by difficulties of co-operation between the military and R.I.C.[129] In particular, ambiguity remained concerning their relative duties, and the intransigence of senior police officers seriously hampered the adoption of new methods of intelligence gathering. The new strategy was further complicated

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[127] *Ibid*, p. 23.
[128] N.A., W.O. 32/9534., Macready to Wilson, 4 Dec. 1920, (1) Situation Report (2) Steps to meet the requirements of the Irish command in regard to armoured cars. Dec. 1920.
[129] Brigadier General Ormonde de l'Epee Winter, Deputy Chief of Police and Director of Intelligence, 'A Report on the Intelligence Branch of the Chief of Police from May 1920 to July 1921' fully reproduced in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence*, p. 93.

by the introduction of martial law in the 6th Divisional area. Under this arrangement, intelligence in the R.I.C., D.M.P., Auxiliary Division and Secret Service fell under the Chief of Police. Military intelligence services were responsible in areas where R.O.I.R was in force, whilst intelligence in the 6th Division was organized under martial law, with a special branch operating in Dublin.

To illustrate the complications of a 'double system of police and military intelligence' it is worth quoting at length an extract from the 'Record of the Rebellion' containing instructions to intelligence officers on the correct procedure for disposing of captured documents. To settle issues regarding the transmission of intelligence documents, Brigade H.Q. issued the following baffling instructions:

(a) All documents captured by the troops are forwarded to the Brigade Headquarters. All documents captured by the troops are forwarded to the local centre at the Divisional Commissioner's office.

(b) The military intelligence service is responsible for dealing with all documents relating to the operations, armament, training and organisation (including the order of battle and the names of commanders and officers) of the I.R.A. After duplication of such documents they are passed in original to the police intelligence service as signatures, handwriting, typing of such papers may often be important links in a chain of evidence.

The military intelligence service transfered to the 'Local Centre' of police intelligence all documents referred to in (c) below.

(c) The police intelligence service is responsible for passing through to the military intelligence service all documents referred to in (b) above and for dealing with all documents relating to individuals, addresses, Sinn Féin police, Sinn Féin courts, Sinn Féin organization in Great Britain and abroad, propaganda etc., and for working up the police cases against individuals.

(d) *In cases where documents form the evidence against an individual or individuals charged with possession of seditious documents*, the documents are forwarded by the local C.M.A. through the usual military channels to

> G.H.Q., except in the martial law area where they are dealt with by the Military Governor.[130]

These labyrinthine procedures also tended to undermine Winter's initiative to 'inculcate into all concerned the value of forwarding to Central Bureau all documents captured in raids.'[131] In addition, a convoluted bureaucracy was a significant brake on the effectiveness of the intelligence service in Dublin: on 21 November 1920, the I.R.A.'s onslaught against Special Branch culminated in the murder of 12 British officers and the authorities were forced to centralise their intelligence network. As a result, Special Branch records came under the care of the Chief of Police and an organisation that had previously spearheaded military intelligence was now responsible to the head of the civil authority. Thus, Major-General Boyd (G.O.C. Dublin District) who was still responsible for organizing intelligence, found that his networks of agents were, in fact, still under the control of his police counterpart:

> At precisely the time when the army were assuming an increasing number of security duties, the collection and assessment of intelligence, vitally necessary for successful operations was taken out of military hands. The change, moreover was deeply resented in the Special Branch itself. Most of its personnel were ex-officers who seem to have had little faith in the Irish Police. Morale suffered under their new masters.[132]

The situation proved to be intractable, and was little remedied by 'duplicate organisations' set up to liase between the police and the military whose input resulted in 'delays in taking action' and an 'overlapping of work'. Following similar guidelines to those outlined above, the new centralised bureaucracy produced a registry of intelligence information 'created on the lines of compromise and satisfactory to neither military nor police.'[133]

It is plausible to suggest that in both the fields of military intelligence and operations on the ground (though the two were inextricably linked) a very similar pattern was emerging that involved serious co-operative problems between the

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[130] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence*, p. 30.
[131] Winter, 'A Report on the Intelligence Branch' in Hart (ed.) *Ibid* p. 69.
[132] K.Jeffery 'British Military Intelligence Following World War I' in K.G.Robertson (ed) *British and American Approaches to Intelligence*. (London, 1987) p. 71.
[133] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence*. p. 36.

component forces of the Crown. In both cases, success was usually the outcome of 'personal effort rather than good organisation.'[134] All too often, a chain of co-operative difficulties crowded out personal initiative and the organisation of the Crown forces was the first weak link. Sturgis' wonderfully vivid description of the apparatus of Irish administration as 'a great sprawling, jealous hydra-headed monster spending much of its time using one of its heads to abuse one or other of the others' seems particularly pertinent in the case of military and police intelligence, where mutual decapitation was often the order of play.[135]

Bad foundations were a further disincentive to intelligence officers on the ground whose duties were amongst the most dangerous of any participant in the conflict. The nature of the hostilities ensured that belligerent I.R.A. forces had to remain indistinguishable from the civilian crowd (see Chapter 4). To locate them, intelligence officers had to adopt plain clothes and merge into this heterogeneous group. Adjutant H.W.Stewart of the Royal Scots Fusiliers recalled:

> This was a tricky job and very effectively done by Lieutenant Grant-Taylor, O.B.E., M.C., and 2nd-Lieutenant Strong, who were employed on intelligence duties. They were dressed as civilians and moved among the local inhabitants, picking up information as to the whereabouts of I.R.A. bands.[136]

According to the 'Record of the Rebellion', military intelligence officers who were generally 'young, enthusiastic and incredibly brave' were broadly successful in these secret service operations, principally because this type of work relied upon the skill and audacity of individuals.[137] Indeed, it would appear that secret service agents who were given increased scope for individual enterprise, often proved themselves to be unencumbered by procedural or organisational complexities. However, the price of their detachment from their battalion was a lack of security in the field; secret agents suffered heavy casualties, they were open to attack from both sides and their greater mortality rate hampered the extension of this form of intelligence, also discouraging further recruitment. Nonetheless, remarkable results were achieved by a small group

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[134] *Ibid*, p. 38.
[135] N.A., P.R.O. 39/59/1. Mark Sturgis diaries, 19 Aug. 1920.
[136] Adjutant H.W.V.Stewart, quoted in *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers*, p. 6.
[137] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence* p. 57.

of men, and it is believed that by the time of the truce, military intelligence had agents in:

> ...most of the steamship companies trading with Dublin, on the railways, as journalists or farmers, or even in the I.R.A. They made friends with Dublin citizens of every class and both sexes, they mixed with crowds and they were arrested with officers and men of the I.R.A.[138]

This capacity to mix with all levels of society also enabled intelligence officers to penetrate provincial and rural circles outside Dublin. In particular, personal investigations in these areas were facilitated by the agents' involvements in race meetings and hunting events. In all cases the risks of discovery were considerable; newcomers were extremely conspicuous in Irish towns and villages, and English agents often found that 'their accent betrayed them.'[139] Indeed, it was generally understood amongst intelligence officers that an 'officer or soldier who tried to pose as a local Irishman was found out immediately.'[140]

Personnel, training and material shortages were also a brake on the intelligence service. A lack of complete and up to date intelligence records usually arose from a lack of clerical staff to complete filing and typing rather than any reluctance in the field of intelligence gathering. Furthermore, due to a lack of training and knowledge in the methods of guerrilla war, officers were sometimes criticised for being slow to interpret the meaning of the scraps of information that they gathered. Personal initiatives were also let down by a corresponding lack of informers amongst the civil population. In part, this was due to the deterrent effect of the I.R.A.'s campaign against informers, though 'informing' was little encouraged by intelligence officers' lack of funds to meet the spiralling monetary rewards that they demanded.

If operational effectiveness was hampered by a convoluted intelligence system, the military's prospect of success was further diminished by the nature of the combat itself. This was rarely a traditional conflict; the classic pattern of trench warfare and frontal assault was entirely replaced by guerrilla tactics. Indeed, following Richard Bennett's claim that the conflict 'consisted of a number of small violent incidents which would have gone unnoticed in a general war' Peter Hart has studied casualties

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[138] *Ibid,* p. 56.
[139] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence,* p. 55.
[140] Hist. 5th Div., p. 24.

in Cork in 1920-1 in accordance to whether they occurred in combat, which he defined as attacks upon armed units. Hart's statistics suggest that of 566 overall casualties in 1921, less than a half of crown force victims died in combat and more than half of crown force killings were perpetrated against civilians. Therefore the cycle of cold killing applied in large proportions to both sides in the conflict. Furthermore, Hart only identified nine encounters in Cork in which both sides suffered casualties, suggesting that confrontations usually occurred when the attacking side (by dint of the surprise element or greater numbers) was at an insuperable advantage.[141]

I.R.A. and Volunteer units demonstrated an acute awareness of both their opponent's strengths and weaknesses and developed strategies that would exploit their inexperience and frustrate their potential. As Tom Barry claimed: 'close quarter fighting did not suit them. Keep close to them should be our motto, for generally they must be better shots than us, because of their opportunities for practice and their war experience.'[142] However, even Barry's description of a skirmishing rebel force perhaps overstates the general experience of I.R.A. column men. In fact, the pattern of hostilities was never particularly 'military' in character or intent, nor did insurgents aim to evict the British garrison by means of overwhelming force. During the later period (like in 1916) rebels demonstrated a clear understanding of the effect of 'non-military' action on the 'national mind'.[143] Commenting on the mobile formations of I.R.A. units in the final year of the conflict, David Fitzpatrick has claimed that 'the guerrilla campaign was not a preconceived strategy for undermining the state' but rather 'an agglomeration of expedients by men intent on evading capture and securing arms.'[144] However defensive their ends, the plain fact of their continued existence tended to promote the legitimacy of their demands.

For most, this pattern of warfare was quite beyond the scope of military training and experience. Consequently, it often had the effect of impeding troops'

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[141] R.Bennett, *The Black and Tans* (London, 1959) p. 35; Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, pp. 87-88.
[142] Barry, *Guerrilla Days,* p. 93.
[143] D.G.Boyce, '1916, Interpreting the Rising' in Boyce and O'Day (eds.) *The Making of Modern Irish History*, pp. 164-5. Boyce drew attention to Eoin MacNeill, the Chief of Staff of the Irish Volunteers, who raised objections to the uprising of 1916 on military grounds and failed to grasp the concept that any act of defiance, however militarily significant, had a disproportionate effect on the imagination of the Irish public. After 1916, this concept was generally accepted and during the later period activists avoided large-scale military engagements furthering the republican cause by means of small scale ambushes and assassinations.
[144] D.Fitzpatrick 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922' in Bartlett and Jeffery, *A Military History of Ireland,* p. 402.

occupational expectations, as well as seriously interrupting the military routine of the professional soldier. In this sense, it was a considerable challenge to military discipline. Brevet Major T.A.Lowe of the Essex Regiment eloquently recalled the innovative methods pioneered by his opponents, as well as the military's struggle to keep pace with them:

> They were careful to avoid anything in the shape of a battle but they continued their vendetta with the police, the coastguards and with isolated loyalists with unabated violence....It was by no means unusual to hear of a rebel column moving by road in light rubber wheeled traps commandeered from loyalists. These vehicles would be protected in front and rear by parties of scouts on bicycles, moving along in pairs and ready at any moment to spread the alarm. Info [sic] as to the state of the country through which they were moving would be supplied by small boys and girls of whom there were a vast number employed as spies by Sinn Féin...These kind of tactics were very hard to grapple with...and only by the most careful thinking ahead as to the enemy's probable intentions could any success in the pursuit be obtained.[145]

Undoubtedly, many officers did seek to 'grapple' with their opponents' unconventional tactics, and a number of 'ruses' were devised to exploit the observable habits of rebel groups. In the 6th Division area, Percival recalled a subterfuge method known as the ''Q' lorry', in which a three-ton lorry 'armour plated on the inside' was manned by an armed crew and 'driven out into a desolate part of the country, where it would break down and be ostensibly left on the side of the road.' Abandoned vehicles were usually destroyed by rebel groups in order to prevent their being recovered by the military, but in this case the vehicle acted as a 'Trojan horse' designed to penetrate remote rebel strongholds, and the concealed crew would surprise the sabotaging party as soon as they came within firing range.[146] Despite the success of these initiatives[147], actual formal training in guerrilla warfare was not

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[145] Lowe, 'Some Reflections of a Junior Commander' pp. 56-57.
[146] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 17.
[147] According to 'The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area', the Q lorry was successfully employed on 4 September 1920 in the area of Ballyvourney and led to the killing of two, and the

forthcoming until October 1920, and even then it was restricted to young officers and senior N.C.O.s. The "5th Division Guerrilla Warfare Class" lasted for '3 days' and consisted of both 'lectures' and 'practical tactical exercises' involving mock ambushes and raids, particular attention was given to 'instruction in the issue of clear and definite orders.' All told, over 280 officers and N.C.O.s participated in 10 courses held at the Curragh from October 1920.[148] However, this form of limited practical instruction was never likely to restore balance in the conflict, given that many officers were 'dyed in the wool' veterans of more conventional forms of warfare and I.R.A. mobile columns had already achieved a certain mastery of the tactics of guerrilla tactics.

The difficulties faced by soldiers in adapting to a new form of conflict often led to comparisons with their experiences in the Great War. More surprising (given the relative dangers) were accounts written by veteran soldiers that expressed a clear preference for conditions in France. Upon arrival in Dublin in Easter 1916, 2nd Lieutenant A.M.Jameson was shocked by the ferocity of the violence he witnessed in Dublin and shared the consensus opinion of his colleagues: 'everybody who had been in France seemed to think that the Dublin fighting was a far worse thing to be in.'[149] The unfavourable comparison of 'two evils' was not unique to the extreme events of Easter 1916, throughout the period soldiers were prone to making similar comparisons:

> They (the troops) all agree that it is much worse than France, the strain far greater. There is no "behind the line" in Ireland. There is no relief from the atmosphere of murder and spying. At every street corner there is a knot of men and youths, any of whom may throw a bomb or fire a shot at you, in the absolute certainty that, in that event, no one will give them away; and that they will be able to escape with ease and certainty down a side street or through a shop or house, leaving the innocent passers by to bear the brunt of any shots that might be fired in reply.[150]

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wounding of three rebel incendiaries. Following another succesful outing in Limerick during the next month it was claimed that 'the rebels soon became wary and broken down lorries were given a very wide berth.' p. 51.

[148] Hist. 5th Div., p. 135.

[149] 2nd Lieutenant A.M.Jameson letter to his mother, 2 May 1916. Imperial War Museum, London.

[150] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 48.

Wilfred Ewart visited a besieged garrison in Mallow, County Cork in May 1921 and fell into conversation with a nervous and fractious staff officer who outlined a tale of 'cowardly cunning' on the part of his opponents before announcing that he 'would sooner do another two-and-a-half years in France than the same length of time here.'[151] Similarly, *The 79th News* claimed 'we find ourselves under conditions almost as bad, if not worse, than active service' further concluding that 'war under peace conditions is an unpleasant experience for both officers and men.'[152] Undoubtedly, pronouncements of this kind were sometimes used for effect, or were a 'heat of the moment' response to the pressures of Irish service. Nonetheless, the majority of senior military commanders and a considerable element of the press shared the soldiers' distaste for 'unsporting' guerrilla war. Even Macready himself demanded a lump-sum payment of £5,000 as a condition of accepting the offer of appointment as G.O.C.-in C. by way of compensation for the "disturbance" caused by a 'dangerous and arduous' appointment.[153] Likewise, when Colonel Cameron, then G.O.C. 6th Division, inspected the departing Green Howards' Regiment in January 1922 he thanked them for their assistance to him and to 'the whole empire in what had been the most trying experience in the history of the army.'[154] Following the events of 'Bloody Sunday' in November 1920, a reporter for *The Times* felt it necessary to inform the public that:

> …in the execution of duty, these men, soldiers, police, and Auxiliaries carry their lives in their hands and undergo daily an ordeal even more trying than that to which most of them were exposed in the war, when the enemy was an open enemy and they themselves carried weapons for self defence as well as offence.[155]

Inevitably, the strain of service forced many soldiers to take drastic measures to guarantee their survival. As Augusteijn has noted, unlike their colleagues in the R.I.C., troops did not have the option of resigning their position. For soldiers, the only

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[151] Anon, 'Life in Mallow: An English Officer's Impressions' *The Times*, 23 May 1921, p. 14.
[152] *The 79th News*, 2nd Battalion Notes, May 1921, p. 97.
[153] N.A., W.O. 32/4815. Macready to Lieutenant General P.W.Chetwode, 30 March 1920; letter from Churchill to Chamberlain, 4 April 1920, Sir Nevil Macready: appointment as C-in-C in Ireland.
[154] Extract from the leaving address of Colonel Cameron, Commander of the 18th Brigade of the 6th Division, quoted in *Green Howards' Gazette*, March 1922.
[155] *The Times*, 30 Nov. 1920, p. 16.

exit strategy was desertion (see Chapter 6) or injury, as Augusteijn has claimed 'self-inflicted wounds were one way in which soldiers attempted to get out of their predicament'.[156] J.A.G. Registers indicate that only two soldiers, Private A.W.Edgar of the East Lancashire Regiment and Private C.B.Reid of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, were actually court-martialled and found guilty of this offence.[157] Nonetheless, qualitative sources suggest that this was a recurring phenomenon and one that seriously concerned the military authorities: E.M.Ransford of the Suffolk Regiment recalled how he 'put a .45 bullet through a toe (and my boot!) during instruction in revolver target practice' and (despite it being accidental) was threatened with 'dire penalties, Court-Martial etc. for self-inflicted injuries which were happening rather frequently.'[158]

A detailed study of the everyday routine of the British soldier in Ireland (based largely on soldiers' own accounts) highlights all the major tactical shortcomings of military policy during this period. These included the failure to establish a structure or framework for civil-military policing, the inability to evolve strategy to meet the topographical and tactical context of an irregular conflict and develop methods appropriate to it. This was coupled with a failure to balance operations to available resources (which was an outstanding feature of their opponents' campaign). Therefore, the pressures arising from an intense and uninspiring operational routine often precluded further difficulties arising from the rebel campaign, thereby providing a context and structure for the development and evolution of a successful guerrilla campaign against the Crown forces.

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[156] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 227.
[157] N.O., W.O. 213/32, Judge Advocate Generals Office: Field General Courts-martial (In field and Ireland) Register, 21 July 1920 to 19 Nov. 1921.
[158] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide' p. 19. Imperial War Museum, London. This incident is also cited (but not directly quoted) by Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p.228.

Part II

Isolation

3. Barrack Life in Ireland

> By the institution of barracks, these men [soldiers] are kept away from the people, in the eye and obedience of their respective officers and thereby withheld from insulting or being insulted, as is commonly the case in scattered quarters. By being active and powerful in the suppression of riot in others, they become also more formidable to lovers of sedition and peace is thereby preserved throughout the nations.[1]

If the nature of operations added greatly to the insecurity of service life in Ireland, many soldiers came to regard military barracks as a place of sanctuary and respite. Consequently, detailed descriptions of barrack conditions tended to be foremost in the memoirs of soldiers who arrived in Ireland during this period. This preoccupation with living conditions was only natural: barracks were the professional soldiers' habitat, their standard, facilities, amenities, location and, above all else, the routine of life, exercised a profound influence on the soldiers' period of service. Besides comfort and security, the 'institution of barracks' (in the context of Irish service) could also be said to have both originated and reinforced a sense of isolation amongst the soldierly, an experience cited by many as one of the most frustrating aspects of military life. This chapter will explore this isolating effect through the presentation of four key areas, namely soldiers' views of their accommodation, their experience of forced and unforced confinement to barracks, the external threat posed by armed rebels to normal barrack life, and the soldiery's curtailed opportunities for leisure and recreation. The theme of 'isolation' developed in this chapter will also be used to set up a further chapter examining the precise nature of the relationship between soldiers and civilians.

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[1] Anonymous document dating from 1701 relating to the construction in Dublin of the first purpose built barracks in Ireland, cited in Colonel M.Heffron 'Collins Barracks, Dublin' in *An Cosantoir. The Irish Defence Journal* (May, 1968) p. 132.

Besides responding to the challenges of an armed uprising, there was a strong historically determined rationale for the maintenance of strong military bases in Ireland during this period. The British army was already well established in the province; the English Act of 1699 stipulated that 12,000 troops were to be maintained in Ireland, and this base establishment appears to have been honoured up to the Act of Union of 1801 and beyond. The overall size of the Irish garrison was further stimulated by the 'revolutionary cataclysm in France and Ireland, and the war against France allied to the war in America during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.' In particular, the appearance of French vessels in Bantry Bay in 1786 'convinced Britain of the vulnerability of its traditional backdoor.'[2] Added to this, the long cyclical history of Irish rebellion ensured that a healthy garrison was maintained throughout the nineteenth century, with 1828 being the peak year with 24,918 troops were billeted across six divisions.

Besides responding to the recurring threat of rebellion, Ireland also provided a secure training ground for cadets, who were posted to large established barracks such as those at Moore Park, Portobello and Fort Charles in order to receive their military training. The security offered by large camps and fortress barracks was integral to the maintenance of the British presence in Ireland up to and including the period in question. However, the unusual nature of the 1919-21 rising (in which previously quiet districts were drawn into the conflict) did not allow for a heavy concentration of troops. This necessitated the construction of makeshift barracks, usually involving the fortification of public or private buildings with no previous military use. Furthermore, as the flashpoints of the conflict spread and multiplied, battalions became divided, subdivided and further dispersed into small detachments quartered in cottages, courthouses, tin huts, even lighthouses. As the conflict progressed to remote rural areas, some detachments were even required to become hardened to a routine of bivouacking and outdoor living.

In the early period, when the army's commitment was minimal (even compared to peacetime levels) soldiers still enjoyed the privilege and the protection of older established barracks. At this time, the majority of soldiers in Ireland were undergoing retraining or being primed for war service. Others were awaiting a return to the Western Front following injury or temporary demobilisation. Many in this early

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[2] Costello, *A Most Delightful Station*, pp. 19-24.

period were prone to draw favourable comparisons with their living conditions in France. 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H.Brown remembered his arrival at Moore Park near Fermoy in February 1918: 'we soon made ourselves cosy…and were delighted to find ourselves in comfortable quarters with real beds to sleep on!' Brown enthused greatly about his temporary home in Moore Park, recalling how compared to 'the misery of the Somme …Moore Park was an ideal place for training as it consisted of some miles of varied country.' However, even at this early stage, he was acutely aware of a nascent conflict and regarded his barracks as a haven, amidst a landscape riddled with danger for the British soldier: 'most of our movements were confined to its boundaries. This was just as well, as some of the Irish people were not too pleasantly disposed towards us.[3]

In this early period, the majority of soldiers regarded their traditional peacetime barracks as more than adequate, if rather anachronistic. Cameron Highlander, R.Burns, arrived at Birr barracks in November 1917, a place he considered to be 'very old – out of date I would say.'[4] Similarly, E.M.Warmington, stationed in Kinsale in the autumn of 1918, referred to his time in the 'solid old stone barracks above the town'.[5] Later, F.A.S.Clarke, also stationed in Kinsale, described his quarters as 'ancient barracks designed for defence as well as accommodation, a characteristic of most, if not all, the barracks in Southern Ireland.' He later found himself billeted with "B" Company of the Essex Regiment at Fort Charles: '…an old fort…built during the reign of Elizabeth I.'[6] It would appear therefore that most soldiers found traditional barracks to be comfortable and accommodating, if curiously bleak and outmoded at the same time. The *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* recorded the fate of the 2nd Battalion who found themselves 'quartered in Portobello barracks [Dublin] – as dreary and depressing a collection of buildings as any other barracks of the period.'[7] E.F.Chapman (after a stay in the 'best hotels' of Killarney) was ordered

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[3] W.R.H.Brown, untitled TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 18. Moore Park was one of the better military barracks of the period spanning some 2,500 acres of land. Acquired in 1903 from Lady Harriete-Smyth (daughter of the Earl of Mountcashell) for the sum of £35,000, by 1919 the camp could accommodate 'almost 3,000 troops…in lines of timber huts, each one taking 50 men. The Camp was arranged in three units, the Infantry lines, the Royal Engineers lines and the Army Service Corps lines.' K.Jordan (ed.) *Kilworth and Moore Park British Army Camps from 1896-1922* (Fermoy, 2004) pp. 66,74.

[4] R.Burns, 'Once a Cameron Highlander', TS memoir, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University, p. 163.

[5] Warmington, 'Diaries', p. 37.

[6] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, p. 1.

[7] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 27.

to the old barracks at Fermoy in April 1916. Upon arrival he found them to be thoroughly neglected: 'the rooms we had were horrid: they had been shut up for about a year and so felt very stale and nasty. The dirt was awful.'[8]

General conditions in Irish barracks had improved little by 1920 and the squalid, (and often insanitary) conditions were established to have contributed to the general poor state of health displayed by veteran troops in Ireland. A report on 'The Health of Troops' for the 5th Division area indicated that during the five months from January to May 1920 there were 201 cases of venereal disease and 448 cases of scabies amongst the troops. In the latter case, the report concluded that scabies was 'in some measure the result of the war aggravated by the conditions in which the troops in Ireland were accommodated in the earlier stages and the lack of bathing facilities at isolated stations.'[9]

Larger equipped barracks were generally more conducive to the good health of troops, and many inmates also came to appreciate the defensive qualities of old stone barracks. Therefore, although such places offered a 'retreat' like quality, the safety and security of established barracks could not be accorded to all troops in the long term. The period following the Soloheadbeg ambush of January 1919 witnessed an increase in the scale and the ambition of rebel activities, and as the outbreak became more widespread and more menacing, the military were prevented from remaining concentrated in larger barracks. This resulted in many smaller detachments being dangerously exposed to the enemy. The dispersal of battalions was also a natural consequence of the Crown forces' need to continue to 'show the flag', or to re-establish and maintain civil authority in areas that had been vacated by the police:

> There was a perpetual antagonism between the sound military policy of concentration of force and the political requirements which demanded a considerable dispersion in detachments for the purpose of protecting and putting heart into loyal or law-abiding citizens and bolstering up the influence of the R.I.C.[10]

Differences of opinion regarding the most effective strategic positioning of troops had also led to a certain amount of policy wrangling between police and military command. Shaw was adamant that 'the military necessity for concentration

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[8] Chapman, letter to a friend, dated 30 April 1916.
[9] Hist. 5th Div., Appendix V – The Health of the Troops.
[10] Record of the Rebellion, p. 33.

and training [was] diametrically opposed to the police demands for dispersion and local support.' On the other hand, Byrne, the Inspector General of the R.I.C. argued tirelessly for the 're-detachment of troops' to strengthen vulnerable R.I.C. barracks or establish a military presence in rural areas.[11] Despite a mounting collision course, the issue did not appear to be of great concern to the Cabinet until the closing months of 1920 when Macready expressed his fears regarding the winter accommodation of dispersed troops. This issue, highlighted similar antagonisms between the need to 'afford immediate and constant support to the police' and the need for 'concentration to allow of some comfort, training, leave and rest to the troops.' However, despite the greater profile that Macready brought to the issue, there was to be no immediate respite for detached units. His plea for 'some areas of the country to be abandoned during winter and small detachments be withdrawn and some field and heavy artillery be transferred to England to free up accommodation' fell on deaf ears.[12] As winter approached, it usually fell on divisional commanders to organise their forces in such a way as to guarantee their comfort and security. Concerted attempts were made in the 5th Division area to resolve the twin problem of undermanned garrison posts and the lack of fixed barrack accommodation:

> At the beginning of August 1920 orders were issued for the preparation of a scheme of winter accommodation of the troops on the basis that no detachment would be of less strength than one company and that troops were to be housed in buildings, commandeered if necessary. At this time the greater part of the 9th Lancers and Carabiniers were under canvas.[13]

The successful dispersal of detachments usually depended upon the pragmatism and haste of local commanders in being able to acquire suitable accommodation. In May 1920, 'D' Company of the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment requisitioned a courthouse in Carrick on Shannon as a make-shift barracks. In order to deter rebel attacks they rigged up 'an old piece of drain pipe on the roof of the courthouse' to resemble 'a gun overlooking the town'. Another detachment of the regiment found themselves billeted at nearby Gorvagh in a 'small isolated house' where they were

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[11] O'Halpin, *The Decline of the Union*, p. 191-2.
[12] N.A., W.O. 32/9520, Macready to G.H.Q , Memorandum on the present military situation and general proposals in regard to troops during coming winter, 26 July 1920.
[13] Hist. 5th Div., p. 62.

continually 'subjected to sniping'.[14] 'D' Company of the 2nd Green Howards, stationed in Newcastle West, County Limerick, were even forced to billet their troops 'in a house with the Irish Republican H.Q. next door.'[15] On occasions, old (often ruined) country houses or castles were commandeered by the military to house their troops. A 5th Division War Diary detailed how detachments of the Royal Artillery Brigade garrisoned Coolmoney House and Leitrim Castle for the winter in order to 'protect stores on the Glen-Imaal Artillery Ranges.'[16] Invariably, these vast landed estates had fallen into an irreversible decline: E.Craig Brown of the 2nd Cameron Highlanders (writing to his mother) claimed of his new makeshift quarters at Belmont House that it was 'a most dilapidated and thoroughly Irish looking dwelling which has seen better days many years ago. You would laugh if you could see it.'[17]

Other more suitable quarters were established in buildings that had originally been designed for internment. A detachment of the 3rd Essex Regiment took over a workhouse in Clonakilty, County Cork, in May 1919, another detachment occupying 'an ancient lunatic asylum'. A further company took to Kilbrittain Castle as a suitable base.[18] Sean Moylan of the North Cork Brigade I.R.A. recalled the arrival of 'a Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment to Kanturk early in April 1921' who proceeded to clear out 'the occupants of the old Union Workhouse and install themselves within.'[19] In addition, old gaol houses were sometimes requisitioned as suitable quarters. A *Times* report of May 1920 suggested that 'the burning of so many barracks' by arsonists meant that:

> Troops now arriving in Ireland are finding accommodation for themselves. Yesterday, Colonel Chaplin and a party of men of the Cameronians arrived at the Baltinglass workhouse [County Wicklow] and told the master that accommodation was required for 100 men. The colonel afterwards took possession of one of the wings of the building. A party of the 1st Essex Regiment, which has been sent to Midleton, County Cork, has taken up quarters in a factory belonging to Messrs. Cleeve.

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[14] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion, 'D' Company notes, May 1920, p. 7.
[15] *Green Howards' Gazette*, "D" Company Notes, Aug. 1920, p. 179.
[16] N.A., W.O. 35/93/2, War Diary – 5th Division General Staff, 25 Nov. 1920 to 31 Dec. 1920.
[17] E.Craig Brown, letter to his mother dated 30 May 1920, Imperial War Museum, London.
[18] Burrows, *Essex Units in the War*, p. 188.
[19] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 130.

Inevitably, the requisitioning of public or private buildings for military usage often led to resentment from the host community. E.J.A.H.Brush arrived in Dublin to find that an advance company of the Rifle Brigade had laid out the billets for the 3rd Battalion 'in the beautiful showgrounds of the Royal Dublin Society at Ballsbridge.' He further recalled how 'Mr Bohane' the manager and organiser of the showgrounds, 'took grave exception to the influx of soldiers' and 'put every obstacle in our way.' The eventual transfer of the battalion in the summer of 1921 to live 'under canvas in Phoenix Park' proved to be to the mutual satisfaction of both parties.[20] Aside from community hostility, the process of requisitioning barracks was also made significantly more difficult by the actions of insurgents. Writing in July 1920, Macready complained that 'the survey of buildings which might be suitable for the future accommodation of troops has to be very carefully undertaken, otherwise the buildings are invariably destroyed by our opponents.'[21]

Naval wireless stations such as those at Bunbeg and Malin Head were also garrisoned by small infantry detachments, although this situation was borne out of the necessity of keeping them operational as opposed to the need to find suitable accommodation.[22] Other (more makeshift) barracks could be crude in the extreme: at the height of the troubles, the East Yorkshire Regiment was required to provide and accommodate '9 detachments at the same time' consequently 'the provision at most of the places was very bad and officers and men had a hard time.'[23] Similarly, C.R.B.Knight recalled how the 1st Buffs:

> …were called upon to provide isolated detachments, varying from a company to an N.C.O. and six men, spread out as far as Mallow [County Cork] in the west and Rosslare [County Wexford] in the east, billeted mainly in tumble-down houses surrounded by barbed wire. A far from orthodox military deployment, it was nevertheless the result of the policy emanating from Dublin Castle, to which the greater part of the army in Ireland was committed.[24]

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[20] Brush, 'Rifle Green/Orange Flash', p. 15.
[21] N.A., W.O. 32/9520, Macready to G.H.Q., Memorandum on the present military situation and general proposals in regard to troops during coming winter, 26 July 1920.
[22] Hist. 5th Div., p. 13.
[23] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"* 1st Battalion, "D" Company notes, May 1920, p. 7.
[24] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs*, chapter 1, p. 2.

For the most part, the dispersal of battalions into detachments was necessitated by a lack of large-scale barrack accommodation as opposed to the nature of the rising or government policy in combating the spread of disaffection. This could lead to an uneven dispersal of battalions throughout the country, which tended to expose small parties to large rebel bands. The most extreme example was provided by the 1st Devonshire Regiment who, in August 1920, were providing no less than 15 detachments covering Waterford, Wexford, Enniscorthy, Gorey, Taghmon, Rosslare, Carnsore, Newtownberry, Clonmel, Carrick-on-Suir, New Ross, Kilkenny, Callan, Thomastown and Craighenamanagh.[25] This dispersal lottery also determined soldiers' access to training facilities and other necessities. For example, the 'History of the 5th Division' recalled how 'range accommodation was only available at certain of the larger stations such as the Curragh, Athlone and Mullingar, and at such hutted camps as Ballykinlar, Finner, Magilligan and Oranmore.' Assault courses were also constructed at larger barracks for the purpose of enhancing troops' fitness and stamina, with smaller purpose built barracks establishing 'tin rings' as an adequate substitute.[26] The fragmentation of battalions also hampered military reform during the final phase of post-war demobilization. The Digest of Service of the 2nd Border Regiment recalled how:

> Owing to a lack of accommodation and the disturbed state of the country the battalion was destined to be split up into many detachments, a fact which severely handicapped it in the process of reformation and rendered more difficult the task of demobilizing personnel serving on "Duration of War" engagements.[27]

In order to gain a 'firm footing' in Ireland, newspaper reports of the time claimed that the government were contemplating an 'elaborate system of blockhouses' to 'be erected throughout the country.' It was claimed that the scheme would allow the military to establish dispersed strongholds throughout Ireland, which would facilitate training, security and reform in the armed forces.[28] However, the proposal proved to

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[25] Rebellion. 6th Div., Appendix II, Table 2: Showing units stationed in South of Ireland on 31 Aug. 1920 and detachments found by them.
[26] Hist. 5th Div., p. 134.
[27] Digest of Service of the Border Regiment, 9 July 1919.
[28] *The Times*, 19 May 1920, p. 16.

be one of the innumerable 'false starts' in military policy during this period.[29] In the absence of a 'blockhouse' system, the lack of suitable existing buildings, meant that some detachments were required to accommodate themselves in flimsy. hastily erected hutment camps such as Ballyvonare Camp near Buttevant, County Cork, a place 'bare of any comfort, dusty and remote.'[30] Later, many small detachments found themselves living under canvas. J.M.Cordy of the 57th Field Company remembered being stationed under canvas with an infantry company near Athlone, during which time the officers and men 'had to sleep on tables in the mess tent because the place was alive with rats.'[31] The lack of fixed barrack accommodation in the Irish garrison was never resolved during the period of conflict, and even as late as autumn 1921 'six Battalions were still living under canvas as winter approached.'[32] In a startling passage, the chronicler of the O.B.L.I. recalled with sardonic humour how (after the truce) the battalion were forced to camp in tents in Phoenix Park 'an unenviable position' in the '"no-man's land"' between 'Free State Patrols and the I.R.A.'[33]

Life on a military flying column could be even more precarious. Columns lacked even the comfort and security of a formal barracks to which they could return immediately following an ambush, raid or sweep:

> These columns, sometimes consisting of one or more companies, stay out for indefinite periods, and requisition their food and billets from the various towns and villages in whose vicinity they happen to be operating.[34]

In May 1920 the government had touted a system of 'garrison posts and flying columns' as a means of 'restoring order' and 'carrying out a relentless pursuit of the

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[29] N.A., P.R.O. 39/59/3. Mark Sturgis diaries, 31 Dec. 1920. The inconsistency of military policy during this period was also a great (off record) source of frustration for Castle officials as well as military commanders. Sturgis wrote that he was 'entranced' by the government's military policy which he felt amounted to an 'amazing game of chance.'

[30] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', p. 18.

[31] J.M.Cordy, 'My Memories of the First World' TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London. p. 39.

[32] N.A., W.O. 35/50/7, Winter Accommodation, Dec. 1921. This was partially accounted for by the widespread transfer of British barracks to the Free State Army.

[33] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 34. Lieutenant Colonel E.J.A.H.Brush of the 3rd Battalion Rifle Brigade also lived in the tented camp at Nine Acres in Phoenix Park which he described as 'a rather rough and ready frontier camp', 'Rifle Green/Orange Flash', p. 17.

[34] *The 79th News*, 2nd Battalion notes, April 1920, Cameron Highlanders' Regimental Museum, Fort George, Ardersier, Inverness, p. 140.

terrorists.' Indeed, a *Times* report for the same month looked forward to reinforcements of mobile troops as the final solution to the military's predicament:

> The military will be constantly on the move ready at all times to protect the weak and to fight the assassin…That is the outstanding feature of the Government's plans. They are not proclaiming martial law or seeking to impose on the Irish people a form of military coercion.[35]

Enhanced mobility in the shape of flying columns was also regarded as a genuine alternative to failed strategies that depended upon weight of numbers (such as drives, raids and patrols). Lord Privy Seal, Andrew Bonar Law observed in a letter to the Prime Minister in May 1920 that '[Macready] attaches more importance to the mobility of the troops he now has than to an increase in their number.'[36] Nonetheless, the optimism of journalists, politicians and military commanders was in stark contrast to the disillusion felt by troops serving in columns. *The 79th News* published an article in June 1921, in which a soldier serving in a flying column complained that, 'Billets were very hard to find…rations were all commandeered.'[37] Where flying columns were required to remain mobile for lengthy periods of time, weather conditions were often the decisive factor that shaped their experience, and military column men appear to have been fortunate in this respect:

> The military columns lived in the open from April to July, and during that time there were to my knowledge only two wet days in the South West of Ireland…Weather is still the greatest moral factor in War.[38]

Likewise, soldiers engaged in the picketing of roads were occasionally required to bivouac or, alternatively, commandeer accommodation in the immediate vicinity of their post to allow them to maintain the effectiveness of the picket:

> It is possible that a picket may be kept on duty for several days at a time. In that case any suitable building in the vicinity of the examining post may be taken as a billet. A limited number of

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[35] *The Times*, 19 May 1920, p. 16.
[36] Bonar Law to Lloyd George, letter dated 11 May 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/1/30.
[37] *The 79th News*, 'Our Trek in Ould [sic] Ireland', June 1921, p. 187.
[38] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Feb. 1922, p. 179.

tents are available for posts where billeting accommodation cannot be arranged.[39]

The general tone of dissatisfaction with barrack accommodation and living conditions, drew many soldiers into making unfavourable comparisons with military life in England. The correspondent of the *Green Howards' Gazette* wrote nostalgically of the battalions desire to return to the 'roomy portals' of their English barracks claiming, in turn, that they were prepared to accept 'even the worst of the many stations in England.'[40] Similarly, C.R.B.Knight looked forward to the 'amenities' of a 'pleasant station in the regiment's own county.'[41]

Despite the unpopularity of Irish barracks throughout the period, there were, nonetheless, significant improvements in conditions towards the end of the 1920s. Barrack inspection reports from this period indicate that facilities at Boyle , Cootehill, Londonderry, and Tullamore were 'very good', Dunshauglin, Galway, Belfast, Ballyomar, Killarney, and Kanturk were 'good', Limerick was 'good/fair' Kilbride was 'fair' and Skibereen was 'satisfactory.' Nonetheless, in all cases, these judgments were qualified in accordance with the conflict situation: for example all the above reports included the postscript '…given the circumstances.' This suggests that the majority of barracks remained well below the standards that soldiers serving on a 'peace-time' basis had the right to expect.[42]

If soldiers were generally dissatisfied with the standard and the aspect of their accommodation, their predicament was little enhanced by severe restrictions on their movements outside camp. The kidnapping of Brigadier General Lucas in June 1920 whilst on a fishing trip in Kilbarry, County Cork (see Chapter 4) had led divisional commanders to reconsider their position regarding the free movement of off-duty officers and men outside barracks. In June 1920, B.B.Cubitt writing on behalf of the Army Council informed Macready that 'so far as the more senior officers are concerned the Council consider that where recreation cannot be indulged in without

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[39] N.A., W.O. 35 90/1, Dublin District War Diary, "Schedule D", 'Instructions for Picqueting Roads', 4 Schedules "A", "B", "C" & "D" to accompany G.S. Dublin District War Diary, 24 June 1920.
[40] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Feb. 1922, p. 180.
[41] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs*, chapter 1, p. 2.
[42] N.A., W.O. 35/50/6, Reports [barrack inspections] by Inspector of Quartermaster General's Services, Irish Command, Oct. to Dec. 1920. Barracks were rated according to the quality of their accommodation, dining hall and equipment, ration stores, waste disposal arrangements, kitchen facilities and cooks..

adequate protection it ought to be abandoned.'[43] Similarly, following the murder of three officers near Fethard, County Cork, Strickland wrote to G.H.Q. to clarify the position with regard to the safety and movements of off-duty officers and men:

> The chief points were that all ranks should be made to realise the possible dangers that attended anyone outside barracks, that they should be always alert and suspicious, and finally that 2 was the minimum number of officers that should be out alone, and they would always be armed.[44]

Similar concerns were also raised by battalion commanders, some of whom felt the need 'to put restrictions on the area in which the soldiers could 'walk out', for fear of their being kidnapped.'[45] However, as Strickland observed, there was a continual trade-off between the need for caution and the need to maintain troop morale via a liberal approach to troops' extra-curricular freedoms: 'to have confined all ranks to barracks, except when on duty, would have had a most demoralising effect.'[46] However, despite Strickland's honourable intention to make provision for off-duty exercise, soldiers' testimonies suggest that these general orders only had a limited application at a local level. Bouts of increased I.R.A. activity usually resulted in all (or the majority of) ranks being confined to their barracks for long periods of time. The Dublin District War Diary of December 1920, recalled how, following the assassination of 12 officers on the morning of 21 November 1920, 'troops were confined to the barracks with the exception of 15% at the discretion of the C.O.'s.'[47]

Major-General L.A.Hawes, following his arrival in Cork in May 1919, documented the encroachment of I.R.A. activity on the normal routine of the British soldier:

> The great access of leisure time was for a little most welcome.
> We used to play golf at a course about five miles out of Cork.
> Then the troubles got far worse and our movements became

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[43] N.A., W.O. 32/4309. Cubitt to Macready, Whether officers in Ireland are on "Active Service", letter dated 30 June 1920.
[44] Strickland, copy of a letter addressed to G.H.Q., 30 Oct. 1920, Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers.
[45] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 13.
[46] Strickland, copy of a letter addressed to G.H.Q., 30 Oct. 1920, Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers.
[47] N.A., W.O. 35/91/7, War Diary, General Staff H.Q. Dublin District, Dec. 1920. p. 1.

> more and more restricted, until we were virtually confined to barracks.[48]

F.H.Vinden recalled his service in Boyle, County Roscommon between January 1920 and December 1922 as a time 'void of excitement...we were confined to the barracks, except when on duty.'[49] This form of collective ennui also had serious repercussions for the ability of troops to maintain their discipline which. arguably. 'increased the likelihood of disproportionate reactions to minor incidents.'[50] The 'demoralising effect' of enforced confinement was chillingly captured by C.Cordner of the 2nd Argyll and Southern Highlanders:

> the evenings after pay-out were very rough, fighting with barefists was commonplace. Those especially, who had returned from Active Service, were bored, and after drinking became maudlin in their cups, by the confinement to barracks [sic].[51]

Douglas Wimberley observed a similar 'drinking culture' amongst his men, which he also attributed directly to the isolation of barrack life:

> There is no doubt at this time, a good deal of hard drinking went on, especially in the sergeants' mess, and it was no wonder. for when off duty there was so little for them to do, cooped up as they were in a small camp surrounded by sentries and barbed wire. We did our best with games in camp and whist drives and the like, but we were allowed no wives or families there and few of the local Irish girls dared to be seen with a British soldier.

Wimberley's account also suggested that an uptake in 'drunkenness' in the later period began to affect the performance of men under his command. In January 1921 he recalled being asked to provide a large party of men to hunt down a suspected ambush. After calling his men out on parade he discovered that '...several hundred men turned out, a good few in no shape for a lorried patrol, and I selected a composite force from the remaining teetotallers.'[52] Indeed, J.A.G. Registers, indicate that 166

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[48] Major-General L.A.Hawes. 'Kwab-O-Kayal - The Memories and Dreams of an Ordinary Soldier'. TS memoir. Imperial War Museum, London, p. 68.
[49] Vinden, 'By Chance a Soldier' p. 30.
[50] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 226.
[51] C.Cordner, Untitled TS memoir. Imperial War Museum. London, p. 11.
[52] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 154.

soldiers were actually court-martialled for 'drunkeness' between 1 January and 11 July 1921, of which the majority were also charged with offences under section 40 of the Army Act of 1881 (updated annually) relating to 'act conduct [and] disorder or neglect to the prejudice of good order.'[53]

That is not to suggest that barrack confinement was unique to the later period. As early as spring 1917, 2nd Lieutenant C.Carter remembered that 'meetings of protest were held all over the country and we were continually confined to barracks owing to fear of riots.'[54] Nor, as Fitzpatrick has asserted, did barrack confinement always result from stringent military directives, soldiers often displayed a strong isolationist tendency that confined them to familiar ground. This attitude was typified by a staff officer stationed in Buttevant in May 1921, who claimed 'We can't go outside barracks without risk of being shot in the back'. Faced with such insecurity, a great many soldiers opted for the safety and the tedium of barrack life.[55]

In other cases (typically amongst smaller detachments) isolation usually resulted from a significant geographical separation. Sometimes the seclusion and utter bleakness of location reinforced a keenly felt sense of 'apartness' from the main body of the battalion and from the conflict itself. In some cases, the soldiers' experience was one of unbearable quietness, inactivity and spartan endurance. F.A.S.Clarke recalled being ordered:

> …to relieve the garrison at the lighthouse on the old head of Kinsale about eight miles to the south west of the town. I was detailed to go with my platoon. We lived in old Coast guard cottages and suffered from intense boredom, bad rations, dust instead of coal and paraffin lamps. We were there a month and during that time were never visited by a senior officer…We had no means of contact with the outside world except by patrols.[56]

Percival recalled how lorry convoys travelling through dangerous, isolated areas were the only lifeline for the 6th Division's most remote outposts: 'In the bad areas lorry

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[53] N.A., W.O. 92/4; W.O. 213/32, Judge Advocate Generals Office: General Courts-Martial: register 1917-1945; Field General Courts-Martial (In field and Ireland) Register 21 July 1920 to 19 November 1921. For more detailed information on the process of Courts-Martial during this period and for offence codes relating to the Army Act of 1881 see J.Putkowski, *British Army Mutineers 1914-22* (London, 1998) p. 44.
[54] 2nd Lieutenant C.Carter, MS War Diary, 23 April 1917, Imperial War Museum, London.
[55] Ewart, 'Life in Mallow: An English Officer's Impressions' *The Times*, 19 May 1921.
[56] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, p. 5.

convoys escorted by armoured cars had to be organised to take supplies to the various detachments and this was practically the only means of communication between one detachment and another.'[57]

In more established barracks the sense of isolation was reinforced by the imperative of making barracks defensible. Heavy fortifications were constructed to protect from rebel attacks and these defensive measures contributed to the soldiers' sense of being under siege (even if the threat of rebel attack was negligible). The 'History of the 5th Division' reasoned that 'although a general rising was hardly probable …dispositions were…taken to make all detachments secure by strong defences and with reserve supplies of rations, forage, fuel, petrol and water, varying from 7 to 30 days' consumption.'[58] Sean Moylan (not without sympathy) recalled the 'cramped quarters of the British in Newmarket' in which the soldiers 'had to live inside barbed wire and sandbag emplacements.'[59] Similarly, the *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* recorded how the soldiers' sense of barrack isolation was little improved 'by the defence measures considered necessary – blocked gates, walls crowned with broken glass, long stretches of rusty wire, and sentries patrolling the perimeter.'[60] Likewise, the Buffs' historical records evoked a very familiar picture:

> It was necessary for the most stringent precautions to be taken; barracks were wired in and the main gates were covered with a *cheval de fris,* officers and men were allowed out only armed and in parties.[61]

The heavy use of defence measures tended to convert secure barracks into hemmed-in fortresses. Undoubtedly, the soldiers' sense of isolation must have been influenced by the fact that he viewed the outside world through the gaps in barbed wire and the spaces between patrolling sentries. The military authorities paranoia in this respect also contributed to the construction of artificial social barriers between the military and their host communities (see Chapter 4).

Many troops felt that their distrust of the general population (which had, to a large extent, been cultivated by military command) was legitimised by I.R.A.

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[57] Percival, Guerrilla War (I), p. 18.
[58] Hist. 5th Div., p. 65.
[59] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 86.
[60] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 27.
[61] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs*, chapter 1, p. 2.

attempts to penetrate military barracks. This situation also convinced many that barrack fortifications separated them from certain death. In addition, the combined propaganda efforts of Sinn Féin and the British authorities led many to believe that all guns in the conflict were trained to and from military and police barracks. The level of alertness and suspicion that this generated actually misrepresented the true scale of the threat to barracks, and the situation was little improved by the need for continual patrols in the vicinity of military bases. These operations (by their very nature) tended to bring soldiers into conflict with their enemies, contributing to a skewed perception of the outside world. F.C.Penny, stationed in Tallaght, County Dublin, recalled how sentries were plastered around the airfield where he was based '…with orders to fire if any intruder failed to halt.' Hearing shots one night he 'rushed to the scene to find that one of the guards had fired and shot a civilian.' It later emerged that the 'civilian' was a night watchman who had been carrying out his regular duties.[62] Other soldiers spoke of 'itchy-trigger fingers' or 'shooting at shadows' whilst performing guard duties.[63] As Augusteijn has claimed, 'fear…guided the behaviour of many in the Crown forces': incidents where 'sheep or cattle were killed by random fire from nervous police and military near barracks' indicate just how developed the siege mentality had become.[64] Sean Moylan, detained in Cork Detention Barracks in May 1921, observed that 'British troops were always nervous and on the alert. So much so that on a number of occasions the sentries fired at their own comrades and one British soldier was killed by a sentry.'[65]

In some cases troops could be forgiven for their irrational behaviour during sentry duty. There can be little doubt that, in certain areas, the sentries' existence was both precarious and wearisome. Besides actual physical exhaustion, guard duties also brought severe mental fatigue. The continual need to be alert and to take decisive action where necessary placed a severe mental strain on guards and sentries. In addition, the terrain immediately surrounding military barracks was as close to a 'front line' as could be achieved in a guerrilla conflict.[66] Soldier guards were aware

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[62] F.C.Penny, 'Memories of Flying 1915-20', TS memoir, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University, pp. 15-16.
[63] Chapman, letter to a friend, dated 30 April 1916.
[64] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 227.
[65] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 137.
[66] G.S.I.C.'s Record of the Rebellion goes even further to suggest that troops 'were, in fact, living inside the enemy lines' and given the presence of spies, informers and other infiltrators 'their every movement was known as soon as begun and in many cases was betrayed even before that.' p. 33.

that the area in and around military and police barracks was the one place where rebels and Crown force troops could largely rely on each others presence. This situation could only favour rebel snipers who could avoid announcing their presence until the decisive moment. Soldiers were acutely aware of this disparity of advantage: J.E.P.Brass, who acted as King's Messenger to Ireland in the later period, recalled how guards at the various barracks were exposed to great danger: 'the grounds surrounding were plastered with sentries. I felt sorry for these wretched men; they made splendid game for prowling gunmen.'[67]

As Percival observed, lone gunmen acting by night were also in the habit of 'sniping the sentry and making off'.[68] This made sentries an easy fixed-target; as early as 1917, Private C.Cordner recalled how the battalion's 'sole sentinel' was 'subject to an occasional rifle shot…during the hours of darkness.'[69] Similarly, *The 79th News* recalled how:

> …the sentry, Private Young, was shot down and severely wounded when a guard of the battalion were dispossessed of their rifles during a surprise attack on the barracks in Queenstown.[70]

Incidents of this kind led to the issuing in July 1920 of further orders 'relating to the care of arms and the duties of guards and sentries on barrack gates.'[71] However, the necessary vigilance that sentry duty fostered also began to infiltrate the interior of barracks, as soldiers who had enjoyed the relative comfort and privacy of their barracks became bound by increasingly cautious security measures. E.F.Chapman remembered being forced to sleep in uniform in order to repel an invasion at a moments notice: 'we were not allowed to take off even our boots.'[72] This tended to militate against the soldiers' assurance of respite within their barracks, and to reinforce the impression that there was 'no back area' in the conflict into which they could withdraw.[73]

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[67] J.E.P.Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet 1914-21', TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 232.
[68] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 3.
[69] Cordner, TS memoir, p. 11.
[70] *The 79th News*, 2nd Battalion notes, Aug. 1921.
[71] Hist. 5th Div., p. 67.
[72] Chapman, letter to a friend, dated 30 April 1916.
[73] N.A., W.O. 32/9572, Memorandum – Ireland and the General Military Situation, 16 June 1921, issued by Sir Laming Worthington Evans, Secretary of State for War (replaced Churchill in February 1921). (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the

There was of course a minor threat to the lives of soldiers in barracks. Initially, the republican campaign had tended to target police barracks in isolated areas. As the roles of the military and the police became fused, larger barracks hosting the army and the R.I.C. were occasionally targeted by rebel groups. These attacks only rarely took the form of full-scale assaults; attacks that aimed to overwhelm the occupants were neither realistic nor useful to an elastic guerrilla army. Battles (whether in the field or in defence of a fixed position) were never a typical feature of the conflict; vandalism, theft and intimidation were usually the order of the day. *The 79th News* reported (with great amusement) that 'Shinners' had been 'creating' at the A Company barracks on Spike Island: 'they endeavoured to turn the place into a sanatorium. They seemed to think that the fresh air cure was best for all diseases and so knocked all the windows out.'[74] E.Craig Brown wrote to his mother in May 1920 regarding his barrack confinement, and the omnipresence of his enemies, claiming that 'a Sinn Féin sentry stands outside our barrack gate and watches everybody and every wagon going or coming. He no doubt reports to Sinn Féin H.Q at the end of his tour of duty.[75] Whether intimidation or espionage, these occurrences were disproportionately alarming to soldiers who depended on the safety and the security of their barracks. More unsettling still were incidents of theft from military barracks. Such incidents were an infiltration into the private sphere of barrack life and the effect on the military was both physical and psychological. The correspondent of the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment, recalling a plot to procure arms from the courthouse barracks in Carrick on Shannon, described how:

> …a couple of civilians entered on the plea of interviewing the caretaker, who is a saddler by trade. They passed through the hall to the caretaker's quarters and started to unlock a door that opens out at the back of the courthouse…a party was detailed to be in readiness just over the wall behind the Court-House, while the two leaders got the caretaker's back door open; then there was to be a combined rush from the back and the front, in the hope of overpowering the guard and getting our rifle. However,

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respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis).

[74] *The 79th News*, 'A' Company Notes, Dec. 1921.

[75] E.Craig Brown, letter to his mother dated 30 May 1920.

> the caretaker, hearing a noise came out of his room and not knowing the men ordered them out, and they left the way they came…their plans had miscarried.

The same correspondent noted that these daring stunts became less frequent as 'D' Company became centralised in the courthouse. However, simple weight of numbers was no guarantee of safety: in November 1920 the same company were attacked in their barracks twice in one night. On this occasion the military forcibly demonstrated their strength relative to their attackers: 'they only fired about half-a-dozen shots to our eighty…the Sinn Féiners appear to have got a good fright, as they have left us alone since then.[76]

A more concerted effort to overpower soldiers and to seize arms from barracks occurred in April 1921 when a group of insurgents attacked Westridge barracks in County Cork. On this occasion the attackers lay in wait fully aware that 'the battalion [Cameron Highlanders] had gone out on a route march' with the 2nd Gloucesters. After half an hour shots were fired into the barracks:

> The main target of the assailants was the lines of the 2nd Gloucesters…The assailants had probably known that both battalions were going out, and rather fancied their chances of securing a few rifles without much difficulty.

On this occasion a party of the Gloucesters and two parties of the 2nd Cameron Highlanders were able to repel the attackers. No soldiers were hurt in the attack, but a number of sentries narrowly escaped being injured by the hail of bullets directed towards the guardroom.[77]

Besides group infiltration for the purpose of raiding or attacking, there was a suspicion amongst soldiers that lone republican agents were operating amongst them. The 'History of the 5th Division' provided some justification for this view: 'Sinn Féin had its agents everywhere throughout the country, and also inside and outside barracks. Certain threats of action under R.O.I.R. had to be issued against loitering by civilians outside barrack gates.'[78] Percival recalled one occasion when the 'secretary of the Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors Federation' requested an interview with him,

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[76] Plimpton, "*The Snapper*", 1st Battalion, 'D' Company notes, pp. 7-8, May 1920.
[77] *The 79th News*, 'The Battle of Westridge', April 1921, p. 146.
[78] Hist. 5th Div., p. 90.

offering 'on behalf of his Society to do all he could to help us.' Following several interviews, he received intelligence to the effect that the individual also 'held the position of Battalion Commandant in the I.R.A. and that his visits were designed to gain firsthand information of the interior of our barracks!'[79] Furthermore, spies and informers operating within barracks were, by no means, always civilians engaged in subterfuge: Coleman drew attention to an arms raid on the 'Upper Military Barracks in Longford town' led by members of the 1st Battalion I.R.A., the success of which owed much to information supplied by a soldier of the 18th Lancers known as 'Jordy'. This soldier had established contact with local rebels for the purpose of supplying 'arms and ammunition' during his service in the barracks, and only deserted to Sinn Féin when he came under suspicion. It was claimed that his 'firsthand knowledge of the layout of the barracks and of where arms were stored' allowed a raiding party to seize eight rifles and a quantity of ammunition.[80]

Although the threat of Sinn Féin must have appeared overbearing to soldiers in their barracks, it very rarely interrupted the normal routine of barrack life to such an extent that recreation was impossible. In many cases, soldiers enjoyed a great access of unrestricted leisure time in their barracks. Some accounts even evoked a 'holiday-camp' atmosphere. For example, E.Craig Brown recalled a riotous guest night at Belmont barracks:

> We had great dancing after dinner, I took the floor with Commander Weston, the padre and Captain McWatt…we finished off with a rugby football match with the medicine ball…my shirt was red with someone else's blood! [81]

These guest nights (mainly for the benefit of officers) tended to become a focus for gaiety and celebration:

> We young officers managed to have quite a lot of fun in Ireland. We had, for instance, a number of jolly guest nights…we were full of fun and enjoyed after dinner wild reel dancing and riotous games.[82]

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[79] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 17.
[80] Coleman, *County Longford*, p. 120.
[81] E.Craig Brown, unaddressed letter dated 22 June 1920.
[82] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 153.

Wimberley recalled another occasion when (Naval Commander-in-Chief) Admiral Sir Reginald Tupper visited Queenstown barracks:

> He was a splendid old sportsman and seemed to thoroughly enjoy his time with us. After dinner we got him into the middle of a rather wild eightsome reel, and once in the centre we never let him out; Each one of us in turn "hooched" the old chap, and did our reel steps to him which he nobly tried to follow.[83]

Lively descriptions of guest nights in barracks or soirees with local loyalist families were commonplace in officers' memoirs. Such events provided a counterpoint to other aspects of Irish service and, as such, were very much the antithesis of the drudgery of service.

It would appear that very little could quell officers' appetites for leisure, comfort and privilege. A report on the proposed 'reappropriation [sic]' of military barracks in Ireland from December 1920 reveals that officers based at Kildare barracks submitted a proposal to the War Office to dispense with an infants school in the barrack grounds and 'reappropriate the Sergts' Mess West as an Infants' School and the Infants' School East as a Sergts' Mess.' This was deemed necessary because 'the Sergts' Mess is too small owing to an increase in members.' The new arrangement was intended to allow officers to create [the unlikely combination of] a combined adults and infants school and sergeants' mess that included a billiard room, reading and writing room, mess room, liquor store and beer cellar. The new layout would also reduce the infants' school to just two rooms, one of which would be earmarked during the present emergency for military training purposes.[84]

Regular soldiers were also driven by the need to maintain the semblance of an active social scene. E.M.Warmington, describing his quiet station at Bere Island, County Cork, recalled how:

> Many men missed the noises and bustle and entertainments of their native or familiar towns …yet I feel that we managed pretty well. Our non-military social life was active and even talented, including concerts and dramatic performances, open in every

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[83] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 156.
[84] N.A., W.O. 35/50/3. Barracks: Reappropriations and Misappropriations., Dec. 1920. There is no indication in the application as to whether permission was eventually granted for the proposal.

> respect to all ranks and to outside guests. The play 'The Private Secretary' proved popular on our stage. We had an orchestra which could play Bach, and there were expert pianists among both officers and other ranks.[85]

Musical concerts and amateur dramatics were especially popular in the Irish garrison. Most battalions were accompanied by a regimental band, which provided some distraction from everyday fatigues. R.Burns recalled how his arrival in Limerick in 1918 was greatly 'enlivened' by the presence of the Cameron Highlanders' Pipe Band. Other soldiers spoke fondly of their involvement in theatricals.[86] E.M.Ransford remembered the Suffolk Regiment's performance of the 'The Speckled Band' at Belfast Theatre: 'I was cast for Sherlock Holmes!'[87] Similarly, the anonymous author of the *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers* (having previously struggled to strike a light-hearted note concerning the experience of the 1st Battalion in Ireland) concluded with a fond remembrance of 'the amateur theatricals staged by "A" Company at Hunstanton House under the energetic leadership of Captain Fleetwood and 2nd Lieutenant Strong in which the latter displayed yet another of his many talents.'[88]

Concerts and performances were one aspect of leisure in Ireland in which officers and men became jointly involved. For the most part, the leisure activities of senior and lower ranks demonstrated a clear separation in this respect, with officers tending towards more individual pursuits such as golf, fishing and shooting.[89] Adrian Clements Gore, a young officer of the 2nd Rifle Brigade, fondly recalled his 'salad days' in Ireland spent 'patrolling the country with fishing rods and guns handy in the car.'[90] By way of contrast, lower ranks tended towards team sports within their barracks and occasionally with neighbouring units where conditions allowed. The satisfaction of officers' leisure needs was usually dependent upon the co-operation of

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[85] Warmington, 'Diaries', p. 33.
[86] Burns, 'Once a Cameron Highlander' p. 168.
[87] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', p. 20.
[88] Anon, *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers*, p. 7.
[89] This separation was reflected in the right of officers to live outside barracks in the early period. J.M.Cordy arriving in Ireland in November 1919 recalled how he 'hired a bedsitting room in a cottage in a village close by [Curragh camp] and my wife came out and we had a very pleasant time.' 'My Memories', p. 39.
[90] Adrian Clements Gore, 'This Was the Way it Was', TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 3.

other ranks who were sometimes required to provide armed guards for officers' sorties outside barracks:

> Officers stationed at Tullamore and Birr were able to enjoy an occasional outing on the local golf courses. Their efforts were observed with close attention by armed fusiliers patrolling just off the fairway.[91]

In particular, the contrivance of officers to continue their regular golfing routine placed a heavy burden on regular troops. In November 1920, *The 79th News* published extracts from Brigade Orders regarding the playing of golf in Ireland. Some of the guidelines read like a dark comedy:

> …parties will invariably send out advance and rear guards, the actual players being regarded as the main body. Before the players drive off a pair of fore caddies will be sent on to make good the first line of bunkers and as soon as the players have left the tee, their caddies will push on to the green and will exploit as far as the next tee, where they will take up a suitable defensive position.
>
> In the case of short holes the players will not drive off until the fore caddies have made good the next tee.
>
> At blind holes the greatest care is to be taken to ensure that before any advance is made the fore-caddies have the reverse slope under observation.[92]

Nevertheless, experiences in County Kerry suggested that these safety concerns were both necessary and prudent in relation to golfing parties. On 9 April 1921, men of the Boherbee section of the Tralee I.R.A. tracked Major John Mackinnon, a deeply unpopular Auxiliary officer, to a golf course in Oakpark, Tralee, where veteran soldier James Cornelius Healy shot him twice in the head as Mackinnon steadied himself to putt on the third green. Historian T.Ryle Dwyer described Healy's feat of marksmanship as 'the most famous shots ever made on any Tralee course.'[93]

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[91] Mullaly, *The South Lancashire Regiment*, p. 350.
[92] *The 79th News*, 'Golf in Ireland', Nov. 1920, p. 22.
[93] T.Ryle Dwyer, *Tan, Terror and Troubles: Kerry's Real Fighting Story* (Cork, 2001) p. 302.

On the other hand, lower ranks usually confined their leisure activities to the safety of the barracks. Battalion whist drives and other card games were a popular pastime. Practical joking was pursued with relentless vigour. W.R.H.Brown remembered that 'there was much "ragging"' between the companies in Moore Park:

> One night we threw a smoke bomb into a hut in B Company's lines which prevented the occupants from entering for a couple of hours. In return they raided us, and, as we had barricaded our doors and closed our windows, they threw a fire bucket full of water clean through one of our windows, drenching the nearest bed.

Another tumultuous occasion resulted in a newly arrived cadet being 'carried to the washhouse in his night attire and, with legs tied, laid on a bench with two taps turned on him. He was then left to "rescue" himself as well he could.' Brown further added that 'dozens of similar incidents took place, giving a touch of spice to our existence and helping to keep the place alive.'[94]

Troops also benefited from a greater access to education which 'formed an integral part of the soldiers' training…even throughout the most troublous [sic] times of 1920 and 1921.' In the 5th Division, this form of provision resulted in 3,652 certificates of education being awarded to troops during the period.[95] In some areas soldiers also benefited from organised lecture programmes. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade were particularly active in this respect, even promoting a course of lectures on 'Imperial History and Geography' in late 1921 and early 1922.[96] A more light-hearted series of talks and lectures were organised by officers of the Essex Regiment who made presentations on 'local I.R.A. celebrities' and encouraged troops to volunteer information to enable them to construct profiles.[97] In May 1920, the military acquired an Agricultural School in Ballyfair and offered courses of practical instruction to troops. In addition, a course in Market Gardening was established at the Curragh, and ran until December 1921.[98]

Inter-regimental sports competitions were another means by which to maintain morale and encourage the health and vivacity of troops. These included the Challenge

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[94] Brown, untitled TS memoir, p. 19.
[95] Hist. 5th Div., p. 138.
[96] *Ibid*, p. 139.
[97] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 10.
[98] Hist. 5th Div., p. 139.

trophy for boxing, 1920-21 and the Irish Army Cup Association Football Competition in 1921-22. League rugby (union) was established in the 5th Division for the season 1921-22, and ran alongside the 5th Division Hockey Cup. Unit teams also participated in cross-country running events, which were utilised by officers to both maintain the health of troops and develop their knowledge of the topography of the brigade area. Despite severe restrictions, soldiers' passion for these events continued unabated throughout the period. As late as September 1921, Wimberley recalled one such Brigade Sports Meeting in Cork hosting eight infantry regiments:

> Travelling to and from Sports meetings and inter-unit games at that period was an unusual affair. We were conveyed to and from in old fashioned motor vehicles, covered with rabbit netting to keep out any Sinn Féin grenades thrown at us, and all armed to the teeth with Lewis guns, rifles and grenades.[99]

As late as June 1921, some regiments were still contriving to engage civilians in team sports, which created dangerous situations for both players and spectators. An ill advised 'Military v Civilians' cricket match in the grounds of Trinity College on 3 June 1921 was interrupted by revolver shots from the direction of Nassau Street resulting in the death of a female spectator.[100] Nonetheless, the best efforts of armed rebels could do little to quell the soldiers' appetite for these events. The only serious obstacle to leisure was created by the proliferation of military duties as the contours of barrack life became defined by an incessant military routine. The *Green Howards' Gazette* recorded in September 1920:

> We fear there will be no chance of sport of any kind until Ireland's troubles are over. With increased duties and men becoming more scarce, very few of us have any chance of doing anything apart from work.[101]

Similarly, *The Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* summarised military life in Ireland as being composed of 'raiding and search parties, guards and escorts of all kinds, spasmodic bouts of training and, of course, the ubiquitous fatigues.'[102]

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[99] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier' pp. 150-1.
[100] N.A., W.O. 35/93/2, War Diary – G (operations) – 1 Dec. 1920 to 31 Dec. 1921, and War Diary – General Staff H.Q. Dublin District, June 1921, entries dated 3 June 1921.
[101] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Sept. 1920, p. 60.
[102] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 32.

J.P.Swindlehurst, a prolific diarist, even ceased entries for a whole month owing to fact that 'each day was a repetition of the day previous. if we weren't on guard in some place, we were patrolling somewhere else, or else on a route march.'[103] These accounts contrast greatly with those of the earlier period when barrack life could be inactive to the point of tedium. Robin Salisbury, stationed in Dublin, wrote to his mother in October 1917:

> I really haven't a bit of news. My day up here consists of either sitting through awful lectures being bored stiff or crawling over small hills with guns and being more bored stiff if possible.[104]

Other soldiers lacked even the demands of training with which to occupy themselves. L.A.Hawes recalled his humdrum military life in Cork:

> My only work was each Saturday morning to sign a return showing how many rats had been killed during the week. This is a fact to add to my frustration with my work, I had come from a very active and essential appointment, to a useless one.[105]

Cecil Plumb, based at the Old Barracks in Fermoy in 1917 converted his standard issue 'Field Message Book' (for the use of non-commissioned officers of cavalry) into a diary of service. His descriptions convey the boredom and inactivity of an Irish station during this period, punctuated by 'joy rides on the sergeant's horses'; 'gardening in front of the O.C's room'; 'scraps with my bed mate' and strolls in Moore Park 'in the hope of getting a tart!'[106] Plumb's vigorous pursuit of leisure, his extra-marital agenda, and his 'joy rides', provide firm counterpoints to the more regimented existence of soldiers in the later period.

It is clear that troops access to leisure varied greatly according to considerations such as time period, rank and district. However, this section has demonstrated that, regardless of these influences, the pursuit of leisure was an integral need amongst

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[103] Swindlehurst, MS diary, 28 Feb. 1921.
[104] Robin Salisbury, letter to his mother dated 15 Oct. 1916, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.
[105] Hawes, 'Kwab-O-Kayal', p. 67.
[106] Cecil Plumb, Field Message Book, MS Diary, entries dated respectively 24, 24, 28, 20 June 1917, Imperial War Museum, London.

soldiers, and its satisfaction was the flipside to the constraints of barrack life. The historic links between the military and civilians in Irish garrison towns began to be eroded by the regular confinement of soldiers to barracks and the defensive measures required to fortify fixed military positions. This could lead to alienation, inaction and a false perception of the conditions under which troops served. Soldiers sought to relieve the tension of barrack confinement and the hardship of the operational routine through recreation. Their sustained effort to pursue leisure reveals much about the pressures of military life and their social exclusion (real or otherwise) from the life of the community.

4. Soldiers and Civilians: Relations Between the Military and their Host Communities.

An understanding of the limitations created by barrack life is a prerequisite to understanding the wider picture of civil-military relations in Ireland. Whilst the fiats of military commanders and other aspects of barrack life acted as a limiting factor on social contact between soldiers and civilians, the conflict itself tended to bring soldiers and rebels head-to-head in busy urban settings. Skirmishes often occurred under the gaze of civilian bystanders, with the streets of towns and villages forming the battleground for conflict. This pattern of hostilities ensured that the civilian population could never remain entirely detached from the conflict, and were vulnerable to the coercive influences of both soldiers and rebels. Active insurgents depended upon the active or passive co-operation of civilians in order to ensure the success of their actions. Likewise, the co-operation of the civil population was vital to the military's efforts to expose threats, collect reliable intelligence and secure convictions. Therefore, the nature of the conflict required that both sides forge positive links with the civil population or risk losing touch with their opponents' campaign. It would not be overstatement to suggest that the overall outcome of the conflict hinged upon the actions and ultimate loyalties of the 'man in the street.'

Setting aside military considerations, closer links with the community were also a conduit for developing friendships, pursuing leisure and ensuring consumer supply. As has been demonstrated, both battalions and military detachments often found themselves quartered in the heart of the community, sometimes in public buildings converted for military use. In the absence of self-contained (or self sufficient) military communities, many soldiers were anxious to establish relationships with local shopkeepers, churches, families or publicans in order to maintain some semblance of a social life and to maintain or develop a 'civilian' outlook.[1]

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[1] Helen McCartney in her recent book *Citizen Soldiers, The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge, 2005) explored the continuity of aspects of civilian life amongst soldiers in the First World War, especially those arising from regional and class based identities which remained intact within the context of locally raised territorial battalions. In regular battalions (such as those operating in Ireland during this period) the region in which a battalion was raised was a less reliable indicator of the regional origin of soldiers. Shared identities tended to converge on belonging to a particular regiment or to a British (or sometimes English, Scottish or Welsh) identity. Nevertheless, aspects of a

Therefore, if the conditions of conflict immured soldiers in their barracks, the attractions, opportunities and dangers of civilian life were usually close at hand. This chapter will study the nature of this social interaction through the presentation of a series of case studies highlighting the varying experiences of regiments stationed in both hostile and quiet districts at different periods during the conflict. It will also highlight relevant themes, including the commercial and social boycott of the Crown forces and the regulatory influence of the I.R.A. on community life, to demonstrate the means by which community hostility came to be expressed and the motivations behind this dissension. Instances where barriers between the military and the civil population were successfully overcome will also be identified as a means to highlight the continuity of historic links between the military and civilians in Ireland. This should bring into sharper relief the lost potential evident in other areas. Above all, the chapter will consider the influence of civil-military relations on the soldiers' experience of service life in Ireland, and assess how this contributed to the success or failure of the British campaign. It is hoped that a detailed scrutiny of these issues will enable a clearer picture to be constructed from a mass of seeming contradictions.

Republican memoirs have tended to portray civil-military relations in Ireland as being uniformly hostile. Likewise, newspaper reports and propaganda from the period tended to emphasise the explosive nature of community relations. For the most part, the military and the civil population emerge from these accounts like two separate chemical elements that, when brought together, were almost bound to produce an exothermic reaction. As early as July 1919, *The Freeman's Journal* was already describing the atmosphere between the military and the general population as one of 'poison gas'.[2] Similarly *"The Snapper"* regarded the deteriorating relationship as a 'fever prevalent in the country'.[3] In the same vein, *The 79th News* claimed that the introduction of military detachments to Queenstown, Ballincollig, Midleton, Killetagh and Youghal in April 1920 had created 'hornet's nests!' in South-West Ireland.[4]

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more general civilian experience involving cinema and theatre outings, sightseeing and the enjoyment of local hospitality were carried over to Irish service as a means by which to bolster morale.

[2] *The Freeman's Journal*, 9 July 1919, quoted in *The Times*, 10 July 1919, p. 14.

[3] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, July 1920, p. 106.

[4] *The 79th News*, April 1920, p. 96.

Despite the inflammatory language, the soldiers' experience of opposition was, for the most part, far less volatile than these descriptions suggest. Initial forms of resistance tended to be passive; community hostility only rarely took the form of violent physical assaults. The most common means by which civilians indicated their disapproval was the simple, yet effective, device of disassociation. Therefore, community hostility was not only expressed in 'stories of soldiers being thrown into the river'[5], nor even in the 'battery after battery of coldly hostile glances' observed by a visiting reporter.[6] It could also be subtle, almost discreet: Private J.W.Rowarth remembered that: 'there was no violence. In the early days before going to France you did get a smile or two from the locals, now nobody spoke, or even nodded their heads to me.'[7] After the 'permanent joy' of his station at Bere Island where the local population 'treated us as friends', E.M.Warmington recalled his arrival in Tipperary in the spring of 1919 where he found a community 'not yet afflicted by violence' but unwilling to reciprocate any gesture of friendliness: 'I saw ahead of me about twenty young men in civilian clothes on either side of the road. As I walked through that company I spoke a word or two with a smile, but got no reply.'[8] This form of social ostracism was genuinely disconcerting to soldiers in Ireland whose predecessors had enjoyed the respect of the community 'as "good customers" and "eager huntsmen" admired for their accurate marksmanship and lack of local connections.'[9]

This growing estrangement was well documented by Douglas Wimberley, an officer stationed in Queenstown in the winter of 1920. Wimberley recognised his increasing isolation by the fact that 'fewer and fewer of the local Irish families attempted to entertain army officers.'[10] Similarly Rowarth, returning to Ireland after the armistice, recalled his attempt to 'visit some of the people [he] knew before' which proved unsuccessful because 'this time [he] was not welcome.'[11] The consciousness of social exclusion was perfectly captured by a visiting reporter in May 1921. In a vivid passage, he remembered a spring day in the town of Limerick:

> White clad young men and women were playing lawn tennis in the gardens, old men were smoking and talking on the veranda

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[5] Burns, 'Once a Cameron Highlander', p. 164.
[6] Ewart, 'In Rebel Hands: An English Officer's Impressions', *The Times*, 20 May 1921, p. 14.
[7] Private J.W.Rowarth, 'A Soldier's Tale', TS memoir, Imperial War Museum, London, p. 27.
[8] Warmington, 'Diaries', p. 43.
[9] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 29.
[10] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 154.
[11] Rowarth, 'A Soldier's Tale', p. 27.

> of a club that overlooks the river. A more peaceful scene could hardly be imagined…A military band was playing somewhere near, and I found it eventually huddled away in a yard up an alley, nobody taking any notice except an armed sentry who stood at the entrance.[12]

This social boycott, which gathered strength and momentum after the armistice, was reinforced by a more overt campaign of commercial and infrastructural exclusion. Many shopkeepers and tradesmen had long refused the patronage of the military and their initiatives were to be later promoted by quayside workers in Dublin who refused to assist the military in the unloading of munitions. This fractured supply chain was finally broken by the refusal of railwaymen to transport war materials.

The first rumblings of what was to become a more general transport embargo occurred on 20 May 1920 when a meeting of quayside workers in Dublin resolved not to handle 'certain war material' on behalf of the military.[13] On the very same day, dockers and crane-men refused to discharge the cargo of the freighter *Polberg*, believing the vessel to be carrying munitions. This resulted in the freighter being landed in Kingstown on 21 May, and unloaded into railway wagons by troops driven in from Dublin. If this was a slight inconvenience to military, the situation was made considerably worse by the refusal of Dublin and South-Eastern railwaymen to convey the wagons to Dublin, followed by the refusal of men on the Great Southern and Western Railway to work the train from Dublin to the South of Ireland. As a result, the carriages remained under military guard in Kingstown for two days until the military could satisfy the railwaymen that the 160-ton cargo contained only preserved meat and not, in fact, munitions.

The outcome may have been farcical, but it did nonetheless indicate a willingness by transport workers to co-operate against the interests of the military. When the government tug *The Czaritza* arrived in Queenstown on 30 May 1920, the alighting crew of Cameron Highlanders found themselves confronted by a conspiracy of non-co-operation from both transport workers and other civilians. Their first experience of Irish service entailed: a crew that refused to discharge the munitions, the fact that 'no civilians could be found to assist in the landing of Lewis guns and other equipment'

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[12] Ewart, 'On the road to Ulster: An English Officer's Impressions', *The Times*, 23 May 1921, p. 14.
[13] *The Times*, 21 May 1920, p. 16.

and 'the destruction of the shore gangway by unknown men'.[14] Similarly, in Millstreet, County Cork a detachment of the 1st Manchesters found themselves cut off from military supplies by 'the railway authorities' refusal to take 'two truckloads of military stores'. Their predicament was made considerably worse by 'reluctance amongst the civil population to allow the military to purchase food'.[15] In the same fashion, the *Green Howards' Gazette* recalled a strike that involved the co-operation of both transport workers and the civil population. This entailed 'the closing of all shops and a total stoppage of the railways as a protest against the non-release of hunger strikers in Mountjoy prison …a state of affairs that lasted two days.'[16]

Very soon railwaymen were refusing to transport troops as well as munitions: in July 1920 the correspondent of East Yorkshire Regiment lamented how 'for the first time, a party of East Yorkshiremen were refused to be taken on the train by the driver at Mullingar station.' The troops were obliged to reach their destination by lorries, though they were greatly inconvenienced in doing so by the discovery that '4,000 gallons of petrol, laying overnight in the goods yard…had been hauled out of the trucks, nearly every can punctured and thrown down the embankment'.[17] By these methods, the transport embargo was complemented by the actions of local traders and the civil population. Naturally, many soldiers began to regard such actions as a form of civil conspiracy; whereby transport workers sought to confine the military's movements and the civil population sought to heighten their discomfort within their confined locality.

During June 1920 the embargo spread rapidly across Ireland. Earlier in the month, *The Times* had claimed that 'the principle involved is upheld by railwaymen over the various systems.'[18] However, in the absence of a sustained general strike, stoppages on the railways tended to arise spontaneously on the back of local initiative, as opposed to any clear policy directive on the part of the National Union of Railwaymen. Despite the lack of a unified policy, the majority of railway employees were soon refusing to assist in the transportation of soldiers, policemen and military prisoners, as well as munitions. This united front led to doubts being expressed regarding the sincerity of the railwaymen's actions, not least from within the railway

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[14] *The Times*, 31 May 1920, p. 14.
[15] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, 12 July 1920.
[16] *Green Howards' Gazette*, April 1920, p. 6.
[17] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"* July 1920, p. 106.
[18] *The Times*, 5 June 1920, p. 14.

companies themselves: Fane Vernon, the Chairman of the Great Northern Railway Company wrote to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Sir Hamar Greenwood in July 1920 claiming that:

> A number of loyal servants of the Company have been kidnapped, kept prisoner, and forced at the point of a revolver to sign an undertaking not to work or assist in the working of military traffic, with the threat that a refusal would mean death. A driver has been tarred and feathered for previous working of military traffic.[19]

Whether through conviction or coercion, the transport boycott rapidly gathered pace: on 24 May 1920, drivers refused to transport three military prisoners from Ballinamore to Sligo Gaol.[20] On 22 June, drivers on the Great Southern and Western Company's line from Cloughjordan to Dublin refused to drive the train from Cloughjordan on the grounds that a number of policemen were amongst the civilian passengers.[21] At Kingstown on 28 June, dockers even declined to unload the Sunday newspapers (presumably on the grounds that they represented British propaganda). In the same report, *The Times* provided a summary of the overall state of the transport system in Ireland:

> It is no longer possible to hope that a stoppage will be averted. This is a strike in everything but name, an accumulation of individual and scattered stoppages, making up to a paralysis of the general transport system.[22]

The railwaymen's actions were to last roughly six months, despite the rail companies' efforts to dismiss workers who discriminated between cargoes which resulted in approximately 1,750 men being discharged by August 1920.[23]

The army did develop some notable counter-actions, the most popular of which involved 'detailing…troops or police to enter trains at various stations daily. These

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[19] N.A., W.O. 32/9516, Memorandum from Eric Geddes to the Cabinet – Difficulties of transport of stores and troops to and from Ireland. Extract from a letter from Fane Vernon to Greenwood, dated 19 July 1920.
[20] *The Times*, 25 May 1920, p. 10.
[21] *Ibid*, 22 June 1920, p. 17.
[22] *Ibid*, 28 June 1920, p. 17.
[23] N.A., W.O. 32/9516., Memorandum from Eric Geddes to the Cabinet, Difficulties of transport of stores and troops to and from Ireland. Geddes' figures included those 'dismissed for disobedience' and those 'dispensed with in consequence of the lines having been closed.'

parties took rations with them, and if the driver refused to work the train they continued to sit in the train until it was cancelled or proceeded on its journey.' This did raise concerns at G.H.Q. that 'it should be necessary for His Majesty's forces to have recourse to such undignified methods' which were also taken as 'eloquent testimony of the ineffectual powers that were given to the Commander-in-Chief for dealing with the situation.'[24] Nonetheless, despite the military's tactical (if undignified) response, the only sure way to obviate the negative effects of the transport embargo was to rely upon military labour and transport. This task was undertaken by the military with a certain amount of belief in their own self-sufficiency:

> The closing of the railways is indeed a tragic comedy, since the only sufferers will be the "good citizens of the Irish Republic" who are already beginning to feel the pinch. For the past six months "armed forces of the Crown" have been content with motor lorries and will continue to be so until the end of time if necessary.[25]

Nonetheless, a growing resort to coercion betrayed this defiant stance. In October 1920, a correspondent of *The Times* reported on a signalman's refusal to receive a troop train at Armagh station, which prompted a desperate action on the part of the officer in charge. Acting outside his authority, the officer was heard to address his party and the signalman with the order: '…the train will go in anyhow, and you will go on it. Corporal take two men, and put this man under arrest on the train.'[26] Therefore, despite the bluster and the bravado evident in many accounts, the transport embargo must have weighed heavily upon the army's already strained resources. An entry in the Digest of Service of the 2nd Border Regiment recorded how:

> During the month of November, much extra work and hardship was thrown on the battalion owing to the trains not running to Castlebar and through the railway employees declining to take W.D. property. This necessitated constant motor convoys being

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[24] Record of the Rebellion, pp. 15-16.
[25] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Dec. 1920, p. 116.
[26] *The Times*, 12 Oct. 1920, p. 11.

> despatched to Athlone, under escort to fetch rations, supplies etc and a heavy strain on all ranks.[27]

In order to demonstrate the extent of the inconvenience caused by the railway strike, it is worth highlighting that in the 5th Divisional area the two main railway lines, namely the Great Southern and Western from Dublin to Cork via Newbridge, and the Midland Great Western from Dublin to Athlone, were supplemented by branch lines which 'brought every part of the area within 15 miles of a railway station.'[28] The inconvenience would appear to be even greater if we accept Darrell Figgis' (rather controversial) claim that 'the Irish railways were built to link military barracks rather than commercial centres.'[29]

Further to the logistical difficulties that the boycott entailed, the episode also gave a strong indication to the military that a long-standing campaign of disassociation was now being accompanied by a concerted campaign of industrial and commercial boycott, which, though rather uncoordinated, was held together by a unifying principle of civil resistance.

Although such forms of hostility may have appeared ubiquitous to the soldier, there are strong reasons to suggest that civilians were not always willingly complicit in this form of action. Boycotts were sometimes the outcome of forced expressions of hostility on the part of the community. Active rebels were anxious to coerce communities into resisting the presence of the armed forces and, if the majority of civilians were unwilling to participate in military offensives, they could be more easily persuaded to disassociate themselves from, or actively boycott, soldiers and policemen. A *Times* article of November 1920 suggested that the insurgents` grip on the community was all-pervasive:

> …terrorized by the tyranny of Sinn Féin, by night raids in search of arms, by compulsion of the younger men, enforced by threats of death, to join the ranks of the Irish Republican Army… Grim letters of personal warning, notices of forthcoming vengeance on whole towns, and similar alarming threats are almost commonplaces of life. It is easy to find people who have been cruelly knocked about or who have had their houses burned

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[27] Digest of Service of the Border Regiment, 9 July 1919.
[28] Hist. 5th Div., p. 14.
[29] D.Figgis, *The Economic Case for Irish Independence*, (Dublin, 1920) p. 37.

> about their ears. Every night thousands of people sleep in fields, under hedges or haystacks, because they dare not sleep at home.[30]

Likewise, C.R.B.Knight of the Buffs Regiment, claimed that the Irish countryside was dominated by 'armed men' intent on 'terrifying the people into becoming active helpers, or at least into mute acquiescence of their deeds.'[31] Indeed, Augusteijn cited (an unproven) case whereby a group of Volunteers arrested in Dublin on 21 November 1920 claimed to have been 'forced to join the I.R.A. against their own will.'[32]

Certainly, the majority of soldiers attributed their growing estrangement from the community to Sinn Féin's influence on the Irish people. J.W.Rowarth, after being snubbed by his previous associates in Dublin, was informed by the parish priest that: 'the rebels are very strong in the district now, and it is forbidden to talk to the enemy…the rebels are few in numbers but strong in persuasion.'[33] Douglas Wimberley sympathised with the growing reluctance of local families to entertain officers: 'from a very natural fear of reprisals.'[34] Very soon, any hint of commercial or social fraternisation between the military and civilians usually prompted a severe response. A fancy dress ball held in Rosslare (County Wexford) in August 1920 was interrupted by armed and masked men who ordered 'the women to go home on the grounds that they were improperly dressed'. On the same night, military and naval officers were 'held up', searched, and told to leave 'as social intercourse with the people was denied to the "army of occupation."'[35] In most cases however, rebels targeted civilians for punishment rather than risk an engagement with the military.

Sometimes civilians received similar treatment if their familial ties connected them to the Crown forces. A girl in Tuam was rendered 'unconscious from shock and exposure' after being dragged from her home, and having her hair cropped with shears, under the repeated threat of her ears being cut off. This was claimed to be a

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[30] *The Times,* 'Two Terrors in Ireland', 30 Nov. 1920, p. 16.
[31] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs,* p. 2.
[32] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 242. This was a common mitigation plea that was usually rejected by G.H.Q., although it would seem from the evidence presented in this chapter that, in a minority of cases, such repudiation of the I.R.A. may have more guileless than it seemed.
[33] Rowarth, 'A Soldier's Tale', p. 27.
[34] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 154.
[35] *The Times*, 1 Sept. 1920, p. 11.

reprisal for her brother having recently joined the military.[36] This form of action mirrored a long-standing campaign against the R.I.C. and their associates. A series of telegrams from June 1921, sent by the Inspector General of the R.I.C., T.J.Smith to Bonar Law, detailed similar incidents whereby civilians were punished for assisting or supplying policemen. In June 1920, Miss M.A.Little of Enniskillen received a letter 'warning her against letting her house to a sergeant of the R.I.C.', during the same month Mr G.Mcphail J.P. of Portumna District, County Galway had his 'turf shed maliciously burned including its contents and a quantity of turf and farm cart' when he allowed the police to take turf after they had been refused elsewhere.[37]

General Staff's 'Record of the Rebellion' is particularly useful for its exposure of incidents of community coercion on the part of the I.R.A. For the period from May to July 1920, chapter notes provide a tally of the so-called 'typical' methods employed by the rebels: '10th May – Newport (Co.Tipperary) a shopkeeper and his daughter each received a letter signed "Officer I.R.A. Commanding the District," threatening them with bodily harm, if the daughter continued to talk to policemen's wives.'; '16th July – at Arklow (Co. Wicklow), bombs were placed in two shops which supplied troops.'; '10th May – Broadford (Co.Limerick) an armed gang of 80-100 men entered the shop of a tailor who made police uniforms. Having assaulted the tailor and his son the gang made off with 400. The same gang having then proceeded to the house of an R.I.C. pensioner, having pulled his 16-year old son out of bed and into the street, stripped him naked and compelled him to swear never to speak to a policeman again.'[38]

The experience of the 1st Manchesters in North Cork provided a vivid picture of the means by which communities in North Cork became coerced into loyalty to the republican cause. In Millstreet the combined efforts of Sinn Féin activists and the local priest and demagogue, Father Brennan, appear to have cowed the population into a terrified submission. On 22 August 1920, a military detachment based in the town overheard a sermon delivered by Father Brennan in the local Catholic Church in which he urged parishioners that:

> ...contact with the English people depraves the Irish mind...The soldiers are here to murder innocent civilians and to destroy your

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[36] *The Times*, 5 May 1920, p. 16.
[37] N.A., C.O. 906/19, Ireland 1920-1: Disorders and Telegrams.
[38] Record of the Rebellion, pp. 19-20.

> property…bind yourselves together for the overthrow of khaki and all that represents England.[39]

It later emerged that Father Brennan's activities were not confined to mere demagogy; his position and influence allowed him to browbeat the community into compliance with his wishes:

> …he has compulsorily enrolled all the young men in the district in the I.R.A. One method of enforcing enlistment was by prohibiting owners of threshing machines to hire their machines to farmers whose sons were not enrolled.[40]

Even more sinister were the activities of the local I.R.A. Both the Mid-Cork Brigade and the notoriously active North Cork Brigade (under the energetic leadership of Liam Lynch) operated within the area for which the 1st Manchesters was responsible. Besides the numerous, and often successful, attacks perpetrated against the regiment, service records also recalled numerous instances where civilians incurred the wrath of the I.R.A. An entry for 29 November 1920 recorded how two uniformed men near Ballincollig raped a young woman at gunpoint, after previously threatening her with '"bobbing" (hair cut short)'. Her alleged indiscretion against the I.R.A. is not revealed in the account.[41]

Local Loyalist Mrs Mary Lindsay of Coachford, who was known personally to Strickland, paid the ultimate price for reporting a planned ambush to the Crown forces, due to take place on 28 January 1921. Owing to her information, the action was thwarted, resulting in the death of one Volunteer and the later execution of three others. Subsequently, she was kidnapped together with her chauffeur James Clarke, by men of the 6th Battalion Cork I.R.A. who also burned her house and confiscated her land during her period of capture. The Manchesters' account recalls how Mary Lindsay and James Clarke were held hostage for several days 'without adequate food or clothing' while 'their lives were used to bargain against the execution of rebel prisoners'. When these executions were enacted, both hostages were similarly shot by the I.R.A., and it was claimed that during her execution '20 shots were fired into her.

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[39] Speech delivered by Father Brennan at the Roman Catholic Church, Millstreet, County Cork, 28 Aug. 1920, quoted in Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment.
[40] *Ibid*, 5 Oct. 1920.
[41] *Ibid*, 29 Nov. 1920.

detaching some of her limbs'.[42] The severity of her treatment, and the exaggerated method of execution must have served as a stark warning to civilians to disassociate from the Crown forces.

By 1 December 1920 the Manchester Regiment were able to report. with some satisfaction, that 'all wanted persons in the area are "on the run"' due to a counter-offensive following the murder of their intelligence officer Captain J.Thompson.[43] This would appear to have had a curious effect on the civil population of Millstreet who were observed to be in a 'highly nervous state…all the population leave their houses at night and sleep in the workhouse'. Service notes suggested, rather quizzically, that 'this is done for extra warmth (?)', though it seems more likely that people were grouping for safety, fearing either the vengeance of the local I.R.A., or the free hand of the military.[44] Civilians were very much in the crossfire between the two: the military usually regarded them as an adjunct of the I.R.A., who treated civilian loyalties with equal suspicion. Father Brennan's flight from Millstreet in December 1920 coupled with the continued absence of the majority of local I.R.A. leaders certainly had a liberating effect on the population. Local people, who had greeted a detachment of the Manchester Regiment in August 1920 with stone throwing, were described as 'considerably quietened down'. Military proclamations in the town were no longer vandalised, and 'a certain amount of uniform' was handed in. More significantly, service notes reported that, in the absence of prominent I.R.A. leaders from the locality 'there appears to be no desire on the part of the rank and file to take their places.'[45]

In some cases, the coercion of communities was such that civilians were not allowed to give any succour to the military, even when a humanitarian impulse would seem to compel it. Thus, Nurse McCrossan was ordered to leave her home. which was shortly afterwards showered with bullets, as a reprisal for assisting wounded soldiers during several nights of serious rioting in Derry in June 1920. Soldiers later escorted her, still under heavy fire, to Derry railway station. In the hail of bullets that accompanied her flight, a passer-by was shot by her side.[46]

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[42] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, 28 Jan. 1921.
[43] *Ibid*, 28 Jan. 1921.
[44] *Ibid*, 1 Dec. 1920.
[45] *Ibid*, 6 Jan. 1921.
[46] *The Times*, 25 June 1920, p. 17.

On other occasions, rebels were anxious to ensure that opportunistic local traders were unable to undermine the commercial boycott. During a general strike in April 1920, as a protest against the non-release of hunger strikers in Mountjoy prison, the *Green Howards' Gazette* observed that 'any venturesome shopkeeper who did not comply was speedily convinced of the error of his ways and had his premises closed for him.'[47] In addition to carrying out threats against the owners of businesses, the I.R.A. also issued stark warnings to the community to boycott those who did not comply (boycott or be boycotted). The following I.R.A. proclamation, posted in Killshandra, County Cavan, highlights the typical means by which communities were 'warned off' trading with non-compliant businesses:

> The following Merchants are boycotted. Any person found entering will do so at their own risk:
>
> William Johnson
> John Richardson
> George Eccleston
> Joseph Carson
> John Storey
> Samuel H.Gibson
>
> By Order
> I.R.A.[48]

Nonetheless, for many shopkeepers the loss of trade created by trade boycotts was too severe to encourage them to continue with any form of trade discrimination. The 'Record of the Rebellion' claimed that the economic importance of the military to Irish communities (coupled with the military's preparedness to requisition goods that were refused) ensured that the boycott could never be sustained in the long term: 'an attempt to boycott the troops was…a failure, partly because trade with the troops formed the shopkeepers' chief source of income.'[49]

Nonetheless, it would appear that the majority of ordinary civilians preferred to face the consequences of non-compliance with military directives. rather than risk a reprimand from local republicans. Numerous reports in *The Times* throughout 1920 detailed how civilians were increasingly failing to report for jury service at military

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[47] *Green Howards' Gazette*, April 1920, p. 6.
[48] N.A., W.O. 35/93/2, War Diary, 26th Brigade, June 1920 to Jan. 1922. This notice appeared in a Weekly Intelligence Summary for week ending Sept. 17, 1921.
[49] Record of the Rebellion, p. 15.

courts and inquests. Of 14 jurors summoned, only five attended an inquest into the deaths of Sergeant Keane and Constable Norton after an attack on police barracks in Kilmallock, County Limerick in May 1920. This failure prompted an outraged District Inspector to condemn their non-appearance as a 'contemptible piece of cowardice' and a 'terrible indication of the terrorism to which the country was reduced'.[50] A further inquest into the murder of Constable King near Bantry on 14 June 1920 yielded only three jurors.[51] Following the murder of Lieutenant G.B.F.Smyth, the R.I.C. District Inspector for Munster (also attached to the K.O.S.B.) at the County Club in Cork City, a subsequent inquest had to be abandoned when all the jurors failed to attend and could not be found.[52] Even when a jury could be summoned to its full complement it usually failed to return the expected verdict. One District Inspector was dismayed by 'the farcical verdicts' of local juries in County Limerick.[53] A famous example was the pronouncement of a coroner's jury, following the Fermoy ambush of September 1919, that the killing of British soldiers was a regular act of war and therefore not murder. The decision (whether influenced by terror or not) prompted a severe response from outraged soldiers who descended on the town and destroyed property belonging to the jurors (see Chapter 5).

Civilians were also loath to incriminate rebels for their outrages, meaning that witnesses were usually at a premium in prosecution cases. As early as August 1919, *The Times* (commenting on crime reports from Dublin) detected 'a pernicious and insistent notion…amongst the people of the city…that it was a crime to help the police in the detection of criminals.'[54] Furthermore, military sources and other reports suggest that the refusal to co-operate with the military and the police in criminal cases was only partly motivated by patriotism or belief. In the main, non-co-operation was enforced by the threats of republican activists. For this reason, Shaw consistently argued in favour of the deportation of suspects on the grounds that '…no witness can come forward and give evidence against any member of the Irish Volunteers without running grave risk of assassination. Nor is it possible to induce any Jury outside parts of Ulster to convict even on the clearest evidence.'[55]

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[50] *The Times*, 31 May 1920, p. 14.
[51] *Ibid*, 15 June 1920, p. 18.
[52] Lieutenant G.B.F.Smyth Papers, K.O.S.B. Regimental Archive, Berwick Upon Tweed.
[53] *The Times*, 31 May 1920, p. 14.
[54] *Ibid*, 6 Aug. 1919, p. 14.
[55] N.A., W.O. 32/9519, Statement by Shaw on the present situation and state of affairs in Ireland, 27 March 1920,

As the conflict progressed, rebel groups continued to inflict punishment on civilians who were seen to be working against them via the legal system. In Galway on 19 September 1920, Miss Evelyn Baker, proprietor of Baker's Hotel, was seized by six masked men, who cut of her hair for giving evidence to a military inquiry into the death of Constable Krumm.[56] Such actions were backed by notices posted in villages and towns warning of dire consequences for anybody who was prepared to comply with 'English courts'. Attendance at court was tantamount to 'informing' as the following notice, posted at Ballyjamesduff, County Cavan in September 1920, demonstrates:

NOTICE

> Any persons attending English Courts as Plaintiffs, Defendants or Witnesses will be treated as spies and informers.
>
> By Order
> Competent Military Authority
> I.R.A.[57]

This situation posed serious difficulties for the military and the legal system who were keen to ensure that 'due process' could be adhered to. Prior to the establishment of the R.O.I.A. in August 1920, the *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* recalled how the intimidation of witnesses seriously hampered the process of courts-martial under D.R.R:

> They were difficult cases in law, and complicated by the reluctance of witnesses to give evidence. A man might be shot in the street in broad daylight. When the civil and military police arrived, a moment later, no one would admit having heard the shot, seen anything unusual, or even to have noticed the body lying at his feet.[58]

To resolve the difficulties, Greenwood had introduced a Bill to the Commons in August 1920 that aimed at substituting coroners inquests and (in certain areas) trial by jury, for military courts of enquiry and courts-martial. These regulations formed the

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[56] *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1920, p. 12.
[57] N.A., W.O. 35/93/2, War Diary, 26th Brigade, June 1920 to Jan. 1922. This notice was posted in Ballyjamesduff (Ulster) and finally appeared in a Weekly Intelligence Summary for week ending Sept. 17 1921.
[58] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 33.

pre-conditions for the introduction of the R.O.I.A., which finally established the jurisdiction of courts-martial for cases previously heard in civil courts. This tended to increase conviction rates and yet failed to resolve the problem of obtaining evidence, particularly in relation to capital offences.[59] The reticence of civilians in this respect seriously hampered the detection and prosecution of crime in Ireland. The breakdown of British law and authority, first driven by popular feeling, was being reinforced by Sinn Féin's increasing willingness to purge elements disloyal to it. Their growing confidence (if not paranoia) in this respect, often led to the belief that entire communities could be cleansed of their disloyalty. Numerous sources from the period reported people having been 'driven out' of their communities, sometimes under threat of death. One Daniel Donoghue, of Leap, County Cork, was forced to 'abandon his home and go into hiding in 1921 after having a poster with the word 'Traitor" nailed to the gate.'[60] More chillingly, a *Times* report of February 1921, detailed how: 'Michael Ryan, a labourer was found shot about five miles from the town of Tipperary. He is said to have been warned to leave the district a short time ago.'[61]

Insurgents also sought to eliminate political opposition to Sinn Féin, even in cases where their political opponents were seeking a democratic mandate from the electorate: during rural elections in the Laskey District of County Sligo in May 1920, a notice was found posted to the effect that 'John Maloney farmer [sic] was to prepare for death. The motive is to deter Maloney from standing as an independent candidate in the forthcoming election for Rural district Councillorship [sic].'[62] On occasions attacks were even targeted against moderate Sinn Féiners: in July 1921, a rebel party entered the office of the Dundalk Examiner and destroyed type and printing machines to prevent any future publication. A telegram from Dublin Castle to the War Office described the paper as a 'Sinn Féin paper of the "mild type."'[63]

Traditional antipathies towards the British garrison became rapidly inflamed during the later period of conflict. Given that civilian non-combatants were subject to

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[59] Historian Gerard Oram lists 20 death sentences as being passed by military courts in Ireland between October 1920 and May 1921, of which three were commuted to life imprisonment, these were: Dermot O'Sullivan (civilian), William James Gordon (civilian) and C.G.R.Helmore (Royal Marine). All 17 executed persons were civilians charged with murder or treason. *Death sentences passed by military courts of the British Army 1914-1924*, (London, 1998) pp. 69-70.
[60] Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies,* p. 295.
[61] *The Times*, 21 Feb. 1921, p. 10.
[62] N.A., C.O. 906/19. Inspector General R.I.C. to Lord Privy Seal, Ireland 1920-21 - Disorders and Telegrams, 4 July 1920.
[63] *Ibid*, G.H.Q. to the War Office, 22 June 1921.

coercive influences from both sides and that their actions were scrutinized and punishable, a social and commercial separation from the military was probably regarded by many as the most tactful way to respond to these pressures. A newspaper article of the time described how civilians were 'ground to powder' between 'the upper and nether millstones' of 'two terrors':

> …the innocent section of the people of Ireland…suffer for the excesses of both sides… they are, not unnaturally, so abjectly cowed by the rule of the revolver, and the assassins in their midst, that any other attitude than their present one of enforced submission is to be hardly expected of them.[64]

Take, for example, the role played by civilians in the trenching of roads. This laborious process sometimes involved the digging out of trenches up to '14 feet wide', which often depended upon the use of forced civilian labour. However, the equally labour-intensive task of refilling trenches also fell involuntarily upon the civilian population. The 'History of the 5th Division' recalled how 'armed strangers' would enter a district and compel the 'local inhabitants to dig some road trenches during the night; the next day the troops would appear on the scene and make the same inhabitants fill in the trenches which they had dug the night before!'[65] Percival recalled how this pattern could repeat itself over and over: 'we also tried to fill them with civilian labour, but they would invariably be opened again within the next few days – probably with the same labour; in fact, the local inhabitants spent most of their time opening and filling in trenches during this period.'[66]

Despite the note of sympathy in these accounts, most soldiers failed to recognise the involuntary aspect of actions designed to inflict injury or inconvenience on them. Naturally, many saw no essential distinction between civilians and active rebels. Some imagined that the I.R.A. were able to conceal themselves within a wholly compliant civil population. Many accounts were unable to decipher where the I.R.A. began and where it ended. The chronicler for the O.B.L.I., stationed in Dublin from 1919 to 1922, reported that:

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[64] *The Times*, 'Two Terrors in Ireland', 30 Nov. 1920, p. 16.
[65] Hist. 5th Div., p. 80.
[66] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 27.

No one could be trusted, not even those concerned with matters of everyday life. The artisan working on one's car – the girl who sold cigarettes – or the man sitting next to one on the bus – they were all a possible part of the vast underground Sinn Féin organization, which attacked without warning, and then as suddenly dissolved again until required for the next job. Nor was the hidden threat confined to any time or place.[67]

Descriptions of this kind were replete in military accounts. Most soldiers considered Sinn Féin to be an organisation that operated within a highly propitious climate. Douglas Wimberley was confident that Ireland was 'largely a hostile country, and maybe 75% of all the local inhabitants, both men and women, viewed us with enmity, active and passive.'[68] Working on the assumption of collective responsibility, his regiment (the Cameron Highlanders) rounded up 'several hundred men' in Queenstown and brought them to the barracks at Belmont where they were divided into 'groups of five or six'. Each group was allotted a time during which they would be 'on duty'.[69] This meant that should any incident occur in the town, whereby any member of the regiment or the police were killed or wounded, the men detailed as being on duty at the time would be immediately arrested and incarcerated.

To the detriment of the military campaign, the assumption of collective responsibility did not usually extend to the female population of Ireland who, as Hopkinson has stressed, 'excelled and played a most crucial role' especially in 'the field of Intelligence and propaganda.'[70] In the very early period, a 'mistaken chivalry' often led to women being exempt from search during military operations.[71] However, this oversight was given legislative authority under D.O.R.R. which stated that 'in the event of it becoming necessary to search a woman, female searchers were to be employed, and troops were forbidden to arrest a woman.'[72] Women searchers were at a premium in the British army and this shortage enabled female rebels to exploit their

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[67] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle,* p. 28.
[68] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 146. Claims of this kind were often exaggerated in line with the claims made by republican propaganda. Many republicans were similarly given to overestimating the actual strength of the Volunteer movement, For example, Dan Breen claimed that in early 1920 'nine tenths of all able bodied Irishmen between the ages of 16 and 50 were Volunteers of some kind.' Breen, *My Fight*, p. 31.
[69] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 148.
[70] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 199.
[71] Record of the Rebellion, p. 33.
[72] *Ibid*, p. 6.

apparent immunity to detection and prosecution. This allowed women to play a crucial role in concealing arms during the course of I.R.A. operations: The 'History of 5th Division' recalled how the military (under orders to search railway carriages) encountered great difficulty in detecting rebels who had learnt to 'conceal their arms by handing them over to women passengers.'[73] The huge disparity between male and female internees in British prisons in April 1921 (respectively 4,000 and 26) gives a strong indication of the failure of the Crown forces to detect female insurgents, and a very weak indication of the relative involvement of men and women in the preparation (and realisation) of acts of rebellion.[74]

The assumption of collective responsibility (though not carried through during search and arrest operations) was prevalent in the memoirs of soldiers from this period. Captain J.B.Arnold, a pensions inspector for the British army, sensed an all-pervading antipathy throughout Ireland: 'the whole tenor of the country was one of opposition to British rule.'[75] In the same vein, the correspondent of the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment, Major K.A.Plimpton claimed that 'the Irish today blame the government for everything; blame everybody in fact'.[76] Clearly, some soldiers were prone to implicate the Irish as a homogenous and actively rebellious race, and many felt that the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin articulated and acted upon the wishes of the community. In other words, the actions of rebels were legitimised by the bulk of public opinion and they were an outcome of a more general antipathy. Even the 'History of the 5th Division' offered very little insight, beyond the rather platitudinous claim that 'the whole population supplied their information, either actively, or out of sympathy, or through terrorism.'[77] Fitzpatrick has claimed that this quality was particularly relevant to 'the forces of the 6th Division' who were 'taught to treat the 'natives' as enemies rather than citizens.'[78] These attitudes reflected a similar lack of sophistication at the very top level of Irish Administration, which, according to Sir Warren Fisher (Head of the Civil Service), was 'almost woodenly stupid and quite devoid of imagination':

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[73] Hist. 5th Div., p. 87.
[74] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 200.
[75] Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 128.
[76] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion 'D' Company, Nov. 1920, p. 8.
[77] Hist. 5th Div., p. 6.
[78] Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland' in Jeffery and Bartlett, *A Military History of Ireland*, p. 403.

It listens solely to the ascendancy party and (previous to General Macready's arrival) it never seemed to think of the utility of keeping in close touch with opinions of all kinds. The phrase 'Sinn Féin' is a shibboleth with which everyone not a 'loyalist' is denounced and from listening to the people with influence you would certainly gather that Sinn Féin and outrage were synonyms….the ruling class reminds one of some people in England who spend their time in denunciation of the working classes as "socialists" without ever condescending to analyse what they mean.[79]

For the regular soldier, certain experiences lent justification to the impression of wholesale hostility which, at times, appeared to be almost overwhelming: on 11 April 1920, a plain clothes officer attending Mountjoy prison to oversee the deportation of suspects, was manhandled by a gathered crowd of four to five hundred. Military sources described how 'as soon as the car stopped a section of the crowd gathered round the car calling out "he is military" and proceeded to lay hands on the officer.' The officer was fortunate to escape the situation relatively unharmed by claiming to be 'a doctor paying a visit to the sick prisoners.'[80]

In the later period, despite the daily experience of strong opposition in the 6th Division, Percival was able to achieve a more balanced view as to the real extent of popular support for the nationalist cause amongst the population. He asserted that 'the rebel campaign in Ireland was a national movement' and not one 'conducted by a few hired assassins' and yet held firm to the belief that in combating Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. the military 'must at all costs distinguish the sheep from the wolves.'[81] Percival placed great emphasis on the necessity for battalion intelligence officers to gather information regarding the political loyalties of all civilians within their district and to consider how useful they might be for supplying relevant information. His own method of monitoring political allegiances in his brigade area involved a 'large scale 6" map' upon which 'every farm and detached house is marked' containing the name

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[79] Letter from Fisher to Lloyd George, Chamberlain and Bonar Law, 15 May 1920. As Chief of the United Kingdom Civil Service and Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Warren Fisher (together with R.Harwood and A.Cope) was transferred to Dublin Castle in May 1920 to assist with the reorganization of departments and administrative reform. Lloyd George Papers, F/31/1/33.
[80] N.A., W.O. 35/91/7. War Diary – General Staff Dublin District, Schedule "D", Report on the proceedings at Mountjoy prison during Sunday 11 April 1920.
[81] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I) pp. 5-6; Guerrilla Warfare (II) p. 7.

of the occupier. This was accompanied by a book containing notes on the 'perceived political sympathies of these occupiers, to be consulted prior to raids or other military operations.'[82]

Some soldiers were prone to view hostility as the product of an anti-English hysteria amongst the populace. Consequently, many imagined themselves as 'whipping boys' for the long history of Anglo-Irish antagonism. Whilst seeking accommodation in Dublin, an officer's wife was confronted by a woman who described herself as:

> "England's bitterest enemy"…she told me a great deal about Ireland under Cromwell and Lord French, and of General Dyer's methods in India; she evidently classed them together, and spoke of all three in the same breath with equal bitterness. It was a novel experience to be hated and told so. I realised just a little of the intense hatred with which the English are regarded by a large majority of Irish men and women… They have not forgiven England yet for Cromwell's deeds…time does not soften things in this unhappy country.[83]

The sources generated by soldiers in Ireland also tended to reflect Fisher's derogatory assessment of the Irish as a 'tragically long-memoried race.'[84] L.A.Hawes, based in Cork between October 1919 and October 1920, recalled an impromptu history lesson in a Waterford hotel from a local man who claimed that: '…"when King John came here to receive the allegiance of the Irish Kings, he made them kiss his foot and laughed at their clothes". "This" he said, "was an example of the behaviour of the hated English". In turn, Hawes described the incident as 'a small example of the mentality of the Southern Irishman.'[85]

More extreme was the experience of an English officer in Tullamore, County Offally, who was confronted in a railway station by 'an apparently decent and sober Irishwoman' and assailed with a battery of anti-English abuse, most of which he considered to be 'unprintable', though 'the majority of her sentences ended with the

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[82] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), pp. 7-8.
[83] Anon, *Experiences of an Officers Wife*, pp. 7-13.
[84] Fisher to Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Chamberlain, letter dated 15 May 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/1/33.
[85] Hawes, 'Kwab-O-Kayal', p. 70.

exhortation: "shoot me if you like! Yes – trample on my dead body!"'[86] Similarly, J.P.Swindlehurst describing his attempts to arrest persons during curfew patrols. recalled how 'our ancestors, ourselves and future generations were roundly cursed as only an Irishman can do.'[87]

Even during the earlier period, when passions were less inflamed, many soldiers' accounts suggest that the structure of popular anti-Englishness was already well established. Private W.S.Matthews undergoing training in Derry in 1918 with the 3rd D.C.L.I., was shocked on his return via Dublin to be approached by an old woman who described him as an 'English bastard!' In this case, Matthews made light of the event by adding 'I didn't take any notice because I wasn't a bastard anyhow'.[88]

Incidents of this kind were usually recounted in a decidedly light-hearted tone, except in cases where there was a perceived affront to national pride. These included the removal of the union flag from public buildings, or the omission of the national anthem from cinematic or theatrical performances. Officers were also incensed by the refusal of civilians to respect military ceremonials or to remove their hats for the playing of the national anthem during band displays. One officer, stationed in Tallaght, County Dublin, was so infuriated by the refusal of the villagers to remove their hats (while officers stood at the salute for the playing of the national anthem) that he forcibly removed their hats and trampled on them.[89] Similarly, soldiers of the 2nd O.B.L.I. were so outraged by the failure of a Dublin theatre to play 'The King', which they regarded as 'a deliberate insult', that a party of soldiers 'introduced a cornet into the theatre …and repaired the omission, also taking care to ensure that hats were removed in proper respect.' This event provoked a night of serious rioting in the capital as soldiers attempted to return to their barracks through 'large crowds, angry and determined'.[90] In both cases, the perceived affront to national pride, arguably, arose from the soldiers themselves. Nonetheless, these events were usually regarded as further proof of an inherently anti-English stance on the part of the civil population.

If the majority of soldiers detected anti-English undercurrents, the sometimes-differential treatment of Scottish soldiers does give some credence to their claims.

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[86] Ewart, 'In Rebel Hands: An English Officer's Impressions' *The Times*, 20 May 1921, p. 14.
[87] Swindlehurst, MS Diary, entry dated 20 Jan. 1920.
[88] Taped interview with private W.S.Matthews, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.
[89] Penny, 'Memories of Flying ', p. 16.
[90] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, pp. 32-3.

Despite heavy Scottish associations with settlement in Ulster, there is ample evidence to suggest that soldiers in Scottish regiments could expect more leniencies from the I.R.A. and from the community, than their English colleagues. This was in spite of the notoriety gained by some Scottish regiments in Ireland: both Tom Barry and Dan Breen reserved especial distaste for the King's Own Scottish Borderers who were popularly dubbed 'the King's Own Scottish Murderers' after opening fire on an unarmed crowd in Dublin 1914, following an arms landing at Howth harbour.

Nevertheless, when Private R.Burns arrived in Limerick in April 1918 with the 2nd Cameron Highlanders to 'replace a regiment which, we were told by some of the inhabitants, had "to get out quick"', he later reported that 'there was no longer a disturbed atmosphere in the city' due to 'the fact that we were Highlanders.'[91] On another occasion, he and a colleague took an excursion to the Lakes of Killarney where they were held up by five individuals with guns and searched for arms. Having failed to find weapons, they were told to 'scram - quick, and consider [themselves] lucky to be wearing kilts.'[92] On the same outing, Burns was fortunate to be allowed to travel back to his barracks by a train-driver 'who had relations in Scotland, and agreed to help provided we sat among the coals.'[93] In a diary entry, republican activist Edward Maclysaght recalled how a British officer by the name of Dick Forsyth regularly spent his time on leave in County Clare where as a 'Scottish Highlander' he was 'tremendously popular'.[94] Furthermore, despite the infamous reputation of the Cameron Highlanders in County Cork, *The 79th News* claimed that the departure of the battalion from Queenstown was 'keenly regretted' by the townsfolk. This was in marked contrast to accounts of other departing regiments.[95]

These accounts suggest that a fraternal Celtic feeling was sometimes sufficient to overcome barriers to integration. Nevertheless, if Scottish soldiers enjoyed apparent popularity (or at the very least mild indifference) some accounts suggested that such gestures could also be used as a smokescreen for rebel or military activity. One Cameron officer recalled how a road patrol in South Cork was 'surrounded in a village street by a number of young men supposedly playing a game of hurly on the village green, a game akin to our own Highland Shinty.' In this case, the men

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[91] Burns, 'Once a Cameron Highlander', p. 168.
[92] *Ibid*, p. 170.
[93] *Ibid*, p. 172.
[94] E.Maclysaght, *Changing Times* (Gerrards Cross, 1978), diary entry dated 28 Jan. 1919, p. 92.
[95] *The 79th News*, 2nd Battalion Notes, Jan. 1922, p. 82.

exchanged pleasantries and 'made friendly remarks and gestures' before seizing their ammunition and bicycles at gunpoint.[96] In a similar fashion, men of the Cameron Highlanders attempted to gather intelligence and infiltrate local Sinn Féin circles by sending their Gaelic speakers into public houses where Gaelic was spoken 'for reasons of secrecy'. However, their initiative was betrayed by the significant differences between Irish and Scottish Gaelic.[97]

Clearly, identities constructed with reference to nationality or nationhood are vital to understanding the soldiers' experience of hostility in Irish communities (see Chapter 6). However, the religious-sectarian divide between the bulk of the Irish population and the majority of the Crown forces does not appear to have contributed significantly to poor relations. Moreover, it would appear that sectarian differences were less central to the struggle for Irish independence than issues of nationalism and sovereignty. Alleged abuses of British rule in Ireland were the important factor, with religious differences only becoming significant when they were bound together with conceptions of nationality. Of the military sources consulted only one contained a sketchy reference to sectarianism as a source of hostility: R.Burns recalled how members of the Queen Mary Army Auxiliary Corps were employed at Birr barracks in the cookhouses and messes: 'they seemed to be rather restrained and under a severe curfew.' Burns hesitantly suggested that 'religion was one factor'.[98] Likewise, Peter Hart noted that:

> British anger also occasionally expressed itself in sectarian terms. Anti-Catholic songs were heard sung during reprisals …and rioting soldiers sometimes declared themselves out to get 'the Catholics'. This does not seem to have been a major factor in Crown forces' violence, however.[99]

Where soldiers did become involved in sectarian issues they were usually caught in the crossfire during street clashes between Catholic and Protestants in Ulster, sometimes bearing the brunt of hostilities from both sides. The 'History of the 5th Division' recalled how events in Munster triggered sectarian violence in Ulster between members of historically divided communities: 'the main storm

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[96] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 146.
[97] *Ibid*, p. 149.
[98] Burns, 'Once a Cameron Highlander' p. 164.
[99] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 83.

centres…were Belfast and Londonderry, and it was in these towns that the ripples created by the outbursts of lawlessness in the south started disturbances between the rival factions.'[100] Soldiers became embroiled in these sectarian clashes, even though they were rarely targeted for religious hostility. Lady Day in August 1919, saw soldiers of the Dorset Regiment being forced to stand in the crossfire between the two communities who taunted each other with 'the singing of "The Soldiers' Song" and "The Boys of Wexford" on the one side, and the waving of Union Jacks and the singing of "God Save the King" on the other.[101]

F.H.Vinden serving with the Suffolk Regiment in Belfast found himself in an uncomfortable barrier role between two irreconcilable communities: 'The centre of the troubles was the Falls Road area as it is today. and besides bullets, there was a good deal of bottle throwing between the two religious groups.'[102] During several nights of serious rioting in Belfast in late August and early September 1920, troops were even forced to open fire on Orangemen who were proceeding from the Shankill Road to attack a Sinn Féin Club near the Falls Road. Soldiers fired at the party despite the fact that they 'displayed the Union Jack', an action that prompted a *Times* journalist to observe: 'this is…the first time that the Union Jack has been fired upon by [British] troops.'[103]

The apotheosis of sectarian conflict in Derry during this period (and the whole period stretching up until the late 1960s) was four consecutive nights of rioting in June 1920 that resulted in an estimated 17 deaths.[104] During the rioting, local magistrate Major R.G.Brett resolved that the situation could only be relieved by the sternest military methods available. In a telegram to Greenwood he urged that:

> …control of the situation be assumed by the competent military authority and martial law proclaimed forthwith. Trade and business of city are at a standstill. Citizens afraid to appear in streets. Much looting, burning and shooting still continuing. Grave situation anticipated tonight [sic].[105]

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[100] Hist. 5th Div., p. 12-13.
[101] *The Times*, 18 Aug. 1919, p. 10.
[102] Vinden, 'By Chance a Soldier', p. 35.
[103] *The Times*, 1 Sept. 1920, p. 11.
[104] *Ibid*, 25 June. 1920, p.17. The estimated number of killed is based on an official police statement released to the press on 24 June 1920.
[105] Major R.G.Brett, 'Letters 1914-22', MS/TS letters and telegrams, Imperial War Museum, London.

Sectarian violence was not confined to Ulster; Protestants in Munster also attracted the attention of the I.R.A. Of the 113 private homes burned by the I.R.A. in County Cork over the period, 85 per cent belonged to Protestants, and a further 24 farms were seized from Protestant landowners.[106] By late 1920, dispossessed and sometimes under threat of death, many Cork Protestants were forced to seek refuge in Dublin, Belfast or England. One, Henry Bradfield of Killowen, was forced to flee his home after a spate of murders of loyalists in the district and remarks made to his family by local guerrillas that 'they would soon have the English out of the country.'[107] Many of those who chose to remain, like George Lysaght, a Protestant farmer from Cashel, County Tipperary, paid the ultimate price for their decision. Lysaght died in hospital in Dublin on 20 June 1921 from 'wounds received on 7/3/21 when working on his farm'. The details of his death featured in a telegram from Dublin Castle which concluded with the stark verdict: 'Motive – loyalist.'[108]

Many republicans imagined that the military and the Protestant community were inextricably linked. The persecution of Protestant minorities was usually based on the assumption that Protestants were also (by extension) loyalists, and therefore a fruitful source of local information for the Crown forces. In reality, there was far less contact or co-operation between the two than many active rebels imagined.

In the early period, officers were often invited to attend *soirees,* garden parties and sporting events at the homes of prominent loyalists: Robin Salisbury recalled attending a 'tennis fete …in a great big house standing in its own grounds at a little place called Dundrum just outside Dublin.'[109] However, despite this early promise, the progression of the conflict and the fear of I.R.A. reprisals caused many loyalists to disassociate from the military to avoid charges of fraternising with the enemy. To be regarded as an 'informer' was a palpable threat to the lives of Protestants; Peter Hart's study of a list of 'Enemy agents and other suspects' compiled by the I.R.A. West Cork Brigade in July 1921, revealed that 64 per cent of people shot as informers by this division were from the Protestant community.[110] Naturally, many Protestants

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[106] Report on Land Seizures to Ministry of Agriculture, 19 April 1923, reproduced in Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 313.
[107] *Ibid*, Henry Bradfield statement, p. 276.
[108] N.A., C.O. 906/19, Dublin Castle to the War Office, Ireland 1920-21 - Disorders and Telegrams, 22 June 1921.
[109] Salisbury, letter dated 3 June 1916. The description of Dundrum as a 'little place' will be of some surprise to readers who are familiar with the Dundrum of today, a large conurabation within the urban sprawl of Dublin.
[110] Intelligence Officer, Cork 3 Report, July 1921, quoted in Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 304.

were anxious to avoid visible contact with the military. One martial law area commander was unimpressed by the lack of 'any effort to actively help the government' on the part of Protestants. Another bemoaned the fact that 'practically none take any action and nearly all hide their sentiments.'[111] Percival claimed that Protestant elements were 'unanimously in favour of a continuation of English control in the South' but complained that only '...a few, but not many, were brave enough to assist the Crown forces with information.'[112] There were suggestions in some quarters that loyalists and other law-abiding citizens could be formed into "Protection Committees", however the government's reluctance to issue arms to civilian militias meant that the concept never came to fruition.[113] The tone was set at a Dublin Castle conference held in July 1920, at which it was formally agreed that 'it was impossible to afford protection to individual loyalists'. Thereafter, a number of vague initiatives were floated during the truce period aimed at concentrating armed loyalists together with troops in 'certain centres' or 'protected areas' should the conflict re-ignite.[114] Macready's only stated policy in this area involved '"showing the flag" in districts where there are a number of loyalists' in order to 'encourage the waverers' and 'hearten' the loyal population to take a more active role in supporting the military.[115] However, Lord Desart was far less sanguine about the prospect of encouraging loyalists to assist the military and rightly observed that 'while the vengeance of Sinn Féin is almost assured, it is demonstrated that the government afford no effective protection against such vengeance.'[116] Startlingly, a number of instances were reported where loyalists who had been the victims of crime, finding 'that no redress could be obtained from the ordinary courts' and no protection was forthcoming from the government, had 'applied to the Sinn Féin Courts' where they were generally 'well treated.'[117]

Given that any involvement in civilian affairs was a hazardous pursuit for members of the armed forces, some soldiers felt the need to distance themselves

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[111] Reports quoted in Macready to Miss Stevenson, 20 June 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/36/2/19.
[112] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 23.
[113] Hist. 5th Div., p. 83
[114] Hist. 5th Div., p. 122; Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 5.
[115] N.A., W.O. 32/9572, Memorandum issued by Macready, (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis), 23 May 1921.
[116] N.A., P.R.O. 30/67/42, Earl of Midleton Papers, Lord Desart to the Earl of Midleton, 27 March 1920.
[117] N.A., CAB 24/1636, Report of the Irish Situation Committee – note by Walter Long, 16 July 1920,

completely from the community. Many fell back upon the safety afforded by their barracks (explored in more detail in Chapter 3) Major B.L.Montgomery, stationed in County Clare in 1921, shunned community life for barrack isolation: 'I think I regarded all civilians as "shinners" and never had any dealings with them.'[118] F.A.S.Clarke remembered being invited to dinner at the house of 'a local practitioner' who had been acting as the army doctor. He declined the offer, suspecting that the invitation was a 'treacherous trick' on the part of local rebels: 'The superstitious mind came into play at once, as we had no social contact with any civilians of whatever political beliefs.[119]

Nonetheless, self-imposed barrack isolation not only resulted from suspicion and paranoia, nor the authorities' attempts to foster vigilance in the ranks, the web of rumour and distrust was also fuelled by almost daily reports of attacks on soldiers. In early May 1920, Major G.S.Drew, O.C. 25th Brigade, Dublin District, had reported to G.H.Q. that 'information has been received that the Sinn Féiners will probably commence to molest officers and soldiers when the opportunity is favourable.' This necessitated a number of precautionary measures aimed at distancing and protecting vulnerable soldiers from attacking parties, including orders that 'main thoroughfares are to be used…daily routes should be varied…officers should not move about alone [and] soldiers to move in parties consisting of at least four.' However, these measures failed to anticipate the increasing involvement of ordinary civilians in anti-military violence.[120] Indeed, several newspaper reports from the time suggested that civilians (intimidated by the conduct of the military, and fully encouraged by Sinn Féin propaganda) could sometimes be driven to new heights of violence. On 23 November 1919, the army attempted to proscribe an event held to commemorate the execution of the 'Manchester Martyrs' in 1867, only to find themselves bombarded with stones and missiles from the gathered crowd.[121] In July 1919, Victory Day was marred by street rioting in Dublin, Limerick and Cork, in the course of which several soldiers were openly assaulted by crowds of civilians consisting of 'both young men and women'.[122]

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[118] Major B.L.Montgomery papers, quoted in Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21*, p. 23.
[119] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, p. 8.
[120] N.A., W.O. 35/90/1, Secret Communication from Major G.S.Drew to H.Q. Dublin, 2 May 1920. 4 Schedules "A", "B", "C" & "D" to accompany G.S. Dublin District War Diary, 24 June 1920.
[121] *The Times*, 24 Nov. 1919, p. 14.
[122] *Ibid*, 21 July 1919, p. 17.

Although some were willing to engage the military as part of a large crowd, civilians were usually manipulated to provide cover for armed rebels. The routine appearance of civilian life masked a subterranean threat to the lives of soldiers. Rebels were indistinguishable from civilians; the adoption of uniforms for I.R.A. gunmen only became a facet of the rebel campaign after August 1920, and even then they were worn only by 'flying-columns' operating in isolated rural districts. The 'History of the 5th Division' recalled how although 'the I.R.A. took to wearing khaki breaches and black leggings [brown after 11 July 1921] with trench coats, slouch hats and green ties' doubts remained as to whether this attire 'fulfil[led] the requirements of the Laws and Customs of War on Land regarding "uniform"'. However, regardless of whether these rural columns displayed 'distinguishing marks recognisable at a distance', in urban areas the military were reliant entirely upon accurate intelligence to separate civilian non-combatants from suspected rebels.[123] In the absence of this, they were forced to observe suspicious behaviour amongst the civil population in order to expose the threat. In reality however, the military could only make the distinction after the decisive moment: when the 'hidden and plain clothes enemy' revealed itself by launching an attack.[124] Percival observed that 'a favourite trick of the I.R.A. was to mix with the crowd in a busy thoroughfare and suddenly make an assault on any military patrol that might be passing.'[125]

Insurgents made full use of the daily flow of civilians in urban districts: it allowed them to remain inconspicuous, to attack and then return to the 'role of a harmless worker in the fields' a 'loafer at street corners' or 'assistant in a shop.'[126] Brevet Major T.A.Lowe of the Essex Regiment recalled how, in the course of tracking rebels:

> Pursuit was kept up as long as possible, but the rebels had the advantage here because, having thrown away their arms and picked up ploughs and other agricultural implements, it was impossible to distinguish between them and the ordinary farm labourers.[127]

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[123] Hist. 5th Div., p. 78.
[124] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', pp. 146-7.
[125] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), pp. 18-19.
[126] Hist. 5th Div., p. 64.
[127] Lowe, 'Some Reflections of a Junior Commander', p. 54.

Civilian traffic provided a useful cover for escape and occasionally formed an effective human shield. On 20 February 1921, a military and police patrol was fired upon by men in civilian clothes outside Phibsborough Church in Dublin. Soldiers and policemen were hampered in returning fire: 'owing to the number of civilian adults and children in their line of fire …one of the attacking parties was definitely seen to take cover and fire from behind the shelter of women and children.'[128] On other occasions, having not seen their attackers, the military were less discriminate in returning fire: four civilians were wounded and a young boy killed when soldiers fired from a bombed military lorry travelling down Camden Street in Dublin on 6 February 1921.[129] Six civilians were shot dead in an exchange between soldiers and rebels that followed an attack upon two military lorries in Dungarven, only one of the attackers was killed.[130] Another soldier was shot dead during a military football match in Bandon, County Cork, by rebels who had immersed themselves amongst the ordinary spectators, a number of civilians were also wounded in the subsequent exchange of fire.[131] During the ambush perpetrated by Kevin Barry and his colleagues, a party of soldiers of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment were attacked, and two killed, whilst conveying bread from Monk's Bakery, North King Street to the North Dublin Union Workhouse. Their attackers were estimated to have numbered between '10 and 15', although they 'aroused no suspicion' in the busy street, on account of the fact that they 'walked in twos and threes, some of them reading newspapers.'[132] In Cork city, one soldier was killed and three dangerously wounded when 'civilians from a street corner' bombed a military lorry: 'the street was crowded at the time by men and women going to work and children going to school'.[133]

This 'state of affairs' was recognised by Macready who feared its effects on military discipline:

> The very nature of duty necessitates guards and sentries being posted where civilians are apparently pursuing their ordinary avocations, but who suddenly turn and attack the soldiers. The

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[128] *The Times*, 21 Feb. 1921, p. 10.
[129] *Ibid*, 7 Feb, 1921, p. 10.
[130] *Ibid*, 21 Jan. 1921, p. 14.
[131] *Ibid*, 18 May 1921, p. 8.
[132] Digest of Service of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 20 Sept. 1920.
[133] *The Times*, 9 Oct. 1920, p. 11.

> result of this is that the troops are getting – to use a slang expression – "fed up".[134]

The ability of the I.R.A. to manipulate their position in the community must, undoubtedly, have contributed to the military's reluctance to become involved in civilian life. Even in cases where civilians approached the military for assistance, soldiers were naturally prone to caution: J.E.P.Brass remembered travelling with a military convoy along the road from Dublin to Kingstown:

> …when away ahead of us a figure ran out into the road waving its arms…without a moments [sic] hesitation our gunner opened up with his Lewis gun. I've never seen a figure jump for cover as quickly as that one did. As we passed the spot there was a car drawn up at the side of the road. It might well have been a genuine breakdown; but we were taking no chances. People had been had that way before.[135]

All the evidence suggests that soldiers' attempts to segregate themselves from the Irish were, to a large extent, driven by the difficulty of distinguishing between insurgents and civilians. Another consequence of this outlook was that soldiers came to regard the community as homogenous and collectively responsible for the rebel campaign. Brass remembered that he blindly avoided any contact with civilians on the grounds that 'one trusted nothing and nobody.'[136] L.A.Hawes commented on the ability of rebels to manipulate their position as civilians to provide an effective camouflage for their military ambitions: 'the soldiers despised the Sinn Féiners, they never came out into the open'.[137] Another soldier wrote of the rigours of urban warfare: 'It was a game of hide and seek …in pursuit of an enemy so elusive that, but for his trail of crimes, appeared almost mythical.[138] Towns and villages were a labyrinthine hunting ground for soldiers; enemy actions could arise instantaneously from apparently normal scenes of everyday life, and the enemy could just as easily disappear back into the civilian crowd.

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[134] N.A., W.O. 32/9537, Macready to the War Office, Reprisals by troops in Ireland and their effects on discipline, 1 Sept. 1920.
[135] Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet', pp. 232-33.
[136] *Ibid*, p. 234.
[137] Hawes, 'Kwab-O-Kayal', p. 70.
[138] Lowe, 'Some Reflections of a Junior Commander', p. 56.

The genuine threat of attack, combined with the parallel existence of social ostracism, ethnic hostility and commercial and infrastructural exclusion evoked a palpable climate of fear amongst the soldiery. By the spring of 1921 troops had became the regular target for rebel actions. At their peak, during the final two weeks of May 1921, 91 Crown casualties resulted from enemy action.[139] Douglas Wimberley captured something of the adverse climate in which soldiers served in his dramatic description of a train journey across rebel Ireland in September 1920:

> I travelled with my 45 Colt automatic in one pocket and another 32 automatic in the other. Not long before some British officers had been pulled from a train, in cold blood, and shot. Every time the train stopped I felt nervous and alone. Every time a ticket collector came to the compartment, while I showed him my ticket with one hand, I kept the other in my pocket on the butt of one or other pistol.

Indeed, upon his return to Britain, his experience of service in Ireland continued to inform his everyday practices:

> We were back at peacetime soldiering, but after Southern Ireland, I had got so used to sleeping with a loaded pistol under my pillow. I found it quite difficult to drop the habit for many a month to come.[140]

Few soldiers attempted serious or sober assessments of their enemies' strength, rather the I.R.A. were regarded as an omnipotent force embedded in the community and unfathomable from the civilian crowd. The correspondent of the *Green Howards' Gazette* drew attention to their enemies' claustrophobic presence outside the barracks, by making reference to the 'eagle eye upon us'.[141] Other soldiers wrote of their compulsion to carry 'an entrenching-tool' for self-protection outside barracks.[142] Some soldiers received written warnings from Sinn Féin – allegedly written in blood:

> They ran somewhat as follows: The officer's name might, or might not be at the top and then "Your first warning: beware."

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[139] N.A., CAB 24/2804, Survey of the State of Ireland for Weekended 4 April 1921 (circulated by the Chief Secretary for Ireland).
[140] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 155.
[141] *Green Howards' Gazette*, July 1920, p. 49.
[142] Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet', p. 232.

> Or "Your third or last warning." ...The chits might be signed by an initial, a cabalistic sign, or a bloody thumbprint, or not signed at all.[143]

F.H.Vinden, based in Ballykinlar, County Down, receiving a chilling letter from an anonymous adversary 'headed by a skull and crossbones with the words "There is not room for you and me in this world and one of us is going to leave it."'[144] Similarly, Captain N.Austin, serving in County Kerry at the height of the troubles in 1920, was the recipient of a startling letter, which read as follows:

> Captain Austin
> Intelligence Officer
>
> Sir,
> You are hereby given 48 hours notice in which to leave Tralee. If this order is not obeyed you will be shot on sight at such a time and place to suit our convenience
>
> Signed by me
> The Officer Commanding
> Tralee I.R.A.[145]

Soldiers were made to feel uncomfortably aware of their status as an 'army of occupation' in Ireland. The I.R.A. assumed belligerent rights to expel soldiers from the community, under threat of death if necessary. Letters of this kind were unequivocal in tone and intent and, at the same time, suitably vague in detail to heighten the soldiers' discomfort outside barracks, which must have contributed to his general distrust of the Irish population.

This distrust, coupled with the failure to engage or to co-operate with the civil population, inevitably gave rise to wild rumour and speculation amongst the soldiery. Given the social and psychological gap between the military and the host community, the conflict became firmly rooted in abstract mythology. For the most part, the civil population and the military regarded one another through the medium of hearsay and propaganda (as opposed to familiarity arising from actual social contact). This hampered their ability to make a rational assessment of their enemies' strength, or

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[143] *Ibid*, p. 233.
[144] Vinden, 'By Chance a Soldier', p. 35.
[145] Captain N.Austin Papers, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.

disentangle the loyalties of the general population from the united front presented by Sinn Féin propaganda.

Misconceptions concerning the actual scale of the threat posed by insurgent groups had their roots very early in the period. Indeed, if we make a chronological leap back to the rising of Easter 1916 it is evident that rumour, mythology, fear, distrust and misconception were already exerting a heavy influence on soldiers' experiences of Irish service. These mediums undoubtedly contributed to the actions of the notorious Captain Bowen-Colthurst, an officer of the Royal Irish Rifles. On the evening of 25 April 1916, Colthurst, based upon his own loose definition of martial law, used (often falsely) arrested prisoners as human shields for his own protection outside barracks. He later shot three prisoners without trial at the barracks before being arrested, court-martialled and confined to Broadmoor Lunatic Asylum. His plea of mitigation read as follows:

> Sir,
> In accordance with instructions, I have the honour to forward for your information a more detailed account of the circumstances connected with the shooting of three rebels in Portobello Barracks, Dublin.
>
> On Tuesday evening, 25th ultimo I was officially informed that martial law was declared in Dublin. There were three leaders of the rebels in the guard room in Portobello Barracks. The guard room was not safe for these desperate men to be confined in, their rescue from outside would be very easy.
>
> On Tuesday and up to Wednesday morning rumours of massacres of police and soldiers from all parts of Dublin were being sent to me from different sources. Among others the rumour reached me that 600 German prisoners at Oldcastle had been released and armed and were marching in Dublin. I also heard that the rebels in the city had opened up depots for the supply and issue of arms, and that a large force of rebels intended to attack Portobello Barracks, which was held only by a few troops, many of whom were recruits ignorant as to how to use their rifles, and a number of the others were soldiers and

sailors who had taken refuge in the barracks. We had also in the barracks a considerable number of officers and men who had been wounded by the rebels and whose protection was a great source of concern to me. I believed that it was known that these leaders were confined in the barracks and that possibly the proposed attack on the barracks was with a view to their release. Rumours of risings all over Ireland and of a large German-American and Irish-American landing in Galway were prevalent. I had no knowledge of any reinforcements arriving from England, and did not believe it possible for troops from England to arrive in time to prevent a general massacre. I knew of the sedition which had been preached in Ireland for years past and of the popular sympathy with rebellion. I knew also that men on leave home from the trenches, although unarmed had been shot down like dogs in the streets of their own city, simply because they were in khaki. On the Wednesday morning the 26th April all this was in my mind. I was very much exhausted and unstrung after practically a sleepless night, and I took the gloomiest view of the situation and felt that only desperate measures would save the situation. I felt I must act quickly, and believing I had the power under martial law, I felt under the circumstances, that it was clearly my duty to have the three ring leaders shot. It was a terrible ordeal for me, but I nerved myself to carry out what was for me at the time a terrible duty. [146]

Though later certified insane, Captain Bowen Colthurst's plea highlights the ways in which many soldiers perceived the climate under which they served. It captures something of the mental and physical siege that many servicemen described at different times and in different places throughout the period. Military society in Ireland was a hotbed of rumour and speculation and this applied regardless of the actual level of the threat. The influences to which Colthurst was subject, made an unpopular and under-supported minority Rising take on the appearance of a general

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[146] N.A., Records of the Home Office (hereafter H.O.) 45/10824/319388. Report of the Royal Commission on the Arrest of 25th April, 1916, and subsequent treatment of Mr Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, Mr Thomas Dickson and Mr Patrick James McIntyre.

rebellion or even an Irish-German or Irish-American conspiracy. His false perception of the tenor of Irish society (though specific to events in Dublin 1916) could be said to be typical of many soldiers serving in the later period. Indeed, an anonymous military source dated June 1921 offered a similarly gloomy assessment of the military situation in the later period:

> The position is Gilbertian with the humour left out…The British Army in Ireland is besieged…responsible officials cannot move without strong escort; money cannot be drawn from the Bank without strong escort; despatch riders are being rapidly displaced by armoured cars, officers must move not only armed and in bodies, but with their revolvers very handy; in motor cars they carry them actually in their hand. Troops sleep in defended barracks – behind barbed wire…communication is so laboriously difficult that it is not unnatural that personal liason between army headquarters and the divisions is very much reduced, as also, I understand, it that between divisions and brigades and battalions. On the other hand the population move when, where and by whatever route it wishes. This is a curious situation for a force whose *raison d'etre* in the country is to maintain order.[147]

The soldiers' sense of insecurity was also heightened by the fact that their whole experience of Irish society consisted of confrontations and skirmishes with rebel groups. Sometimes this resulted from the intensive work regimes to which they were subject, especially following the declaration of martial law in December 1920 (see Chapter 2). Ambushes, raids, searches, and patrols through rebel strongholds brought them face to face with the enemy on a regular basis. Even during patrols through isolated stretches of country, any human presence was likely to be rebel activity. On occasions, even barracks were attacked or raided by well-organised rebel soldiers (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, the military (alongside the R.I.C.) were the main targets for I.R.A. activity, as the most accessible organs of state. They were actively sought out,

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[147] N.A., W.O. 32/9572, Anon – 36 Hours in Dublin, (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis), 16 June 1921.

in a game of 'cat and mouse' in which, prior to 1919, (before the onset of a reciprocal war) they were very much the hunted.

Given the variety of obstacles that prevented British soldiers from associating with Irish communities during their brief tenure, it is surprising then to discover accounts which evoke a very different picture of civil-military relations in Ireland. If we accept that the military and the I.R.A. were both dependent upon the community for success, then it would appear that many of the same influences that led to distrust, could also encourage a tentative contact between the military and the general population. An intelligence report of 1922 concluded that 'in guerrilla war the foundation of military intelligence is the battalion and detachment system and that the best information is that obtained by front line troops.'[148] In addition to the tactical advantage of establishing close relations with the community, neither side could achieve autonomy from the general population: both required succour from civilians in terms of shelter, transport and consumer supply.

Violent clashes between soldiers and rebels overshadowed a parallel struggle for the hearts and minds of the people. Of course, shared nationality, as well as kith and kin, gave Sinn Féin a decisive advantage in this pursuit, and yet several military accounts highlighted instances where soldiers were able to establish close contact with civilians. A deteriorating relationship between the military and civilians (like that between active rebels and civilians) tended to arise where the military displayed a growing resort to coercion. However, this was not an inevitability: many individual soldiers or whole battalions were able to forge tentative links with Irish communities that undoubtedly contributed towards their success or, at the very least, promoted their comfort and security.

During the period stretching from the Easter Rising of 1916 to the summer of 1919, accounts of military service in Ireland provide ample evidence of associations between soldiers and civilians. Initially, the warmth of the reception for arriving soldiers was a source of surprise. In a taped interview, W.S.Matthews remembered his arrival in Dublin in 1917 en route to Derry to be trained for war service:

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[148] Record of the Rebellion (Intelligence) in Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence* p. 57.

> …we were received most cordially. At every station we stopped at on our troop train they would come up and give us potato cakes and things like that because we were always hungry being young boys of eighteen.[149]

Similarly, the anonymous author of the *'The Whitest Band'*, (Journal of The Buffs) after previous warnings that 'You will have a hot time…English soldiers are not safe in Ireland…take a knuckleduster and a revolver', arrived in Dublin in November 1917 to find that

> …the inhabitants surrounded us and tried hard to kill us – with kindness. They assaulted us with cups of tea, and bombarded us with sandwiches, and had we allowed them to work all their will upon us we would never have reached Moore Park alive…[Consequently] we revised all our ideas about the relations between English and Irish.[150]

Similarly, on his return to Ireland in 1918, J.W.Rowarth remembered:

> Arriving in the Capital Dublin, with joy in my heart and appreciation for that gallant band of ladies who still dispensed tea and other goodies to the troops passing through Railway stations, they were a godsend to us…we had a wonderful time, all Irish people did not hate the British soldier, I met some very nice Dubliners some who invited me to their homes.[151]

Upon arrival many soldiers recalled how they nestled comfortably into life in an Irish community. F.C.Penny remembered his station in Ireland with the RAF in 1919 with great fondness, describing one occasion in June when the local population and the military co-operated to assist two British airmen who had crash-landed at Clifden, County Galway:

> Little damage had been done to the aircraft itself, so with the use of gear such as ropes, spades, shovels etc, which we had brought

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[149] Taped interview with W.S.Matthews.
[150] *"The Whitest Band"*, Journal of the Buffs Regiment, p. 4.
[151] Rowarth, 'A Soldier's Tale', p. 24.

> along and with the very valuable assistance of dozens of Irish villagers, we were able to get the machine on an even keel.[152]

In a letter to his father in 1917 one soldier commented, with some amusement, on the 'daily contest between women of the local village as to who would take care of the soldiers' laundry'.[153] In March 1918, E.M.Warmington of the K.O.Y.L.I. was transferred from Catterick Camp in North Yorkshire to a quieter station on Bere Island. He remembered being:

> …entertained in a lonely cottage at a table supplied simply with a pile of potatoes in the middle and a plate and a knife and plentiful butter for each person. Next to the camp were several little houses whose Irish inmates treated us as friends. I doubt whether at that time politics meant anything to them.[154]

In the autumn of 1918, the battalion moved to Kinsale: 'a town of about 5000 people', though again he experienced '…little or no resentment during our stay of some four months…we went about freely in town and country with no feeling of danger.' Through his involvement in Church parades, he soon acquired 'a new society of Irish friends' amongst whom he was to meet his future wife Mollie Robertson.[155] Recalling a later period, E.J.A.H.Brush detailed how 'there were a number of families who I will not mention by name, but in spite of the dangers incurred were very kind to us during our soldiering in Dublin.'[156] Also with reference to the later period, Douglas Wimberley remembered that his fellow officers were able to establish relationships with local girls despite the complex considerations of religion and nationality:

> A well known local bank manager, belonging to an old Irish Roman Catholic family had several daughters, and very good looking and charming girls they were…at one point three of his daughters became engaged to no less than three of our Protestant

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[152] Penny, 'Memories of Flying', p. 16. The incident described was the crash landing of Alcock and Brown's famous flight, which has been recorded as the first non-stop aerial crossing of the Atlantic.
[153] Griffin, letter to his father dated 10 Nov. 1917.
[154] Warmington, 'Diaries' p. 29.
[155] *Ibid*, p. 41.
[156] Brush, 'Rifle Green/Orange Flash' p. 19.

Cameron officers. Later two of these engagements ended in marriage'.[157]

Indeed, relations between soldiers and local girls appear to have been commonplace throughout the period, despite the risks inherent to both parties. An English officer visiting Limerick as late as May 1921 was surprised by the presence of 'soldiers and girls strolling arm-in-arm under the new flowering lilacs.'[158] Earlier in his trip, when visiting Dublin he had similarly observed: '...groups of soldiers and young girls, standing about the north side of St Stephen's Green, exchanging-obviously-evening [sic] pleasantries.'[159] Similarly, K.A.Plimpton, serving with the East Yorkshire Regiment in County Longford, noted that 'the people were on the whole friendly, some of the weaker sex being particularly so'.[160]

Beyond the apparent popularity of British soldiers with local girls, the memoirs of participants (both soldiers and republicans) suggest that the troops were far more acceptable to the civil population than their comrades in the R.I.C. Despite being an active republican, Darrell Figgis (who wrote at length of the deteriorating relationship between the Irish people and the R.I.C.) added that British soldiers 'were regarded as men who were simply doing their duty'.[161] In the same vein, J.W.Rowarth, upon visiting a pub, was pleased to be accepted by the locals: 'like someone said on the cross, we forgive you, ye know not what ye do [sic]'.[162] Likewise, an officer's wife stationed in Dublin in 1921 expressed her confidence with regard to the safety of her husband: '...he was a regimental officer, and had nothing to do with politics, secret service or police, and the regular soldiers were popular.'[163] The Record of Service of the 1st Manchesters claimed that 'the civil population at Inchigeelagh [County Cork] have more respect for the military than the R.I.C.' and went on to detail the boycott of the R.I.C. by a local publican who continued to welcome the patronage of the military.[164] Therefore, although it is evident from the pattern of hostilities that active rebels turned their attention to the British soldiery as the conflict progressed, it is

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[157] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 154.
[158] Ewart, 'On the Road to Ulster: An English Officer's Impressions', *The Times*, 23 May 1921, p. 14.
[159] Ewart, 'Life in Dublin: An English Officer's Impressions', *The Times*, 17 May 1921, p. 9.
[160] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion, 'D' Company notes, Dec. 1920, p. 7.
[161] D.Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War* (London, 1927), p. 262.
[162] Rowarth, 'A Soldier's Tale' p. 24.
[163] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 47.
[164] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, 27 July 1920.

reasonable to suggest that this applied in a more limited sense to the ordinary civilian population.

Even in the later period, certain regiments were able to gain the trust and respect of local people, despite the intensification of hostilities. In May 1920, the East Yorkshire Regiment arrived in Longford to assist the local police in maintaining order in the district. K.A.Plimpton, recorded several incidents of kindness and solicitude on the part of the community: '…there were a lot of ex soldiers, and the people on the whole were friendly'.[165] This was consistent with experiences throughout the divisional area, as the 'History of the 5th Division' recalled 'even in May 1920 there was no real hostility shown to either officers or men of the Army in the 5th Division area.'[166] Later, detachments of the East Yorkshire Regiment were sent to occupy the courthouse in Carrick-on-Shannon, where they became involved in a number of minor skirmishes with local rebels. Subsequent reports in *"The Snapper"* documented a growing estrangement from the local population. A detachment stationed in Mullingar, County Westmeath, was 'for the first time' refused transport on local train services and had their own transport facilities sabotaged. As a consequence, the correspondent noted that '…we all feel sorry that our quiet little town of Mullingar has contracted, or is contracting the fever prevalent in this country.' However, the same author was able to note, with some satisfaction, that 'all ranks are on very friendly terms with the local inhabitants, and a feeling of resentment [towards the perpetrators of the aforementioned sabotage] was expressed by a large body of the community.'[167] Another isolated incident occurred in February 1921 when attempts were made by street vendors to 'sell poisoned cigarettes and chocolate to the troops.'[168] However, reports of this kind failed to detract from the convivial relationship that developed between the regiment and the civil population of Leitrim and Westmeath. When a detachment based in Carrick-on-Shannon were relieved by the Suffolk Regiment, Plimpton noted that the incoming regiment 'were amazed at finding how well the troops were getting on with the people there'.[169] Furthermore, when a draft left Mullingar station on 15 March 1920 to return to England, *"The Snapper"* noted that 'there was a fairly large assembly of people on

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[165] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion, 'D' Company notes, Dec. 1920, p.7.
[166] Hist. 5th Div., p. 39.
[167] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion notes, July 1920, p. 106.
[168] Hist. 5th Div., p. 77.
[169] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion, 'D' Company notes, Dec. 1920, p. 8.

the platform seeing the boys off, and I'm afraid many a lass of Mullingar went home heavy hearted.[170]

The regiment's ability to forge friendly relations with the local population did, on at least one occasion, allow the soldiers to foil an enemy incursion. Two attackers entering the barracks at the courthouse, in an effort to procure arms and ammunition, were forced to leave when reinforcements failed to arrive. Their plans were foiled by the efforts of a local woman who upon 'noticing a collection of men and motor cars in the town' had immediately informed the police and the military. Despite being 'stopped at the point of revolver and told to go back, she eventually got through and gave the alarm', giving policemen and soldiers time to disperse the would-be invaders.[171] The battalion finally left Ireland in March 1922, after three years service and, according to service records, even the local republican press were compelled to remark that 'the conduct of the battalion had been exemplary throughout'.[172]

The East Yorkshire Regiment did undoubtedly benefit from the relative quietness of their station. Although Longford was an active county, Westmeath and Leitrim were notably less so, and all three were quieter than the flashpoints of Dublin and the South-Western Counties.[173] Consequently, the local population were less prone (or less compelled) to become embroiled in a reciprocal siege between the military and the I.R.A. Nonetheless, some regiments serving in the worst districts were able to maintain good relations with the local population, despite the co-existence of a concerted rebel campaign. For example, the Green Howards stationed in Tipperary between January and July 1920, were subject to attacks, arms raids and general acts of intimidation by an active and well organised local Sinn Féin movement. In July 1920 the regiment transferred to West Limerick, another active area and yet, despite their experiences, the correspondent of the *Green Howards' Gazette* was able to conclude that:

> Everyone in Tipperary seems sorry that we have left, for we have made many friends, who for their part will not forget us.

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[170] *Ibid*, April 1920, p. 12.
[171] *Ibid*, Dec. 1920, p. 7.
[172] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment, 15 March 1922. The Prince of Wales' Own Regiment of Yorkshire Museum, York.
[173] According to Hopkinson, Westmeath and neighbouring Meath conformed 'to the pattern in the Irish Midlands of intermittent and extremely small-scale military action', while Leitrim was rumoured to be 'the most treacherous county in Ireland.' *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 144.

> Even on our bills is written: "How grieved we are that so many of your regiment are leaving Tipperary."[174]

Another detachment arriving in Rathkeale, County Limerick, in July 1920, noted that local villagers:

> …were quite peaceful, and do not seem anxious to give us any trouble. Though at first we were somewhat boycotted by tradesmen etc, after three weeks' occupation of the village, the inhabitants are willing to do anything for us, except wash our clothes!

This suggests that initial resistance was never vociferous enough to provide an obstacle to friendly relations with the community.[175] Similarly, 'C' Company, stationed in Adare, were able to establish good relations with local people in order to fulfil their consumer wants: 'Lieutenant Richardson is very successful in interviewing tradespeople [sic] in Adare, and has discovered where cigarettes can be bought cheaply.'[176] Officers in the 5th Division also proved adept at establishing supply networks, sometimes as a means of obtaining illicit goods: 'There were some 30 or so shops including a tobacconist who sold smuggled navy tobacco at a very cheap price.'[177]

In February 1921, the correspondent of the *Gazette* observed that: 'during the last few weeks, Sinn Féin activity has greatly diminished in our particular area' he also suggested that the decline in rebel activity had further promoted good relations with people 'in the various villages occupied, so much so that, in many cases, great regret was expressed at our departure.'[178] In September 1921 (following the truce) the same correspondent claimed that the regiment's experience in Ireland had convinced the soldiers that:

> Irish or English, whatever we be, we can all live peaceably together. The so-called fanatical hatred of the one for the other is neither fanatical nor is it hatred. It is merely a slight

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[174] *Green Howards' Gazette*, July 1920, p. 50.
[175] *Ibid*, "B" Company notes, July 1920, p. 51.
[176] *Green Howards' Gazette*, "C" Company notes, July 1920, p. 52.
[177] Vinden, 'By Chance a Soldier', pp. 14-15.
[178] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Feb. 1921, p. 147.

> misunderstanding between two people who are burning to shake hands with each other.[179]

This may have been overstatement, arising from of an emotional conflict, and yet it was noted by General Staff in the 5th Division that in many brigade areas 'directly after the hour at which activities ceased on July 11th, the I.R.A. leaders, and others hitherto "on the run", came out into the open and even tried to enter into friendly conversation with soldiers.'[180]

When the regiment finally withdrew in February 1922, the *Gazette* concluded that:

> It would be wrong were we to say that we leave entirely without regret. There are few, if any, among the ranks who have not made friends who have [sic] "played the game" with the despised "English garrison". To them our hearts go out.[181]

It is worth noting that, during the regiment's period of service, one soldier was murderously assaulted with a pickaxe and a detachment was ambushed in Listowel, County Kerry. A further two soldiers received knife wounds after being assaulted in Rathkeale, and another soldier was shot and severely wounded in Limerick station. In addition, a road patrol was ambushed in Gallybally, and a ration party was attacked in Clonbeg. Most serious of all was the capture of three officers near Macroom who were subsequently shot by the I.R.A. after refusing to dig their own graves.[182] Therefore, despite being on the receiving end of a number of I.R.A. actions, it would appear that soldiers of the regiment made the important distinction between active rebels and non-combatants. Although there is no evidence in their account to suggest that this contributed towards success in the gathering of military intelligence, it did, at the very least, provide opportunities for friendship, recreation and trade. It is also reasonable to assume that the nature of civil-military relations must have contributed towards the exemplary conduct of the Green Howards during their period of service in Ireland.

At a further extreme, there were a number of cases where friendships or (at the very least) mutual respect developed between opposing combatants. The most famous

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[179] *Ibid*, Sept. 1920, p. 97.
[180] Hist. 5th Div., p. 114.
[181] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Feb. 1922, pp. 178-9.
[182] Kenneth Robert Henderson, *Officers of the Green Howards 1688-1931* (Richmond, 1935), p. 162.

example emerged following the kidnapping of Brigadier General Lucas (Commander of the 16th Infantry Brigade) on 26 June 1920. In his memoir, Michael Brennan, a prominent IRA leader in East Clare, recalled his role in guarding Lucas following his capture in Kilbarry, County Cork. Brennan highlighted the kinship that developed between Lucas and his captors, an affinity that even extended to a nights 'stroke-hauling' or poaching for salmon on the Shannon. He also fondly recalled how Lucas' remained steadfast to his officers' lifestyle: insisting on 'drinking a bottle of whisky every day', maintaining regular exercise and playing 'bridge every night until about 2 a.m.' The relationship of trust that developed between the two men allowed Brennan to convey letters to and from Lucas and his family without the usual precaution of opening them.[183]

Affinities between opposing soldiers did not always result from such intimate proximity; Tom Barry recalled how Colonel Hudson, commanding a detachment of the King's Liverpool Regiment in Skibereen 'was a very decent man and a professional' who recognised 'that we had a right to fight for our freedom'. Barry also recalled how Colonel Hudson was instrumental in saving republican lives from the vengeance of the Black and Tans. To demonstrate his appreciation, Barry ensured that 'whenever he wanted to go fishing he got a permit from us'. After the conflict, the friendship remained intact and Hudson continued to write to Barry from his new base in India.[184]

Fitzpatrick has drawn attention to the influence of 'militarism' on Irish national consciousness during this period, suggesting that many Irish war or army veterans who chose to apply their learnt knowledge in aid of the republican cause maintained a level of respect for the institution and the soldiers of the regular army. This was certainly true in the case of Paddy Mulcahy, who, after training with the Royal Engineers, became the leader of an I.R.A. flying column in Tipperary where he used his telegraphy skills to gather intelligence. Despite his position, Mulcahy lacked the killer instinct when it came to waging war against the military, in fact he 'regarded the 10th Royal Hussars stationed in Ennis [County Clare] as 'gentlemen' and discountenanced all attacks against soldiers.'[185]

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[183] Brennan, *The War in Clare*, 'Entertaining General Lucas', pp. 54-6.
[184] K.Griffith & T.O'Grady, *Curious Journey: An Oral History of Ireland's Unfinished Revolution*, (Dublin, 1998) p. 220.
[185] Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland' in Bartlett & Jeffery, *A Military History of Ireland*, p. 400.

The large majority of republican memoirs from this period failed to convey a similar level of respect between combatants. Nonetheless, the military were usually cast as the more respectable face of the Crown forces: Clare Volunteer and Genealogist Edward Maclysaght (who, post-conflict, was elected to the Senate of the Irish Free State and also served as the Chief Herald of Ireland between 1943 and 1954) having never belonged to the regular army had no especial reason to exonerate the military from the worst excesses of Crown force brutality, and yet his descriptions of troops succeeded in being remarkably balanced. The main thrust of his book was concerned with the misdeeds of the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans, and yet he was emphatic that his 'strictures [did] not apply nearly so strongly to the army.'[186] He went on to recall acts of kindness shown towards him by regular soldiers, even during the course of raids on his premises. Even his criticism of the Auxiliaries implied a tone of respect for the British army when he expressed surprise at the lack of discipline amongst men '…who were supposed to be ex-officers of the British Army.'[187] This was a recurrent theme in republican memoirs; republican fighters often regarded the British officer rank as a benchmark of respectability. American newspaper correspondent Carl W.Ackerman reporting 'behind the lines' in Ireland, claimed that Macready as G.O.C-in-C. commanded great respect within Sinn Féin circles: 'Sinn Féiners, I find have respect for General Macready. They invariably ask questions about him. They consider him human, kind and believe he tries to be fair.'[188] Many held to an idealized notion of the officer type, which (despite the image presented by actual military conduct during the conflict) they subsequently tried to imitate within I.R.A. battalions.

The various permutations of civil-military relations in Ireland and their meaning for the British campaign can only be revealed through an examination of the complex social relationships that formed (or failed to form) between soldiers and civilians against the backdrop of a civil uprising. Where personal affinities could develop, even in the midst of an overwhelmingly antagonistic situation, civilians and soldiers were usually kept apart by the divisive influence of their respective authorities, namely the

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[186] Maclysaght, *Changing Times*, p. 96.
[187] *Ibid*, p. 102.
[188] Ackerman Report (undated) contained in Lloyd George Papers, F/19/4/2.

military and the I.R.A., of whom, only the latter appeared to appreciate the importance of civilians to the outcome of the conflict. The military were also faced with the difficulty of an enemy that utilised civilian traffic as a cover for insurgency. This led many soldiers to view all civilians as a potential threat to security. Only in rare cases did they sufficiently penetrate civilian circles to be sure of the distinction between rebels and non-combatants. A greater willingness to do so would have aided military intelligence and allowed the army to dissect Irish communities into their constituent parts. Instead, most soldiers treated the civil population as one homogenized mass, and failed to recognise that most civilians found themselves in an indeterminate 'middle-place' between the rebels and the Crown forces.

Part III

Reactions

5. Reprisals, Indiscipline and Provocation

Following wildly inaccurate claims made by General Sir Nevil Macready that only four military reprisals occurred during the course of the whole conflict, incidents of military reprisals in Ireland remain almost entirely shrouded in mystery.[1] Furthermore, this post-conflict admission appeared to be more than Macready was prepared to admit during the conflict itself: writing in May 1921 he claimed that 'in not one single instance has there been the least attempt at an outbreak or retaliation at any time.'[2] Likewise, General Staff in the 5th Division promoted the conflict as an episode that reflected well on the discipline of the British army: 'It is to the undying credit of the British army in Ireland that its discipline was never strained to breaking point.'[3] Therefore, besides a smattering of correspondence and policy debates relating to the strategy of 'official' reprisals[4], the issue remains conspicuously absent in available War Office records. Faced with a dearth of evidence, many commentators (including several prominent republican authors) have tended to exonerate the military from the worst excesses of the conflict instead concentrating on the notoriety of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliary cadets. These 'soldiers of fortune' have been described as 'the greatest blot on the record of the Coalition, perhaps upon Britain's name in the twentieth century.'[5] Their misdeeds have monopolised reports of Crown Force violence to the extent that many scholars of the period have come to regard retaliation as being the overwhelming characteristic of policemen in Ireland. Consequently, the 'lusty animals' of the new R.I.C. have too often been reproached for the combined sins of the Crown forces.[6]

This chapter will, for the first time, subject the issue of military reprisals to serious academic scrutiny. It will attempt to reach beyond the shallow surface of events by presenting soldiers' own accounts as a means by which to provide detail and viewpoint. These memoirs will be supplemented by newspaper reports and eyewitness accounts. In particular, Hugh Martin's (surprisingly under-utilised)

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[1] Macready, *Annals*, Volume II, p.494.
[2] Memorandum by Macready to C.I.G.S., dated 23 May 1921.
[3] Hist. 5th Div., p. 46.
[4] See particularly N.A., CAB 627/108; CAB 24/2807; P.R.O. 30/67/44; W.O. 32 9537; W.O. 32/9578.
[5] C.L.Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars*, (London, 1955) p. 65.
[6] This colourful description of the troops and Auxiliary cadets who guarded him during his imprisonment at Dublin Castle is to be found in O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 241.

account *Ireland in Insurrection* will provide a key source for many of the arguments developed in this chapter. An appropriate use of both primary and secondary sources should also help to identify the origins of military reprisals and establish precedents. In turn, this will lead to a consideration of the different forms of reprisals and how they became incorporated into the military routine. This (broadly narrative) aspect of the study will also lend more understanding to the abstract notion of 'a dynamic of escalation' in military violence. The term 'reprisal' will also be brought under the spotlight; incidents where military terrorism was an initiative, rather than a response, will also be highlighted. The chapter will further examine the actual composition of reprisal squads: paying particular attention to the pivotal role of officers in the prevention or the promotion of indiscipline. This, in turn, will yield insights into the ways and means by which reprisal parties organised their actions. The chapter will further consider the intended effect of reprisals on their victims in order to reveal the motives and strategies that underpinned reprisal campaigns. The relationship between 'official' reprisals and their 'unofficial' precedents will also be considered as a means by which to link official policy with experience on the ground. A further section will highlight the other forms of indiscipline and provocative behaviour to which the army were prone: paying particular attention to bullish displays of nationalism on the part of the military. A final section will draw together these strands, identifying the factors that triggered rebellious actions and considering their effect on the nature of the conflict at large.

Few historians have been inclined to tackle the issue of reprisals via military sources, and fewer still have subjected allegations of military reprisals to any detailed scrutiny. Beyond surface events, very little is known about the extent of vigilantism in the army, nor even the prickly question of 'official' punishments. The pioneering studies of a number of scholars, particularly Townshend, Hart and Fitzpatrick, have been instrumental in highlighting some of these incidents. Despite this, (and with the possible exception of Peter Hart's book *The I.R.A. and its Enemies*) most studies that have confronted military violence in Ireland have merely provided a dry tally of reprisal incidents, interspersed with the denials and deliberations of officials.

Therefore, historians, writers and even filmmakers[7], have colourfully and vividly reconstructed the excesses of the Crown forces in Ireland with little inclination to categorize the forms of military reprisal, to rationalize them from the point of view of the soldiery, to trace their origin, or to identify who was involved and why.[8] Therefore it would seem that the majority of previous studies have brought us little closer to understanding the phenomenon of reprisals than the republican accounts that have provided their source.

In recent years, historians have been prone to explain military terrorism in Ireland within the context of a 'tit for tat' cycle of violence. Where this has been useful in restoring the phenomenon of I.R.A. violence to the equation, the stress on base revenge mentality has provided a rather too simplistic explanation for the explosion of Crown force violence vis à vis the republican campaign. Certainly, there can be no denying that the majority of reprisals were (at least on the surface) knee-jerk reactions to the excesses of the I.R.A. campaign. This form of reciprocal siege has been ably demonstrated by Peter Hart in his study of County Cork, in which the pattern of terror and counter-terror was promoted by a 'dynamic of escalation' driven by an irreducibly simple logic: 'hurt one and you hurt us all'; 'if you didn't kill someone, someone was going to kill you.' In this view, the nature of the conflict caused military strategy to give way to murderous self-reliance as the means by which to wage war.[9]

Following this 'dynamic' it has been suggested that deliberation amongst politicians and military commanders concerning the need to pursue a sterner course of action, prompted the military to take matters into their own hands. Full martial law was not forthcoming until December 1920, by which time the problem of indiscipline was practically insuperable. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that imposing

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[7] Notable film and television productions depicting Crown force brutality have included *Rebel Heart*, (John Strickland, BBC Northern Ireland, 2001) a four part BBC production written by novelist Ronan Bennet; the biopic *Michael Collins* (Neil Jordan, Warner Bros, 1996) and more recently the winner of the 2006 Palme d'Or - *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (Ken Loach, Sixteen Films, 2006), in which (despite underdeveloped references to the legacy of the Western Front) a dehumanised military are portrayed as little more than a pack of slavering wolves stalking the Irish countryside.

[8] One notable exception to the dearth of historiography in this subject is Hugh Martin's investigative study, *Ireland in Insurrection* which was published at the height of the conflict. It is perhaps one of the most remarkable documents to emerge from the period, it succeeds in being both painstakingly researched and frankly and explicitly written. It was also openly defiant of government policy in Ireland, and yet remained, throughout, scrupulously fair to the Crown forces, in the sense that it highlighted both their excesses and examples of their gallantry and discipline. With the exception of D.G.Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, (London, 1972) it has been largely ignored by historians of the period and remains curiously absent in studies of the military.

[9] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, pp. 102, 82, 97.

martial law in active areas at an earlier stage might have reinforced the military's grip on the population as well as delivering the means by which to resolve the army's disciplinary problems.[10] Macready was convinced that all disciplinary issues could be resolved by placing the conflict on a war footing, claiming that 'discipline would be enforced as in any theatre of war'.[11] However, in the absence of this form of acknowledgement the later period came to be defined by attack and reprisal, siege and counter-siege, marked at each stage by escalating violence. In this rather crude assessment, the conflict took on the form of a game of 'cat and mouse' in which both sides swapped roles indeterminably. The lines of distinction between Crown force troops and Irish Volunteers became indefinite, both operated beyond the command of their relevant authorities. In a short space of time the conflict had degenerated into an interlocking series of brutal clashes between 'renegades' and 'bravos' drawn (on both sides) from the disaffected male youth of the post-war generation.

If we trace the issue chronologically, there is strong reason to suggest that the foundations upon which military violence was to flourish in the later period were established prior to the period dubbed the 'Anglo-Irish War'.[12] As early as October 1918, a government report on the special Military Areas in Clare and Tralee warned that a reaction to community hostility combined with a lack of support from government was conspiring to produce 'a bitter feeling amongst the soldiers for the Irish. Many of them are being taunted by young Irishmen and are getting in such a state that they may take the law into their own hands.' The report further warned that the situation could only be remedied by a clear unambiguous government policy, rather than one that 'changes like a weather cock with every breath of air' fluctuating between hard-line repression and official permissiveness.[13] In a similar vein, the *Daily News* journalist Hugh Martin visited Ireland in the summer of 1919 to find that mutual hatred and open retaliation had already soured the relationship between police and public: 'over thousands of square miles of country there is active hatred…Each

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[10] Charles Townshend's study of *The British Campaign* related the failure of the military campaign, and some of the excesses that it produced, to the government's reluctance to settle a course of military policy that involved martial law.

[11] N.A., W.O. 32/9537, Macready to the Secretary of the War Office, Reprisals by troops in Ireland and their effects on discipline, 1 Sept. 1920.

[12] Although there is no defined consensus, the period stretching from the Soloheadbeg ambush of January 1919 to the truce in July 1921 has often been taken by historians to constitute the 'Anglo-Irish War', or the 'Irish War of Independence.'

[13] Lieutenant Colonel G.S. Report on Special Military Areas in Clare and Tralee, Aug. 1918, quoted in Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 63.

side "gets it own back" at every opportunity. Blood feuds persist and multiply.' Martin also claimed that at this early stage it was 'only the presence of the army' that prevented police actions from 'degenerating into massacre.'[14]

Conversely, the few remaining soldiers' accounts from this period tended to recall incidents of retaliation in a very different tone. For example, J.B.Arnold described his arrival in Limerick in 1918 where he found that the British garrison, particularly the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, were 'very much cock-a-hoop in the town'. It later emerged that local men had attacked a party of soldiers returning from a pub, and the event had prompted a much larger body of troops to return the following night armed with entrenching tools. Arnold recalled, rather light-heartedly, how 'the battering was very much on the other skulls'. However, in this instance, the military authorities deemed the incident to be serious enough to warrant the removal of the regiment 'to another cantonment where they would not be obliged to carry their entrenching tools at night.'[15]

Similarly, on 5 September 1919, following considerable 'friction between soldiers and some of the inhabitants in Inchicore [County Dublin]', *The Times* recalled that 'a number of soldiers had gathered in Ring Street and discharged as many as 20 revolver shots' during the course of which three youths were injured: one received a thigh wound, another was shot in the ankle, and a third was grazed by a bullet across his hand. The event prompted a police investigation which (rather nonchalantly) concluded that 'the incident had been exaggerated' and explained it in terms of drunken high spirits, consequent upon the soldiers having received a £10 bonus to their pay that night. However, the investigators also recognised that the soldiers were responding to a long-standing campaign of intimidation and provocation in the district and 'thought that by firing revolvers, they could frighten those who had been annoying them.'[16]

This pattern of casual violence had become well established by the autumn of 1919. However, the involvement of the military (relative to the police) was still minimal at this stage. Subsequent events at Fermoy were to mark a new stage in escalating violence amongst soldiers, policemen, and their republican counterparts. On 7 September 1919, a party of men of the Shropshire Light Infantry entering a

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[14] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 43-44.
[15] Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 132.
[16] *The Times*, 8 Sept. 1919, p. 11.

Methodist church were surrounded by 'three large motor cars, full of armed men' who indiscriminately 'fired revolvers point blank into the ranks of 18 soldiers.' This action, by rebels of the I.R.A. North Cork Brigade under the command of Liam Lynch, resulted in the death of one soldier, who died instantly after being shot through the heart. Four other soldiers received bullet wounds, and several others were badly injured when the attacking party overpowered the military using 'bludgeons' and 'wheel spokes' as weapons in their attempt to procure rifles.[17]

I.R.A. arms raids and ambushes of this kind were not unusual in 1919: previous incidents had occurred at Soloheadbeg where two police escorts guarding a cartload of gelignite were shot dead, and at Knocklong where a further two policemen died whilst escorting their prisoner, Sean Hogan. In both instances however, the killing of policemen was the tragic outcome of a bungled attempt to capture arms, or to rescue I.R.A. prisoners. A more deliberate murder had occurred on 23 June 1920 in broad daylight in the village of Thurles, County Tipperary when an R.I.C. District Inspector was assassinated by persons unknown. However, the incident at Fermoy represented a departure because it fused together elements of cold-killing and armed raiding.

Fermoy was a stronghold for the British army; its position as 'the most important military station in the South of Ireland' was sealed by the presence of two large barracks, and a sprawling military camp at nearby Kilworth.[18] It was also the headquarters of 16th Brigade (6th Division), Irish Command, and hosted four battalions. Therefore, the attack at Fermoy struck at the army's 'inner sanctum', and the soldiery were further roused when a coroner's jury at the inquest into Fermoy held that the attack had been an effort to procure arms, and therefore not murder but a legitimate act of war. Impervious to the legal position, the local soldiery descended on Fermoy in numbers and wrecked 50 to 60 shops and houses as well as other property owned by members of the jury, causing damage estimated to total over £3,000.[19] The Urban District Council of Fermoy demanded £20,000 compensation for the destruction of property which they claimed was of 'so violent a character that business has actually been wiped out, and it is more probable that the affected parties

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[17] *The Times*, 8 Sept. 1919, p. 11; 9 Sept. 1919, p. 12.
[18] *Ibid*, quote from *Thom's Official Directory*, Sept. 9, 1919, p. 12.
[19] *Ibid*, Sept. 10, 1919, p. 10.

will never again be on the same financial standing as they were previous to the night of the attack.'[20]

The early months of 1920 saw minor skirmishes between the military and the civil population escalate to an altogether more dangerous level. There was a further acceleration in the frequency and the scope of reprisal actions, and soldiers' involvement in rioting, vandalism and acts of deliberately provocative behaviour tended to proliferate. Lieutenant Gilbert of the Royal Berkshire Regiment recalled how on 22 March 1920, soldiers of the regiment had marched towards Portobello Bridge singing patriotic songs, after attending a performance at Dublin's Theatre Royal. Their inflammatory display attracted the attention of a crowd who followed and hissed at them. The party were then subject to stone throwing from the crowd, and several soldiers alleged that shots were fired against them. The military party were joined by an armed cycle patrol under the command of Lieutenant Dawson, who had been sent to provide safe passage for the soldiers. Dawson was heard to order the patrol to charge at the crowd, and (though accounts of the subsequent events are contradictory) it would appear that the officer in charge ordered "Rapid Fire", following which, 30 rounds were discharged above the heads of the assembled crowd. The patrol then followed the fleeing crowd around Kelly's Corner where they unleashed another volley of 21 rounds in 15 seconds. During the course of events two civilians were shot dead (Michael Cullen and Ellen Hendrick).[21]

Equally alarming were events in Arklow (County Wicklow) on 25 April 1920, where a number of soldiers were bruised or injured when a patrol of the Lancashire Fusiliers were confronted by an enthusiastic crowd, gathered to welcome home a released hunger-striker. When the patrol returned to barracks a number of men were conspicuously absent at the roll call. It later emerged that a party of armed soldiers had 'broken out of the camp through the barbed wire fence taking their rifles' and descended on the town. Having reached Arklow via a bridge, 'one or two shots' were fired at them 'from the civilian population' and one soldier was wounded. The illicit party responded by opening fire 'without any orders' killing one civilian and wounding four others.[22]

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[20] N.A., CAB 24/1708. Correspondence from W.Theeham, Clerk of the Council to Macready, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War – Fermoy disturbances, undated.
[21] *The Times*, 7 April 1920, p. 11.
[22] N.A., W.O. 35/90/1. Report by Captain A.H.Peacock, Commanding Minden Coy. 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, to H.Q. Dublin District in Schedule "D" General Staff, Dublin District War

In both cases, detailed facts were difficult to ascertain; important issues such as who began the provocation, and who fired the first shot, were obscured by conflicting accounts. However, the two events suggested an increasing ambition on the part of civilians and rebels to engage the military, and (more importantly for our study) they point towards a corresponding slackening of army discipline in early 1920.

If the events in Dublin and Arklow can be interpreted in a numbers of ways, an incident in Limerick on 20 May 1920 was far less equivocal. During the early afternoon, two police officers were shot dead by armed rebels. necessitating the use of troops to buttress the force. At 11 o'clock on the same day, both soldiers and policemen discharged shots, resulting in the death of James Saunders, a dock labourer. Another man named Joseph Egglestone was shot in the thigh and two others persons were wounded. The next morning at 3am bombs were thrown through the windows of a local drapery and a flour shop causing fires in both buildings.[23]

These events contained all the elements of a classic reprisal action: death resulting from death, the escalation of violence, and indiscriminate revenge against civilians and their property. Furthermore, the attack was given extra significance by the joint involvement of *both* policemen and soldiers. Previous violent acts had tended to be factional. The incidents in Limerick in 1918, Inchicore in 1919, and Dublin and Arklow in early 1920 probably arose from problems between specific regiments and local people.[24] Furthermore, these incidents tended to have developed from minor skirmishes into small-scale battles in a matter of hours. The later events in Limerick heralded the development of co-operative action between members of the Crown forces, thereafter policeman and soldiers who were billeted together often made common their pursuit of revenge. Douglas Wimberley observed that the new R.I.C. cadets, stationed with his own regiment the Cameron Highlanders, 'seemed to make a habit of breaking out of their barracks at night, illicitly killing men they thought were suspect rebels.' He also observed that, in this way, 'the habit spread surreptitiously to army officers and men.'[25] This assessment reflected Macready's

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Diary, 4 Schedules "A", "B", "C" & "D" to accompany G.S. Dublin District War Diary, 26 April, 1920.

[23] *The Times*, 21 May 1921, p. 16.

[24] The 1st Essex Regiment in West Cork were a typical case. Unlike many other regiments in the 6th Division, notably the 1st King's and 2nd Green Howards' Regiments, they engaged in relentless rounds of attack and reprisal with local people until their eventual removal in late 1921.

[25] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 153 (that is not to suggest that the initiative was always with policemen; following the murder of a civilian, the same officer had earlier recalled how 'a certain Cameron...had been out on his own secretly by night.')

stated opinion of the means by which indiscipline was fostered in the regular army. To Macready reprisals were a form of learnt behaviour arising from the military's obligation to work in tandem with the R.I.C. In September 1920 (still stopping short of implicating the military) he had warned:

> Every detachment of troops employed in carrying out arrests or preserving order is accompanied by one or more men of the R.I.C…Lately the R.I.C. has been reinforced by recruits from England…known by the soubriquet of "Black and Tans"…It is not for me to criticise the methods employed by the Police for keeping order, but in certain parts of the country this is attained by promiscuous firing [and] retaliatory measures are often indulged in…I mention these facts merely to illustrate the atmosphere in which the young soldiers who compose the Army today are called upon to serve.[26]

Much has been written, not least by soldiers themselves, concerning the problems of co-operation between soldiers and policemen on joint-operations and yet it would appear that the pursuit of clandestine revenge was certainly a binding factor. Inter-regimental reprisals also became commonplace, and later Auxiliaries and Black and Tans (drafted into the R.I.C.) were to join the melee. During his travels through Limerick in August 1920, Hugh Martin recalled how scattered military detachments were prepared to form reprisal networks: 'All this region was held by small outposts of the Machine Gun Corps, and one post was no doubt ready to help to avenge the wrongs of another.'[27] Significantly, the action at Limerick (like that at Fermoy) was also marked by an intervening gap between the initial event and the counter-attack, during which time soldiers and policemen were likely to have fed one another's appetite for revenge. This lag between action and reaction also accounted for the more planned and systematic nature of the reprisal. The shooting incidents reported in the evening were probably indiscriminate, however, the bombing of two shops in the early hours of the morning in order to cause fire is suggestive of a more considered approach. Indeed, E.S.Montagu, the Secretary of State for India and a keen observer of Irish affairs, claimed in a memorandum to the Cabinet that the majority of reprisals

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[26] N.A. W.O. 32/9537, Report by Macready to the Secretary of the War Office, Reprisals by troops in Ireland and their effects on discipline, 1 Sept. 1920.
[27] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 78.

were not the result of 'vengeance in hot blood, but of deliberate outage, carefully planned and throughout without authoritative and definite permission by uniformed men as an answer to outrage.'[28] Furthermore, the action at Limerick represented a marriage of several of the threads established in previous reprisals: it combined arson and vandalism with the killing or injury of civilians. Many future reprisals were to follow this lead and aim toward destruction of both people and property.

Illicit action against the I.R.A. and the general population on the part of British soldiers shifted a gear in the spring and summer of 1920 when the very basis of agricultural life in Counties Tipperary and Limerick was shattered by the wholesale destruction of co-operative creameries. The campaign began in April 1920 at Laccamore, County Tipperary following the shooting of two police constables in the village. The creameries at both Laccamore and nearby Killoscully were both wrecked in the initial stage. On 10 April, soldiers destroyed another creamery at Kilcommon in broad daylight. Other smaller units at Rear Cross and Knockfune were also burnt down during the same week. These attacks would have been unremarkable (and might have been regarded as wanton and random destruction of property) had they not occurred in such a short space of time within a confined locality. Moreover, given these factors, the actions point towards a thoroughgoing campaign on the part of elements of the British army against the Irish Agricultural Organization Society (I.A.O.S.) The logic of this vendetta was revealed by the fact that all the sites attacked were co-operative creameries; it was no coincidence that the most active rebels tended to be the sons of farmers and, according to Martin, 'enthusiastic co-operators'. Often their livelihoods, and their welfare, were dependent upon the success of the creameries. Furthermore 'the prosperity of a neighbourhood [was] in fact, more closely bound with the prosperity of its creamery than with that of any other institution. Hit the creamery and you hit the community.[29]

Through the creameries campaign, soldiers and policemen had found a means to punish the whole community in one 'fell swoop', whilst also taking care to ensure that their most dangerous enemies were hit the hardest. In addition, soldiers were also responding to allegations that creameries were being used as 'recognized meeting

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[28] N.A., CAB 24/2084, Memo – Present situation in Ireland – Circulated by the Secretary of State for India (E.S.Montagu), 10 Nov. 1920.
[29] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 67-9.

places, and distributing centres for the I.R.A.'[30] Thus, given their suitability as a focus for attack, the military came to pursue a relentless campaign against co-operative creameries and dairies. Naturally, the Cabinet always demurred from the notion that any 'campaign' or 'practice of reprisals' was being pursued (in any context) by forces of the Crown, to have made such an admission might have implied that they had 'received the sanction or condonation of the Government.'[31] Nonetheless, the evidence for an unofficial campaign appears to be almost irrefutable: according to a report compiled by George Russell ("AE"), a stalwart of Irish co-operatives, 42 such attacks occurred between April and November 1920 of which, at least 31 were directly attributed to the military (with or without police co-operation).[32] Hugh Martin, writing in August 1920, claimed that in the counties of Tipperary and Limerick alone:

> At least fifteen dairies had been wiped out during the preceding few months at a loss to the community of £50,000. The progress of the co-operative movement – Ireland's 'one bright spot' – had been stopped with a jolt.[33]

Sir Horace Plunkett, a doyen of the co-operative movement in Ireland, claimed that police and troops had inflicted over £150,000 worth of damage to co-operative creameries by October 1920.[34] After the truce in July 1921, a delegation of the American Committee for Relief in Ireland estimated that 15,000 farmers had suffered severe loss 'from the crippling of the co-operative creameries.'[35]

George Russell claimed that the sabotage of creameries was a systematic policy of retaliation on the part of the Crown forces that followed on directly from the destruction of police barracks in the early part of 1920. He saw the dairies campaign as having a simple logic: 'for every barracks a creamery.'[36] However, it is difficult to make the destruction of barracks correspond with attacks on creameries and, as we

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[30] Record of the Rebellion, p. 38.
[31] Letter drafted by Greenwood on behalf of Lloyd George in response to concerns raised by the Lord Bishop of Chelmsford regarding the discipline of Crown troops, dated 8 April 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/19/3/10.
[32] Figures complied from entries contained in G.W.Russell ("AE"), *A Plea for Justice*, (Dublin, undated), pp. 7-24.
[33] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 66.
[34] Detailed in a letter from E.S.Agnew (Hon.Secretary, London Branch, Irish Dominion League) to *The Times*, 2 Oct. 1920, p. 11.
[35] O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 289.
[36] G.W.Russell ('A.E.') *The Irish Homestead* (no publishing details given) quoted in Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 66.

have demonstrated, such attacks, however unbridled, did contain a strong element of forethought. Furthermore, the savage destruction of creameries often followed from the most minor infringements to military pride. In July 1920, a young girl attending to cattle at her father's holding in County Tipperary was approached by a group of young men who proceeded cut her hair with shears and bound her arms and legs. Her alleged crime was the familiar accusation of 'walking out' with English soldiers. When she complained to the local soldiery, troops were reported to have been incensed by what they regarded as a cowardly attack on a helpless young woman.[37] Within a matter of hours a creamery at Newport was burnt to the ground, followed a few days later by establishments at Reeska, and the previously damaged units at Laccamore and Knockfune. The attack at Newport was particularly telling because it led to the ruin of an I.A.O.S. flagship dairy containing valuable machinery and a cheese house stocked with £2000 worth of goods. According to a witness, 'twenty or more soldiers were present…they marched up four abreast and the leader, apparently a sergeant, gave the order, "Now, lads, over the top!" when they reached the locked gates of the creamery yard.' Other witnesses remembered that shots were fired by troops, and the place was set alight at a number of points. After the creamery had been razed, the sergeant in charge was heard to say "Now we'll burn the cheese-house", further instructing his men to prevent any stock from being salvaged by local people while the incendiaries carried out their order. Similarly, in a later incident at Upperchurch, policemen and soldiers patrolled the village and surrounding roads in lorries, in order to prevent civilians from interfering, while their comrades destroyed the creamery. Interestingly (in the case of the Newport Creamery) when the I.A.O.S. took their claim for compensation to Nenagh County Court 'no rebutting evidence was offered by the military authorities.'[38] This was despite Macready's assertion that claims regarding the conduct of soldiers been 'untrue and exaggerated' and further unsubstantiated allegations that the military were 'fired at from the creamery premises.'[39]

Such disproportionate responses suggest that the creameries campaign was intended as a defiant statement to the community, who must have become aware that a clutch of creameries would be destroyed for every outrage perpetrated against the

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[37] Russell "AE", *A Plea for Justice*, pp. 9-10.
[38] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 65-73.
[39] Russell, *A Plea for Justice*, p. 10.

Crown forces. However, the campaign, once inaugurated, became entirely self-sustaining; the destruction of creameries continued regardless of whether or not soldiers were the victims of outrages. As the causal links disappeared, the actions could be seen more plainly as an independent and illicit military campaign operating far beyond anything prescribed by the military authorities. Unusually, given the overall pattern of the conflict, the campaign forced the I.R.A. to adopt a number of militarily conventional operations involving the defence of fixed points. Sean Moylan recalled how 'all creameries in the district [Kanturk, County Cork] were covered by the strongest forces we could muster – the British seemed to make a special point of destroying creameries.'[40]

Alongside the creameries campaign, the army participated in other notable reprisal actions calculated to hurt Irish society as a whole. As D.G.Boyce has noted it was 'in September 1920 that the word 'reprisals' began to appear with alarming regularity in the headlines of the British press.' Newspaper reports suggested that many of the actions at this time were similarly designed as a deliberate affront to Irish nationalists in particular. Planning, precision and forethought were discernible in the burning of a private house in Killorglin, County Kerry in October 1920, known to hold a library containing an important collection of Gaelic manuscripts relating to Irish folklore.[41] A similar blow to Irish pride occurred on 30 January 1921, following the ambush of a party of soldiers at Teranure, a suburb of Dublin during which, two men, including an officer, were seriously injured. In this case the reprisal was carried out against Cullinswood House, which was partially wrecked by soldiers yielding crowbars, picks and saws. Cullinswood House was formerly St Enda's College, the school founded by Patrick Pearse, hero and martyr of the 1916 uprising. The institution had been a training ground for the militants of 1916, and was considered by Irish nationalists to be a monument to republican tradition.[42]

Martin provided further strong evidence that the military were devising their own lawless approach to controlling unrest in Ireland during his visit to the previously quiet village of Hospital in County Limerick. Here he discovered that the creamery had been partially wrecked, and an estimated £720 worth of damage inflicted. As an investigative journalist, Martin became exasperated at the lack of a sufficient

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[40] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 69.
[41] Copy of a newspaper report included in Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers, October 1920.
[42] *The Times*, Jan. 31, 1921 p. 10.

explanation for the event: 'certainly no policeman or soldier had been murdered or assaulted in the immediate neighbourhood.' That this incident (lacking any discernible background in provocation) could be seen as a new departure in the campaign was confirmed by Martin's visit to Roscommon in October 1920 where he discerned another initiative involving 'the methodical burning of selected farmsteads and large quantities of stacked hay.' Again, the destruction of property could not be linked to any known attack on the Crown forces in the immediate vicinity:

> The excuse of uncontrollable fury caused by some dastardly outrage was altogether absent. In this sense the affair was not so much a reprisal for something done as a deliberate piece of terrorization to prevent something else from being done in the future.

Pre-emptive reprisals or 'disciplinary measures' were to become increasingly common amongst the soldiery. Where the government and the military authorities could be accused of inconsistency or reacting to events in their approach to military policy, elements of the British forces were devising their own provocative and consistent methods to combat the uprising. Martin recalled incidents of riflemen 'joy-shooting' after dark in the streets of Abbeyfeale, County Kerry, and the case of two young men who were shot dead for simply failing to say 'good evening' to a sentry. Particularly distasteful was his description of a military lorry driving through Limerick 'while a soldier fingered the trigger of a heavy swivel gun and swung the barrel from side to side.' This incident prompted him to write '…this sort of thing may be expedient, but if so, why pretend that we are acting merely on the defensive?'[43]

It would appear then that many of the incidents previously filed under the heading of 'reprisals' were, in fact, examples of the military going on the offensive. There can be little doubt that soldiers were becoming increasingly prone to displays of power, which can only be regarded as 'disciplinary measures'. Speaking in Leicester in October 1920, Herbert Asquith drew attention to the false representation of military and police outrages as reprisals, highlighting the systematic nature of such actions to suggest that they were rarely a simple reflex response:

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[43] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 75, 107, 129-131.

> We have heard a great deal about the police and the military acting in self defence. But outrages have been committed in the name of, or at any rate by the officers of the law in the uniforms of soldiers and policemen – not in hot blood, but calculated, planned and organized, and of which the victims have been innocent, inoffensive civilians.

He also asserted that his case:

> …rested upon the evidence of perfectly independent, honest, and responsible correspondents, not only of the English but of the American and European press [He concluded that there was] an overwhelming and irrefutable case of systematic and calculated outrage on the part of the officers of the Crown.[44]

Ultimately, there is strong reason to believe that a campaign of 'disciplinary measures' on the part of the armed forces was entirely counter-productive. Certainly, the evidence of outrages in Ireland committed by the I.R.A. against the Crown forces and civilians suggests that the simplistic 'strike first' logic of the soldiery and the police was deeply flawed. Illustrating the peak of the conflict, Irish Office statistics suggest that the three months from the end of September to the end of December 1920 saw 1098 outrages committed by the I.R.A. The following three months saw another 2033, with a disproportionately greater incidence of killing or wounding of soldiers and policemen.[45] The fallacy of the supposed quietening effect of 'disciplinary measures' was also exposed by Martin who claimed that: 'neither in Clare nor Galway had the number of shootings, kidnappings, and other rebel outrages diminished, but rather the reverse.'[46] Following a particularly distasteful military reprisal in Templemore, County Tipperary, Martin warned that 'such experiences…manufacture 'physical force men' wholesale out of peaceable citizens.'[47]

Following this, a considerable part of the I.R.A.'s campaign became focused on simultaneously limiting the excesses of the Crown forces, whilst maintaining their own violent offensive. Marie Coleman uncovered a useful example of how the I.R.A. attempted to break the chain of interlocking reprisals via a series of counter-reprisal

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[44] *The Times*, Oct. 30, 1920, p. 12.
[45] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, Appendix V, p. 214.
[46] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 113-4.
[47] *Ibid*, p. 105.

actions. The death of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence Macswiney, On 25 October 1920, whilst on hunger strike in Brixton prison, provided the trigger for the killing of District Inspector Kelleher on the 31st and Constable Cooney of the R.I.C. on 1 November. On 2 November, combined parties of policemen and troops (by way of reprisal) attempted to burn the town of Granard in which Kelleher and Cooney had been shot. On this occasion, their attempts were thwarted by a flying column of the Longford I.R.A. Still seeking revenge, the British forces headed for Ballinalee (the base from which the counter-attack was launched) only to 'fall into an I.R.A. trap by driving all their lorries into the centre of the village and thus allowing the five sections of the column which were arrayed around the village to attack them from an encircling position.'[48]

In some cases, I.R.A. units even 'factored-in' anticipated reprisals and made adequate defensive provisions before launching their own attacks. Such was the case in Tubercurry, County Sligo, on 30 September 1920 following the ambush of an R.I.C lorry which resulted in the death of Detective Inspector Brady. Frank Carty of Sligo I.R.A. claimed that 'in anticipation of reprisals he sent a group of men under the charge of Charles Gidea to take up position in the vicinity of Rathscanlon creamery, near Tubercurry.' Further parties took up position in the town square at Tubercurry suspecting that reprisals would be directed towards local republican businesses. However, on this occasion the party of police and military proved to be too strong for the counter-reprisal squad who were forced to retreat.[49]

Only rarely did incidents of this kind seriously interrupt the cycle of terror and counter-terror. For the most part, preventative measures only prompted the side seeking revenge to return in greater numbers thereby sparking off new rounds of reprisals, which (following the dynamic) became more savage and ambitious in character. The developing situation was adequately summarised by Dr Cohalan, the Bishop of Cork, in a pastoral address on 19 December 1920.[50] Bishop Cohalan referred to the killing of Constable Murthagh of the R.I.C. in March 1920, as the event that prompted 'the terrible reprisal murder of Lord, Mayor MacCurtain' which

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[48] Coleman, *County Longford*, pp. 123-24.
[49] Farry, *Sligo 1914-22*, pp. 245-6
[50] This address was focused on the shooting of Constable Murtagh on Pope's Quay on 19 March 1920 which was a rebel response to a series of police raids on Sinn Féin clubs in Cork. Likewise these raids were a response to the killing of Inspector McDonagh who lost his life whilst guarding ballot boxes in a municipal election. It is also likely that this particular series of interlocking assassinations ultimately led to the death of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Tomas MacCurtain, in the early hours of 20 March 1920.

thereby sparked 'a devils' competition in feats of murder and arson between members of the Volunteer organization and agents of the Crown.'[51]

Very soon regular military operations such as raids, patrols and round-ups were quickly degenerating into reprisals, and violent acts were being committed under the pretence of duty. Take, for example, Sean Moylan's description of a military raid on Noonan's farm near Liscarroll:

> The father and one son, Paddy, were in the house…Mr Noonan and his son were questioned and beaten. Finally, the son, a boy of nineteen, was brought out placed against the wall and riddled with bullets. As he lay on the ground, the officer in charge put a bullet through his face, smashing his jaw and teeth and almost severing his tongue.[52]

Sometimes routine military operations became converted into reprisal actions or grossly indisciplined operations when raiding parties were stirred by breaking news. In an exceptionally explicit account, Colonel J.M.Hulton remembered being asked to plan a joint police and military raid on a Sinn Féin meeting being held under the guise of a dance at Cahirguillamore House (County Limerick.) The raid was intended to be a regular military operation, aimed at making arrests and procuring arms. consequently Hulton took great pains concerning the precision planning of the event. He remembered how, given that the operation was to take place shortly after Christmas Day, officers, men and policemen had little appetite for the job. However, their enthusiasm was awakened when 'news came in that a policeman, walking with a girl in the city [Limerick] had been fired upon, and the girl had been killed. This episode rather increased the general interest in the operation.'
Passions were further inflamed by the news that the meeting was being attended by men involved in an earlier ambush against the police at Grange, County Limerick. The strength of feeling was such that when D.I. Regan of the R.I.C. requested 40 policemen for the raid 'about sixty men paraded' including a number of 'R.I.C. motor mechanics' yielding 'large, useful looking spanners in their hands.' The mood was

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[51] *The Times*, Dec. 20 1920, p. 10.
[52] Moylan, *In His Own Words*. Miraculously, Moylan claimed that Paddy Noonan survived the attack despite receiving 10 bullets at point blank range. It is also claimed that he went on to father 10 children, a fact which prompted Moylan to jibe that 'England's problem in Ireland cannot be solved in her munitions factories.' p. 64.

such that Hulton (whilst being conveyed to Cahirguillamore House in a Crossley van) remembered stopping at a nearby cottage where he promptly smashed the window with the butt of his revolver demanding that the inmates give him directions, an action that prompted their children to 'wild...sickening...dreadful screams.' When the military and two police parties finally arrived, five suspected rebels were shot outside the entrance to the house (in spite of an earlier "No shooting" order issued by District Inspector Regan.) Another man, shot and wounded in the attack, managed to escape but was later spotted by a police patrol 'who fired and brought him down with a lucky bullet through the top of his head.' With the Crown forces in total control, the remaining attendees were rounded up and packed tightly against the side wall. Despite their 'frantic, monkey-like screams' the troops held them in the hall for over two hours and forced them to listen to soldiers and policemen singing a 'fervent chorus of "God save the King" and "Rule Britannia."' Hulton regarded the operation (the very first under martial law) as being 'entirely successful [and] the only operation in the Brigade area which produced direct and lasting results over a whole area right up to the truce.'[53] Indeed, the operation did secure the arrest of 138 rebels, many of whom were subsequently court-martialled and sentenced to a combined total of '600 years imprisonment.'[54] Hulton's account demonstrates the belief amongst troops that they could gain the upper hand in the conflict through the sheer weight of military violence. However, his belief was perhaps slightly overstated; attacks on the Crown forces did continue unabated in Limerick, most notably at Drumkeen, where a police patrol were crushed by a rebel ambush on 3 February 1921.

Raiding parties were also prone to petty theft. Considering the period as a whole, over 2,000 claims of theft arose in connection with military search and raid operations. This was in spite of attempts in some areas to discourage such actions: G.J.Ball, still investigating allegations of theft against the military as late as March 1924, claimed that in some areas:

> The military party was...under an officer and before starting out the men were searched and their ammunition counted. On their

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[53] Colonel J.M.Hulton, 'The Operation at Cahirguillamore House' TS memoir, p. 2, Peter Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.
[54] Rebellion. 6th Div., p. 65.

return to barracks they were searched again and their rifles examined and their ammunition checked.[55]

However it would appear that this form of protection was not always rigorously enforced. Martin witnessed disturbing aspects of raid conduct (which effectively amounted to armed robbery) during his investigation into a raid on the premises of Mr. O'Rorke, a schoolmaster from Tarmon, County Roscommon. In this case the raiders attempted, unsuccessfully, to burn down the premises and: '…it was owing to this fact that Mrs O'Rorke knew that when the raiders left they took with them all the spoons, forks and knives, a quantity of china, a silver watch and all the towels in the house.'[56]

Predictably, evidence that raids were being used for the purpose of theft is harder to discern amongst sources generated by soldiers. However, F.A.S Clarke suggested that stealing during the course of raids was commonplace, and a likelihood that was sometimes anticipated by householders. During the search of a farm near Kinsale, Clarke remembered how 'a spinster with a nasty sneer produced a bottle of whisky from a drawer and handed it towards me so as to show that my sergeant had forgotten to pick it up.'[57]

Besides the opportunities for minor theft, there is also a suggestion that soldiers in some districts appropriated goods from local farmers and shopkeepers (usually in response to their refusal to trade with the military). Martin suggested that this behaviour was another feature in the general bullying of civilians by the military. During his visit to the village of Hospital, Martin discovered that the local soldiery were indiscriminately firing rounds in the village streets in order to frighten the villagers into submission. The indiscipline of these young soldiers was so notorious that the military authorities were forced to change the command of the garrison. Martin recalled how the villagers were 'pathetically grateful' to the new officer 'for

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[55] N.A., W.O. 32/9577, Memorandum by G.J.Ball on the Procedure of Crown Forces in Connection with Raids and Services in Ireland, (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis). Ball urged a note of caution regarding the figure of 2000 claims, indicating that where misconduct was alleged, in most cases 'the claimant was himself arrested or incriminating matter found as the result of the search.' March 1924.

[56] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 112.

[57] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, p. 4.

having at once put a stop to the theft of eggs, the trick of refusing to pay for drink consumed, and the bullying habits of the young soldiery.[58]

Indeed, the problem of theft (as well as other forms of gross indiscipline) was so widespread that it was publicly recognised by the military authorities, albeit rather belatedly. In a remarkable admission, possibly designed to promote the case for regularizing reprisals, Churchill, the Secretary of State for War, confessed that 'the troops are getting out of control, taking the law into their own hands, and that besides clumsy and indiscriminate destruction, actual thieving and looting…are taking place.'[59]

The reprisal that followed the Fermoy ambush provided copy for this admission. Following the wrecking of 50-60 shops in the town, troops were reported to have been seen 'marching to the barracks, swinging boots and shoes in their hands.' Furthermore, 'a jewellery shop received particular attention' and later, when military pickets turned out for duty in the town, 'most of the stock in the windows was carried off.' The military (with the help of a band of opportunist civilian followers) were estimated to have looted goods to the value of £2,000, besides causing £1,000 worth of damage by the breaking of windows.[60] In addition, the military were also found guilty of inciting or, at the very least, failing to discourage civilians from harvesting the loot. During a night of serious incendiarism in Cork on 11 December 1920, a civilian witness recalled how a soldier 'dressed in ordinary "Tommy" uniform' seemingly 'engrossed with his own loot…did not interfere' when 'four or five women and a civilian came and looted many pairs of boots.' Other looters followed, however nobody was 'interfered with by the soldiers who could see all that was going on.'[61]

Sometimes thefts were carried out with a clear purpose. Martin remembered his first visit to Templemore, County Tipperary, in August 1920, where he discovered that police and soldiers had stolen a large quantity of petrol from a neighbouring garage, and had used their loot to burn down the market hall as a reprisal for the recent killing of D.I. Wilson in the town.[62] For the most part, purposeless looting and theft were simply 'part and parcel' of reprisal actions. In some cases, illicit actions against property were accompanied by the beating and intimidation of civilians,

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[58] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 76-7.
[59] Memo by Churchill, 3 November 1920, quoted in Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 122.
[60] *The Times*, Sept. 10, 1919, p. 10.
[61] The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, *The Burning of Cork City by British Forces*, December 1920, (Cork, 1978), Part I – 'Who Burnt Cork City?' p. 48.
[62] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 95-6.

especially in cases where reprisal parties were known to have indulged in heavy and sustained alcohol use. As the major part of Patrick Street. Cork burned on the night of 11 December, one witness claimed that a young soldier 'very drunk and showing his rifle to a youngster' turned the rifle on him as he approached, forcing him to grapple with him in order to turn the 'rifle to one side'. This defensive action resulted in the witness being shot in the arm, as opposed to the 'left breast' as the soldier had intended.[63] On a return visit to Templemore in December 1920, Martin witnessed another reprisal in the town (which is worth quoting at length) that followed the ambushing of a party of the 1st Northamptonshire Regiment. His description evokes an almost carnival-like atmosphere, in which drunkenness and larceny were very much part of the festivities:

> They broke first into Morkin's, a spirit grocer's premises, and looted a quantity of whisky, which they drank in the street....Then they attacked Michael Kelly's public house and after taking a great deal more to drink burnt it down in the most determined fashion....The window smashing began next. Fogarty's, a large drapery house, was easily looted by breaking its plate-glass windows. Much of the stock was thrown into the river, but the men dressed themselves also in what they fancied, dancing up and down the street attired in ladies' blouses and autumn millinery. Many of the men seemed to be riotously drunk. Having set fire to a bicycle shop...they looted a jewellers by the light of the flames...one soldier proved himself to be an expert performer on a stolen mandoline. Another, having with some comrades broken into a private house where a sick woman happened to be lying, played ragtime tunes on a piano. [64]

Martin's account also exposed the soldiers' appetite for arson. By the summer of 1920, vandalism (involving the breaking of windows and the defacing of monuments) gradually gave way to a more persistent campaign of burning property and contents. Following rebel attacks on soldiers, houses or business premises belonging to republican families were often destroyed in lieu of the military being able to punish

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[63] The Irish Labour Party and T.U.C., *The Burning of Cork City*, p. 49.
[64] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 102-4.

those responsible. As the conflict progressed, incendiaries became even less discriminate, and the homes of civilians, as well as civic buildings, were reduced to ashes. In addition, burnings prompted an equally indiscriminate riposte on the part of the I.R.A. against the homes of Protestants. In two parallel campaigns, the Crown forces assumed homogeneity amongst the populace to justify their actions and the I.R.A. took the pre-supposition of 'loyalty' to direct their operations. Soon combatants on both sides became 'locked into an arson competition which became part of the cycle of reprisals.' In County Cork alone, the seven months from January to July 1921 saw the destruction of 93 buildings by the I.R.A., and a further 67 by the Crown forces, bringing the respective totals between January 1920 and July 1921 to 209 and 216.[65] Lady Gregory recalled how, upon hearing lorries full of Crown force troops 'firing and shouting' as they descended on the town of Gort, County Galway, local people had became accustomed to putting their furniture out in the streets 'expecting the burnings to begin.'[66]

The origin of military reprisals involving arson is difficult to discern, but it was probably the next logical step in a campaign of vandalism, looting and intimidation. *The Times*, under the editorship of Wickham Steed who 'placed no restrictions on his "leader writers"' played a key role in exposing military reprisals involving arson:[67] after the devastating reprisal at Fermoy in September 1919, which involved large-scale vandalism, May 1920 saw a joint police and military reprisal in Limerick that resulted in the bombing of a flour shop and a drapery establishment. In this case the resulting fires were easily extinguished before extensive damage was caused.[68] The spring of 1920 also saw the beginning of the creameries campaign which, as we have demonstrated, relied on burning as its most effective weapon.

Besides attacks on creameries (which tended to be methodical and efficient), the first significant arson attack against public buildings occurred in July 1920 in the small town of Tuam, County Galway. The build-up to the reprisal contained all the elements necessary for a large-scale revenge attack. On the night of 19 July 1920, two policemen were killed in an ambush whilst returning by motor wagon to Tuam from Galway Assizes. Parties of police and 'Dragoon Guards' were detailed to track down those responsible for murdering their colleagues but having failed to do so returned to

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[65] Hart, *the I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 101.
[66] L.Robinson (ed), *Lady Gregory's Journals* (Dublin, 1973) p. 136.
[67] Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, p. 59.
[68] *The Times*, May 21 1920, p. 16.

Tuam at 3am the next morning. Other policemen and troops stationed in the town were engaged in a "wake" for their colleagues, which lasted until 5am and, following the tradition, involved a heavy use of alcohol. The scene was set for a devastating reprisal: the patrolling party's desire for revenge had not yet been sated, and remaining troops were intoxicated with alcohol and thoughts of revenge. Matters worsened when the returning party allegedly threatened to shoot a young Sinn Féiner in his lodgings. Fortunately their actions were thwarted by the valiant efforts of a senior policeman who removed the target to a local bridewell for his own safety. Not yet satisfied, the Crown forces finally opened fire in the town, and their shots were mixed with the sound of grenades exploding. When the barrage had ceased, the smoke cleared to reveal that a number of buildings had been bombed or set alight, among them a large drapery warehouse, containing '£20,000 worth of stock and fittings' and the Town Hall which had been set alight by the blast from a hand-grenade. Furthermore 'the progress of the fire was aided by the application of paraffin.' The fire spread rapidly to other 'business establishments' owing to 'the flames being swept by the wind across a narrow street.'[69]

Similar scenes were to become alarmingly familiar in Irish towns. Commander of the 1st Lincolnshire Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel R.H.G.Wilson kept a personal record of notable reprisal actions in Ireland which point towards a catalogue of sustained arson attacks between August and December 1920. In August, a party of troops set fire to a lodging house in James Street, Tipperary after cutting the 'urban council's hose' in order to ensure that the fire remained 'beyond control'. Previously burnt out houses, in the process of repair, were 'again bombed and set on fire, and only the walls now remain.' Similar precautions were taken at Tralee in October 1920, when armed men 'kept up rifle firing throughout Sunday night' in order to deter any would be rescuers; in the absence of any opposition their colleagues burned several buildings including the County Hall. In October, at Ballyduff 'a creamery and some of the chief business houses in the village were burned down', bridges enabling access to the village were also bombed. Killorglin also witnessed the destruction of several dwelling houses in October. In December, a cinema hall in Tullamore was bombed and burned, whilst other troops set about burning and demolishing the local

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[69] *The Times*, July 21 1920, p. 14.

transport workers hall, finally turning their attention to 'the offices of a local Sinn Féin club, and the houses of several Sinn Féiners.' [70]

In an evocative account, Ernie O'Malley described (with a touch of hyperbole) how, at the height of the arson campaign, Irish towns stood like 'jagged stumps of broken teeth where the fires had spread.'[71] F.H.Vinden even recorded a (rather tasteless) doggerel poem concerning a fictitious military operation that aimed at the wholesale destruction of a town as an effective means by which to root-out extremists:

> And just to show them that 'twas no more play, we burnt the parish church and C.P.A.,
>
> This didn't yield us the desired effect, not even with the Manse completely wrecked,
>
> So as they held their ground at half-past nine, we blew the Gospel Hall up with a mine.[72]

Further to attacks against creameries and religious or public buildings, new avenues also emerged in the arson campaign. Arriving in Roscommon in October 1920, Martin found that 'in the place of the usual destruction of shops and cottages in some small country town, we had here the methodical burning of selected farmsteads and large quantities of stacked hay.' He further observed that incendiaries drove from place to place, carrying their petrol with them…instead of indulging in an orgy at one spot. From his investigations he discovered that a lorry carrying policemen and soldiers had set out from the small town of Castlerea, County Roscommon, on 5 October 1920. After 'shooting up' windows in the town, they drove to the village of Ballinagare, where the 'shop and house' of Patrick Martin 'was sprinkled with petrol and set alight' whilst his family were held at gunpoint. Shortly after, an explosion on the first floor caused the whole premises to collapse. The raiders repeated their actions in a neighbouring premises belonging to 'Mr Kelly, farmer and general merchant' also destroying 'a large quantity of hay, nearly eight tons' which 'was carefully lit in several places and totally destroyed.' Descending on a farm in Dereen belonging to Thomas Hanly: 'aged eighty seven years', some of the party set fire to a

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[70] These accounts are drawn from various newspaper reports that appear in scrapbook form in the Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers.
[71] E.O.Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 219.
[72] Lieutenant R.D.Jeune, 'Dublin 1920-21', TS memoir, poem entitled 'A National Communique'.

30ft haystack, whilst other raiders doused the farmhouse in petrol and 'burnt the place to the ground: 'as they watched the flames rise the men shouted, 'That's the stuff to give 'em.' The shouts mingled with the shrieks of a sow and ten young pigs which were being burned to death.' The same party were also found to be responsible for the destruction of a farm at Tarmon on the same night. In this case, the family were given 'five minutes to live' while their house was burned, along with 'three stacks of oats' stored in the barn. The incendiaries concluded their *tour de force* in Roscommon, by attempting to destroy the house of the schoolmaster Mr O'Rorke. The flames were eventually extinguished leaving the house seriously damaged. Martin later recalled, rather ominously, that the same raiders returned six weeks later and 'Mr O'Rorke's house was again set alight, and this time completely destroyed.'[73]

In this case, the actions of Crown force terrorists were reminiscent of the earlier creameries campaign: they were distinguished by clarity of purpose, organisation and, more worryingly, resounding success. Interestingly, Martin's account offered an unwitting explanation for the methodical nature of the reprisal. His interviews with scores of witnesses drew attention to several crucial distinctions of rank between those who participated in the nights violence. In particular, Mrs Martin, the wife of Patrick Martin whose corner shop was destroyed that night, remembered being held at gunpoint against the wall while the burning was in progress. Interestingly, she remembered that her captor was a man wearing a trench coat who described himself as 'an officer'. Similarly, Patrick Flynn, the son of Frank Flynn whose farm was destroyed at Dereen, remembered being held at gunpoint under repeated threat of death by a man similarly dressed in a trench coat. He also remembered that the same man 'placed over him as guard a man dressed in the uniform of a sergeant of the British Army. This man obeyed the orders of the man in the trench coat as though he were an officer.' Furthermore, the uniformed soldier seemed 'much distressed at his position' and was keen to help Flynn bind a wound he had sustained during the attack. Mrs O'Rorke, also recalled that the man in the trench coat was responsible for 'supervising the smashing of all the looking glasses and windows within reach and the drenching of the stairs and other wood-work.' The mysterious individual also

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[73] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 108-12.

made repeated death threats against her absent husband, in spite of the apologies of other soldiers 'who seemed much upset' at the action that was taking place.[74]

These eyewitness accounts are significant because they point towards several unexplored features of reprisal actions. In particular, they suggest that reprisals or disciplinary measures could be characterized by a chain of command. The account also incriminates officers as well as men and suggests that colleagues (particularly superiors) may have coerced one another to participate. Previous studies have suggested that reprisals were the independent actions of small knots of young policemen or soldiers typically drawn from the lower ranks, representing the equivalent of I.R.A. 'murder gangs'. However (excepting the case of 'official reprisals') the relative involvement of officers and men in punitive actions has never been fully explored. Certainly, the evidence of soldiers, investigators and journalists suggests that these actions involved the full spectrum of military personnel. They also suggest that the success of illicit actions was dependent upon a definite command structure. Eyewitnesses to the aforementioned attack on the Newport creamery were surprised by the formality with which soldiers carried out their actions. James Parker, the courthouse caretaker, recalled how soldiers marched to the scene in full military formation. Patrick Bourke, another witness, confirmed that the officer in charge dispensed orders as though it were a regular military operation. Denis Ryan, the manager of the creamery, provided further strong evidence that an officer was supervising and spearheading the action. He recalled that the soldier in charge detailed some of his men to prevent stock being salvaged whilst others set about burning the creamery. Therefore, the testimonies of three independent witnesses suggested that reprisals or disciplinary measures had qualities akin to official military operations; both depended upon the exercise of authority and a clear division of labour.[75]

Similarly, during a night of reprisals in Cork on the night of 11 December 1920, eye witnesses observed a unit of 'fourteen to sixteen' soldiers under the 'charge of an officer in uniform' formed 'into two files …[with] the leading man in each file carrying what appeared to be an iron bar'. They continued to 'go through movements of a military nature' before marching to Marlboro' Street in order to 'smash windows on both sides of the street.' Again, the action appears to undermine the familiar image

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[74] *Ibid*, pp. 106-12.
[75] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 65-73.

of reprisals as a highly secretive and illicit activity, perpetrated by gangs who had 'broken ranks'. Far from losing their discipline, those involved in this incident were drilled and instructed at all stages in order to maximise their destructive potential.[76]

Similar qualities were evident during Martin's visit to Granard, County Longford, in early November 1920 to ascertain the facts surrounding the partial destruction of the town in an arson attack. During his visit, further reprisal acts were committed against the town. One such act was distinguished by the fact that it was directed from first to last by a 'tall fellow in khaki officer's uniform, with leggings, riding breeches and a cane.' This individual was said to have 'kept excellent order throughout. There was no shouting, no drunkenness, only a little music on mouth organs.' After a night of relentless attacks, the dust settled to reveal that 'Granard was a ruin. It had been coolly, scientifically, methodically, gutted by men who from first to last remained under some sort of discipline. Planned vengeance had had its ordered result.'[77]

On other occasions, officers were implicated in the chaos and the disorder that accompanied reprisals or regular operations. In the midst of desperate actions, officers' seniority still held considerable weight. Darrel Figgis, an active republican and a prominent member of the Dáil's Commission of Enquiry, recalled how a meeting of the Leitrim and Roscommon County Councils was interrupted when 'the door of the Council Chamber was flung open and a body of military entered, with bayonets fixed, led by two officers, a captain and a lieutenant, each with large revolvers in their hands.' Figgis was ordered to give his name and, being a wanted man:

> …the effect on the Captain was startling. It is hard for me not to appear to exaggerate that effect, for indeed he behaved like a villain in a melodrama – a dangerous villain, with almost unlimited power in his hand. He levelled his revolver at me and ordered my instant arrest.

Figgis also revealed how the captain (acting beyond his authority) 'announced his intention to try us instantly by drum-head court martial…it was clear to us all that he

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[76] The Irish Labour Party and T.U.C., *The Burning of Cork City*, p. 57.
[77] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, pp. 151-6.

meant to execute his sentence.'[78] He also noted that the soldiers under the officer's command 'were terrified, but when I protested to them in his absence they replied that they did not want him to turn upon them'. Figgis was later liberated by the timely intervention of the Clerk of the Crown of Peace, and recalled:

> I wondered how it came about that an officer; so clearly mad should continue in authority. It was not till afterwards that I learned that he had but a few days been liberated from hospital after a drinking bout followed by delirium tremens.[79]

Figgis' account suggests that there may have been some distrust of the system of court martial, given that some officers were attempting to punish their enemies by subverting legal means. Certainly, in pursuit of summary justice many officers did display a cavalier disregard for human life. Lieutenant Colonel M.B.Savage remembered the events of 28 February 1921 – the day that six republicans were executed in the Cork city barracks – an event that prompted the local I.R.A. to shoot 12 unarmed soldiers in the streets. The assassins were traced to a nearby barn whereupon:

> …the officer who found them, told them that he would give them a sporting chance, there was a hedge on the side of the hill and he told them that his men would open fire when they got there. Four of them were killed, the fifth got away, but ran into another of our pickets and they shot him'[80]

In this case, the officer used the letter of military law to punish his assailants by death (in the sense that he ordered their escape before firing a shot).

A.M.Jameson, based in Gough Barracks at the Curragh, wrote to a letter home to his mother in May 1916 in which he recounted the actions of his corporal during street fighting in Dublin. With misplaced humour Jameson recalled how:

> The corporal saw a civilian walking where a whole lot of Sinn Féiners were, he said he didn't know whether he was a Sinn

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[78] According to Percival, a Drum-head Court-Martial was only permissible in cases where 'rebels were caught with arms in their hands.' Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 20.
[79] Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War*, p. 305.
[80] Lieutenant Colonel M.B.Savage, MS memoir, *Looking Back; The story of my life*. p. 126 quoted in Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*. p. 99.

> Féiner or not, but anyhow he oughtn't to be there, so he'd "just shoot him the foot." [sic] So he aimed with his rifle and fired, and the man hopped all down the street on one leg!

Jameson (an officer himself) also commented that it was 'one of the best shots I saw.' Even more disturbing was his description of the Dublin skyline ablaze during the 1916 rebellion. A sight repellent to most, Jameson regarded the fires as 'the most gorgeous thing I've ever seen.'[81]

In most cases it could be argued that, whilst not taking an active role in reprisals themselves, some officers were guilty of failing to prevent them and this ability to 'turn a blind eye' could be seen as a tacit encouragement by lower ranks. On other occasions, the decisions made by officers could be said to have promoted the likelihood of reprisals: F.A.S.Clarke remembered attending a football match between the Essex Regiment and the local R.I.C. The game was suddenly interrupted when 'fire was opened on both players and spectators from the edge of a nearby wood.' The shooting resulted in the death of a soldier. Following the incident, Clarke recalled being 'ordered to take a patrol out'. In so doing, he 'chose the dead fellow's platoon' being fully aware that they were 'anxious' for revenge.[82]

Despite a general acceptance of the logic of reprisals amongst some officers, the most serious outrages such as killings or counter-murders were usually remarked upon with due seriousness. Wimberley recalled the murder of a civilian by a British soldier: 'he had been out on his own secretly by night. I think the madman concerned was the same individual who was soon after removed from our regiment and the army.'[83]

Nonetheless, despite being aware of assassins in their midst, most officers and other ranks were prone to absolve the military from wrongdoing and consign disciplinary problems to their colleagues in the R.I.C, particularly to the new recruits. J.P.Swindlehurst described Black and Tan and Auxiliary troops as 'miniature arsenals' roaming the country committing 'bloodthirsty deeds' armed with 'a brace of revolvers on each hip, bandoleers of ammunition slung around, and a short musket to finish off the ensemble.'[84] In a similarly critical tone, J.E.P.Brass recalled a startling

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[81] Jameson, letter to his mother, 2 May 1916.
[82] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', Chapter 6, p. 6.
[83] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 152.
[84] Swindlehurst, MS diary, 8-9 Jan. 1921.

conversation with a Black and Tan on a ferry crossing to Ireland in which the young cadet: '…told [him] with some glee that he had thirty seven 'kills' to his credit.'[85] Another general was equally disdainful of his colleagues in the R.I.C., describing Black and Tans as veterans of the Great War '…of the type who would not or could not settle down in civil life …some were undoubtedly no more or less than real "thugs". On joint patrols with the R.I.C. the same general felt the need to observe the policemen as closely as his surroundings: 'to see that they did not commit any atrocities when they were acting under my command'.[86] This need to 'police the police' was echoed by E.M.Ransford who claimed that: 'it was to say the least difficult for disciplined troops to co-operate with the Black and Tans'.[87] Therefore, in the perceptions of soldiers and the general public alike, Black and Tans monopolized the violence perpetrated by the Crown forces. Likewise, government advisors and other officials also impressed this image upon the Cabinet. The notion that counter-terror was spearheaded by the R.I.C. without military collusion was evident in W.E.Wylie's declaration at a Cabinet conference that an 'Irish policeman either saw white or saw red; if he saw white he resigned from the force through terrorism, and if he saw red he committed a counter-outrage'.This was tantamount to declaring that all existing serving policemen were involved in committing outrages.[88] Most soldiers also failed to connect reprisals to the military, instead confining their whole discussion of the subject to outrages committed by Black and Tans or Auxiliaries. Even the army's official account claimed that while 'several cases of retaliation had occurred amongst the R.I.C.' the 'army was practically free from this taint.'[89]

An officer's wife was aware of the notoriety which Auxiliary troops had achieved in Dublin. In her description of her husband's role in military raids in Dublin, she revealed that 'the occupants of the house were generally terribly frightened but when they realised the raiders were soldiers and not the much feared Auxiliaries they became much calmer.'[90] Clearly, many soldiers felt that the Black and Tans and the Auxiliary cadets with their 'bullying' habits, their appetite for 'hard-

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[85] Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet', p. 234.
[86] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier' p. 153.
[87] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', p. 19.
[88] N.A., CAB 24/1693, W.E.Wylie (Law Advisor) to conference. Notes of conference - Officers of the Irish Government - 10 Downing Street, Friday 23rd July, 1920.
[89] Record of the Rebellion, p. 22.
[90] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 63.

living' and their 'exotic habits', had found their true calling in Ireland.[91] One soldier even remarked that 'one would think that this trouble was made specially to amuse them and they alone.'[92]

Despite Macready's confident (post-conflict) assertion that 'unauthorized reprisals on the part of the Army [had been] effectually checked by the autumn of 1920' there was, nonetheless, a remarkable growth in the scale, ambition and regularity of reprisals in the latter half of 1920.[93] This brought a belated recognition from the government that stemming the tide was well beyond the capacity of military commanders under the current system of court martial. With this recognition came the notion of incorporating reprisals into a broader military strategy aimed at diverting troops' energies into more productive channels. The official line on reprisals reflected a characteristic ambiguity in policy direction. Despite the insistence of Macready, Lloyd George felt unable to commit the government to such a responsibility, although he was aware of commentators' suggestions that unofficial reprisals were contributing to the quieting of hostile districts. Indeed, Sturgis (at least privately) advocated the view that illicit reprisals were the only effective counter-insurgency method left open to the Crown forces:

> There is no doubt that we have benefited by them. Yet we have been driven into repudiating them and saying they will be stopped. If they stop S.F.[Sinn Féin]stock will rise higher than if they had never been, unless the Big Wigs in London find a substitute that will satisfy the "armed forces" and have an equally discouraging effect on the gunmen.[94]

The Prime Minister differed in his public and private attitude towards reprisals in such a way that Crown force troops could easily be forgiven for drawing some encouragement from his behaviour:

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[91] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 23. British veteran officers were recruited to form an Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C. (A.D.R.I.C.) Over the period, 2214 such veterans were recruited into a force that remained virtually independent from both military or police authorities. The creation of the force was based on the assumption that officers who had distinguished themselves in the Great War would similarly adapt to the demands of guerrilla warfare.
[92] Swindlehurst, MS diary, 31 Jan. 1921.
[93] Macready, *Annals*, Volume II, p. 502.
[94] Strugis Diaries, 1 Oct. 1920.

> Lloyd George privately urged restraint on the Crown forces, but in public he defended them against all criticism…the professed champion of the rights of small nations allow[ed] himself to be tied to repression in Ireland, and condone[d] methods similar to those he had condemned in South Africa twenty years before.[95]

Certainly, his reluctance to prevent troops from entering into a 'competition in crime with the rebels' and his failure to express his concerns to his colleagues regarding Crown discipline until as late as February 1921, suggest that he was not the 'prisoner of his Cabinet' in this respect.[96]

It would appear, however, that Macready was more torn between the need to maintain army discipline and troops' fragile morale:

> He sees clearly that to wink at organised reprisals is the end of discipline. On the other hand he said frankly that a regiment that did not try to break out when a story…was told them…that one of their comrades had been chucked in the Liffey and shot in the water, was not worth a damn, and he had to be careful not to make them sullen and take the heart out of them.[97]

E.S.Montagu even suggested that the government felt a misplaced sense of obligation to the military and allowed them to exact their own punishments in the absence of their being able to effectively punish those who were provoking them by legal means. To Montagu, this form of acquiescence 'in unlawful and often vicarious punishment' gave troops 'every reason to believe that the government [had] encouraged them in the action that they [felt] justified in taking.'[98] Indeed, Fitzpatrick went further than most in claiming:

> Though never a declared policy of Lloyd George's government, the campaign of violent reprisals was applauded by Churchill at the War Office and condoned at every level of administration.

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[95] Boyce, 'How to Settle the Irish Question' in Taylor (ed) – *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays*, p. 149.
[96] Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State*, p. 39; Lloyd George to Greenwood, letter dated 25 February 1921, in which the Prime Minister declared himself to be 'not at all satisfied with the state of discipline of the Royal Irish Constabulary and its Auxiliary force' Lloyd George Papers, F/19/3/4; Hopkinson, 'Negotiation' in Augusteijn, *The Irish Revolution 1913-23*, p. 126.
[97] Sturgis Diaries, 19 Aug. 1920.
[98] N.A., CAB 24/2084, Memo – Present situation in Ireland – Circulated by the Secretary of State for India (E.S.Montagu). 10 Nov. 1920.

> notwithstanding mild expressions of regret for the
> understandable excesses of men under intolerable pressure.[99]

Indeed, a number of official sources give a clear impression that illicit reprisals were tolerated for their purpose as an effective counter-insurgency weapon. The authors of the 'Record of the Rebellion' were adamant that retaliation had 'produced such a quelling effect upon the lawless, and such a corresponding peaceableness in the district concerned' that its suppression would, in the absence of 'some compensating Government policy, lead to a more vigorous campaign of murder and outrage on the part of the rebels and renewed incitement to retaliation.'[100]

Aware that the logic of reprisals was gaining support amongst the people who mattered, Macready put forward a proposal in September 1920 that the houses of known rebels should be destroyed 'as a military operation.' This was to be done on the condition that the occupants were given an hour to remove any 'valuable foodstuffs' from the building, following which the house would be destroyed using explosives (arson was to be one element of reprisals carried over from the unofficial campaign). The proposals fell way short of (C.I.G.S.) Field-Marshall Sir Henry Wilson's remarkably candid remark to the Prime Minister (also in September 1920) that 'if some men should be murdered, the government should murder them.' Therefore, perhaps due in part to their relative moderation, they gained cautious approval in military and Cabinet circles.[101] By December 1920, military governors in the martial law area had already adopted the practice of authorised punishments against known rebels. The first of these actions occurred on 29 December 1920 when six houses were destroyed in Midleton near Cork, following the murder of three policemen in the district. The frequency with which these operations occurred remains unclear (and probably understated): Townshend estimated that around 150 took place between December 1920 and June 1921, although evidence from the 6th Division suggests that 278 official punishments occurred in a single brigade area, of

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[99] Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-39* (Oxford, 1998) p. 91.
[100] Record of the Rebellion, pp. 23-4.
[101] Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State*, p. 38. Dangerfield also cited this remark in his discussion of Wilson's role in promoting a more draconian approach to dealing with unrest in late 1920. *The Damnable Question*, p. 320.

which 182 involved the destruction of houses, twenty aimed at the destruction of property and 76 involved the closure of Post Offices and creameries.[102]

There is strong evidence to suggest that the new policy was based on strategies devised by officers in certain districts, which had sought to sanction limited reprisals as a means of preventing more serious outrages. Prior to the onset of official reprisals (in an illuminating and unpublished passage) Colonel R.H.G.Wilson. Commanding the 1st Lincolnshire Regiment in County Tipperary, claimed special dispensation for a military reprisal at a farm near Goldengarden 'as a military operation and as punishment, not as mere blind reprisal.' Wilson's letter to G.H.Q. in October 1920 is illuminating because it highlights the depth of soldiers' appetite for revenge, as well suggesting that reprisals had a quality of inevitability that Wilson could not ignore. Following the shooting of Lieutenant Morley-Turner in Goldengarden, he claimed:

> From the moment the battalion heard of this outrage, feeling ran high…this event seemed likely to prove too much for their self restraint. The officers company were giving voice to their feelings (which were running high) and uttering certain threats…Nothing could be shown to them to show that the outrages on previous officers had been adjusted and even in the case of the would be murderer being arrested, the term of imprisonment he was likely to get from a court martial did not seem adequate to them. I therefore sized up the situation as follows. If I was unable to show them that something would be done and done promptly, and allowed to be done by them. I would be prepared for a reprisal of their own…but such an affair would have been deplorable in the extreme and added one more instance of troops getting out of control and causing senseless and ill-directed damage against the innocent people and another black spot on the map. The situation admitted of no delay for advice or report to higher authority, it had clearly gone too far that…I therefore chose a picked party of men who could be trusted not to go to excess and detailed one of their officers to

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[102] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 149, these estimates were based on instances in R.I.C. Reports, January to May 1921; Rebellion. 6th Div., Appendix V.

command it. His orders were to remove the inhabitants and destroy the farm. The occupant is a bitter and well-known Sinn Féiner. Two of his sons are wanted for murder.

In an appeal for special consideration, he added:

> Was it to be one farm, known to shelter scoundrels and the scene of a treacherous attempt at murder, or was it to be a town wrecked and tens of thousands of pounds worth of property destroyed.[103]

Wilson's plea indicates that officers recognized the need for punitive measures as a means of preventing acts of gross indiscipline. Similarly, Hugh Martin following interviews with a number of officers, detected a large amount of sympathy for the idea of official reprisals. It was anticipated by many that legalized punishments would have a disciplinary effect on troops, whilst (of course) absolving their own responsibilities:

> The average officer detests the unofficial reprisal, because it means indiscipline and the overthrow of his personal power, but he can see little objection under present circumstances to the official reprisal, which would take the form of the punitive expedition. He bases his argument upon British experience and practice in certain parts of Africa, where the custom has been to destroy a certain number of villages as a punishment for acts of aggression on the part of natives. In the meantime he is willing to turn a blind eye to the excesses of his men, well knowing that he will not be called to account by those at the head of affairs.[104]

Punitive measures had long been a component of British counterinsurgency methods. The popular presentation of military reprisals has tended to concentrate on the renegade actions of individuals (the most obvious example being those of General Dyer at Amritsar). These examples of individual cruelty, misjudgement, even insanity, have tended to mask some of the brutalities that were permitted by official military policy. British methods in South Africa during the Boer War of 1899-1902

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[103] Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers, letter to G.H.Q., 4 Oct. 1920.
[104] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 191.

aimed at the 'devastation' of Boer farms in order to 'strip away the logistic base' of the Boer Commandos. The policy of burning Boer farms (begun under Lord Roberts) was inherited by Lord Kitchener who, realising 'that there would be no clean military success in the conflict', drove military units into the countryside to 'lay waste' to their surroundings. A further solution involved 'rounding up' persons displaced by this strategy into concentration camps.[105] Likewise, in other areas and other conflicts, punitive expeditions were a component of military strategy. Whilst the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment were pursuing rebels in Counties Westmeath and Leitrim, their colleagues in the 2nd Battalion were 'engaged on punitive measures near the middle Euphrates from Shamiya to Kufa [Mesopotamia].'[106]

Even in cases where punishments were not implicit in military policy, it could be argued that the British army of the early twentieth century was prepared to give rogue officers their 'heads.' Collective punishments (inspired by officers) formed part of the British army's campaign against Egyptian insurgents during the unrest of 1919-23 (in what was, for the most part, an efficient and disciplined campaign).[107] After the Irish conflict and the Amritsar massacre (when the barbarity of reprisal measures was brought to public attention) similar actions were even employed in Palestine as late as 1947 as a means by which to discourage Jewish guerrillas who had risen against British rule of the protectorate.[108]

In Ireland, an official policy of reprisals was touted by many officers as an expediency; not only would it limit indiscipline in the ranks, it would also act as an effective military weapon:

> I think the only solution to the problem is to institute a system of official reprisals and impress on troops that by taking the law into their own hands they damage the cause instead of furthering it. If there is a definite scheme of reprisals in force, made known beforehand, it should be easy to get the troops to restrain their

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[105] Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1986) pp. 179-181.
[106] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 2nd Battalion notes, Nov. 1920, p. 8.
[107] Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p. 193. One staff officer involved in punitive expeditions in Egypt recalled 'We went through the country with fire and sword.' p. 192.
[108] T.R..Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency 1919-60* (London, 1990), p. 110.

> unofficial efforts, while the deterrent effect on Sinn Féin cannot fail to be considerable.[109]

Despite the willingness of many officers to voice public approval for the scheme, detailed descriptions of official reprisals are almost entirely lacking in military sources. Historians of the period are confronted with a surplus of detail about the policy and a dearth of information about the practice. It is therefore difficult to discern how Wilson's 'disciplined' example became translated into policy.

A rather sketchy reference contained in the Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchesters highlighted an incident that could be said to resemble the perfect model of the official reprisal. On 28 May 1921, a party consisting of two officers and 30 other ranks 'proceeded to Waterfall [County Cork] and burnt William Murphy's furniture'. The failure to burn the property wholesale probably fell in line with Macready's directive that, in the case of terrace houses, the furniture was to be removed from the building and burnt separately in the street to avoid a house fire spreading to other properties. William Murphy's house was targeted because his son Walter Leo Murphy (who also resided there) was believed to be commander of the 3rd Battalion I.R.A. He was also implicated as the head of a 'murder gang' responsible for the killing of Captain Thompson (the intelligence officer of 1st Manchesters). That the incident can be regarded as an official reprisal is revealed by the fact that it was a disciplined raid, followed by an exacting punishment that followed martial law directives, against a man with obvious rebel credentials.[110]

However, legalized punishments were rarely so well organized: on 7 March 1921 in Kilmallock, County Limerick, the military, following erroneous information as to the ownership of the property, destroyed a house occupied by Mr J.Houlihan not realising that the property was owned by local loyalist Mr J.Fraser. Furthermore, 'during the destruction of the house occupied by Houlihan, Mr Fraser's private residence and business premises were also badly damaged.' On 15 April 1921 at Shanballymore, County Cork, troops destroyed a private house 'held in trust for the children of Mr O'Keaffe (deceased)' believing it to be occupied by a Mr David Daly.

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[109] N.A., W.O. 32/9536, Major-General Radcliffe, (D.M.O.) to Wilson, Ireland: Proclamation of Martial Law, 23 Sept. 1920.

[110] This version of events and the background to the reprisal has been compiled from the scattered evidence of various reports: Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, entries for 21 November 1920 and 28 May 1921; Hart (ed.) *British Intelligence*, see footnote 29, p. 102; Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, pp. 96, 279, 291.

it was in fact occupied by Mrs R.Daly who had no connection to the intended target. On this occasion, a recommendation was made for compensation of £604:12:6. At Tralee, County Kerry on 22 May 1921, the house of loyalist Denis McCarthy caught fire and sustained significant water damage during the rescue effort. after the adjoining property belonging to William Knightly was destroyed in an authorized reprisal.[111] Even Lord Midleton (Leader of the Irish Unionists in the House of Lords) found that a portion of his estate was badly damaged during the course of the first official reprisal in December 1920:

> The whole of the town of Midleton belongs to me. Three hundred of the houses are in my hands…one which was destroyed reverts to me in three years time by the termination of a lease made eighty years ago. Further damage has been done to another house.[112]

Speaking in April 1921, the Lord Birkenhead claimed that the effect of authorised reprisals was a matter of 'conjecture' further pointing out that 'the houses destroyed usually turn out to be the property of respectable absentee landlords.'[113] Indeed, mistakes of this kind were so common that the policy of burning property was gradually phased out in favour of a system of fines 'except in very serious cases.'[114]

There was also a danger that escalating violence and proliferating murder might arise from the new official measures. This was recognised by Macready at the outset of the martial law period. He was acutely aware that 'public opinion insisted that the beginning of official reprisals must mean the end of irregular acts of revenge or punishment by the Crown forces.' In fact, his reputation depended on it. He was further aware that 'the co-existence of the two systems, would diminish the punitive value of the official measures and would encourage rather than discourage unauthorized attacks on life and property.'[115] To this end, he issued a circular in December 1920 warning troops that under martial law, acts of indiscipline by forces

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[111] N.A., W.O. 32/9578, Macready to the Secretary of the War Office, Policy regarding compensation claims arising out of action by the military in Ireland (undated).
[112] N.A., P.R.O. 30/67/44. Letter from Midleton to Greenwood, dated 20 January 1921, Earl of Midleton Papers,
[113] N.A., CAB 24/2807. Lord Birkenhead to the Lords. Irish Situation – deputation to the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords, 4 April 1921.
[114] Record of the Rebellion, p. 31.
[115] *The Times*, Special Report: 'Official Reprisals on Trial: The Test of Discipline' 4 Jan. 1921, p. 12.

of the Crown might incur the death penalty.[116] However, few soldiers seemed concerned with the consequences given the authorities past failure to clamp down on reprisals. For the period 1 January to 11 July, J.A.G. Registers indicate that 236 soldiers were court-martialled for 'absence and breaking out of barracks', a further 38 were charged with 'offences against the property of an inhabitant' and 16 were found guilty of 'offences against the person of an inhabitant'. None of those found guilty received the death sentence.[117]

Undoubtedly, some Crown force troops recognised that bringing punishment under legal control was an attempt to appease their frustrations and to limit their excesses. Others assumed *carte blanche* to pursue their own reckless campaigns. Townshend highlighted the case of an R.I.C. District Commander in Galway who, following the inauguration of official reprisals, unleashed a series of reprisals in the county, despite the fact that his area was not even covered by martial law (making official punishments illegal without the permission of higher authorities).[118] The author of *The History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers* suggested that official reprisals were no more discriminate than most of the troops previous unofficial efforts:

> On New Year's Day 1921 "authorised" reprisals had begun. The inhabitants of districts where outrages had occurred were held collectively responsible, on the assumption that the outrages could not have taken place without connivance. The punishments were burning and the demolition of property. Fortunately the Scots Fusiliers were not involved in this repugnant role.[119]

In tandem with the new military measures, cold-blooded unofficial reprisals continued unabated throughout the period, despite the strictures of martial law. Hart's study of the conflict in County Cork suggests that martial law aided 'secretive squads – often operating undercover and often at night…to organize official or unofficial 'raids' and 'stunts'' due to an increased flow of intelligence. Hart also suggested that

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[116] *Ibid*, 20 Dec. 1920.
[117] N.A., W.O. 92/4; W.O. 213/32. Judge Advocate Generals Office: General Courts-Martial: Register 1917-1945; Field General Courts-Martial (In field and Ireland) register, 21 July 1920 to 19 Nov. 1921.
[118] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 166.
[119] Anon, *History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers*, p. 4.

these 'hunters' were increasingly adopting a policy of 'shoot to kill'[120] or otherwise allowing their prisoners to escape in order to shoot them and avoid the need for a court martial.[121] To Hart, the introduction of martial law to County Cork in December 1921 promoted the conflict from being 'primarily an affair of ambushes and round ups' to a campaign of 'terror and counter-terror' characterized by 'murder after murder' and 'death squad against death squad'.[122]

Therefore the legalization of arson as a 'military' measure may have had the adverse effect of pushing military vigilantes towards the taking of life, as opposed to attacks on property. In turn, this suggests that the illicit aspect of reprisals was important to some soldiers; this was *their* campaign and they would pursue *their* own agenda by *their* own methods. By legalising reprisals within strict limits, the authorities may, unwittingly, have pushed the 'bravos' in their ranks to new extremes of indiscipline.

Certainly, the early months of 1921 point towards a distinct lowering of the moral threshold of British soldiers. In the flashpoint of Carrigtwohill, County Cork, soldiers were even implicated in such nefarious activities as kidnappings and drive by shootings. Furthermore, despite the unequivocal tone of martial law directives, many soldiers were prone to a loose interpretation of their new powers. On 20 December 1920, Brigadier General Cumming, Commander of the Kerry Infantry Brigade, issued a proclamation stating that 'Irish Republican Army officers or leaders in military custody will be sent as hostages with all transport moving armed forces of the Crown in areas under military law.'[123] This policy of using 'hostages for convoys' was intended as a practical scheme to prevent attacks by armed civilians on military and police transport (see also Chapter 2). However, as O'Malley recalled, many convoys were abusing the scheme in order to pursue inhumane practices:

> Hostages from amongst the prisoners were being used by the British, The prisoner had his hands stretched over his head; they

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[120] This development is evidenced by the earlier description of 'The Operation at Cahirguillamore House' by J.M.Hulton, the first operation under martial law. Five men fleeing the house were shot dead, prior to any attempts at arrests being made. A sixth was later shot by a patrol

[121] Peter Hart also noted that four Volunteers and three civilians were shot by the Crown forces in Macroom, County Cork between Sept. 1920 and July 1921, on the grounds that they had 'attempted to escape' or 'failed to halt' before a patrol, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies*, p. 97.

[122] *Ibid.* p. 96.

[123] *The Times*, 20 Dec. 1920.

were then tied to a steel bar that ran from front to rear of the lorry. "Bomb now" was painted on a card near the prisoner.[124]

Macready, who only rated the policy as a 'slight deterrent to outrages' considered that the practice was worthwhile because it 'amused the light hearted soldiery, though possibly not their involuntary passengers.'[125]

Other examples of deliberately provocative behaviour on the part of the military were alluded to in soldiers' accounts. The chronicler of the O.B.L.I. remembered an incident in a Dublin theatre:

> The theatre was not in the habit of playing 'The King' …one night someone introduced a cornet into the theatre, and in the presence of a considerable number of his friends – between two and three hundred – repaired the omission. The friends also took care to ensure that hats were removed in proper respect …a large-scale riot ensued as the soldiers attempted to return to barracks.[126]

Provocation often assumed this form; affronts to national pride were a typical form of aggravation. R.H.G.Wilson recalled an incident in Tipperary when a Sinn Féin flag was replaced with a Union Jack. Likewise, journalist Henry Nevinson (who was generally kind to the soldiery, often defending their role in the conflict) found himself amongst civilians who had gathered to watch the coffins of the victims of the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre being conveyed to the North Wall to be removed to England. Nevinson recalled being shocked by the sight of 'British Officers going about them, knocking off their caps with foul oaths as though to provoke trouble.'[127] F.C.Penny, an R.A.F. officer recalled a military procession in the small village of Tallaght outside Dublin:

> …we marched to the accompaniment of patriotic airs along the half mile of road leading to the centre of the village, where we formed up in a circle with a band in the centre. The band began well-known tunes such as 'Rule Britannia' and 'There'll always

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[124] O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 269.
[125] Macready, *Annals*, Volume II, p. 503.
[126] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, pp. 32-33.
[127] Nevinson, *Last Changes, Last Chances*, p. 186.

be an England'. We rounded off with the band playing the national anthem …civilians who had not removed their hats soon had them removed by the C/O [commanding officer] who pulled them off and stood on them.[128]

Similarly, the wife of an officer recalled how:

> Four or five of the older soldiers, who knew how to use their fists, would go into a public house on the quays of the Liffey, and order drinks. Then, standing up, they would sing 'God save the King' insisting that everyone else should stand up too.[129]

Often the military pursued its regular routine of ceremonials and displays, oblivious to the offence that they caused. F.C.Penny (an Australian by birth) did sense something of the offensive nature of his ceremonial duties when he remembered a close formation flight 'at almost roof-top level' over Dublin on Empire Day in 1920, he added quizzically 'just what these displays were intended to prove, I know not'.[130] The *Green Howards' Gazette* remarked bitterly upon the refusal of the Civil Population to observe Armistice Day ceremonials, which the correspondent considered to be an 'an entirely unpolitical and unsectarian custom [sic]' without realising the potential offence caused by exposing a hostile population to military displays.[131]

Clearly many regiments in Ireland were either unwilling to make allowances for the political and national tensions which surrounded them, or were largely ignorant of public opinion. Many soldiers were genuinely surprised at the hostile reception that greeted patriotic or institutionalised military displays, and it would appear that many officers arrived in Ireland in full expectation of carrying on the trappings of regimental life as usual, and this (albeit, at times unconsciously) could be seen as a form of provocation in itself.

Despite a general dearth of official or military sources concerning the particulars of military reprisals or provocation, a close scrutiny of the records generated by British soldiers is able to offer limited insights into the motives, purposes and general

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[128] Penny, 'Memories of Flying', p. 17.
[129] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 70.
[130] Penny, 'Memories of Flying', p. 18.
[131] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Dec. 1920, p. 116.

contexts of reprisals and other Crown force violence. Given the frequency of acts of indiscipline in the later period, any study of this kind is forced to consider the issues that prompted soldiers towards counter-terrorism. Broadly speaking, the frustrations arising from the monotony of the work routine, tedium and barrack isolation, undoubtedly contributed to the soldiers' desire to break free from the shackles of military discipline. Furthermore, the artificial separation of the military from the community helped to create the necessary atmosphere of suspicion, distrust and hatred. Nonetheless, it would be far too convenient to draw easy equations between the difficulties and privations of the soldiery and their appetite for revenge. Therefore, to avoid idle speculation, perhaps the best way to rationalize reprisals is to consider their intended effect. A detailed consideration of the purpose of reprisals will have backwards implications to the base issues that troubled the soldiery, and forwards to the wider political context that made these actions appear necessary. A consideration of these issues will also allow for a much clearer understanding of the character of reprisals, ranging from the 'spontaneous' to the 'systematic.'

Descriptions of reprisal actions only skim the surface of events and, as Hugh Martin pointed out, examples of Crown Force violence could easily 'be multiplied to the point of tedium'.[132] Furthermore, previous studies of the period have failed to fully explore the issue of reprisals, eschewing any attempt to rationalize these actions from the point of view of the soldiery. Given that many studies have limited themselves to a dry tally of events, incidents of counter-terrorism appear to be lacking in any real motivation beyond a 'tit for tat' logic – driven by an instinctive want for revenge or a 'mob mentality.' This aspect of reprisals certainly cannot be ignored: based on the available evidence it would appear that the majority of reprisals did occur in the immediate aftermath of attacks on the Crown forces and were therefore committed in 'hot blood'. The memoir of an officer's wife provided a snapshot of the raw emotionalism that affected soldiers in the aftermath of an attack. Her account provided a frank and earnest description of the tenor of soldiers on patrol in Dublin, following the outrages of 'Bloody Sunday' in November 1920:

> The men were longing to shoot. They were mad with passion. One car did not stop when challenged, and they fired at it at once. Fortunately they missed it, as it was an R.I.C. car, going

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[132] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 59.

> from one hotel to another, collecting luggage belonging to the survivors of the morning's massacre.

The same author also recalled being able to share the revenge mentality of the troops. Following the massacre of 12 British officers, during which her husband was seriously wounded, she was conveyed by armoured lorry, for her own safety, to Portobello barracks.[133] In her description the desire for revenge was palpable:

> Our armoured lorry made a terrific noise on the paved roads, and as we passed, people fell on their knees on the pavements. Nearly everyone had their hands up, and ran distractedly about. I could feel no pity for them. I hated them. I know nothing about reprisals. I believe nothing in Ireland that I do not actually see myself; but I do know that night I should have understood, and forgiven any act of reprisal by our men.[134]

Similarly, Ernie O'Malley recalled how, on the same day, 'the troops had blood in their eyes'.[135] Indeed, the events of 'Bloody Sunday' were so monumental to the Irish garrison that, as one soldier stated 'In Dublin, time is now reckoned as since or before "Bloody Sunday".[136]

After the murder of D.I. Brady in October 1920, near Tubbercurry, County Sligo. Hugh Martin recalled how a party of 16 police and 10 soldiers had broken into a shop in the town and attempted to set it on fire. The District Inspector in charge of the party recalled his difficulties in restoring order amongst his troops on account of the fact that 'they were simply mad with passion, and all restraints of discipline were thrown to the winds.'[137] Sean Moylan recalled how, following a successful ambush of British troops near Drominarigle, County Cork, he could hear 'the rattle of a Lewis gun from the Kanturk direction' and suspected that the aimless shooting resulted from the wild and uncontrolled anger of the troops who had just learned of their colleagues fate: 'since there could be no possible target, all our men having retreated, it seemed to me that the mental outlook of the British troops was rather disturbed.'[138]

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[133] The Record of the Rebellion stated that 'The murder of an officer in his house was a recognized form of guerrilla warfare known as "cutting off stragglers."' p. 14.
[134] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, pp. 100-101.
[135] O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 214.
[136] Swindlehurst, MS diary, 16 Jan. 1921.
[137] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 92.
[138] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 68.

Douglas Wimberley was well aware that his soldiers demanded immediate reparations following attacks upon their colleagues. In order to quell their passions. he devised a strategy for exhausting their appetite for revenge:

> Whenever what was called an "Incident" [occurred] we at once worked the troops off their legs for the next 48 hours…until all our soldiers wanted was a chance to sleep; and by this time tempers had cooled.[139]

In seeking to confine troops to barracks following any incident, officers of the Lancashire Fusiliers employed a quite different tactic. As J.P.Swindlehurst recalled. barrack confinement resulted from concerns about discipline rather than their personal safety: 'all pass outs have been cancelled to prevent the rougher element taking reprisals.'[140]

Other accounts suggest that reprisals were commonly a reaction to the perceived brutality of their enemies' campaign. Reprisals seldom followed on from what the military would regard as 'battles', that is – confrontations or gun fights between groups of armed or unarmed men, but rather from attacks on individual soldiers or small detachments. Professional soldiers naturally resented these actions because they failed to offer the victims 'a fighting chance' of survival. To this end, soldiers' accounts were replete with negative references to their enemies' tactics. L.A.Hawes complained bitterly that:

> All shooting was in the back from behind walls…they would extol as a feat of arms, the murder of an unarmed policeman pulled off a bus, and shot by a gang of thugs and left lying in the road. [sic] [141]

Any attack on the Crown forces was perceived as 'murder'; very few soldiers accepted the death of their comrades as casualties of war. To J.E.P.Brass. the rebel campaign was defined by 'brutal, cold blooded murders, and ambushes.'[142] J.M.Hulton regarded all republicans as 'thorough paced murderers' also claiming that "'murder" is a household word in Ireland…that is probably the best explanation of

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[139] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier' p. 148.
[140] Swindlehurst, MS diary, 20 Jan. 1921.
[141] Hawes, 'Kwab-O-Kayal', p. 68.
[142] Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet' p. 233.

the events of the last few years.'[143] C.R.B.Knight highlighted 'the murder of isolated soldiers' as the most significant 'feature of the rebel campaign.'[144] Colonel B.R.Mullaly of the 1st South Lancashire Regiment saw the murder of defenceless soldiers as a form of 'treachery', which served to 'envenom' the soldiery.[145] The correspondent of the 2nd Green Howards, regarded the growth of Sinn Féin as 'a despicable tale of murder... intimidation, anarchy [and] highway robbery.'[146] Writing in December 1920, more than a year after the regiment's arrival, the same author expressed seeming relief when "A" Company became involved in an open gun battle with ambushing rebels. He also suggested that the soldiers involved were 'to be congratulated on being the first company to have a taste of open warfare in Ireland.'[147] Similarly, Hugh Martin detailed how, after the death of Inspector Brady, the frustrations of soldiers and policemen at the method of execution caused them to take to the streets. A county inspector recalled how 'there was a great deal of rifle firing and throwing of bombs. The men stood in the middle of the street shouting to the Irish Volunteers to come out and fight them clean.'[148]

Clearly, many soldiers were frustrated by the reluctance of their enemies to meet the military 'head-on'. Likewise, the military never accepted republican tactics within the context of a war, seeing only 'cowardice' and 'brutality' in the assaults upon their colleagues.[149] Lord Birkenhead provided one of the best summaries of the soldiers' predicament in a speech to the House of Lords on 4 April 1921:

> No war, guerrilla war or otherwise, in the history of the world as far as I am aware, has ever been carried out under circumstances which are claimed to be legitimate by those who are determining the policy of the Irish army at the moment. They claim that they are entitled, wherever they see a man in uniform, be he soldier or be he policeman, to shoot him. They claim, if it meets their convenience, that the persons so carrying out these assassinations may wear uniform and may not wear uniform, and they expect

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[143] Hulton, 'Cahirguillamore House', pp. 1-3.
[144] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs*, chapter 1, p. 2.
[145] Mullaly, *The South Lancashire Regiment*, p. 350.
[146] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Nov. 1920, p. 99.
[147] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Dec. 1920, "Battalion Headquarters Notes" p. 116.
[148] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 92.
[149] Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers, these descriptions can be found in a letter from N.G.Cameron, Commander 16th Infantry Brigade 23 Oct. 1921, to the headquarters of the 6th Division in Cork. The letter concerns the treatment and subsequent murder of Colonel Toogood on June 19 1921.

> that every assassination carried out under circumstances of the kind I have indicated should be treated as a legitimate act of war.[150]

Given these unorthodox methods, it seems plausible to suggest that many troops regarded reprisals as a means of recapturing some of the military potential that was absent in the initial confrontation.

Beyond the base instinct for revenge, and the soldiers' notion of 'fairness in war', military memoirs also suggest that reprisals had another significant underlying purpose. Troop morale was dependent upon tangible success. In Ireland, the difficulty of achieving it created a serious test of discipline. Furthermore, if the military were successful in capturing and arresting republican activists their efforts were sometimes left unreciprocated by their authorities. Both the government and the judicial system often failed to enforce the heavy penalties that they threatened, or otherwise capitulated to public opinion in Ireland and released republican prisoners. Their leniency was usually a response to the tactics employed by imprisoned rebels in using the weapon of the hunger strike to galvanise public sympathy and pressurise the authorities. As a result, military success, however hard gained, rarely became tangible where permissive policies existed alongside coercive measures. There was a clear conflict between military and judicial policy, and the latter frequently nullified the former. As early as 1917, of 148 people tried by court martial, 24 per cent were released following hunger strikes and a further 61 per cent had their sentences withdrawn.[151] In January 1920 when I.R.A. command authorised open attacks on Crown soldiers (with a consequent proliferation of republican violence) the government responded with a counter-insurgency policy that aimed at the internment and deportation of republican militants. However, following an extremely successful round up of Sinn Féin leaders and activists in early 1920, Dublin Castle insisted on following cumbrous legal procedures that held back deportation warrants. Consequently, many prisoners were held for long periods of time without trial. In addition, those who were deported were granted the right to claim status as 'political prisoners'. This contributed to another large-scale amnesty on 14 April, following a mass hunger strike. Untried prisoners were released along with all hunger strikers

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[150] N.A., CAB 24/2807. Lord Chancellor to the House of Lords, Irish Situation – deputation to the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords, 4 April 1921.
[151] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 56.

regardless of whether they had been convicted or not. To make matters worse, it soon emerged that many of those who had been convicted had been granted "parole" as a result of a misunderstanding of instructions on the part of the civil authorities:

> It was originally intended that the only men to be released should be such of the untried prisoners, as the doctors certified to be in danger owing to the hunger strike…In the end, however, owing to a misunderstanding…all the hunger strikers…were released.[152]

Therefore military gains were often lost in a spiral of judicial and penal maladministration. Douglas Wimberley's account documented the growing disillusion amongst soldiers in his regiment at the government's continual failure to settle upon a consistent and thoroughgoing military strategy. Furthermore, his account suggests that the indecision and leniency of bureaucrats increasingly forced his regiment back on their own initiative. Following their strained arrival in May 1920, the regiment found the country to be in a disturbed condition, and were subject to a number of successful arms raids by rebels. However, after these initial setbacks, Wimberley was able to report that his regiment had quickly become conditioned to the demands of service life in Ireland: 'We were now learning our lesson…and soon we began to capture arms and to inflict casualties on our hidden and plain-clothes enemy.'[153] However, he was anxious to credit this military success to the local initiatives of officers and men, as opposed to any guidance on the part of his superiors. In fact, at this point his account began to reveal a growing estrangement from higher political and military authorities:

> It was most frustrating and unpleasant work for us all, and certainly we felt that we were not being given a free enough hand by Parliament to deal with the situation with which we were faced…Our N.C.O.s and men felt that we should be allowed to take much sterner action with the rebels [sic]. Many cases had arisen of obvious Sinn Féiners having been arrested or tried, but if they managed to hide or dispose of their arms and automatics, they were as often as not acquitted and released.

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[152] Record of the Rebellion, p. 10-11.
[153] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 146.

Even at this early stage, Wimberley was insightful enough to realize that an ugly guerrilla war combined with the government's half-hearted and ambiguous approach to military policy was a severe test of discipline for the professional soldier: 'Matters came more and more to a head, and the troops became more and more restive, and chafed at the restraints they were invariably subjected to.'[154] Finally, in July 1920, while dining with fellow officers, Wimberley received a report that a group of soldiers under his command were loose in Queenstown. In his capacity as Assistant Adjutant he was sent out to investigate, only to find a party of some fifty officers and men under the reserve sergeant major had armed themselves with entrenching tools and were destroying shop windows and vandalising property in the town. Though his initial reaction was one of shock and outrage, he did nevertheless make a concerted attempt to rationalize the behaviour of his men:

> The Jocks [Cameron Highlanders] had felt that they were not being allowed to deal properly with their enemies, and they had therefore decided they would retaliate…They had let off steam, and in point of fact their undisciplined action really did a lot of good, for the military authorities were forced to realise that the troops were not prepared to stand anymore a policy of never being supported, whatever politicians in London might be advocating. …The British government would not or dare not properly support the army in the impossible task they had given us to do, tied as we were always tied by restrictions on our legal actions.[155]

This was to be Wimberley's first taste of what was to become a grim pattern of retaliation on the part of the Crown forces, a pattern that was marked by an expanding threshold of violence. His account (like Colonel R.H.G.Wilson's plea) suggests that the phenomenon of military reprisals cannot simply be dismissed as evidence of a 'tit-for-tat' logic amongst soldiers. Moreover, he suggests that the actions had both a clear motive and a definite purpose. To Wimberley, there were clear linkages between the escalation of military violence in Ireland and the failure of the British government

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[154] *Ibid*, p. 147.
[155] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', pp. 147-8.

to encourage or to capitalise on military successes. His opinion coincided with that expressed in the 'Record of the Rebellion':

> Anything in the nature of an offensive against the I.R.A., or wholesale arrest of rebels, militant or political, formed no part of the Government policy. Indeed, neither at this time nor any other did the Government ever give to the military authorities any enunciated policy. The Commander-in-Chief was left to devise the best means he could for quelling lawlessness and crime with whatever powers, or handicaps he derived from the Act of Parliament for the moment in force.[156]

Rather than struggle amiably within the confines of emergency legislation, it became clear that the government's 'lack of a coherent policy had simply unleashed forces it could not control'.[157] However, the display of such force was as much a demonstration and a show of strength to the government, as it was to the I.R.A., Sinn Féin or civilians. Reprisals tended to plug the contradiction between soldiers' ambitions for a thoroughgoing military campaign and the actual legal reciprocation of military success. For their part, the Cabinet became increasingly aware that a consideration for the discipline and the morale of the armed forces was vital to the formation of government policy. This came to be reflected in the government's attitude towards the continued detention of Terence Macswiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork during a sustained hunger-strike between September and October 1920. Lloyd George wrote to Bonar Law in September:

> I have received no communication during the last few days indicating what the view of the Irish Government is of the detention of the Lord Mayor of Cork to the point of death. When I sent my wire I had been definitely informed that if we let him go it would completely disintegrate and dishearten the police force in Ireland – and the Military. Apart from that it struck me that if we release him we might as well give up again attempting to maintain law and order in Ireland.[158]

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[156] Record of the Rebellion, p. 25.
[157] P.Cottrell, *The Anglo-Irish War: The Troubles of 1913-22*, (Oxford, 2006) p. 89.
[158] Lloyd George to Bonar Law, letter dated 4 Sept. 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/1/44.

From the sources generated by soldiers during the period it would appear that the threat to 'law and order' envisaged by the Prime Minister as arising from the lack of a sufficiently hard-line policy, came from both the military and the civil population. The phrase 'dishearten' in this context can be read as political shorthand for the promotion of indiscipline in the Crown forces, with all the violence and rapine that this implied.

From the evidence presented in this chapter it is would seem that the inadequacy of a simple 'reciprocal siege' explanation is demonstrated by the sources generated by soldiers and other participant observers. In particular, the explicit accounts provided by journalists, based on their own tireless investigations, suggest that reprisals were not always instantaneous, nor blind; they could be systematic and calculated. Sometimes these actions were planned to cause maximum distress to the community at large, and, in their pursuit of revenge, soldiers could be extremely discerning in their choice of targets. Conversely, many troops regarded reprisals as a form of demonstration to the government of what the military were capable of given adequate support or legislation. They were a kind of 'proof of worth': displays of potential power in order to highlight the shortcomings of actual power. Therefore, beyond the simplicity of a 'tit for tat' mentality, we can see the foundations of a crude, but consistent rationale.

6. Politics, Ethnicity and Nationhood

> The British "Tommy," as usual, forgot the bitterness of the "campaign" with remarkable suddenness and was quite prepared to mix with the very men he had been chasing and to exchange cigarettes and gossip with them. But he is built that way and being a "nature's gentlemen" by disposition, his outlook is wonderfully serene.[1]

If the pressures of an intense campaign, coupled with the frustrations of isolation and weak government promoted indiscipline amongst a minority of the Crown forces, the majority, more rationally, confronted the political and military issues of the day in their writings. The strain of service sharpened the troops' appetite to question the role of their superiors in handling the conflict and this often led them led them to comment on wider political issues such as Irish sovereignty, or the future of the loyalist minority in Ireland. Significantly, this new political consciousness did lead some to consider the wider pattern of Anglo-Irish relations, ultimately leading to a consideration of the 'Irish question' itself.

This final chapter will present and contrast soldiers' views on the political and military issues that surrounded the conflict. It will consider the full spectrum of political opinion that emerges from soldiers' accounts: views ranging from pro-republican bias at one extreme, to dogged British colonial attitudes at the other. Within this broad range, this chapter will attempt to draw out the main strands of opinion, paying particular attention to considerations of the British authorities' handling of conflict, and British attitudes towards the aims and aspirations of Irish republicanism. It will further examine soldiers' views of the methods used by their opponents to further their ends.

As well as providing the first study of political opinion in the Irish garrison, the chapter will break new ground by investigating the possibility that financial

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[1] Lowe, 'Some Reflections of a Junior Commander', p. 58.

incentives and a pro-republican attitude amongst some troops led to a limited fraternisation between soldiers and rebels in aid of the nationalist cause.

At another extreme, this chapter will consider the means by which soldiers came to regard the campaign as a 'racial' or 'ethnic' conflict between the English and the Irish. This section will further downplay the notion of a religiously sectarian conflict, placing the struggle firmly within the arena of nationalism. Accordingly, it will uncover the myriad associations of nationalism, including soldiers' perceptions of the 'Irish' and the 'English' as two distinct 'ethnic' groups. This aspect of the study will highlight the tendency of soldiers to regard the Irish within the confines of 'received' stereotypes. Additionally, it will consider soldiers' ideals of 'Englishness' or 'Britishness' and explore the tendency of troops to stereotype themselves within this image.

By examining the scope and the variety of troops' political concerns, this study will highlight how the truce of July 1921 was received by troops. This should provide a leading indicator of their views towards the campaign as a whole. A further consideration of soldiers' reactions to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 should also yield insights into the relationship between soldiers' experience of service and the manner in which it reached its conclusion. This chapter will also incorporate a number of accounts written long after the period in order to determine the means by which soldiers' political attitudes were formed during the course of the conflict. A consideration of the process by which soldiers became politicised should explain how their final assessment came to differ from their initial or 'working' view of the conflict.

In order to analyse soldiers' attitudes towards the conflict, it is first important to realise that increased political awareness was, by no means, common to all. In fact, it would appear that very few accounts were brimming with overt political comment. Percival's own account, delivered orally in the course of two lectures dealt mainly with 'tactical problems' and 'as far as possible, avoid[ed] all political and religious questions.'[2] Likewise, our sample of soldiers' records from the period indicates that the majority were apolitical (at least in their written accounts). There were very solid

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[2] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p 1.

reasons for this apparent absence of political motivation: in particular it should be understood that military culture promoted subservience and the suppression of independent thought.[3] This form of deference, coupled with the government's continual failure to settle a course of policy may have discouraged many from forming coherent political opinions. In addition, the shape-shifting and incompetence of political and military authorities in Ireland tended to promote an indifference to political issues. Therefore, Ireland's demands for self-determination usually fell beyond the pale of interest or concern for British soldiers. Few (certainly amongst the ranks) defined their commitment to service in terms of their own deeply held hostility to republican ideals, suggesting that they were less 'imbued with an ideological zeal' than their rebel counterparts.[4] That is not to suggest that they made patent statements of a lack of concern for Irish political affairs, but rather that most detailed accounts of service failed to mention anything pertaining to the political situation. An expressed lack of concern was evident in some accounts: the correspondent of the 2nd Green Howards, still stationed in Ireland in February 1922, wrote that 'the majority of the Crown forces are quite uninterested in Ireland's future and are quite prepared to let her 'stew in her own juice'.[5] Further apathetic comment followed the ratification of the Treaty in December 1921: in June 1922, R.H.G.Wilson was approached by a reporter from the *Daily Chronicle* who asked him about the likely duration of military outposts in Ireland to which Wilson replied: 'I can't say…our job is done here. The rest is political.'[6] His reply was indicative of the usual tendency of soldiers to separate the realms of politics and the military and a further indication of the lack of interest in a future political resolution. In this view, the military remained very firmly the passive puppet of political decision makers. This quality was reflected in almost every leaving address given to outgoing regiments during this period:

> Our energies and our sufferings in Ireland had not been in vain. We were soldiers, not politicians. We were the servants of the state and

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[3] Interesting debates surrounding the political ramifications of soldiers' criticisms of prevailing policy have emerged following (the head of the army) Sir Richard Dannatt's damning assessment of government policy in Iraq on 12 October 2006. Jonathan Freedland, writing in the *Guardian* has claimed that Dannatt's actions 'violated a principle central to democracy: that the military stay well clear of politics…soldiers are meant to be servants of the elected leadership: they follow political decisions they don't make them.' See 'Homeward Christian Soldiers' *Guardian*, 13 Oct. 2006. or 'A man prepared to speak his mind' *Times*, 13 Oct. 2006.

[4] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p. 227.

[5] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Feb. 1922, p. 179.

[6] Colonel R.H.G.Wilson Papers.

> not of any particular government. If the state was satisfied, then we were satisfied. We naturally resented how much had happened and was happening even now in Ireland; but whatever happened, we might rest assured we had done our duty.[7]

In June 1921, an observer visiting soldiers in Dublin district, was surprised to realise that those involved in a conflict that had preoccupied public opinion in Britain had very little appetite for the political and military issues that it raised. He recalled that, although 'very few were pessimistic' the 'bulk were just fatalists' with little or no interest in broader political or military affairs.[8]

Despite a general lack of concern for political affairs amongst the majority of soldiers, a significant minority (especially amongst those who recorded their memoirs after the conflict) wrote with a free hand about the political and military issues of the period, sometimes with great insight. In particular, the breakdown of British administration and authority in Southern Ireland became a real focus for discontent: J.B.Arnold recalling his first trip to Ireland in June 1919 recalled how 'the sands of British administration in Southern Ireland, now "The Republic", were running low and soon we saw them disappear in blood and misrule.'[9]

The author of the *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle* highlighted the demise of British authority in Ireland resulting from Sinn Féin's ability to galvanise public sympathy and duplicate the Irish Executive:

> After their success in the 1918 elections, its members, under de Valera, claimed the right of government. To this end they set up a legislative assembly, called the Dáil; appointed their own ministers; and unequivocally declared Ireland independent.[10]

However, the author never entirely absolved the British government of blame, suggesting that their loss of prestige was masterminded by Sinn Féin, but ultimately guaranteed by their own actions. Sinn Féin was 'an illegal body, bent on attaining

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[7] Description of the general sentiments expressed by Colonel Cameron, Commander of the 16th Infantry Brigade to the departing regiment, *Green Howards' Gazette*, March 1922, p. 193.
[8] N.A., W.O. 32/9572, Anon, 36 Hours in Dublin, (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis), 16 June 1921.
[9] Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 132.
[10] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 28.

their ends by subversive action' but these 'ends' were realized by them 'having received sufficient recognition by Westminster to give them the status of a negotiating party.'[11] Taken to its conclusion, this argument suggested that the government had promoted Sinn Féin from being a marginal separatist group to becoming the nexus of militant republicanism. Furthermore, this promotion, first arising from a false perception of Sinn Féin's part in the 1916 Rising, was finally sealed by their summons to the negotiations that led to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921.

Arnold also recognised that Sinn Féin's ability to undermine the British authorities was based on its ability to imitate the authorities that it aimed to supersede:

> By 1921…all departments of government had gone so far as effective work was concerned. The Courts ceased to function, the King's writ did not run and a government within a government, set up and sponsored by the Sinn Féin party, was the only law that held sway.[12]

Sinn Féin's total control of certain districts by means of duplicate administration had been acknowledged by the Irish Situation Committee in their report of July 1920 concerning the town of Westport, County Mayo:

> …flour is issued only on a permit from the head of the Sinn Féin organization…the Sinn Féin Arbitration Court was held on Friday every week at the Town Hall…a Sinn Féin Urban Council had been formed which had struck a rate, which was being levied by the official rate collector.[13]

Arnold recognised that Sinn Féin had assumed authority in order that the I.R.A. could pursue 'outrage and assassination' in the knowledge that they had weakened the judicial system beyond its ability to retaliate.[14] Likewise, many soldiers were

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[11] Anon, *Oxford and Bucks Chronicle*, p. 28.
[12] Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 161.
[13] N.A., CAB 24/1636. Report of the Irish Situation Committee, note by Walter Long dated 16 July 1920.
[14] Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 161. N.A., CAB 24/1693, Notes of conference - Officers of the Irish Government - 10 Downing Street on Friday 23rd July, 1920.W.E.Wylie, Law Advisor to the Cabinet, reported to the conference that 'the entire administration of the Imperial government had ceased. In one town out of 45 appeals down for hearing only two came on.'

extremely forthcoming regarding the aims, methods, organization and morality of their opponents' campaign. A 'free hand' hand in this respect was very much evident amongst Brigade Commanders and lower officer ranks. In October 1921, General N.G.Cameron, then Commander of the 16th Infantry Brigade, claimed that 'cowardice and brutality have characterized the doings of rebels throughout this so-called war.'[15] K.A.Plimpton questioned the misguided patriotism of his opponents after witnessing the sabotage of the regiment's vehicles in July 1920: 'a heavy day's work had to be put in to clear away the result of what, perhaps, might seem to a certain sect, an act of patriotism...We don't think so!'[16] Similarly, Hulton recalled his vendetta against the Irish rebel Martin Conway, culminating in Conway being shot dead during a raid at Cahirguillamore House, County Limerick, in December 1920. Hulton summarised his opponent as either 'a simple Irish patriot – or a thorough-paced murderer, according to one's point of view.' Where Sean Moylan regarded his colleagues as 'determined, earnest men', there was little concealing Hulton's view of the I.R.A. as a 'murder gang' whose principal feature was cowardice: 'an enemy that sprints better than it fights.'[17] To F.H.Vinden they were no more militarily proficient than 'a sabotage force' and even the 'History of the 5th Division' dismissed the I.R.A. as an 'ill trained, ill armed and badly disciplined force.'[18] In June 1921, The *Green Howards' Gazette* highlighted the murder of Mrs Blake (the wife of D.I. Blake of the R.I.C.) as the most craven act of the conflict: 'If these so-called "Irish" imagine that by the murder of women (Miss Barrington of Limerick was also shot dead this weekend) they will further their cause for self-determination they are sadly mistaken.'[19]

Some military commentators went even further in suggesting that the brutalities of the I.R.A.'s campaign were a direct threat to Ireland's reputation in international circles. In alarmingly familiar language, 'the murder gang' were urged to 'hand over their weapons of destruction to safe-keeping, come out into the open and save Ireland's good name from further stigma and total bankruptcy.'[20] Certainly, the development of the rebel campaign (ranging from the social and commercial boycott

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[15] Commander N.G.Cameron, Letter to Colonel R.H.G.Wilson dated 23 Nov. 1921, Colonel Wilson Papers.
[16] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion notes, July 1920, p. 106.
[17] Hulton, 'Cahirguillamore House', p. 2; Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p.109.
[18] Vinden, 'By Chance a Soldier', p. 29; Hist. 5th Div., p. 4.
[19] *Green Howards' Gazette*, June 1921, p. 156.
[20] *Ibid*, March 1921, pp. 5-6.

of the Crown forces to the cold-blooded assassination of Crown soldiers) was a constant test of moderate opinion amongst officers:

> During my earlier trips the officers' distaste for the job appeared to me to rest on the ground of being sorry for the Irish. But later, after a string of particularly brutal, cold blooded murders, and ambushes, in the early part of 1921, their distaste changed to pure hatred, and all they asked for was the chance to take part in a full blooded round up.[21]

The majority of commentators lacked sufficient insight to relate changing attitudes amongst the soldiery to the development of the Sinn Féin movement. Some demonstrated very little sophistication in their political assessments. In a letter to a friend dated 30 April 1916, E.F.Chapman, provided the following naïve summary of the republican cause: 'The Sinn Féiners are silly people who hate England and want to be quite free from her.'[22] Similarly, A.M.Jameson wrote to his mother following the Easter Rising dismissing republicans as 'all fanatics and very cracked.'[23] Even K.A.Plimpton struck a similar note in claiming that his enemies' grievances were entirely misdirected: '…they blame everybody but those most to blame – themselves. 'Not a bit' do the majority of them do to help matters.'[24]

Others were prone to regard their enemies as being representatives of a low criminal mentality emanating from Ireland's poorer classes. Sometimes this false perception was utilised by Volunteers to avoid capture or to limit their ill treatment at the hands of the military. During his imprisonment at City Hall, Dublin, C.S.Andrews of the Rathfarnum Company of Volunteers, felt that his non-compliance with the classic stereotype of the I.R.A. soldier 'wearing leggings, trench coat and cap with neither collar or tie who was also illiterate' confused his captors, who were surprised that he was 'respectably dressed and spoke coherently and grammatically'. These qualities allowed him to avoid the worst excesses of an interrogation at Dublin Castle.[25]

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[21] Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet', p. 233.
[22] Chapman, letter to a friend, dated 30 April 1916.
[23] Jameson, letter to his father, undated.
[24] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"* Nov. 1920, p. 8.
[25] Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p. 169.

The class diversity of the I.R.A. was little appreciated by soldiers. Peter Hart's statistics from a sample of 878 Volunteers in County Cork suggested that 49 per cent were sons of farmers or skilled workers, whilst a further 17 per cent were students, professionals, merchants or clerks, with 31 per cent being farm labourers or unskilled workers.[26] These statistics only partially correspond with Percival's derogatory summary of his enemies as '"farmers sons and corner boys" who had no stake in the country [who]... preferred earning a living by plunder and murder than by doing an honest day's work.'[27] Dan Breen also noted the military's weak analysis of their enemies and their tendency to project the vagaries of the British class system on Irish society. Recalling a car journey through an army convoy, he observed how 'in those days British officers regarded an Irishman who could travel by motor as a person of considerable importance.' Given that his means of transport did not correspond with the military's expectations Breen was able to pass through the convoy unnoticed.[28]

Where most soldiers held derogatory views concerning the class composition and political aims of their opponents, most were keen to emphasise the ingenuity of their enemies' tactics. Of these, the majority focused on the organizational exactitude that underpinned their opponents' operations. Soldiers' descriptions of rebels were often couched in a tone of soldierly respect, the average column man became 'the wily Sinn Féiner'; or the 'elusive' and 'invisible' enemy, who displayed awareness, perception and 'cool pluck.'[29] This suggests that the frustrations of service in an unorthodox conflict (commonly regarded as 'dirty', 'ugly' or 'ungentlemanly') were usually insufficient to prevent soldiers from applying some form of context to enemy actions. Some even managed to hold two competing views of their opponents: who became both 'callous murderers' and 'freedom fighters'. The Green Howards in Limerick were painfully aware of the elaborate research, intelligence and operations networks that fed their opponents' campaign:

> To give them their due the rebels' columns were clever and extraordinarily well commanded. Their leaders were acquainted

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[26] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, p. 155.
[27] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 5.
[28] Breen, *My Fight*, p. 52.
[29] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"* Nov. 1920, p. 7; Carter, MS War Diary, 15 April 1919; *"The Snapper"*, *Ibid*, p. 8.

> with all the tricks and a great many more that made the Boers famous in the South African War. [30]

The wife of an officer wasted few opportunities to remark on Sinn Féin's organizational superiority to the Crown forces:

> No one who has not been in Ireland lately could possibly realise the marvellous organization of the Sinn Féiners, and the enormous sums of money they have at their command for Intelligence work. Their information was wonderfully rapid and accurate, and they do not disdain the humblest instrument. The paperboys, the woman who sold flowers and was allowed to sit in the hall of the flats with her baskets, were all part of the Intelligence system [sic]. Ever since 1916 when [Prime Minister] Asquith released the rebel leaders who were then in prison, they have been busy, while we were fighting for our lives, perfecting this system, collecting money and organizing the guerrilla warfare which they are now waging so successfully.[31]

Shaw was unsparing in his praise for the military achievements of the I.R.A., claiming that they were 'organized and commanded in a manner which would be creditable to highly trained military experts.'[32] Others were startled by the audacity and bravery of rebels and equally aware of their resourcefulness: '...don't imagine that the Irish Volunteer is a fool, he is anything but; he has a versatile brain, and is up to all sorts of dodges in his efforts to steal arms and ammunition.'[33] Career soldier, Douglas Wimberley recalled his game of 'cat and mouse' with a local republican for whom he began to develop a grudging respect. By using R.I.C. constables concealed in the barrack's guard room whilst prisoners were paraded in the adjacent courtyard, Wimberley was finally able to identify one of the prisoners as:

> a man named Henry O'Mahony, the local "Robin Hood", who had, on capture, given us a false name. He was a colourful character, and the local Sinn Féin leader in our area. We had him imprisoned in a fort on Spike Island, a small island in the Cork Harbour, but he soon

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[30] *Green Howards' Gazette*, 'Fighting the Gunmen', Feb. 1922, p. 179.
[31] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 61.
[32] N.A., W.O. 32/9519. Statement by Shaw on the present situation and state of affairs in Ireland, 27 March 1920.
[33] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, Nov. 1920, p. 8.

> escaped by means of a disused passage into the fort's moat. I think we had a sneaking admiration for him.[34]

Wimberley was also insightful enough to recognise rebellion as an act of patriotism for those involved and not an indication of murderous or violent tendencies: '…though very ruthless, these rebels were certainly brave, and, according to their beliefs, patriotic men'.[35]

Some British soldiers (in common with the British and Irish public) were susceptible to creating martyrs of imprisoned or executed rebels: Private C.Farrar of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment stationed in Dublin between 1919 and 1921, recorded a collection of republican songs in his training diary during his service in Ireland. One song, the ballad 'Kevin Barry', was a particularly controversial choice given that Farrar belonged to the regiment that had lost two soldiers when Barry and his accomplices attacked an escorting party. The event is best remembered for its aftermath during which Barry (a young medical student) became the first rebel to be executed by the British in the later period. Partly due to his tender years, he became a dual symbol of the Irish nationalist spirit and of British tyranny. Despite these connotations, the ballad was to become extremely popular amongst men of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment for many years to come[36] although Farrar added a note to his diary as a cautious reminder: 'not to be sung in public.'[37] Similarly J.P.Swindlehurst, despite being involved in operations aimed at securing his arrest, was far more exited by the mythical status of Michael Collins than the actual prospect of capturing him. In a diary entry he wrote: '…the population of Dublin are too loyal to give him away. I was going to say that I hope he keeps free, but someone might see this before I get it home so that it is better left unwritten.'[38]

Friendships were also prone to develop in military internment camps between republican inmates and their captors. Often these relationships were based on a shared appetite for political discussion, as well as a sense of mutual respect. F.H.Vinden recalled how:

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[34] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 149.
[35] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 149.
[36] Personal correspondence with the curator of the Duke of Wellington's Regimental Museum and Archive (a former soldier of the Regiment).
[37] C.Farrar 'Training Diary 1920-1' MS, p. 149, Duke Of Wellington's Regiment Archives, Bankfield Museum, Halifax.
[38] Swindlehurst, MS diary, 28 Feb. 1921.

The internment camp was soon filled with to capacity and amongst the internees were Desmond Fitzgerald, who became the Eire Minister of Foreign Affairs when Southern Ireland became independent, and Sean Lemass, who later became Prime Minister. I liked Fitzgerald and spent many an hour in evenings walking around the cage with him. He poured out the woes of Ireland going back to the days of Cromwell and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 when William III defeated the local Chieftain.

The extent to which soldierly respect translated into genuine republican convictions amongst the soldiery has never been previously explored in any concerted way. In a political sense, the fight for Irish independence and its consequences for the wider British Empire tended to be of little concern to soldiers when their service began. Those entering service were often a 'political void' into which radical ideas could be fed. Thus, political views were usually formed by the experience of conflict. Therefore, officers of the East Yorkshire Regiment flirted with the improbable notion that they were all 'deep and sincere Sinn Féiners' because they shared republican ideals: 'We are all strongly in favour of the Irish people looking after Ireland themselves.'[39] More convincing were E.M.Warmington's criticisms of British rule in Southern Ireland. Warmington was a man of moderate opinion and his delightfully balanced account of service with the K.O.Y.L.I. between March 1918 and June 1921 suggests that his sympathies were with the 'moral force' section of the republican movement. In his role as an officer, following the establishment of Tipperary as a Special Military Area, Warmington recalled being asked to enforce a curfew order and to prohibit markets in the town of Tipperary following a serious outrage elsewhere in the county. Initially he was given the duty of picketing the main road leading into the town, but was later transferred to picketing the market for having 'let some pleasant county people through who claimed to have other business in the town.' These concessions reflected Warmington's deep 'unease' about Britain's policy towards Ireland: 'further British control over Southern Ireland did not square with my conception of freedom.'[40] Warmington was also insightful enough to realise that restricting freedom would encourage many (even moderately

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[39] Record of Service of the East Yorkshire Regiment, Sergeants' Mess Notes, p. 40.
[40] Warmington, 'Diaries', p. 44.

minded) civilians into support for the 'freedom fighters' of republican propaganda. As O'Halpin has claimed, it was assumed that civilians:

> ...irked by the restrictions on economic activity imposed by the military – prohibition of fairs and markets, and of the movement of goods in and out of the area – would turn against the wrongdoers, what in fact happened was that they grew progressively more hostile to the government which was punishing everyone for the activities of a few.[41]

In very rare cases, republican sympathies could lead to a greater or a lesser degree of military-rebel fraternisation. A.C.Hannant of the Royal Fusiliers recalled one such incident prior to the Easter Rising of 1916. In early April of that same year he had been invited by a colleague, an Englishman by the name of 'Smith' (a 'trooper [sic]' in the same regiment) to attend 'a party in a house in St Stephens Green.' Upon reaching the venue his friend introduced him 'to a smart young man in uniform' whom Hannant observed was asking 'discreet questions' to other soldiers 'about their regiments etc.' Later, whilst returning to barracks, Hannant recalled:

> I asked Smith who the officer was, and he replied, "Don't tell anyone! he was Lieutenant de Valera of the I.R.A....The next morning I reported the matter to my Squadron Commander. He assured me the matter would be looked into, and thanked me for reporting it, and after a few days Smith disappeared, and I never saw him again.[42]

For the later period, when the Crown forces and the nationalist Irish became even more polarized, it is much more difficult to discern a similar example, although Percival revealed that he was aware of the presence of I.R.A. spies and informers within the ranks of the Essex Regiment. Owing to this, he 'found from personal experience' that:

> it was fatal to issue orders for any operation more than an hour or two before the troops were due to start, and then the plan should

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[41] O'Halpin, *The Decline of the Union*, p. 186.
[42] Hannant, untitled TS memoir, pp. 4-5.

> be known only to one or two necessary officers before the troops actually paraded.'[43]

The Digest of Service of the Manchester Regiment between August 1920 and May 1921, contained a series of references numerous enough to suggest that soldiers and local rebels were linked outside their 'combatant' relationship. The first hint of a possible fraternisation appears in service notes for 6 August 1920 when 'two attempts were made at Inchigeelagh [County Cork] to buy arms or ammunition from the soldiers, £5 reward being offered for a revolver or rifle. One civilian has been identified as being concerned with this.'[44] This type of event was not remarkable in itself, but its importance became apparent shortly afterwards when army equipment and rifles began to appear in the houses of known rebels. An entry for 2 September 1920 reveals that a search of the house of J.O'Keefe near Macroom found 'ammunition and a pair of army boots belonging to an absentee of the battalion' who was believed to have deserted his post.[45] Suspicion was further aroused in November 1920 when a planned operation secured the arrest of William Eager (a known rebel) at Bishopstown Railway Station 'for being concerned in an organization to help soldiers to desert.' On this occasion:

> Two private soldiers were used as decoys, while the remainder of the party took cover, the prisoner ran into the trap, firmly believing that the decoys were would-be deserters. He was eventually sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour.[46]

Eager's apparent willingness to trust two unknown soldiers claiming to be potential deserters suggests some previous involvement with soldiers of the regiment. In addition, the entry suggests that soldiers were approaching rebels (or vice versa) with a view to undermining or escaping the military.

Desertion was certainly feature of the Irish campaign, although overall rates in the military lagged well behind resignations from the police force. Nonetheless, J.A.G. Registers indicate that between March 1919 and November 1921, 514 soldiers on Irish service were court-martialled for desertion. Of these, 283 were convicted between January and the truce of July 11, a weekly rate of 10. These figures are

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[43] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (I), p. 9.
[44] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, 6 Aug. 1920.
[45] *Ibid*, Sep. 2, 1920.
[46] *Ibid*, Nov. 22, 1920.

perhaps a better indicator of overall convictions than overall rates of desertion and give no indication whatsoever of the actual number who secretly defected to the republican cause.[47]

In the case of the Manchesters, another entry dated 20 November 1920 revealed that insurgents were continuing to approach the regiment to buy arms and ammunition: 'John O'Brien arrested and identified for attempting to buy arms from a soldier.'[48] Other entries suggested an increasing frequency of army equipment, arms and clothing being found in rebel hands. During a 'shoot-out' between 15 men of the 1st Battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Evans, and a band of 50 rebels near Macroom on 28 January 1921, at least 'two of the rebels' were observed to be 'dressed in British uniform with "Sam Browne belts."'[49] Sometimes these disguises were used to good effect to draw Crown force troops to ambush sites, such was the case in Macroom in November 1920, when 'two lorries containing 16 Auxiliary police…were stopped by a rebel dressed as a British soldier and wearing a steel helmet.' The man claimed to belong to a military patrol that had broken down and requested the assistance of the Auxiliaries, who, not sensing anything untoward 'were led straight to an ambush' in which 15 of their number were killed.[50] The misuse of military uniform was so widespread and considered so serious that it was specifically covered by a Martial Law Proclamation:

> Any unauthorised person wearing the uniform or equipment of His Majesty's Naval, Military, Air, or Police Forces, or wearing similar clothing likely to deceive, will be liable on conviction to suffer DEATH, and any person in possession of such uniform, clothing or equipment will be liable on conviction to suffer penal servitude.[51]

Despite the dire warnings, it would appear that military equipment, uniforms, arms and ammunition continued to be made readily available to the I.R.A. Supply networks, often involving members of Cumann na mBan to aid with the acquisition

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[47] N.A., W.O. 92/4; W.O. 213/32, Judge Advocate Generals Office: General Courts-Martial: Register, 1917-1945; Field General Courts-Martial (In field and Ireland): Registers, 21 July 1920 to 19 Nov. 1921,; Fitzpatrick established a figure of 12 per week over the same period although he gave no source for the data. *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 36.
[48] Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, 20 Nov. 1920.
[49] *Ibid*, 20 Nov. 1920, 28 Jan. 1921.
[50] Record of the Rebellion, p.27.
[51] N.A., W.O. 32/9536, Ireland: Proclamation of Martial Law, Appendix IV, 11 Nov. 1920.

and carrying of weapons appear to have been commonplace. Marie Coleman identified Bridget McGuinness as being particularly prominent in this form of activity in County Longford where she purchased revolvers from soldiers and conveyed them to Brigade Headquarters 'strapped round' her body and those of her sisters.[52]

While these examples point towards some form of contact between soldiers and rebels, it is less clear whether any shared ideology developed between the two. Certainly, Sean Moylan's account suggested that the main motivations for British soldiers to desert to the I.R.A. were financial. Whilst being attended by a group of soldiers prior to his imprisonment in Kanturk he recalled how 'these men were tremendously interested in their prisoner but my memory…of their main concern was their anxiety to know what the pay of the I.R.A. was.'[53] Financial rather than ideological motives also drove a working party of the Royal Engineers to assist the escape of prisoners from the Curragh camp. These form of break-outs were a regular occurrence at the Curragh but it took some inspired sleuthing on the part of Brigadier F.H.Vinden to establish a link between the escapees and itinerant working parties of troops. His (unpublished) account is worth quoting at length for the extra dimension that it reveals concerning the relationship between soldiers and rebel prisoners:

> We had a series of disappearances of one internee at a time. I gave much thought to the method. One afternoon, I went to the guard room at the main gate to see the officer on duty for an idle chat. I was looking out of the window of the guard room still half thinking about the escapes and saw a working party of Royal Engineers marching out. There were about 20 soldiers under a sergeant. Working parties were almost permanently in the camp patching roofs of the huts which leaked or other maintenance jobs. I went out to the gate as the party was passing through and ordered the sergeant to march them into an empty hut on the opposite side of the road. I followed and was then at a loss to know why on earth I had given such an order. However, inspiration made me tell the sergeant to grounds tools and when

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[52] Coleman, *County Longford*, p. 186.
[53] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 132.

this was done, I said: "I am going to search you". This I did, making each man turn out all his pockets. From the pockets of the sergeant and four men I found letters from internees addressed locally telling the recipient to give the bearer five pounds for which he would bring into the cage a uniform in which the internee would dress and march out with the working party.

It is not altogether clear whether the relationship between fraternising soldiers on both sides was always one of such rudimentary supply and demand. Given a lack of sufficient evidence, it is difficult to establish whether these relationships were formed on mutual opportunity or shared aspirations. What is clear in any case is that the relationship was, in many respects, far less binary than any previously imagined.

Loyalties aside, the majority of political comment concerned soldiers' desire for a resolution of the conflict. Some looked forward to the end of hostilities regardless of whether or not the outcome was favourable to the British. Most troops had two main priorities which they hoped a political resolution would procure: the first was a speedy end to the conflict, and the second was a prompt return to an English station. These wants could be best satisfied by Britain's imminent withdrawal from Ireland and a hasty transfer of sovereignty. The correspondent of the 2nd Green Howards typified this attitude: writing after the truce of July 1921 he applauded the Anglo-Irish Treaty as a stepping stone to the end of British military involvement in Southern Ireland: 'good luck to the Irish Free State if it functions, and may it soon be farewell to the miseries, the horrors and the wasted energies which the poor unfortunate Crown forces have endured for so long.'[54]

Prior to the truce the tone had been markedly different. As early as July 1920, the *Green Howards' Gazette* had already succumbed to a pessimistic view: 'We are afraid that we have long since given up all hopes of a settlement of anything appertaining to Ireland.'[55] Even in the weeks preceding the truce of July 1921 the *Gazette* remained rooted to its familiar gloomy position: 'we are almost entirely in the dark as far as the Irish riddle is concerned. All we can say is that the toll of murder and the inevitable consequences of rebellion wax greater day by day.'[56]

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[54] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Dec. 1921, p. 145.
[55] *Ibid*, July 1920, p. 49.
[56] *Ibid*, May 1921, p. 25.

Likewise, in November 1920 *The "Snapper"* described the Irish question as 'a hopeless business' and denounced the regiment's 'efforts to produce peace and order in this distressful country' as futile. This tended to reflect opinions long held by Macready that 'the state of affairs in the country [had] been allowed to drift into such an impasse that no amount of coercion [could] possibly remedy it.'[57]

The desire to escape Irish service was palpable in soldiers' accounts, which made the majority reaction to the truce of 1921 all the more surprising. Rather than being gratefully received, the end of hostilities was roundly condemned as a premature capitulation to Sinn Féin. The timing of the truce and the terms of the subsequent Treaty drew a greater volume of political comment from soldiers than any other single issue in the conflict. This reflected an undercurrent of feeling that had been present throughout that soldiers were serving 'under difficult and distressing circumstances' but could not leave Ireland until they had put an 'end to Sinn Féin and its despicable tale of murder.'[58] The full weight of this opinion could only be liberated by the cessation of hostilities, to soldiers the tragedy of the July truce was that it delivered a last minute reprieve to an enemy believed to be 'on the ropes' at this point of the conflict.

Regardless of the I.R.A.'s strength (real or imagined) at the time of the truce, it is certainly true that Irish Command had heavily reinforced the British garrison from early June. In fact military strength increased dramatically by 'about one third in less than a month'.[59] This was in marked contrast to the fate of the I.R.A., which had been decimated by the imprisonment and internment of the core of its battalion leaving a remnant of just 2,000 men, with roughly 5,500 men either convicted or interned being held in detention.[60] In addition, the reinforced garrison was immediately successful in a number of counter-insurgency operations. Between December and June 1920, the Crown forces captured 1,585 firearms and 45,593 rounds of ammunition, a significant haul against a force whose greatest restraining factor had always been a lack of sufficient arms.[61]

Despite these inroads, the picture was far from one-dimensional; the I.R.A. had inflicted 48 deaths and 116 injuries on the military between January and April 1921,

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[57] Macready to Greenwood, letter dated 17 July 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/19 2/12.
[58] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Oct. 1920, p. 85.
[59] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 196.
[60] M.Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 2004) p. 9.
[61] Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p.195.

and this death toll was more than matched in the final two months of the conflict when the British army suffered its worst casualty figures of the conflict.[62] Furthermore, the I.R.A. continued to wreak havoc against Crown force patrols even after the truce. It is difficult to imagine then how the Crown forces could have been poised on the brink of victory. Nevertheless, increased mortality rates failed to detract soldiers from the belief that victory was in their grasp. L.A.Hawes' military assessment of June 1921 was unequivocal:

> More and more troops were poured into Southern Ireland until there were some 100,000 of them. Techniques for quelling the rebellion were perfected and the rebellion was being subdued. H. M. government [sic] chose this moment to give in. All the casualties we had suffered were wasted. While it might have been wise to give Southern Ireland independence. I feel this might well have been kept until we had made it quite clear that we were acting from a position of strength.[63]

In a more dispassionate tone, the 'History of the 5th Division' claimed that the first of a scheduled seven extra battalions to arrive at the Curragh in June 1920 had restored the military advantage: 'from that date onwards the military outlook appeared more favourable.'[64] Similarly, men of the Green Howards believed that an injection of troops together with improved tactics had already defeated their rebel counterparts when hostilities ceased. In a retrospective account, a correspondent recalled:

> By degrees, an absolute military ascendancy was established in certain of the worst areas, and several rebel flying columns were dispersed and broken up while others were compelled to take to the mountains.[65]

Consequently the truce was bitterly received by contributors to the *Green Howards' Gazette*, even more so when it became clear that the cessation of hostilities had allowed their opponents to regroup and continue their attack:

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[62] Greenwood to Lloyd George, letter dated May 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/19/4/6; Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 96.
[63] Hawes, 'Kwab-O-Kayal', p. 68.
[64] Hist. 5th Div., p. 86.
[65] *Green Howards' Gazette*, 'Fighting the Gunmen', Feb. 1922, p. 179.

> Attacks have been made on our detachments at Clonbeg and Gallybally, without any material success to the rebels. And we are bidden to forget the hideous past and to keep a truce from what was virtually war.[66]

Indeed, on the day of the truce, it was claimed that in the 6th Division alone:

> A Private of the Machine Gun Corps was murdered; a water party of the Green Howards was attacked at Mitchelstown luckily without fatal results [and] that night four unarmed soldiers were kidnapped and murdered in Cork, and a patrol at Castleisland was ambushed.[67]

It was also claimed that "liason" officers appointed to co-ordinate the truce (usually recruited directly by de Valera from amongst officers of the I.R.A.) were guilty of ignoring 'offences claimed of and took no steps to redress just grievances, or were totally unable to control their followers.'[68] By November 1921, the Green Howards were concerned that 'British prestige…was endangered' by the rebels continued violation of the truce: 'Never has such provocation been shown to a force as is being shown to us.'[69] As late as December 1921 (five months into the ceasefire) they still found themselves targeted by rebels: 'We could fill volumes if we liked in recording very serious breaches of the truce in our area alone.'[70]

J.E.P.Brass expressed particular frustration at the timing of the truce. His account points towards an upturn in both the morale and the capability of the armed forces in the final days of conflict:

> …the round up was fully organized, the net carefully laid, and the strings just about to be pulled to close it up, when there was an epidemic of handshaking amongst certain of our politicians, and the gunmen were left to murder Irishmen instead of Englishmen.[71]

Evidently, many saw the truce as a contradiction to the increased military activity that preceded it. C.R.B.Knight achieved more balance through his recognition of the

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[66] *Green Howards' Gazette*, no 329, Aug. 1921, p. 43.
[67] Rebellion. 6th Div., p. 129.
[68] Hist. 5th Div., p. 112.
[69] *Green Howards' Gazette*, no 332, Nov. 1921, p. 78.
[70] *Ibid*, no 333, Dec.1921, p. 145.
[71] Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet', pp. 233-4.

continued threat of an I.R.A. offensive: he remained convinced, however, that the British forces had finally outflanked their opponents by July 1921:

> At Fermoy, no trains had run for a week due to the lines being cut and the roads for miles around were blocked. Yet everywhere British columns were passing, harassing the rebels who were everywhere "on the run" as the saying was, when, with a complete *volte face*, the government ordained a truce, and there began the talks that resulted in the establishment of the Free State of Eire.[72]

F.A.S.Clarke was less confident of the wholesale destruction of his opponents and yet remained certain that the I.R.A. could never have physically evicted the British forces from Ireland. In a poignant passage, he recalled the Essex Regiment's final withdrawal from Fort Charles:

> Every officer and other rank felt angry and ashamed as we marched out into the dark from the Fort which had been held by British troops for about 350 years. We did not see the rebels waiting somewhere nearby to take over the Fort which they could never have captured but which our politicians had given to them.[73]

In their outlook on the military campaign, it would appear that the military were continually at odds with the Cabinet in terms of the balance of optimism. In November 1920, Greenwood expressed his confidence that 'the work of restoring order is making satisfactory progress', likewise, in January 1921 he reinforced his opinion that that 'the tide had turned' against Sinn Fein and the I.R.A..[74] This contrasted with a less encouraging (if not fatalistic) report issued by Macready on 25 December claiming that: 'The general military situation is developing as was anticipated…rebel flying columns still carry out enterprises in out-lying districts against small forces of troops and police.'[75] Further to this, in the latter part of 1920 Macready had begun to express his underlying concerns regarding the weakness of the British counter-propaganda effort, and the frequency of retaliatory acts on the part of the R.I.C. Indeed, Lawlor has suggested that Macready displayed increasing

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[72] Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs*, chapter 1, p. 3.
[73] Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', chapter 6, p. 14.
[74] N.A., CAB 27/108, Weekly Survey of the State of Ireland for the Irish Situation Committee, 9 Nov. 1920; Greenwood to Lloyd George, 26 Jan. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F 19/3/2.
[75] N.A., CAB 27/107, Macready to Irish Situation Committee, 25 Dec. 1920.

irritation at Greenwood's unbridled optimism fearing that it 'encouraged the extremists to keep up their pressure' in order to continue to discredit the government.[76] In his reports to the Irish Situation Committee, Macready tended to convey an impression of inertia rather than advance during the early part of 1921. This tended to be reflected in the rather sullen accounts generated by soldiers' during this period. However, despite this, military initiatives did begin to meet with considerable success by the spring of 1921. A series of arms raids in Mountjoy Square, Harcourt Street, and Baggot Lane in Dublin during March and April were accompanied by a raid on 31 March on the Dáil's Ministry of Home Affairs in Molesworth Street resulting in the seizure of a number of important documents. A further raid on Blackhall Place on 29 April resulted in the arrest of 40 men of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. Certainly, the evidence of serving soldiers suggests that an enervated military was revitalised by the more favourable military outlook in April.

In a reversal of roles, the increasing optimism of the soldiery (if not Macready) failed to synchronise with a burgeoning realism at Cabinet level that gestures towards a constitutional settlement were the key to restoring order in Ireland. The divergence of opinion between the soldiery and the government was voiced by Midleton, who contrasted military optimism with the general public perception: 'whatever any soldier has said to the contrary, no civilian that I have met will admit that we have gained in the last six months.'[77] Indeed, there were belated signs of a Cabinet recognition that coercive policies had failed to sufficiently advance the British position. In December 1920, the government had already committed itself to resolving a new constitution for Ireland through the introduction of the Government of Ireland Act. This established two Irish Parliaments: a Northern Parliament for the six counties of Ulster, and a Southern Parliament for the remainder. The elections held on 25 May revealed that the Unionists had gained a majority in the Northern Parliament, and Sinn Fein had secured 124 of 128 seats in the Southern Parliament, of whom only the four Unionist M.P.s of Trinity College were prepared to assemble. Sinn Fein were aware that the terms of the Government of Ireland Act stipulated that the failure to assemble would result in Crown Colony government being imposed in Southern Ireland. This eventuality strengthened the government's resolve to reach a settlement with Sinn Fein. Given the delicate balance of public opinion and the lack

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[76] S.Lawlor, *Britain and Ireland 1914-23* (Dublin, 1983) p. 86.
[77] Midleton to Lloyd George, 8 March 1921, quoted in C.Townshend, *The British Campaign*, p. 173.

of military and financial resources to implement it. the government were particularly anxious to avoid such drastic emergency measures.

Certainly by March 1921 it would appear that all hopes of a speedy military resolution to the conflict had been abandoned and the Cabinet had reached a recognition that 'the military methods adopted by the government had not kept pace with or overcome, those adopted by their opponents.'[78] The change of emphasis was also reflected in Greenwood's recognition in April 1921 that 'attacks upon the police and military forces continue with no signs of diminishing activity.'[79] It would appear, therefore, that the government had belatedly accepted the reality that 'Britain had neither the coercive capacity nor the political will to carry the campaign through to finality.'[80] Despite this, officers' statements suggest that such 'finality' was required to satisfy the garrison. Furthermore, their assuredness regarding the prospect of a military victory can be taken as an indication of a general lack of political nous amongst officers in Ireland. As Hopkinson has observed 'politics and shifting perspectives, both nationally and internationally, came to matter more than the state of the fighting and the strengths of the two sides.'[81] For the soldiery, it would appear that 'defeat' or 'victory' could only be understood in a purely military sense.

Amongst officers, the most insightful view of the eventual settlement of 1921 was offered by Douglas Wimberley. He was perceptive enough to realise that where an enlarged army might have overpowered Sinn Féin in the short term, time and convalescence would have re-ignited an armed republican campaign. To Wimberley the settlement went well beyond expediency because it was shaped by moral considerations:

> To my mind this was the only sensible course left open to them…an official policy of ruthlessness could easily have quelled the active Sinn Féin revolt…but I feel certain the discontent would have merely smouldered underground, it would have again burst into flames as soon as we withdrew. The really brutal measures which Cumberland and his army took in Scotland in 1745, finally to crush

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[78] Speech of Lord Chancellor, 21 June 1921, quoted in D.G.Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics 1868-1996* (London, 1996), p. 68.
[79] N.A., CAB 24/2804, Survey of the State of Ireland for Weekended April 4th 1921 (circulated by the Chief Secretary for Ireland).
[80] J.Ainsworth, 'British Security Policy in Ireland, 1920-1921: A Desperate Attempt by the Crown to Maintain Anglo-Irish Unity by Force' *Australian Journal of Irish Studies* (2001) p. 184.
[81] Hopkinson, *The Irish War Of Independence*, p. 96.

> the rising there, would never have been tolerated by public opinion in Britain in 1921.[82]

Macready was similarily convinced that there was no definitive military solution to Anglo-Irish antagonism, asserting that the 'the great Irish question will never be solved by force.'[83]

The eventual settlement of the Irish War of Independence in the form of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, drew a heavy volume of comment from the soldiery. Although some (like Wimberley) saw it for its pragmatic qualities, others felt that it was too generous to republican demands, at the expense of loyalists:

> We do not see in any of these terms any guarantee that no more murders are to take place, no intimidation of loyalists, or even no coercion of Ulster, but we hope that those upon whom the whole responsibility of this somewhat dangerous Treaty lies, have taken our only friends in this country into consideration.[84]

For some, the Treaty was 'a betrayal of the rights and the honour' of the loyalist Irish.[85] Others, less biased in their assessment, saw the portents of sectarian conflict in the Treaty. By maintaining the partition of Ulster (previously established by the Government of Ireland Act in December 1920) J.B.Arnold claimed that 'differences of religion' which had previously been tempered by an 'artificial link' in the form of 'a common government' were likely to become 'more marked and more prominent when the link [was] broken.'[86] Similarly, E.M.Ransford argued that the separation of Ulster was undesirable to all participants in the conflict be they loyalists, nationalists, soldiers or policemen. To Ransford 'partition' was a 'crude arbitary solution with no clear basis on geographical, religious or ethnological grounds.' He also added, rather sardonically, that it 'had some more merit in being unsatisfactory to all sides! An "Irish" virtue?'[87]

Clearly, the handling of the final period of the conflict from the truce to the Anglo-Irish Treaty was very much at the forefront of the minds of those who served

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[82] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 155.
[83] N.A., W.O. 32/9520, Memorandum by Macready to G.H.Q. Memorandum on present military situation and general proposals in regard to troops during coming winter, 26 July 1920.
[84] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Jan. 1922, p. 66.
[85] *Ibid*, Feb. 1922, p. 178.
[86] Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 134.
[87] Ransford, 'One Man's Tide', p. 19.

in Ireland during these months, enough to cast significant doubt on claims made in the 'History of the 5th Division' that:

> The British soldier, where his feelings had not been stirred by the murder of some of his officers and comrades. probably did not think very much about the subject; he hoped for a quick release from the arduous round of duties in Ireland and looked forward to more leisure and to more "nights in bed."[88]

Prior to the Truce of July 1921 a number of soldiers had focused their discontent on the lack of leadership shown by the government. Many were angered by the 'extreme reluctance' of the Cabinet 'to opt for either of the dire alternatives of conciliation or full scale coercion in the post-war years of economic recession and labour crises.'[89] Some expressed views that reflected Anderson's indication that military strategy (be it conciliatory or coercive) should be 'accompanied by a declaration of policy'.[90] Certainly, this would have established whether the government, in quelling disorder, intended to maintain the union of Britain and Ireland or create the pre-conditions that they felt were necessary for conciliatory measures. Certainly, an enunciated policy establishing conciliation as the ultimate purpose of the campaign may have attracted the support of moderate opinion in Ireland. From what we can ascertain from soldiers' memoirs, troops were certainly prepared to be led in either direction. The failure to carry policy through to an ultimate conclusion only led to greater anger and frustration and may have pushed some towards the 'consistent' application of violent force.

With regard to the sectarian issues raised by the Ulster question and the persecution of Protestant minorities in the south, it would appear that soldiers were more preoccupied by notions of 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism.' Although present in all conflicts (and often overlooked for this very reason) sentiments and examples of ethnic hostility and aggressive nationalism seemed especially to the fore in accounts of Irish service. Many soldiers regarded themselves as being engaged in a racial war with the Irish and saw this attitude as being reflected back by the Irish people. The Digest of Service of the Manchester Regiment recorded a speech delivered by Father Brennan in Millstreet, County Cork in which he warned against the cultural and

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[88] Hist. 5th Div., p. 110.
[89] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 66.
[90] Anderson to Greenwood, letter dated 20 July 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F 19 2 14.

linguistic colonialism of the English: 'The English language must be expelled from Ireland, like the hated English themselves…only read Irish books in the Gaelic language.'[91] In turn, many soldiers conceptualised the conflict in terms of a binary clash between 'Celts' and 'Saxons'.[92] This could create significant problems for Irish soldiers in British regiments: E.J.A.H.Brush, an Ulsterman, recalled how relations between English and Irish soldiers in the 3rd Rifle Brigade awaiting transfer to Ireland, were destabilized by news of the conflict: 'At that time one of the periodical wars waged by the I.R.A. was in progress and the impact was not lost on an English Regiment.' Brush recalled how suspicion fell on himself and two other Irish Second Lieutenants 'Denis Purdon from the rich Midlands [and] Edda Perceval-Maxwell from the deep South…However, they decided that we were unlikely to have been planted on them.'[93] Recalling an earlier period, Cecil Plumb revealed how traditional rivalries between (London) English and Irish soldiers serving in English regiments could often led to infighting or, in his words, a clash between 'Irish blood and Cockney swagger.'[94]

In addition, many soldiers sought to emphasise the most favourable aspects of the British stereotype in order to highlight the most menacing aspects of the Irish character. This form of presentation usually failed to discriminate between the Irish people and active rebels. Most saw no special distinction between the two, and 'rebellion' came to be regarded as inherent to the Irish character. As the *Green Howards' Gazette* claimed 'Those of our readers who have studied Erin's gloomy history will realise the class of people with whom we have to deal.'[95] The wife of an officer also invoked the past to demonstrate aspects of the Irish temperament: 'History tells us that Ireland has always been indifferent to murder.'[96] Lieutenant R.D.Jeune, an Intelligence officer, ascribed the conflict (and the wider problem of the Irish question) to 'climatic laziness' combined with 'the rebellious Irish temperament.'[97] The *Gazette* even compared the Irish to the 'wildest savages of Central Africa.'[98]

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[91] Speech delivered by Father Brennan at the Roman Catholic Church, Millstreet, County Cork, 28 Aug. 1920 in Record of Service of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment.
[92] This type of presentation can be found in Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 132.
[93] Brush, 'Rifle Green/Orange Flash' p. 13.
[94] Plumb, Field Message Book, 23 July 1917.
[95] *Green Howards' Gazette*, July 1920, p. 49.
[96] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 70.
[97] Jeune, 'Dublin 1920-21', p. 1.
[98] *Green Howards' Gazette*, March 1921, p. 6.

Ethnic hostility amongst the soldiery was fostered by the experience of the conflict although, as O'Malley observed, it was built upon strong foundations:

> We [the Irish people] were an unknown quantity save judged in their hereditary contempt and their current interpretation of the papers they read... These men believed their own propaganda. We saw them as part of their government machine which wished through them to produce a certain effect. [99]

Soldiers' 'hereditary' views usually reflected anti-Irish prejudices that had developed in Britain during the course of the nineteenth century. The dramatic increase in Irish immigration to Britain from the 1840's onwards tended to create antagonism across all levels of British society. This, in turn, led to a rigidly defined ethnic stereotype based around the perceived stupidity, intemperance and violence of the Irish. The Irish immigrant (in contemporary opinion) was akin to a menace or a contagion threatening Anglo-Saxon culture. This 'Irish Conspiracy' loomed large amongst the middle classes who regarded it as a significant factor in the increased criminality associated with British urban life. It applied equally to dispossessed workers who claimed that the immigrant Irish had flooded the ranks of their declining trades. In addition, the Victorian intelligentsia were also prone to articulate anti-Irish prejudices and, according to historian R.Swift, they can even be discerned in the works of such diverse figures as Carlyle, Engels and Disraeli.[100]

Amongst all sections of the populace, contemporary comment on the immigrant Irish tended to be couched in distinctly 'racial' terminology. Victorian attitudes towards the Irish were often based on the assumption that they were inferior in culture and separate in race to the Anglo-Saxons. To this end, some sections of the Victorian press lampooned the Irish, and these presentations allowed the Irish stereotype to become firmly entrenched in contemporary opinion. Historian, Perry Curtis drew attention to the 'simianized' representation of the Irish in *Punch* magazine:[101]

> A creature manifestly between the gorilla and the negro is to be met with in some of the lowest districts of London and Liverpool...It

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[99] O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 242.
[100] R.Swift, *The Irish in Britain 1815-1914* (London, 1990), p. 26.
[101] L.P.Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricatures* (New York, 1971).

> belongs to a tribe of Irish savages... When conversing with its kind it talks a sort of gibberish.[102]

The evidence of British soldiers serving in Ireland suggests that they were prone to similarly lurid presentations of the Irish stereotype. This implies that the Victorian stereotype of the Irish was still very much intact in the early years of the twentieth century. However, as R.F.Foster pointed out for an earlier period, 'class and religion' often informed the caricature, as did 'resentment against Irish resentment of the Union.' Therefore, presentations that were manifestly 'racial' in their tone sometimes reflected a brand of 'colonial' attitude towards the Irish.[103] In any case, Irish stereotypes were manifest in the ranks of the military (despite a significant Irish contingent in the British army). In particular, the concept of the 'drunken' or 'intemperate' Irishman was extremely popular: even the 'History of the 5th Division' drew attention to 'the natural loquacity of the Irishman when drunk' as a fruitful source of intelligence.[104] The *Manchester Regiment Gazette* regularly published anti-Irish jokes to sustain the 1st Battalion whilst they were on Irish service:

> Scene in Hospital...
>
> (Irish recruit with no apparent disability being interrogated by a Medical Officer)
>
> M.O: "What's the matter with you?"
>
> RECRUIT: "I am 'wake' and can't do any work."
>
> M.O: "What did you work at before you enlisted?"
>
> RECRUIT (with emphasis): "Work is it? I never did any."
>
> M.O: "What supported you then?"
>
> RECRUIT: "Sure, my friends paid me 10/- a week to keep sober!" [sic].[105]

Charges of intemperance were usually interspersed with references to casual violence and criminality: J.P.Swindlehurst claimed that men of the Lancashire Fusiliers awaiting transfer to Ireland were convinced that the 'favourite joke of the Irishman is

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[102] *Punch*, 18 Oct. 1862.
[103] R.Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*, (London, 1995), p. 193.
[104] Hist. 5th Div., p. 43.
[105] *Manchester Regiment Gazette*, May 1921, p. 87.

to get you to stand a bottle of Guinness, drink your health. and then crash you on the head with the empty bottle.'[106]

Soldiers were also prone to portray the Irish as 'stupid'. 'ignorant' or 'half witted'. The correspondent of the *Green Howards' Gazette* suggested. patronizingly. that the Irish people were unable to recognise that the British campaign was being fought on their behalf to protect them from the tyranny of Sinn Féin. In his assessment he described them as 'the poor ignorant creatures on whose account the Battalion is serving in Ireland.'[107] Similarly, an officer's wife considered it to be a failing on the part of the general public not to appreciate the role of the army as their protectors: 'it was an undoubted fact that the British stood between them [the Irish people] and ruin.'[108] Indeed, anti-Irish sentiments and stereotypes even extended to the ranks of Irish government and the Cabinet particularly with regard to the rebelliousness of the perceived Irish temperament. Despite his Irish background, Lord French typified this attitude in his claim that the Irish were an 'impulsive' people who lacked the capacity for 'deep thinking.' Hopkinson has similarly discerned 'contempt for the Irish' in the comments and correspondence of. amongst others. Walter Long, Lloyd George, Churchill and particularly Bonar Law who declared the Irish to be 'an inferior race.' [109]

Many soldiers regarded the Irish as dour in both appearance and demeanour. One made reference to the look of 'depression' on the faces of Irishmen and suggested that they had a stern, humourless nature: 'it is rare you see any civilian with a smiling face'.[110] Equally, some regarded the Irish claim to independence as evidence of egotism and self-centredness; one soldier even regarded the demand for an Irish Republic (and the methods used to obtain it) as further proof of the 'ghoulish Irish altar of selfishness.'[111] The authors of the 'History of the 5th Division' even reproached the Irish population for their 'natural moral cowardice' in failing to assert public opinion against the methods employed by the rebels.[112]

Some soldiers even went to the extreme of relating ethnic stereotypes to physical characteristics. J.M.Hulton's (almost eugenic) description of the rebels in his custody

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[106] Swindlehurst, MS diary, 7 Jan. 1921.
[107] *Green Howards' Gazette*, Nov. 1921, p. 79.
[108] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 47.
[109] O'Halpin, *The Decline of the Union*, p.19; Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 7.
[110] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, Jan. 1921, p. 8.
[111] *Green Howards' Gazette*, June 1921, p. 155.
[112] Hist. 5th Div., p. 4.

following an ambush at a Sinn Féin ball was typical of this approach: 'they were fox-trotted into a small room, six at a time, where we cross-examined them. They were all of the right type; long black hair, brushed back; furtive close set eyes; lean degenerate faces.'[113] Though less inflammatory in his choice of words, Percival was similarly confident that he could identify the rebellious 'type' by appearance alone: 'picture 50 or 60 civilians lined up in front of you, out of which you have to pick any of the I.R.A. leaders. At first sight it seems almost impossible, but after a little practice one becomes able to select a few likely 'types.''[114]

Whilst most accounts focused on negative stereotypes, others remarked on the more amiable aspects of the perceived Irish character. This quality was recognised by S.Gilley in his study of English attitudes towards the Irish in Victorian Britain, in which he pointed out that the Irish were perceived to have a benign as well as a menacing face. According to this argument, 'Irishness' not only entailed negative connotations, it also conjured images of kindliness, generosity, hospitality and wit.[115] Certainly there were some amongst the soldiery who were keen to credit what they considered to be the best qualities of the Irish. These accounts may still have invoked familiar stereotypes, but they did also reveal a fondness and a warmth towards the Irish people. In particular, J.B.Arnold noted a high level of illiteracy amongst the civilian population, but paid tribute to their fluency of speech: 'the Irishman however unlettered, is eloquent, he believes that words are a power in themselves and not merely an imperfect medium for conveying thoughts.'[116] J.P.Swindlehurst was similarly touched by the 'pathos that Irish eloquence could command' after hearing an Irish barrister plead on behalf of one of the perpetrators of the "Bloody Sunday" killings.[117]

If soldiers were liable to draw caricatures of the Irish, they were equally prone to self-stereotyping. In contrast to the 'impulsive', 'intemperate' and 'irrational' nature of their opponents, soldiers regarded themselves as representatives of the 'English' or 'British' virtues of 'rationality', 'sobriety', 'stoicism' and 'discipline.' K.A.Plimpton saw evidence of these qualities in the aftermath of a rebel attack against his battalion's stock of vehicles:

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[113] Hulton, 'Cahirguillamore House', p. 1.
[114] Percival, Guerrilla Warfare (II), p. 10.
[115] S.Gilley, 'English attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900', in Colin Holmes (ed), *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society* (London, 1978).
[116] .Arnold, 'Against the Stream' p. 131.
[117] Swindlehurst, MS Diary, 28 Feb. 1921.

> East Yorkshiremen, like the good Englishmen they are, are not easily upset, but there are limitations to everyone's patience. The reign of "fear and terror" as we sometimes see it described, will not shake the faith that has been pledged before God and Country of the East Yorkshire Regiment.[118]

During his imprisonment in Kanturk, Sean Moylan observed that the soldiers who guarded him exhibited a form of self-perception based on what they regarded as inherent British virtues. During his first night in prison he was attended by an orderly officer who arranged for his handcuffs to be removed and replaced with a pair that allowed him more comfort and freedom of movement:

> I thanked him and expressed some surprise at his kindness, to which he stated "I am British". The term did not in my experience connote any form of chivalry or fair play and at that time I could not realise that it could mean those things to anybody. However, there are some British who do play the game.[119]

References to national characteristics were often interspersed with expressions of English or British patriotism, as though the traits were reflective of the 'greatness' or the 'majesty' of Britain. In such cases they were usually assumed to be innate qualities:

> It is only the fact that the men have the inborn instinct of every Britisher that it is his job to "carry on" that keeps them going, and we shall all be glad for our own sakes, as well as for Ireland's when peace is restored.[120]

The qualities that soldiers attributed to themselves were usually diametrically opposed to those displayed by their enemies. Thus, the wife of an officer was able to make a virtue of 'obedience' and 'subservience' in sharp contrast to 'rebellion':

> I only know from hearsay of the deeds, chivalry, self sacrifice and devotion to duty of our men in France. But what I did see with my

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[118] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion notes, July 1920, p. 106.
[119] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p. 132.
[120] Plimpton, *"The Snapper"*, 1st Battalion notes, July 1920, p. 106.

> own eyes in Ireland was the same devotion to duty, discipline, and cheerful obedience to orders under the most hateful and disagreeable circumstances.[121]

Wilfred Ewart, visiting Victoria Barracks in Cork, found himself engaged in a conversation with staff officers of the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment concerning the general picture of Anglo-Irish relations. His hosts attempted to summarise the essential differences between British soldiers and Irish insurgents by claiming that

> …we English are incapable of hating…You see our men actually offering cigarettes to these swine who shoot 'em in the back whenever they get an opportunity. That's your English Tommy all over.

This view echoed sentiments expressed by other soldiers emphasising passivity and generosity as national characteristics. J.B.Arnold, as an army pensions inspector, emphasised 'trustworthiness' as an English virtue. To Arnold, this quality was contrasted with the 'treachery' of Irish nationalists. In his discussion of Britain's commitment to honouring army pensions for ex-servicemen in Ireland, (in which he played a role) he claimed that the English had the quality of being steadfast, regardless of changes in the political sphere: 'Whatever party came out top in the country, the promises of England would always be redeemed.'[122] Again, in this respect, Irish officials were similarly prone to colonial attitudes that promoted the virtues of English democracy, respect for the individual and human rights. Some regarded themselves as duty bound to impose these qualities on a reluctant people. Sir Warren Fisher, in his condemnation of conciliatory policies in Ireland, looked forward to the 'restoration to the community at large of elementary human rights as understood by Anglo Saxendom.'[123]

Besides promoting vigilantism and indiscipline in the Irish garrison, the general aura of discontent arising from isolation, over-work, and frustration came to be reflected in soldiers' attitudes towards the handling of the conflict by their competent authority.

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[121] Anon, *Experiences of an Officer's Wife*, p. 24.
[122] Arnold, 'Against the Stream', p. 128.
[123] Fisher to Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Chamberlain, letter dated 15 May 1920, Lloyd George Papers. F/31/1/33.

This was especially relevant to the timing of the truce, which many felt betrayed their 'struggle' at the precise time when an ascendant military could have delivered the decisive blow. A difficult campaign also promoted a hardening attitude against the methods employed by their opponents. The perceived brutality of the rebel campaign could also have the effect of converting traditional stereotypes into genuine 'ethnic' and 'racially' defined antagonisms that came to be defined by binary ethnic identities relating to 'British' and 'Irish' or 'Saxon' and 'Celtic' categories. On the other hand, a minority of soldiers straddled these identities, to reach an appreciation or a 'soldierly respect' for the ingenuity of their enemies' tactics that was not necessarily indicative of their loyalties. In limited cases, loyalties could be surmounted by the financial incentives involved in fraternising with the enemy. An occurrence which has been demonstrated to have taken place on a larger scale than has been previously claimed.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the social and cultural experience of British soldiers who served in Ireland between 1916 and 1921. In so doing it has provided the first analysis of the period in which soldiers of the British army have formed the primary focus. This represents a unique contribution to the historiography of the subject, and one that that has sought to apply the categories of analysis exemplified in recent regional studies of the conflict in order to appreciate the 'dynamics', 'political identities' and 'relationships' that linked the regular army to other participants in the conflict.[1] Applying these categories to the soldier's experience has also allowed for further insights into the effects of capricious military and colonial policies on those who served at the 'sharp end' of the conflict. Therefore, this study can claim to have promoted the efficacy of reading the period through a concentration on social and cultural experience. To this end, this thesis has established six key areas which, it is argued, formed the social and cultural framework for military service in Ireland.

Retrenchment

The campaign in Ireland, which has been described as Britain's 'rude introduction to insurgency' was continually dogged by organizational, tactical and material deficiencies for which regular soldiers paid the price with their labour and their lives.[2]

Post-war retrenchment and army reform had a profound effect on the remaining garrison in Ireland: the crusade for economy in all aspects of government spending tended to have a disproportionately negative effect on the lives of servicemen. As budgets dwindled, so too did the number of troops available for security work; and as the size of the garrison dwindled, the insurgency gathered pace. This was the central problem facing the British soldier in Ireland. He attempted to continue his regular service life, fully aware of the contradiction between capability and expectation. Those unfortunate enough not to be transferred, seconded, drafted, posted or otherwise demobilized from Irish service, endured a rise in militant republicanism

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[1] Hart, *The I.R.A. at War*, p. 9.
[2] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, p. 149.

with a corresponding decline in their ability to combat the disorder. Furthermore, retrenchment not only affected the numerical strength of battalions but also stripped them of the necessary materials to wage modern warfare. Wireless technology, clerical aids, armour-plating and motor transport were lacking in the Irish army. That this situation did not spell disaster for the British campaign is testament to the energies of those who remained. A small garrison was required to make itself large, and it did so at the expense of adequate training and physical and mental exhaustion. The negative impact of economy in the British army was never counteracted by a corresponding drive for efficiency, which could have incorporated new methods and appropriate training. Even basic military training could have allowed reduced mobile units to benefit from the multiplied effect of superior marksmanship, movement and, above all, discipline.

Operational Experiences

Soldiers could be said to have been the victims of the frugality of the period, which, together with the war-weariness of the British public, established the contours of their operational routine. A culture of distrust and suspicion was later to result as a corollary of barrack isolation and community exclusion; soldiers' discontent, fatigue and professional frustration tended to develop during the course of military operations. This study has attempted to provide detailed accounts of these operations and reach beyond dry descriptions of familiar military terms such as 'raid', 'sweep', 'drive', 'patrol', 'escort' and 'guard' to discover their peculiar meaning within the context of Irish conditions. In so doing, it has highlighted the clash between classical and irregular patterns of warfare in Ireland and, for the first time, this study has, on an inter-personal level, examined soldiers' strained relationships with their comrades in the R.I.C. Here it was demonstrated that the government was never certain of its emphasis in combating disorder, and never fully resolved the balance between 'civil' and 'military' methods in its approach. Soldiers' accounts have revealed that successful co-operation in this field resulted from the enthusiasm and initiative of individual soldiers and policemen and could never be credited to any strategic plan for civil-military policing.

It was demonstrated that military strategy relied upon traditional and predictable military norms in order to define the army's operations and movements. Consequent inability to adapt operations to meet the demands of guerrilla warfare allowed the insurgents to plan and co-ordinate their attacks around conspicuous and ill-conceived military routines. Slow moving military patrols became the favoured target for rebels, and even in the absence of confrontation, it was easy to disrupt their passage through the use of tree felling or 'road cutting.' Sometimes these tactics heralded a planned ambush. That military convoys could fall victim to these, was an indication of a lack of dynamism and imagination on the part of military commanders in Ireland.

This part of the thesis also included a case study of the experience of military intelligence officers in Ireland. This strand brought together several of the threads established in Part I, including the problem of material and personnel shortages, the lack of adequate training, the vacillations of government policy and the inability to establish a unity of command in the Crown forces.

Living Conditions

The origins of military isolation during the conflict were to be found in the culture of barrack life: the standard and the location of barrack accommodation created both a physical and a mental barrier between the British soldiers and other participants in the conflict. This contributed towards a skewed vision of Irish society on the part the British soldier that usually preceded any form of confrontation. Typically, large barracks afforded ample protection to troops, but the old stone fortresses that the military relied on, fostered a siege mentality amongst their occupants. This feeling was reinforced by the heavy fortifications deemed necessary to secure barracks. Heavily armoured bases such as those at Moore Park or Portobello increased the soldiers' perception of being engaged in conflict, regardless of how combative the hostilities actually were. Lines of defence were bolstered despite the absence of any concerted rebel campaign against military bases. Added to this, a blind conspiracy of rebel action and republican and military propaganda tended to immure soldiers within their camps by exaggerating the separatist loyalties of the general public. Given all these influences, troops developed a consciousness of being adrift amidst a uniformly hostile population. Their knowledge of conditions outside barracks was gained during

counter-insurgency operations that, inevitably, brought them into direct contact with their enemies. As a result, the average British soldier experienced Irish service at both ends of the binary extremes of isolation and conflict. A 'curious mixture of peace and war' shaped the soldier's predicament in Ireland.[3] He was either hemmed in fortress-like barracks, and thus physically and psychologically separated from the community, or otherwise detached from the main battalion and exposed to the full wrath of his enemies.

Barrack isolation combined with hostile operations also produced other extremes of experience arising from a sharp contrast between hard work and inactivity. Where, during peacetime, the gap between action and inaction was bridged by a great amount of leisure time and social or sporting activities, the contours of military leisure and social lives were continually eroded by the risks posed by the rebellion. Where this could promote an innovative approach to barrack-based entertainments, many soldiers were prone to fill the void with heavy drinking, leading to quarrels and infighting. For those not overcome by liquor and thoughts of revenge, the safety afforded by larger barracks sometimes allowed soldiers to pursue the usual rounds of guest nights, reel dances and amateur dramatics. However, as the conflict progressed, a change in the direction of military strategy, combined with a shortage of troops required for military operations, resulted in larger battalions being broken up into smaller detachments and dispersed throughout their brigade area. This necessitated the use of makeshift barracks ranging from old cottages and courthouses to gaols and lunatic asylums and even tents and hutment camps. This militated against the soldiers' ability to seek respite and leisure and effectively removed any 'back area' in the conflict into which they could withdraw.[4]

Civilian Life

Developing on the strands established through an examination of barrack life, a thorough study of relations between soldiers and civilians in Ireland suggests that despite the paralysing effect of barrack confinement there were strong elements of

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[3] Hist. 5th Div., p. 65.

[4] N.A., W.O. 32/9572, Memorandum – Ireland and the General Military Situation, issued by Sir Laming Worthington Evans. (1) Discussions and references to the Cabinet on measures to restore law and order and the respective responsibilities of ministers and the General Officer Commanding; (2) Great Britain: (estimated strength after imminent end of coal crisis), 16 June 1921.

both integration and segregation. In fact, ambivalence is the key to understanding civil-military relations in Ireland – it would be easy to attribute the variety of experiences to independent factors such as differences of location and time period. The contrasting experiences of the East Yorkshire Regiment, stationed in the Midlands, and the Manchester Regiment, based in North Cork, bear witness to the importance of locality. Similarly, the experience of E.M.Warmington stationed in County Cork between 1918 and 1919, contrasted heavily with the later experience of Douglas Wimberley stationed in the same county. Nonetheless, the mixed fortunes of other soldiers and regiments suggest that any division in terms of area or period may only have limited value as a general rule. In any case, it fails fully to explain why some individuals or regiments were able to enjoy good relations with local people even in the worst districts, and at the very height of the conflict. This simple analysis also fails to separate the non-engaged crowd from active republicans, thereby failing to credit civilians with a mind of their own. As demonstrated, civilians were subject to the coercive influences of combatants on both sides of the conflict. It would, however, be wrong to imply that their actions were always simply a fearful and submissive reaction to initiatives from the protagonists. Some military accounts suggest that despite I.R.A. attempts to coerce communities into a rejection of the military presence, ultimately communities were able to reach their own conclusion. In his memoir *Changing Times*, Edward Maclysaght, a member of the Dáil's Industrial Resources Commission, remembered how a British officer on leave spent his time in County Clare where he was 'tremendously popular' adding that '…the real explanation is that we have no antagonism to individuals whatsoever …we actually welcome individual foreign soldiers; what we resist is an army of occupation.'[5] To take Maclysaght's observation a stage further: individuals could gain acceptance in the community by virtue of their disciplined conduct and geniality; similarly whole battalions, regiments, companies and detachments could be integrated, provided that they did not display the arrogance of an 'army of occupation'. Therefore the nature of civil-military relations cannot be attributed solely to the strength of local Sinn Féin influence; the conduct of the armed forces must also be brought under the microscope. If (hypothetically) we were to remove issues of politics and nationalism from the equation, the military can be seen as no more than a temporary adjunct to the

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[5] Maclysaght, *Changing Times*, diary entry dated 28 Jan. 1919, p. 92.

community. The British soldier in an Irish community becomes, like a tourist, a potential source of trade, a focus for hatred and suspicion, a source of friendship and entertainment, an exotic point of interest, or an unwelcome outsider. However, given that the soldier was a representative of British rule in Ireland, his very presence did in fact raise issues of sovereignty, ethnicity and nationalism, and these fundamentally precluded his actual social contact with local people. Nonetheless, this chapter also suggested that such barriers could be overcome through individual or collective effort on the part of soldiers, and furthermore that such acceptance was possible in the worst districts and at the worst times. The variegated nature of civil-military relations allowed personal affinities to be formed in the midst of an overwhelmingly antagonistic situation.

Unfortunately, as the weight of evidence provided in this chapter demonstrates, civil-military relations in Ireland only rarely took this form. For the most part, civilians and the military were separated by mutual antagonism, distrust and pre-conceived ideas with regard to each other's loyalties. There is a huge sense of lost potential in the fact that the barriers that separated the military from the community too often proved to be insurmountable. Only in rare and exceptional cases were the military able to establish close relationships with local people, and there seemed to be little or no thrust on the part of commanding officers to attempt to infiltrate community life.

The social and psychological gap between soldiers and civilians, which was usually present at the outset, tended to widen as the conflict progressed. Many amongst the soldiery were prone to fill this void with their own assumptions. Some soldiers experienced Irish society only through a series of confrontations with active rebels. This tended to have a teleological impact on soldiers' perceptions of the Irish as a whole; Sinn Féin came to represent everyone and everything outside the confines of the barracks, the colloquialism "shinner" became almost a generic term to describe any member of the population. In most cases, integrative potential (as seen in a number of accounts) was lost in a web of rumour and speculation concerning the loyalties of the general population. As a result, many soldiers found themselves in the curious position of living 'within' and 'without' Irish communities. The soldier's role in assisting civil policing (and later imposing military law) gave them a pivotal role in Irish towns and villages; the combined efforts of Sinn Féin, the I.R.A., local people, and their own misconceptions, still isolated them from the social and commercial life

of the community. Those who failed to penetrate civilian circles usually became incurious bystanders to Irish life, whilst others increasingly viewed Irish communities as a softer target for revenge attacks than the hardened and elusive fighters of the I.R.A.

Violence

In the historiography of the Anglo-Irish War, the phenomenon of military reprisals and indiscipline occupies an indeterminate place between the horrors of police violence, and the ruthlessness of the rebel campaign. Both of these factors have been evidenced and theorised in great detail, and yet the excesses of the military remain insufficiently covered by either approach. Military violence emerges as the 'grey area' between abuses of the civil power and nationalist revolt.

By breaking down events into their component parts, this study has identified the diversities and peculiarities of the reprisal campaign and, in doing so, it has also highlighted both the 'untamed' and the 'regimental' character of reprisals. This led to a consideration of the composition of those involved, and a more thorough examination of the character and the motivations of raiding parties.

Without fully dispensing with the claim that reprisals could be an irrational 'knee-jerk' response to the pressures of the conflict, it has been shown that such actions were rarely immediate or spontaneous. Hugh Martin's account of the attack on the Newport Dairy, and eyewitness reports of reprisals in Cork on the night of 11 December, demonstrate that reprisals could resemble regular military operations – in the sense that they had a clear target, a definite strategic purpose, a chain of command, and a division of labour.[6] Furthermore, as notable events in Roscommon and Hospital demonstrate, many ostensible reprisal actions often lacked any real background in provocation and were less the product of a revenge mentality than a 'warning shot'. In addition, military sources suggest that these statements of intent were aimed at both the military authorities and the civilian population. Beneath the main focus of the conflict (namely Ireland's struggle for independence) we see a parallel struggle on the part of the soldiery for independence from the restrictions of an over-cautious military policy. Many soldiers were of the mindset that they could

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[6] Martin, *Ireland in Insurrection*, p. 67.

recapture, by violent means, the ground that had been lost in the sands of governmental maladministration. As a result, many professional soldiers regarded the leniency and indecision of the British government as the main obstacle to their success, rather then the strength of their enemy. Sturgis' private assertion: 'I cling like a parrot to Make peace or Make war, and if it is to be the latter it's the soldiers' job and should be the soldiers' responsibility' would, undoubtedly, have raised cheers in the barrack rooms of the Irish garrison.[7] Echoing sentiments expressed by a number of soldiers, Douglas Wimberley claimed that 'an official policy of ruthlessness could easily have quelled the active Sinn Féin revolt.'[8] However justified his claim, the absence of a hard line military policy led many soldiers to resolve upon an unofficial solution.

Behind the scattered trail of destruction we can discern a series of campaigns, such as the ones that methodically targeted creameries, farmsteads or civic buildings. These actions can be seen as part of an unofficial military policy. Of course, the various battalion officers never met to settle on this course, but most individual regiments, or even small detachments did pursue similar independent reprisal campaigns. These small campaigns tended to converge into an effective whole, often with synchronistic effect. The initiatives of one illicit squad were quickly emulated by another; habits spread furtively between battalions, regiments, companies and detachments. Thus, the precedent for the creameries campaign was established at Laccamore, County Tipperary, in the spring of 1920 and, within a very short space of time, the burning of creameries had become a feature throughout the South Western counties. Similarly, the well-publicised vandalism and looting of Fermoy in September 1919 (though not a precedent) prompted a rash of similar incidents from disgruntled soldiers in stations throughout Ireland.

Faced with a seemingly relentless onslaught from the I.R.A. (and the consequent proliferation of military violence) came the belated recognition by the government that civil authority in Ireland had ceased to function effectively. The government's commitment to the restoration of power by civil means created ambiguity for the role of the military, which became effectively 'lifted above its own law'.[9] Conversely, this kind of commitment (which had sought to avoid a drastic military solution) forced the

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[7] Sturgis Diaries, entry dated, 23 November 1920.
[8] Wimberley, 'Scottish Soldier', p. 155.
[9] Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War*, p. 307.

military to go on the defensive, as guerrilla fighters increasingly targeted soldiers. By the time the government had recognised the need to buttress the military, both in terms of manpower and rights within the law, the pattern of reprisals had become firmly entrenched. Necessarily, martial law had to incorporate the soldiers' increasingly flexible notion of justice. Therefore, military policy broadened to assimilate the very forms of indiscipline that its past failures had conspired to produce. Reprisals prompted an official response that could never substantially alter the course that had already been established. The growth in the scale and ambition of rebel attacks had forced the authorities towards a military resolution, but the particulars of future military policy turned upon the earlier independent actions of soldiers. These actions were not usually driven by evil intent, indiscipline, or base revenge mentality, but by raw fear and anxiety. The lack of an enunciated top-down policy combined with social exclusion and barrack isolation had fostered a dangerous self-reliance. Therefore, any consideration of the role of the British army in Ireland is forced to consider two parallel military campaigns: one aimed at aiding the civil power, another at transcending it.

In terms of motivation, it was demonstrated that there were three main 'triggers' for revenge attacks. In the first instance, reprisals were driven by an instinct for revenge that followed a simple 'tit for tat' mentality. Secondly, the brutal methods of the republican campaign tended to make troops more vengeful; many soldiers were not prepared to tolerate the killing of their colleagues by means that they considered to be 'unprofessional' or 'unmilitary.' Therefore, the reprisal was an attempt to regain the 'military' potential denied to their 'murdered' colleagues. Finally, the authorities' irresolute approach to the punishment of insurgents created another vacuum of potential that soldiers filled with their brand of punitive measures.

Political and Ethnic Identities

The co-existence of moderate republican sympathies and Victorian-origin 'racial' attitudes towards the Irish could barely conceal a broad consensus of opinion amongst soldiers of the British army that was fiercely critical of government policy. This general discontent with the authorities' handling of the conflict was manifest in soldiers' memoirs, to such an extent that even republican initiatives (such as the

formation of the Dáil) were seen (at least partly) as a result of the government's tolerance of Sinn Féin. That is not to suggest that soldiers failed to recognise the tactical and organizational intelligence of their opponents, but rather that this recognition brought the shortcomings of military command into sharper relief. This view was further promoted by the Dáil's willingness to duplicate the roles normally reserved for the state. To many soldiers this further undermined British colonial prestige. Given these drawbacks, many soldiers looked forward to a resolution of the conflict in favour of Sinn Féin as the best prospect for a prompt return home, and this attitude derived from the continual failure of the British government to promote military ascendancy.

If a desire for conflict resolution (at whatever cost) produced low morale of the British forces during this period, the government's commitment to reinforcing the garrison in early June 1921 brought a spectacular reversal of opinion. For the first time, a change in military policy had opened up the possibility of a swift and favourable military resolution. Nonetheless the optimism was short-lived – in July 1921, the government offered Sinn Féin a truce as a prelude to the peace talks. Many soldiers felt that the government had failed to support them throughout the conflict and were further insulted by the '*volte face*' of July 1921 because it frustrated their first sustained period of success.

Besides recognising the I.R.A.'s organizational strengths, some soldiers could also accommodate republican ideals. There is even a suggestion that a minority may have sometimes lent material (or manpower) support to the republican cause either for self-serving financial reasons or through conviction, though the claim requires further research. The obstacle for most soldiers, even for the sympathetic, was usually the methods employed by their opponents to further their cause. In this respect, the soldiers' stance was often contradictory, in the sense that they urged that recognition be given to the conflict as a state of war, but continually baulked at accepting their opponents' tactics as being of 'acts of war.' The actions of insurgents exposed them as being 'murderous' and 'treacherous' and this had implications for the way soldiers viewed the Irish as a whole. Many entertained firm stereotypes of the Irish, and the worst aspects of the perceived Irish character were reinforced during the course of the conflict. Negative stereotyping of the Irish (juxtaposed with a positive British stereotype) reinforced the soldiers' view of the conflict as a racial war. Issues of ethnicity and nationalism are central to any understanding of the soldiers' experience

in Ireland; nationalism rather than sectarianism defined the antagonistic relationship between soldiers and rebels. If some republican activists saw the struggle in sectarian terms, to British troops the issue was determinedly racial. Though it was never explicitly stated in soldiers' accounts, it seems plausible that in a civil conflict, the reduction of enemy combatants and civilians to 'ethnic' or 'racial' types made individuals sufficiently anonymous (and homogenous) so as to make revenge attacks against them seem less morally reprehensible. Consequently, claims regarding the innateness of the British sense of 'fair play' and 'rationality' were probably invoked to provide further moral justification for unfair and frequently irrational punitive measures.

This study has provided a vivid portrait of service life in Ireland. It has examined the rigours of military service, and the culture that developed by way of response to antagonistic and alienating circumstances, also demonstrating how this culture established alternatives to effective judicial processes, penal procedures, intelligence flows and operational efficiency. This has allowed for a greater understanding of the British campaign in Ireland. By considering the minutiae of everyday experiences it has also expanded our knowledge of the period as a whole, particularly with respect to the dynamics of violence and the interplay between civilians, combatants, colleagues and comrades. By examining soldiers' personal records, it has afforded individuality to a much-overlooked participant group. Human agency is the defining force in any given conflict: individual acts of violence or gross indiscipline usually emerge as the most salient features of a period of conflict. The conduct of regular armies has a profound effect in galvanising public opinion and strengthening opposition (or even forming the future course of international relations). The constancy of a culture of obedience amongst soldiers is sometimes taken for granted by political historians keen to emphasise the downward causal links between policies and events. This study has demonstrated that soldiers on Irish service were reluctant to be the passive recipients of brigade orders when faced with a conflict that exposed their frailties and tested the limits of their obedience.

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