



# DEFYING THE IRA?

INTIMIDATION, COERCION,  
AND COMMUNITIES DURING  
THE IRISH REVOLUTION

## *Reappraisals in Irish History*

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# Defying the IRA?

Intimidation, coercion,  
and communities  
during the Irish Revolution

BRIAN HUGHES

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# Abbreviations

ADRIC	Auxiliary Division Royal Irish Constabulary
AG	Adjutant General (IRA)
AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BMH	Bureau of Military History
CAB	Cabinet (British)
CD	Contemporary Documents (BMH)
CI	County Inspector (RIC)
CO	Colonial Office
CS	Chief of Staff (IRA)
DED	District Electoral Division
DELG	Dáil Éireann Local Government
DI	District Inspector (RIC)
DMP	Dublin Metropolitan Police
DO	Dominion Office
GHQ	General Headquarters (IRA)
HA	Home Affairs (Northern Ireland)
HO	Home Office
IG	Inspector General (RIC)
IGC	Irish Grants Committee
IO	Intelligence Officer (IRA)
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
JP	Justice of the Peace
KCL	Kerry County Library
LGB	Local Government Board (British)
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London
MAI	Military Archives of Ireland, Dublin
MCR	Monthly Confidential Report (RIC)
MD	Minister for Defence (Dáil Éireann)
MHA	Minister for Home Affairs (Dáil Éireann)

MP	Member of Parliament (British)
MSPR	Military Service Pension Record
NAI	National Archives of Ireland, Dublin
NLI	National Library of Ireland, Dublin
OC	Officer Commanding
PAL	Parliamentary Archives, London
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RM	Resident Magistrate
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SILRA	Southern Irish Loyalist Relief Association
T	Treasury
TCD	Trinity College Dublin Manuscripts Department
TD	Teachta Dáil (Member of Parliament, Irish)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
UIL	United Irish League
USC	Ulster Special Constabulary
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
WO	War Office
WS	Witness Statement (BMH)

## Note on the Text

Place names have been reproduced in the text based on their most common usage in the contemporary documents used for the book, rather than on any political or religious grounds. Thus: Arva, County Cavan (rather than Arvagh); Queen's County (rather than Laois or the contemporary Leix); King's County (rather than Offaly); Connaught (rather than Connacht). In the case of Derry/Londonderry: for the sake of consistency, Derry is used specifically for the city and Londonderry for the county. Where place names appear within direct quotations, they are reproduced as in the original document.

In describing individuals and groups politically loyal to the Union and/or British government the term 'loyalist' is preferred. Where 'unionist' is used in quotations from contemporary documents that usage has been maintained. Unionist (capitalised) refers to members of the political party.

Quotations from original documents appear in most instances as in the original. Where it is felt it will aid understanding, or to prevent confusion, minor typographical or spelling errors have been silently corrected while editorial additions are found in square brackets.

## Introduction

In 1934, in an attempt to have a claim for compensation reviewed under the 1933 Damage to Property (Amendment) Act, James McCabe, an egg-dealer from Arva, County Cavan, set forth his family's republican credentials:

I had 3 sons one a Captain in the Volunteers who has since died and the other is now seeking a Pension and I know of no man in this or surrounding counties who gave the same support or treated as harshly as I was. Any of the then existing officers or men of the 3 surrounding counties can corroborate me as it was the means of putting me on the *road*.<sup>1</sup>

Following up on his 'genuine claim' two months later, McCabe insisted that the family 'gave all & got nothing in the Anglo-Irish War' and if the department of finance were to 'make enquiry into our activities & hospitality during Anglo-Irish War', they would find 'our record is very good'.<sup>2</sup> In 1924, James McCabe had claimed £350 compensation for the loss of a motor car taken by 'Black and Tans' after one of his sons had refused to drive them. Awarded the 'inadequate' sum of £45, he blamed the 'small amount' on the 'active part' he and his sons had taken in the war.<sup>3</sup> Complaints of insufficient recompense for losses suffered during the independence struggle were not uncommon, but McCabe's case was different from most. In between his unsatisfactory attempts to secure compensation from the Irish Free State was an application to the British Treasury-funded Irish Grants Committee (IGC). Unlike the Damage to Property scheme, which was open to anyone

1 James McCabe claim (NAI: FIN/COMP/SHAW/381/445). For a discussion of the legislation, see Fergal Peter Mangan, 'Compensation in the Irish Free State 1922-23', MA thesis (University College Dublin, 1994), p. 63.

2 McCabe to Department of Finance, n.d. 1934 (/381/445).

3 'Claim of James McCabe, Arva, Co. Cavan for Loss and Damage arising out of the Black and Tan War and the Civil War', 4 Oct. 1934 (/381/445).

who could prove they had suffered loss at the hands of any ‘unlawful or seditious’ (but usually republican) organisation, the IGC insisted that applicants’ losses were the direct result of their ‘support of His Majesty’s Government’.<sup>4</sup> In his (unsuccessful) IGC claim, McCabe described how his business had been ruined by an IRA boycott:

Being myself a police pensioner [I] bore allegiance to the British Government & that by supplying British forces during the trouble I was as a matter of fact looked upon as a spy. My son, also being an ex-British soldier of the great war had sworn allegiance to the British government.

He further added that his daughter had ‘got to know one of the young English chaps and according to public opinion now I and my family are called nothing but Black and Tans’.<sup>5</sup>

James McCabe’s contradictory descriptions of his revolutionary experience offer a revealing insight into some of the behaviour that concerns this book. Much of what McCabe said in his applications was true. He had been pensioned from the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in 1907, enough at least to raise suspicion in the eyes of the local IRA and a definition of allegiance usually accepted by the IGC.<sup>6</sup> McCabe also seems to have had at least one son in the IRA.<sup>7</sup> Despite being over 50 years old in 1921, he was among the Arva IGC applicants described by a neighbour as ‘well-known Republicans ... responsible for many of the outrages which took place in this district’.<sup>8</sup>

Requesting payment of his £45 in December 1924, McCabe explained that he was considering closing up his business over Christmas and begged the department to do ‘all possible in your power to see to my case immediately as if not it means destroying the home and life of a family who have assisted the state in all means possible’.<sup>9</sup> By 1926, when he applied to the IGC, McCabe

4 ‘Compensation for injury to persons or property. Memorandum’, 1923, cited in Gemma Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 19; Terms of Reference in IGC Report of Committee, 1930 (TNA: CO 762/212).

5 James McCabe claim (CO 762/29/13).

6 1911 census return, James McCabe (census.nationalarchives.ie) (23 Sep. 2013). McCabe’s return states that he had four children but only two of his sons, Patrick and James, are listed.

7 An RIC report mentions 26-year-old egg dealer Patrick McCabe giving orders to an IRA party in Lossett on 29 October; James McCabe’s son Patrick was 17 in 1911: Breaches of the Truce, Cavan (TNA: CO 904/151); 1911 census return, James McCabe (census.nationalarchives.ie) (23 Sep. 2013).

8 See correspondence contained in Maggie Masterson claim (TNA: CO 762/175/16).

9 McCabe to ‘Secretary, Ministry of Finance Compensation Section’, 21 Dec. 1925 (NAI: FIN/COMP/SHAW/381/445).

had ‘no bussiness & no capital’ and was hoping to use a grant to emigrate to England.<sup>10</sup> Still in Arva in 1934, he again pleaded to the department of finance that ‘If we are entitled to consideration I may tell you we could do with it.’<sup>11</sup> Was it, then, simply an attempt to save his livelihood that encouraged McCabe to distort or exaggerate his record during the struggle for independence, wherever an opportunity arose? This case emphasises the difficulty in associating behaviour (or alleged behaviour) with political allegiance, and of relying on a face-value reading of witness testimony. It also emphasises the various ways in which intrinsically local concerns – a suspicious or jealous neighbour, a past link to the Crown, a stolen motor car, a failing business – could influence revolutionary activity. Defining James McCabe’s allegiances, understanding exactly what he did during the Irish Revolution – whether he was a friend of the IRA, or the Crown, or perhaps both – is problematic. In that sense, he is not unique.

This study will focus primarily on the local, the grassroots, the ‘everyday’; the behaviour and experiences of people like James McCabe. In doing so, it will build on a growing body of historiography that emphasises the centrality of minor acts of threat or harm in its understanding of the Irish Revolution. Joost Augusteijn’s 1996 study of the Irish War of Independence focused on the experiences of ‘ordinary’ guerrillas, probing their radicalisation and behaviour.<sup>12</sup> In work published between 1998 and 2003, Peter Hart used County Cork as means to investigate what motivated guerrillas to volunteer, fight, and kill; their experiences of revolution and those of their victims. Hart was interested in the social dynamics of the conflict, the atmosphere of fear and suspicion that was generated within communities, and its results.<sup>13</sup> In his 2010 book, *Frontiers of violence*, a masterful comparative study of violence in Ulster and Upper Silesia from 1918 to 1922, Tim Wilson has approached both Ulster and Upper Silesia ‘as sites of violent conflict at the grass-roots level’. Wilson has decried the tendency among historians to dismiss ‘plebeian violence as politically trivial’, pointing out that the ‘vantage point’ in studies of ordinary violence ‘still remains the corridors of power rather than the back streets’.<sup>14</sup> Gemma Clark’s *Everyday violence in the Irish Civil War*, published in 2014, studies the nature and consequences of ‘house burning, boycott, animal maiming,

10 James McCabe claim (TNA: CO 762/29/13).

11 McCabe to Department of Finance, n.d. 1934 (FIN/COMP/SHAW/381/445).

12 Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish war of independence, 1916–1921* (Dublin, 1996).

13 Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916–1923* (Oxford, 1998); Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war, 1916–1923* (Oxford, 2003).

14 T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918–1922* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 4, 7–8, 17.

assault, and murder' in Counties Tipperary, Limerick, and Waterford between 1922 and 1923.<sup>15</sup> Outside of the Irish context, scholars have highlighted the relevance of minor acts of cooperation or resistance to a more complete understanding of irregular conflict. In the 1980s, Michael Fellman looked at the 'nature of terror and its personal and social impact, loyalty and justice as it had been expected and was reworked' through the narratives of the ordinary people caught up in the American Civil War in Missouri.<sup>16</sup> More recently, Stathis Kalyvas explored the logic of civil war by examining the nature of violence, participation in irregular combat, support from non-combatants, and motivations that 'tend to be systematically overlooked in macrohistorical accounts'. Importantly, he emphasised that 'coercive violence is not necessarily massive. In fact, successful terror implies low levels of violence,' and, further, 'Instances of terror cannot be considered independently of instances where violence does not occur'.<sup>17</sup> Outside of war, James Scott's important 1985 book, *Weapons of the weak*, examined 'everyday forms of peasant resistance', preferring an analysis that was 'not centered on the state, on formal organizations, on open protest, on national issues'.<sup>18</sup> Studies of the everyday experience of revolution in Ireland, then, not only contribute to the literature on the violence that preceded the foundation of the two modern Irish states, but also places the Irish Revolution in a broader scholarship on irregular conflict.

### An anatomy of violence

An explanation of what exactly 'everyday' intimidation and coercion means for this study is necessary. The 1882 Prevention of Crime (Ireland) Act rather clumsily defined 'intimidation' as

any word spoken or act done in order to and calculated to put any person in fear of any injury or danger to himself, or to any member of his family, or to any person in his employment, or in fear of any injury to or loss of his property, business or means of living.<sup>19</sup>

15 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 10.

16 Michael Fellman, *Inside war: the guerrilla conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York, 1989), xvi.

17 Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 31, 44, 48.

18 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* (London, 1985), pp. xvii–xix, emphasis in original.

19 Charles Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland: government and resistance since 1848* (Oxford, 1983), p. 173.



More recently, it has been given a simpler definition by political scientist Gene Sharp: ‘The use of sanctions, or the threat to use sanctions, to induce others to take, or not to take, certain actions because of their fear of the likely consequences if they do not comply.’ A broad definition of ‘sanctions’ includes: ‘Punishments, pressures, and means of action used to penalize, thwart, and alter the behavior of other persons, groups, institutions, or States. Sanctions are usually punishments or reprisals for failure to behave in the expected or desired manner.’ ‘In many situations,’ Sharp’s definition suggests, ‘simply the capacity to wield, or the threat to apply, either violent or nonviolent sanctions may induce compliance’.<sup>20</sup> For Sharp, the use of violent domestic sanctions are intended ‘to punish disobedience’ rather than enforce the ‘original command, except in so far as such sanctions may inhibit future disobedience’, whereas non-violent sanctions (such as strikes, boycotts, and political non-cooperation) are intended to achieve the aim of the ‘original command’.<sup>21</sup> In the Irish case studied here, the IRA used non-violent sanctions to punish individual defiance and ensure compliance, but also to intimidate friends, family, and neighbours. Lethal violence, as will be shown, was used for the same purposes and often a sign that non-violent methods had failed or that the perceived act of non-cooperation was considered too severe to be dealt with without violence.

‘Defiance’ is defined by Sharp as ‘Determined, bold disobedience and assertive refusal to obey commands, orders, or policies’.<sup>22</sup> This study will take a similar, but less rigid, understanding of defiance, as often, but not always, determined, bold, or assertive; reluctance and apathy could just as easily produce more subtle forms of non-compliance. Sharp has identified seven reasons why ‘the many obey the few’: habit, fear of sanctions, moral obligation, self-interest, psychological identification with the ruler, zones of indifference, and a lack of self-confidence among subjects. The absence of any or all of these factors can result in defiance; as Sharp notes: ‘obedience is not inevitable’.<sup>23</sup> In terms of obedience to the IRA (and a similar dynamic was simultaneously in play with the Crown), all of these factors are noticeable at different times, but some – notably fear of sanctions and self-interest – were more obvious than others. Charles Townshend has pointed out how ‘violence may subsist in attitude as in action’. ‘Credibility’, Townshend argues, is the key to functionality, and the key difference between ‘agitational terror’ and ‘enforcement terror’: in contrast with T. P. Thornton’s idea that ‘agitational

20 Gene Sharp, *Sharp’s dictionary of power and struggle: language of civil resistance in conflicts* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 162, 259–60.

21 Gene Sharp, *The politics of nonviolent action* (Manchester NH, 1973), p. 12.

22 Sharp, *Sharp’s dictionary*, p. 112.

23 Sharp, *The politics of nonviolent action*, pp. 18–25.

terror functions to the extent that it is indiscriminate and unpredictable, enforcement terror depends on its discrimination and predictability'.<sup>24</sup> The IRA violence and intimidation discussed here most closely resembles enforcement terror: discriminate and functioning with a credibility earned by enforcing sanctions on actual or perceived deviants.

Sanctions need not be physically violent, and one of the most effective is the economic boycott. Sharp defines 'a boycott' as: 'A collective refusal to initiate or continue forms of social, economic, or political cooperation', and an 'economic boycott' as:

The withdrawal of economic cooperation in the form of buying, selling, producing, or handling of goods and services. Economic boycotts are often combined with efforts to induce others also to withdraw such cooperation ... Economic boycotts may be spontaneous, or more often organized, efforts to restrict the buying or selling markets, or the production of an individual, group, company, or country.<sup>25</sup>

Similar economic sanctions applied by the IRA included fines and the seizure or destruction of property. Local IRA units and their supporters also practised another of Sharp's modes of boycott: 'of government departments, agencies, and other bodies'.<sup>26</sup> This was most noticeably the case with the British court system and similarly applied to local government and civil administration. It was, however, not just a boycott of British bodies practised by those opposed to the system but one that was expected of the entire community. Further, the aim was not simply to refuse participation in one system but also to offer active participation in the rival republican system under the alternative government, Dáil Éireann.

At the bottom of the scale of non-lethal sanctions were non-personal threats in the form of threatening letters, public notices, or proclamations. Though non-violent in itself, the threatening letter or notice was closely linked to contemporary violent outrages that were, in W. E. Vaughan's eloquent phrase, 'the bullion reserve that gave this paper currency its liquidity'. If they needed credibility to have an effect, their main virtues were speed, economy, and the minimal chances of being caught.<sup>27</sup> Next on the scale of intimidation are threatening personal exchanges. Individuals were occasionally stopped and threatened in public places but more terrifying were late-night raids

24 Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, pp. 411–12.

25 Sharp, *Sharp's dictionary*, pp. 70, 126.

26 Sharp, *Sharp's dictionary*, p. 335.

27 W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 150–4.

by ‘armed and masked men’. Most commonly, no actual physical harm was inflicted but promises to behave in a way dictated by the raiders were often demanded under duress. In some instances, the victim was subjected to a frightening ‘mock execution’ and, in others, property was damaged or taken away. Those who defied the IRA were also frequently kidnapped for short periods, kept in ominous sounding ‘unknown destinations’, and eventually released. This had the dual benefit of terrifying the victim and incapacitating them from performing a forbidden or treacherous activity.

Following threatening personal exchanges are physical but non-lethal acts against the person with a clear, intimidatory aim. Most common was the removal of (almost exclusively women’s) hair. Tarring and feathering occurred, but rarely.<sup>28</sup> Beatings of various degrees were inflicted, most often during a raid on the home of the victim. These acts of violence served as a more severe punishment and warning but also as a visual spectacle to be seen by family, friends, and neighbours. The burning of property served a similar function and Gemma Clark has noted the power of arson, and particularly the burning of ‘big houses’, to ‘engage with the physical surroundings and undermine a building’s place in the community’.<sup>29</sup>

Killing was the ultimate physical punishment and the execution of alleged ‘spies and informers’ its most notable manifestation. Killing removed an unwanted actor from within a community and offered a wider threat in the form of the various ‘Spies and Informers Beware’ labels that began to appear on the bodies of executed civilians shot by the IRA from 1920.<sup>30</sup> These labels essentially served the same function as threatening letters but in a more immediate and grim way. Killing was also often an indication that non-lethal intimidation, attempts to stop certain behaviour before lethal violence became necessary, had failed. As the commandant of the Cork No. 2 Brigade observed, ‘We cannot afford to wait to find spies, a final official warning should be enough for anyman’.<sup>31</sup> A desire for fatal punishment was not universal and some IRA leaders were more willing to use lethal violence (or at least threaten it) than others. In Clare, for example, Michael Brennan called for a ‘wholesale

28 An ex-soldier was reportedly ‘stripped, tarred and feathered’ in Kerry in June 1920: MCRs, CI, Kerry, Jun. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

29 Gemma M. Clark, ‘The fiery campaign: new agenda and ancient enmities in the Irish Civil War: a study of arson in three Munster counties’, in Brian Griffin and Ellen McWilliams (eds.), *Irish studies in Britain: new perspectives on history and literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010), p. 76; see also, Clark, *Everyday violence*, pp. 54–97.

30 MCRs, IG, May–Jul. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115–16). By the end of the conflict these notices had become so common the IG was repeatedly referring to bodies found with the ‘usual notice’. See also, Anne Dolan, ‘Spies and informers beware ...’, in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds.), *Years of turbulence: the Irish Revolution and its aftermath, in honour of Michael Laffan* (Dublin, 2015).

31 Quoted in CS to MD, 26 Mar. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/17).

wiping-out policy for people associating with the enemy'.<sup>32</sup> But in Meath, as IRA veteran Peter O'Connell told Oliver Coogan, it was felt that 'just because we were an army didn't mean we had to go round shooting people all the time. We could get our way by other means. We didn't want to kill anyone.'<sup>33</sup> The nature and severity of violence was dictated by inherently local conditions, by the perceived disobedience, its persistence, the behaviour and attitudes of local civilians and IRA units, and the position of the Crown forces in the community. Usually, the punishment was meant to match the crime, but these informal rules were often broken and exceptions frequently appear.

Among the most well-known and celebrated IRA actions are ambushes of Crown force patrols, ranging from shots fired (often unsuccessfully) at groups of two or more policemen to the (in)famous Kilmichael ambush on 28 November 1920 that resulted in the deaths of three Volunteers and 17 Auxiliaries in County Cork.<sup>34</sup> Ambushes as military actions will not be considered in detail here as both sets of participants can be classified as belligerents. Civilians, though, could be caught up in the consequences of an ambush, if not just the ambush itself. On the night of 5 April 1921, Edward Beirne was shot dead in a field in Scramogue, County Roscommon. He was described by a local police sergeant as 'a loyal man and on very friendly terms with the police. He was opposed to the Sinn Fein movement and frequently expressed his views forcefully.' Beirne had been 'warned by the Sinn Feiners some few months ago' but a fortnight before, as his daughter remembered, 'went to scene of an ambush, close to our house, and assisted the wounded'.<sup>35</sup> Another case that emphasises the potential impact of ambushes on the civilian population, and also the nature of community politics, is found in County Cork. The Murphy family lived convenient to a site chosen for an ambush on an Auxiliary patrol in Fort Grady and one of Murphy's sons was, 'as is usual in those occasions', commandeered to assist in felling a tree to block the road. When Auxiliaries arrested Murphy and four others, his sister

32 Brennan to CS, 29 Mar. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/38). Brennan is less bloodthirsty in his memoir, published in 1980: Michael Brennan, *The war in Clare 1911–1921: personal memoirs of the Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 1980).

33 Quoted in Oliver Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath, 1913–23* (Dublin, 1983), p. 192.

34 For attacks on police patrols, see Weekly summaries of outrages against the police (TNA: CO 904/148–50). For conflicting views on the events at Kilmichael, see, for example, Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp. 21–38; Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry: IRA freedom fighter* (Cork, 2005; 1st edn. 2003), pp. 67–84; Meda Ryan, 'The Kilmichael Ambush, 1920: exploring the "provocative chapters"', *History*, Vol. 92 (2007), pp. 235–49; Niall Meehan and Brian P. Murphy OSB, *Troubled history: a tenth anniversary critique of Peter Hart's 'The IRA and its enemies'* (Aubane, 2008); Eve Morrison, 'Kilmichael revisited: Tom Barry and the "false surrender"', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Terror in Ireland, 1916–1923* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 158–80.

35 Military inquiry in lieu of inquest, Edward Beirne, April 1921 (TNA: WO 35/146B/5).

Catherine (‘for years a “peeler-hunter”’, in the pejorative words of the local IRA commander) visited him at the barracks, becoming friendly with one of the young policemen. As she failed to heed warnings to stop, a boycott was imposed against the family. Catherine Murphy protested against her family’s treatment, insisting that they should never have been boycotted for the ‘minor offence’ of allowing an Auxiliary who saved her brother from being shot after his arrest to visit their house; ‘We always paid to every collection & suffered more by the military perhaps more than those fellows who were the cause of boycotting us.’<sup>36</sup>

Civilians living close to intended ambush sites posed a significant potential threat to the IRA. By failing to warn Volunteers of danger or passing information to the Crown forces, they could put Volunteer lives at risk. The most notorious example is the case of Mary Lindsay, a Protestant loyalist who informed the authorities of an ambush under preparation at Dripsey, County Cork, contributing to the deaths of several Volunteers. Lindsay was kidnapped and shot by the IRA along with her innocent chauffeur.<sup>37</sup> Planning carried out in advance of a proposed ambush – scouting, tree-felling, and trench-digging – also brought inconvenience and potential financial loss to locals as roads became unpassable or gunmen converged around a home. This, and the threat of Crown reprisals, could influence a civilian to sabotage a potential ambush as much as any political conviction and, in fact, also induced some Volunteers to inform on their colleagues.<sup>38</sup> For the purpose of this study, such behaviour will be regarded as a manifestation of ‘community politics’.

### Precedents

The everyday violence of the Irish Revolution had firm roots in the agrarian agitation of a generation before. As Charles Townshend has declared, ‘The rebels of 1920 were the heirs not only to the exalted legacies of the United Irishmen and the Fenians, but also to a deeper and darker tradition of agrarian secret society terrorism.’<sup>39</sup> The guerrillas of the 1910s and

36 Two letters by Catherine Murphy, 30 Nov. 1921; OC Cork No. 4 to Adjutant Cork No. 4, 9 Dec. 1921 (MAI: A/0668).

37 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp. 308–10.

38 See, for example, OC Tipperary No. 3 to CS, 3 Dec. 1920, Epitome of seized documents No. 53/3649 (LHCMA: 7/24); Epitome of documents seized at 5 Mespil Road, Dublin; Epitome of captured documents, ‘Operation Reports’ (LHCMA: 7/24); BMH WS 1715 (Sean Boylan); BMH WS 474 (Liam Haugh); Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath*, pp. 162–3.

39 Charles Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland, 1919–1921: the development of political and military policies* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 63–4.

1920s grew up in the shadow of nineteenth and early twentieth century land wars and the methods of older conflicts were equally familiar to civilians caught up in revolutionary violence. Like many other communities, guerrillas and civilians often stuck to what they knew. In Charles Tilly's 'repertoires of contention', communities can only engage in acts of which they have knowledge and experience, and action outside their scope is rarely attempted.<sup>40</sup> W. E. Vaughan similarly noticed the 'tendency for agrarian crime to persist in some counties, suggesting that once the habit got a grip, it persisted'.<sup>41</sup> It is in the traditions of agrarian violence that we find the genesis of much of the low-level violence of the Irish Revolution.

The composition of threatening letters offers one distinct form of continuity and remained remarkably similar over generations. The mythical pseudonyms that gave a sense of ubiquity and organisation to land agitators – 'Rory of the Hill', 'Molly Maguire', 'Captain Moonlight', or 'Captain Rock' – continued to give threatening letters 'the exiguous organizational framework required' for them to take effect into the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> Peter Hart found the very same pseudonyms in use among the youth subculture and 'Straw Boys' that fed directly into the Cork IRA.<sup>43</sup> After 1917, they continued to feature in agrarian disputes: after cattle drives in Leitrim and Roscommon it was reported that notices signed 'Rory of the Hill' were found warning people from helping to collect driven cattle.<sup>44</sup> But they were also used for purposes obviously connected to the independence struggle and in July 1920 an RIC constable in Cork received a letter warning him to leave the district signed 'Rory of the Hill'.<sup>45</sup> As the conflict continued and the concept of the 'Irish Republican Army' became more defined, organisational legitimacy came from the IRA itself and signatures took on a military nature (ironically adopted from the British). As early as March 1919, the police reported a notice delivered to a garage owner who supplied them with cars and drivers signed by the 'Competent Military Authority of the Irish Republican Army'.<sup>46</sup> Other threatening letters were signed by the officers of local companies and battalions. Gemma Clark has similarly observed that during the Irish Civil War threatening letters were a 'regular tactic' of

40 Charles Tilly, *The politics of collective violence* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 45–50.

41 Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, p. 157.

42 Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, pp. 152–3; Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p. 23.

43 Peter Hart, 'Youth culture and the Cork I.R.A.', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Revolution? Ireland 1917–1923* (Dublin, 1990), p. 17.

44 *Irish Post and Telegraph for Cavan and Midlands*, 15 May 1920.

45 Weekly summaries, Jul. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/148). For a letter signed 'Captain Moonlight' sent during the Civil War, see Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 119.

46 MCRs, CI, Cork W.R., May 1919 (TNA: CO 904/109).

the anti-Treaty IRA and continued to make use of ‘Quasi-legal language’ to frame threats as ‘orders that must be obeyed’.<sup>47</sup>

The idea of punishing an individual who had failed to behave in an expected manner, while simultaneously producing a clear warning to others, can be seen in the agitation of the United Irish League (UIL) from the end of the nineteenth century. UIL activity took four forms, as identified by Charles Townshend:

first, by ‘courts’ held to decide on agrarian cases; second, by resolutions against individuals published in sympathetic newspapers; third, by public meetings at or near the residence of the threatened persons; and fourth, ‘as a last resource’, by actual outrage.<sup>48</sup>

Publishing decisions from League courts in the press, Fergus Campbell has shown, ‘inaugurated the process by which persons who broke the “law of the League” were punished’. This was a public and very literal way of marking out an individual and making others aware of exactly who had been defiant. Its effect on neighbours was clear: ‘there was nothing that farmers and shopkeepers dreaded as much as seeing their names published in the provincial press’. UIL intimidation was designed to enforce the authority of the League on transgressors *and* on the wider community.<sup>49</sup> The UIL rarely needed to resort to attacks on the person but when attacks did take place, injured parties were reluctant to give information to the police and, as one report suggested, submitted to outrage ‘rather than do anything that might bring themselves into antagonism to the general feeling’.<sup>50</sup> In August 1920, the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) inspector general mirrored that assessment when describing misleading outrage figures in the south and west: ‘many persons prefer to suffer in silence than incur the additional hostility of Sinn Fein by making a complaint’.<sup>51</sup> Most often, the UIL enforced itself through intimidation, boycotting, and attacks on property. Campbell has recorded that of 2,799 ‘penalties imposed by agrarian agitators in Ireland’ between 1902 and 1908, 40 per cent were cases of ‘intimidation’, individuals boycotted made up 24 per cent, and offences against property 17 per cent while offences against the person accounted for just under 4 per cent. Boycotting, he argues, was often enough to ensure future cooperation, but where an individual continued to defy the UIL intimidation was

47 Clark, *Everyday violence*, pp. 107–15.

48 Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p. 231.

49 Fergus Campbell, *Land and revolution: nationalist politics in the west of Ireland 1891–1921* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 138–43.

50 Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p. 231.

51 MCRs, IG, Aug. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

increased. Importantly, Campbell has stressed the ‘cumulative effect’ of small acts of intimidation: one act on its own (such as sending a threatening letter) was unlikely to produce the desired effect, but a series of acts may well do, particularly if acts of violence were taking place at the same time.<sup>52</sup> A relatively small amount of lethal violence could also drastically change the impact of intimidation. Townshend has described how the strength of intimidation and boycotting lay in its ‘diffuse character’. ‘It was the repetition of a number of “disobliging acts” so concerted and repeated so as to make life wretched, though ... each individual act was unimportant’. To refuse to sell someone a loaf of bread was, for instance, well within the rights of the person who did so but in the context of agrarian agitation it had new, dangerous connotations and became one (albeit small) step on the way to a death sentence.<sup>53</sup>

It is significant that the generation who formed the IRA after 1917 grew up amidst the UIL’s campaign. Important continuities can, for instance, be found in Hart’s examination of ‘Straw Boys’ in Cork.<sup>54</sup> These informal groups of young men used special occasions of traditional Catholic ritual to ‘march around in military fashion, and demand money, food, or entrance to houses ... If house holders refused their demands, the gang would frequently enact a violent revenge, and in fact this was sometimes the main purpose of the outing.’ Activity often consisted of ‘anonymous intimidation, the settling of old scores, and confrontations with the police’. For Hart, local IRA units were a natural extension for these groups. The conditions of revolution ensured that the role reversal seen at festival times became a political reality and elicited many of the same responses from the local community:

Some people welcomed them, others only grudgingly complied with their demands, and a few refused them. Rival youth groups often contested their claims to authority ... As with Straw Boys, lack of cooperation was not usually tolerated: it undermined the necessary fiction of unity, and was met by intimidation and acts of revenge.<sup>55</sup>

As will be highlighted in Chapter 5, Belfast’s revolutionary experience was unique in many ways. But a strong continuity can be seen here also. The

52 Campbell, *Land and revolution*, pp. 140–1.

53 Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, pp. 205–6. James Scott also refers to the importance of an accumulation of small acts of defiance: Scott, *Weapons of the weak*, p. xvii.

54 Peter Hart, ‘Youth culture and the Cork I.R.A.’, in Fitzpatrick, *Revolution? Other names for the groups identified by Hart included ‘Wren Boys’, ‘Biddy Boys’, or even, simply, ‘the boys’.*

55 Hart, ‘Youth culture and the Cork I.R.A.’, pp. 15–21.



impersonal, communal violence and rioting witnessed in Belfast between 1920 and 1922 was 'part of a great tradition of rioting and territorial struggle' that had seen outbreaks in the city in the 1850s, 1860s, 1870s, 1880s, and 1910s. As Hart has suggested, 'The moves, the repertoires of action, were more-or-less pre-programmed, automatic, down to the timing of major outbreaks in the Orange marching season.'<sup>56</sup> This was violence in forms, and on terms, that were well understood in the city.

This might suggest that there was a certain inevitability to the forms that revolutionary violence eventually took. This is perhaps true to some degree and, particularly in Belfast, the momentum generated by longer-term continuities in violent methods influenced revolutionary practice. At the same time, as will be shown throughout this book, many of the experiences of revolution, manifestations of loyalty and allegiance, for instance, were uniquely rooted in the revolutionary context. Non-combatants often reacted to the guerrilla campaign based on immediate and personal local concerns. There is, therefore, some value in recognising the historical continuities in the nature of violence, but it is also important to acknowledge the fluid and contemporary chaos generated between 1917 and 1922.

### Time and place

The now common use of the term 'Irish Revolution' is generally applied to the period between 1912 and 1923, incorporating a series of constitutional, agrarian, labour, and separatist conflicts over more than ten years.<sup>57</sup> The period under scrutiny in this book excludes rebellion in 1916 and the Irish Civil War of 1922–23, but instead focuses on almost five years of violent and non-violent conflict between 1917 and 1922. This period begins with the reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers after the set-piece battles of Easter 1916 and covers the guerrilla campaign against the British from around 1919 to the Truce between the IRA and the British government in July 1921. The study will also encompass the year or so that followed the Truce and explore how intimidation and coercion worked during a period of supposed 'peace'. Terminating in June 1922 means the focus will remain on the low-level violence and coercion practised by the IRA before the republican split over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 degenerated into a recognised civil war. The shooting of two unarmed policemen by members of the Irish

<sup>56</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 249.

<sup>57</sup> Marie Coleman, however, began her study of the Irish Revolution in County Longford in 1910: Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution, 1910–1923* (Dublin, 2003).

Volunteers (soon semi-formally rechristened as the IRA) in Soloheadbeg, County Tipperary (coincidentally the very day the underground, revolutionary government, Dáil Éireann, met for the first time), is often seen as the opening act of a self-contained war that ended officially with a Truce on 11 July 1921. As this study transcends the chronological boundaries of what is most commonly called the 'Anglo-Irish War', 'Tan War', or 'Irish War of Independence', the broader epithet of 'Irish Revolution' will be applied.<sup>58</sup>

Since David Fitzpatrick's pioneering study of County Clare was published in 1977, the county study has been the dominant methodological approach to scholarship on the Irish Revolution. Historians remain indebted to *Politics and Irish life* and many have followed Fitzpatrick in taking a single county as their unit of study, usually sketching the development of nationalism and republicanism chronologically from around 1912 to 1923. Oliver Coogan's *Politics and war in Meath* (1983) and Terence Dooley's *The plight of Monaghan protestants* (2000) are early examples of the value of local studies.<sup>59</sup> Among the growing body of more recent work are monographs by Marie Coleman and John O'Callaghan on Longford and Limerick respectively and Sinéad Joy's short but useful study of Kerry.<sup>60</sup> Michael Farry also adopted the county study but his work on Sligo covered rarely trodden ground in focusing on the post-Truce period and subsequent Civil War.<sup>61</sup> Farry's latest book on Sligo, Fergal McCluskey's on Tyrone, and Pat McCarthy's study of Waterford are the first in a series that intends to produce a history of the Irish Revolution in every county.<sup>62</sup> The most

58 Richard English argues that none of the above terms adequately describes what actually took place and prefers the term 'Irish War for Independence': Richard English, *Irish freedom: the history of nationalism in Ireland* (London, 2006), pp. 286–7.

59 Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath*; Terence Dooley, *The plight of Monaghan protestants, 1912–1926* (Dublin, 2000).

60 Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*; John O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick: the republican campaign for independence in Limerick, 1913–1921* (Dublin, 2010); Sinéad Joy, *The IRA in Kerry 1916–1921* (Cork, 2005). For more examples, see T. Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles: Kerry's real fighting story* (Cork, 2001); John Borgonovo, *Spies, informers and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society': the intelligence war in Cork city, 1920–21* (Dublin, 2006); Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, *Blood on the banner: the republican struggle in Clare 1913–1923* (Cork, 2009); Thomas Toomey, *The war of independence in Limerick: also covering action in the border areas of Tipperary, Cork, Kerry and Clare* (Limerick, 2010); William Henry, *Blood for blood: the Black and Tan war in Galway* (Cork, 2012); Dominic Price, *The flame and the candle: the war in Mayo, 1919–1924* (Cork, 2012); James Durney, *The war of independence in Kildare* (Cork, 2013); John Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war and revolution: Cork city, 1916–1918* (Cork, 2013).

61 Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution: Sligo, 1921–23* (Dublin, 2000).

62 Michael Farry, *Sligo: the Irish revolution, 1912–1923* (Dublin, 2013); Fergal McCluskey, *Tyrone: the Irish Revolution, 1912–23* (Dublin, 2014); Pat McCarthy, *Waterford: the Irish revolution, 1912–1923* (Dublin, 2015).

prominent county study to follow Fitzpatrick's is Peter Hart's enthralling *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, published in 1998. Hart's study, like Fitzpatrick's, is not a chronological history of Cork but rather uses Cork as a means by which to explore important themes and issues.<sup>63</sup>

This book has similar interests but takes a different approach, one most suitably compared to that adopted by Fergus Campbell in his 2005 book *Land and revolution*, which he describes as a 'concertina motion: shifting from the wide-angle shot to the close up, and then back again (sometimes within a single chapter)'. Campbell does not 'describe local life in all its quotidian detail in a single county' but explores a single theme over thirty years through 'a series of inter-locking studies of "national", provincial, county and village politics'.<sup>64</sup> This book attempts something similar. In exploring intimidation, coercion, and communities it will alternate between material drawn from all 32 counties and passages of more intensive analysis relating to local districts, most notably Arva, County Cavan, and its vicinity (especially Chapter 3) and Belfast (Chapter 5). James Scott's *Weapons of the weak* described how peasant defiance and resistance were centred on the village and effectively unable to operate outside that sphere.<sup>65</sup> This study will similarly emphasise the town or parish as the unit in which the revolution was most keenly experienced.

In his 2003 collection, *The I.R.A. at war*, Peter Hart wrote that the 'Irish border cuts through the historiography, with historians working on the south often ignoring the north and vice versa'.<sup>66</sup> Historians have continued to find it challenging to reconcile the experiences of revolution in the 'two Irelands' in a single work. The most recent survey of the period, for instance, Charles Townshend's impressive monograph on the republican struggle between 1918 and 1922, draws primarily on the 26 southern counties that became the Irish Free State while the north-east is treated separately and accounts for a relatively small portion of the narrative.<sup>67</sup> This book will aim towards an all-Ireland discussion of community-IRA interaction, though large parts of the six counties with substantial Protestant/Unionist majorities that remained almost entirely free of IRA activity will be largely absent from what follows.<sup>68</sup> It was the Irish communities with either majority or

63 Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998).

64 Campbell, *Land and revolution*, pp. 3-5.

65 Scott, *Weapons of the weak*, esp. pp. 241-303.

66 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 9.

67 Charles Townshend, *The republic: the fight for Irish independence, 1918-1923* (London, 2013).

68 Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the early years of partition, 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 41-2.

significant minority Catholic populations (including the twenty-six counties and areas surrounding the emerging border of partition) that experienced most violence, whether inflicted by the IRA, Crown forces, or loyalists. Tim Wilson and Robert Lynch have both criticised what Paul Bew referred to as ‘partitionist history’; that is, work that pre-emptively applies the partition of six (out of nine) Ulster counties before it became a political reality.<sup>69</sup> Communities in South Armagh, for instance, where the IRA was relatively active, were far closer in their experience to those in parts of Cavan or Monaghan, while their county neighbours in North Armagh had more in common with Protestant-majority communities in East Donegal. In discussion of the pre-Truce period, then, partition will not be applied or assumed, even if one could argue that it was a political inevitability well in advance of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920. This is not to deny entirely the differences inherent in the northern experience – what Townshend has dubbed ‘Ulsterism’ – and elements of exceptionality will become apparent in the chapters that follow.<sup>70</sup> The cementing of those differences through the formation of two states will also be reflected in the final chapters of the book, dealing primarily with events after partition, where aspects of the revolution in the new northern state will be examined in their own right.

Where the six counties appear under-represented, it is to a large extent dictated by the available source material. There is no equivalent of the IGC to explore civilian testimony of republican violence in the six counties, as the scheme was devised exclusively for ‘southern’ loyalists, i.e. loyalists resident in what became the Irish Free State.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, only 132 individuals (8 per cent of the total) of those who recorded witness statements or donated material to the Bureau of Military History (BMH) had been active in Ulster; 53 of those had come from the ‘lost’ Ulster counties of Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan, while 31 of the remainder were from Antrim. Even fewer (11, or 2 per cent) of Ernie O’Malley’s interviewees, recorded in his notebooks, were from Ulster IRA units, with two from Donegal and the rest from the six counties.<sup>72</sup> The most important source for Chapter 2, the records of the Dáil local government department held in the National Archives of Ireland, do not cover the six counties, meaning local government and the impact of the rate collection there remains unexplored.

The book will take a thematic rather than strictly chronological approach, with the exception of a final chapter dealing with the twelve months from July 1921 to June 1922. The opening chapter will explore grass-roots interaction

69 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 18; Lynch, *Northern IRA*, p. 5.

70 Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p. 38.

71 Terms of Reference in IGC Report of Committee, 1930 (TNA: CO 762/212).

72 I am grateful to Dr. Eve Morrison for these figures.

between the IRA and the Crown, beginning with the RIC, their families, and their local suppliers. The RIC was an armed and visible manifestation of British rule in Ireland and took a part in the conflict quite different from other Crown servants, but members of the force are, for the purposes of this study, treated as members of their communities rather than exclusively as belligerents. A second section will develop this discussion to include unarmed servants of the Crown. While the RIC, 'Black and Tans', and Auxiliaries have received much scholarly attention, others involved in law and order, such as resident magistrates, justices of the peace, judges, and solicitors have received far less.<sup>73</sup> More neglected again are the large bulk of civil servants who had a quieter sort of revolution.<sup>74</sup> As the aim of this chapter is to explore interactions within a community setting, soldiers and British recruits to the police are excluded, owing to their having a less symbiotic relationship with local communities than Irish-born policemen and civil servants.<sup>75</sup>

Chapter 2 will explore another neglected aspect of republican activity in the community, Dáil Éireann local government. To do so it will take as its focus the collection of the county council poor rate during the shift from British to republican control, and the participation of the IRA in its enforcement (or otherwise). By moving the attention in this chapter away from armed encounters, and focusing on the operation of the republican counter-state at a local level, this chapter will emphasise the centrality of violence, and particularly the threat of violence, to the maintenance of a republican alternative to British rule. It will further serve to introduce

73 See, for example, David M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British police and auxiliaries in the Irish war of independence, 1920–1921* (Oxford, 2011); Elizabeth Malcolm, *The Irish policeman, 1822–1922: a life*, (Dublin, 2006); W. J. Lowe, 'The war against the R.I.C., 1919–21', *Éire–Ireland*, Vol. 37 (2002), pp. 79–117; Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland, 1919–1921* (Cork, 2000); Donal J. O'Sullivan, *The Irish constabularies 1822–1922: a century of policing in Ireland* (Dingle, 1999); Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: a complete alphabetical list of officers and men, 1816–1922* (Dublin, 1999); Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: A short history and genealogical guide* (Dublin, 1997); W. J. Lowe and E. L. Malcolm, 'The domestication of the Royal Irish Constabulary', *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol. 19 (1992), pp. 27–48; John D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: an oral history* (Belfast, 1990).

74 Martin Maguire, *The civil service and the revolution in Ireland, 1912–38: 'shaking the blood-stained hand of Mr. Collins'* (Manchester, 2008).

75 For recent scholarship on soldiers and 'Black and Tans', see Leeson, *Black and tans*; Benjamin Laurence Butler, 'The British army in Ireland 1916–1921: a social and cultural history', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Hull, 2007); Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland*; William Sheehan, *A hard local war: the British army and the guerrilla war in Ireland, 1919–1922* (Stroud, 2011); William Sheehan, *Fighting for Dublin: the British battle for Dublin 1919–1921* (Cork, 2007); William Sheehan, *British voices: from the Irish War of Independence: the words of British servicemen who were there* (Cork, 2005).

some of the themes and behaviours that will be treated in the following chapters as it explores the motivations behind rate-collectors' and rate payers' acquiescence or repudiation.

Chapters 3 and 4 will take a broader approach under two distinct headings: defiance (Chapter 3) and punishment (Chapter 4). Chapter 3 will first explore the enforcement of republican edicts by local IRA units, with particular attention to Dáil courts and the Belfast boycott. It will then detail community resistance to the IRA before exploring everyday revolutionary activity from the perspective of self-proclaimed loyalists resident in a single district, Arva, County Cavan. Chapter 4 will focus on the IRA response to non-cooperation. To do so, it will first set out to differentiate between lethal and non-lethal modes of punishment. It will also treat one of the most controversial aspects of modern scholarship on the Irish Revolution: the extent of discriminate or disproportionate persecution of loyalists and other minorities within communities, particularly Protestants and ex-servicemen. When it came to the application of lethal violence, women were treated differently from men, and the nature of punishment inflicted on women will be assessed separately but comparatively. As the study takes an all-Ireland approach, it is also important to recognise the often wildly varying levels of violence and intimidation throughout revolutionary Ireland. As regional variations in the application of coercion and punishment (both between and within county boundaries) will be made clear throughout the book, it will be important to chart some of these variations. Peter Hart, following important work by David Fitzpatrick and Erhard Rumpf, suggested that the most satisfactory way to trace and map revolutionary violence was through the victims of bullets and bombs.<sup>76</sup> The nature of available source material and statistics makes tracking non-lethal manifestations of revolutionary activity far more problematic, but a survey of available metrics of regional violence will illuminate some important aspects of the distribution and effect of intimidating violence.

Belfast is the singular subject of a second local study in Chapter 5. Belfast was, overwhelmingly, the most violent region in Ulster and third only to County Cork and Dublin city in terms of fatalities. Put simply, in Peter Hart's words, 'Belfast's revolutionary experience was unique.'<sup>77</sup> Its revolutionary timeline, for instance, lagged some way behind other centres of violence in the south and east. More people were killed in Belfast during the first

76 Erhard Rumpf and A. C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and socialism in twentieth-century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977); Tom Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics* (Dublin, 2005; 1st edn. 1981); David Fitzpatrick, 'The geography of Irish nationalism 1910–21', *Past and Present*, 78 (1978), pp. 113–44; Peter Hart, 'The geography of revolution in Ireland 1917–1923', *Past and Present*, 155 (1997), p. 144.

77 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 9.

five months of the Truce than during the previous seven months, while the opposite was the case in the 26 counties.<sup>78</sup> The nature of violence was also exceptional, comprising stone-throwing, riot, and indiscriminate sniper fire not seen elsewhere. The demarcating lines of conflict were much more firmly inter-communal and sectarian. Chapter 5 will therefore examine community defiance of the IRA on both sides of the religious divide, focusing particularly on the IRA's relationship with the Catholic community it professed to defend, but also rival Protestant communities. The period under consideration will encompass the two years between the first mass expulsions of Catholic workers from the Belfast shipyards and the collapse of the Northern IRA following a failed offensive in spring 1922; a period often referred to by Catholic contemporaries and historians as the Belfast 'pogrom'.<sup>79</sup>

As the case of Belfast and the compensation claim of James McCabe very clearly demonstrate, revolutionary experience did not end or change neatly on 11 July 1921. Everyday violence and intimidation continued in an uncertain political climate before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921 and after its ratification in January 1922. The twelve or so months from the official cessation of hostilities between the IRA and the British government in July 1921 to the occupation of the Dublin Four Courts by anti-Treaty republicans in June 1922, are among the most complex of the Irish Revolution. Politically, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was a key moment of change, but how did the new politics play out on the ground in the months before and after its signing and ratification? Intimidation, violence, suspicion, and victimisation existed and were perceived as carrying on from 1921 into 1922, rather than in six-month chunks. Victims of conflict in January 1922, for instance, may have noted a split in the IRA but did not necessarily see themselves at the time as victims of a civil war. The very terms of reference of post-Truce compensation offered by the British and Irish states, taking post-Truce to cover the period from 11 July 1921 right to the end of the Civil War in March 1923, further suggests a continuity that is worth exploring over a full year.

While this book deliberately focuses on IRA and civilian interaction, it is important to recognise that IRA units were not the sole armed actors in their communities. The aim here is not to portray the IRA as a relentlessly brutal organisation and, in fact, the IRA were relatively restrained in comparison with other twentieth century guerrillas. Much of the violence

78 Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, p. 2.

79 For example, Belfast veterans' testimony in the BMH, MSPR, and Ernie O'Malley notebooks. The phrase is used in the titles of Jim McDermott, *Northern divisions: the old IRA and the Belfast pogroms, 1920–22* (Belfast, 2001) and Kieran Glennon, *From pogrom to civil war: Tom Glennon and the Belfast IRA* (Cork, 2013).

and intimidation recounted here was the necessary result of fighting a guerrilla war in local communities against a much stronger, and far better equipped, enemy and would have been recognised as such by many of its practitioners. Though the RIC had become an increasingly domesticated force by the twentieth century, they remained in essence an armed force, different in that regard from constabularies on the British mainland, and the dynamic of policing in Ireland changed again with the decision to recruit temporary constables and a new Auxiliary division from outside Ireland. Crown forces were the practitioners of terror as often as they were its victims; at least 42 per cent of the total casualties of political violence on the island between 1919 and 1921 were inflicted by those in Crown uniform.<sup>80</sup> Some of the most significant events and images in the popular consciousness of the Irish Revolution are the unofficial and semi-official ‘reprisals’ carried out by members of the Crown forces, often indiscriminate and aimed at bringing terror to communities suspected of supporting republicans.<sup>81</sup>

Focusing on one actor will not, therefore, as Kalyvas argues, give a complete picture.<sup>82</sup> It is not this book’s aim to offer a complete picture, and nor does it claim to do so. Rather, a more modest goal is to examine how non-state guerrillas attempted to hold and gain control over communities into which, in most cases, they had been born or grown to young adulthood, and the nature of resistance they encountered in doing so. The Irish-born ‘old’ RIC, by way of contrast, were in many ways ‘local’ but not allowed by regulation to serve in their home counties; the British-born recruits who primarily formed the ‘Black and Tans’ and Auxiliary Division from 1920, and the British soldiers less commonly associated with the conflict, were very much outsiders. The preoccupation, then, is on intra-communal relationships, at the parish as much as the county or the national levels. Rather than exposing extremes of behaviour or violence, what will emerge in these chapters is a large and rather blurred middle ground, a zone where self-interest and self-preservation mixed with violence, political allegiance, suspicion, jealousy, greed, and fear.

80 Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Counting terror: Bloody Sunday and the *Dead of the Irish Revolution*’, in Fitzpatrick, *Terror in Ireland*, p. 141.

81 For recent discussions of Crown reprisals, see D. M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British police and Auxiliaries during the Irish War of Independence, 1920–1921* (Oxford, 2011), esp. pp. 157–219 and David Fitzpatrick, ‘The price of Balbriggan’, in Fitzpatrick, *Terror in Ireland*. See also the portrayal of Crown forces in the popular, award-winning film *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (dir. Ken Loach, 2005) and the images of burned-out buildings among the Desmond Fitzgerald photograph collection (UCDA: P80/PH/15-21).

82 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 48.



# 1

## Intimidating the Crown

### The Royal Irish Constabulary

In June 1920, Constable Daniel O’Sullivan resigned from the RIC. O’Sullivan was a 31-year-old native of Limerick who had joined the force in 1908, spending his career stationed in Kerry.<sup>1</sup> O’Sullivan had not been shot at, held up and disarmed, ambushed while on patrol, or defended his barracks against a late night attack. He was at home on leave in Limerick when a gang of masked men entered the family home and told him to resign from his job or he would be shot. O’Sullivan refused, and as the gang attempted to drag him outside his mother tried to intervene, before promptly fainting. At this point O’Sullivan agreed to the demand and signed a declaration that he would not return to his station ‘on account of his mother’s health’.<sup>2</sup> O’Sullivan’s reason for resignation in the RIC’s General Personnel Register is simple: ‘Intimidation by S.F.’<sup>3</sup> When Daniel O’Sullivan joined the RIC, they were a respected – even popular – civil police force; the vast majority were Irish Catholics. By the time he resigned in June 1920, the police were the most obvious expression of British rule in Ireland, seen by many as the eyes and ears of the enemy, traitors to their country. As one Volunteer later put it, ‘That was their sorrow, their tragedy, their disease, to be classified as aliens and enemies in and to their own land.’<sup>4</sup> Some policemen were shot and killed or wounded, but most were not. More often they were shunned in public, refused supplies and transport, denied information, and forced to live an isolated and dangerous existence. The section that follows will explore the everyday revolutionary experiences of Irish policemen like Daniel O’Sullivan.

The police boycott serves as a useful starting point from which to observe the local intimidation and coercion that most concerns this book. As Joost Augusteijn has pointed out:

1 RIC General Personnel Register (TNA: HO 184/33).

2 Weekly summaries, Jun. 1920 (CO 904/148).

3 RIC General Personnel Register (HO 184/33).

4 BMH WS 927 (Sean Gibbons).

The type of pressure exerted on the police can be seen as part of a policy to force unwilling members of the community to accept a new direction ... Shunning, the extreme non-violent punishment for those within a community who fail to adhere to its wishes, was started by the police boycott.<sup>5</sup>

This form of terror, consisting of a general boycott and regularly enforced by intimidation and aggression, was not new to Ireland. Its most common features were anonymous threatening letters, proclamations, forcefully administered oaths, raids, and damaged property aimed at inducing members of the RIC to resign and make it impossible for those who remained to carry out their duty.

David Fitzpatrick and Elizabeth Malcolm have both emphasised the relatively happy life of the policeman in most of Ireland prior to 1917. A career in the force offered a position of authority, a standing in the community, and a pension to a class of young men with few other options for such social advancement. Much time was spent detecting and prosecuting minor breaches of the law but the Irish policeman was required to prevent crime as well as solve it. An intimate knowledge of the local community and its inhabitants was further enhanced by roles as census enumerators, compilers of agricultural and emigration statistics, and enforcers of weights and measures legislation. The most obvious sources of disgruntlement – and most notable contributors to a slowly increasing number of resignations – were poor rates of pay and restrictions on marriage.<sup>6</sup> The former policemen who gave statements to the BMH recalled no hint that joining was something unpatriotic, and veterans of the force generally found an absence of political crime prior to 1919.<sup>7</sup> For J. J. McConnell, ‘Those were carefree, peaceful days in Ireland and a policeman’s life was then a happy one.’<sup>8</sup> Eugene Bratton was stationed in County Meath and found that ‘things were very peaceful in the country as a whole and life was generally pleasant’.<sup>9</sup>

Signs of a movement aimed directly against the police were first reported in June 1917 when officers in Clare, Galway, and Tipperary noted a hostile

5 Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 203.

6 David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913–1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Cork, 1998; 1st edn. Dublin, 1977), pp. 4–5; Malcolm, *The Irish policeman*.

7 BMH WS 509 (J. J. McConnell); BMH WS 888 (Liam O’Riordan). Even Volunteer Sean Gibbons was complimentary about the class of men who joined the RIC: BMH WS 927. A number of men interviewed by John Brewer had fathers in the force before the revolution and emphasise how their fathers’ work was of a routine nature: John D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: an oral history* (Belfast, 1984), pp. 23–32.

8 BMH WS 509 (J. J. McConnell).

9 BMH WS 486 (Eugene Bratton).

reception from ‘Sinn Feiners’.<sup>10</sup> In July, the month of Eamon de Valera’s victory in the East Clare by-election, the county inspector noted that ‘The attitude of the Sinn Feiners towards the police has also undergone a change. They will now scarcely salute them and especially if two or three of them are together.’<sup>11</sup> By October, it seemed that ‘the people appear to regard the police as their enemies and have ceased all friendly intercourse with them. Shops continue to supply provisions but in many cases they would prefer that the police did not come to them. No opportunity is lost to try and bring discredit on the Force’.<sup>12</sup> In a speech delivered that month, De Valera had ‘reproached the Royal Irish Constabulary for “doing the dirty work of the enemy”’ and the inspector general believed the deteriorating situation in the country was ‘a result of the Sinn Fein insurrectionary movement’; ‘a spirit of hostility towards the Police has arisen, particularly in the provinces of Connaught and Munster where the defiant attitude of the people towards law and authority has made the duties of the police extremely difficult’.<sup>13</sup> Policemen were not the lone targets. In Kinvara, County Galway, Michael Lyons offered two policemen a lift to mass in November 1917. The following Sunday shots were fired through his window and a note was found, which read: ‘If you drive the peelers in your car you’ll get the same as went through your window last night.’<sup>14</sup> In 1918, attempts were made to cut off the police supply of food, turf, and transport in some small, rural communities in Clare, Galway, and Cork.<sup>15</sup>

Physical attacks remained rare and police in much of the country were unaffected; the inspector general optimistically reported a general improvement in public relations on three occasions in 1917 and 1918.<sup>16</sup> Given the tactics adopted, it is unsurprising that the most affected counties at this early stage had a tradition of agrarian agitation and boycotting and ostracism had been used against the RIC during the Land War in Galway and Clare.<sup>17</sup> Old methods were simply applied to a new cause.

Just after Constables McDonnell and O’Connell were killed in Soloheadbeg on 21 January 1919, the inspector general reported that ‘There was no improvement in the attitude of the people towards the R.I.C. who, in the disaffected counties, are treated with bitter hostility and are boycotted in various ways.’<sup>18</sup> In February 1919, Tipperary Volunteer Séamus

10 MCRs, CIs, Clare, Galway, Tipperary, Jun.–Jul. 1917 (TNA: CO 904/103).

11 MCRs, CI, Clare, Jul. 1917 (/104).

12 MCRs, CI, Clare, Oct. 1917 (/104).

13 MCRs, IG, Oct. 1917 (/104).

14 MCRs, IG, Nov. 1917 (/104).

15 MCRs, Clare, Cork, Galway, Jan.–Dec. 1918 (/105–7).

16 MCRs, IG, Dec. 1917 (/104); Jun. 1918 (/105); Sep. 1918 (/106).

17 Lowe, ‘The war against the R.I.C.’, p. 84.

18 MCRs, IG, Jan. 1919 (TNA: CO 904/108).

Robinson drafted a proclamation, which he sent to GHQ for approval. As all Irish political prisoners had been tried and convicted on the evidence of policemen, the proclamation warned that ‘the life, limb and living of no citizen in Ireland is safe while these paid spies are allowed to infest the country’. As some remained willing to offer information to the police, the following regulations were to apply in the ‘South Tipperary Area’:

- (a) A policeman found within the said area on or after the \_\_\_\_ day of February 1919, will be deemed to have forfeited his life. The more notorious police being dealt with, as far as possible, first.
- (b) On and after the \_\_\_\_\_ day of February 1919, every person in the pay of England (magistrates, jurors etc.) who helps England to rule this country or who assists in any way the upholders of foreign Government in this South Riding of Tipperary will be deemed to have forfeited his life.
- (c) Civilians who give information to the police or soldiery, especially such information as is of a serious character, if convicted will be executed, i.e. shot or hanged.
- (d) Police, doctors, prison officials who assist at or who countenance or who are responsible for, or in any way connected with the drugging of an Irish citizen for the purpose of obtaining information, will be deemed to have forfeited his life and may be hanged or drowned or shot at sight as a common outlaw. Offending parties will be executed should it take years to track them down.
- (e) Every citizen must assist when required in enabling us to perform our duty.<sup>19</sup>

Robinson was instructed not to post the proclamation but copies found their way on to telegraph poles and lamp posts.<sup>20</sup> In a speech around the same time, Séamus Aloysius Bourke, Sinn Féin MP for Mid Tipperary, told his audience that by putting on their uniforms the RIC had declared their own lives forfeit ‘and if any man shoots or otherwise destroys one of them he may rest easy in his conscience, for he is only carrying out the sentence already passed on him by the Republican Government’.<sup>21</sup> A month later, he

19 BMH WS 1721 (Séamus Robinson).

20 BMH WS 1721 (Séamus Robinson); *Irish Post and Telegraph for Cavan and Midlands*, 12 Jul. 1919.

21 *Irish Post*, 12 Jul. 1919.

suggested that ‘the way to deal with the police was not to shoot them ... but to make their life unbearable, treat them as outcasts of society, as we cannot be in any place that some of these vipers are not in our midst’.<sup>22</sup> Bourke was typical of speakers who repeatedly warned that the RIC were the ‘greatest enemies’ of Ireland, the last great obstacle in the way of Irish freedom, ‘spies’, and ‘traitors’.<sup>23</sup> The public were urged not to acknowledge the RIC, even by saluting them in the street, traders were asked not to sell them goods, and the public were even asked not to sit beside them at Sunday service.<sup>24</sup>

It was not until a meeting on 10 April 1919 that a directive was officially advocated by Dáil Éireann and a policy of ‘social ostracisation’ confirmed, described by Dáil Éireann secretary Diarmuid O’Hegarty:

the Police forces [‘and their families’ *crossed out in crayon*] must receive no social recognition from the people; that no intercourse, except such as is absolutely necessary for business is permitted with them; they should not be saluted nor spoken to in the streets nor their salutes returned; that they should not be invited to nor received in private houses as friends or guests; that they be debarred from participation in games, sports, dances and all social functions conducted by the people, that intermarriage with them be discouraged, that, in a word, the police shd be treated as persons, who having been adjudged guilty of treason to their country, are regarded unworthy to enjoy any of the privileges or comforts which arise from cordial relations with the public.<sup>25</sup>

The message disseminated slowly and the shunning of police grew sporadically. Central direction on the boycott was late and often ignored. An official GHQ order on the boycott from the IRA hierarchy was not produced until 4 June 1920 and offered little in the way of practical instruction.<sup>26</sup> It remained down to individual companies of Volunteers to obey the boycott and ensure others did likewise, by whatever means they deemed necessary. Local boycotts had waxed and waned since 1917 and the new policy did little more than attempt to centralise and control local practice. The most affected police were still those in Clare, Galway, Tipperary, and Cork but as the

22 MCRs, IG, Mar. 1919 (TNA: CO 904/108).

23 See MCRs, IG, and CI, Jan.–Aug. 1919 (/108–9).

24 Proclamation issued from Cumann na mBan headquarters, 26 Apr. 1919 (UCDA: P106/1166).

25 O’Hegarty to ‘Home Secretary’, 23 Apr. 1919 (NAI: DÉ 2/175). The description was offered in reply to a request for ‘a more explicit definition of what is implied by its proposed application’.

26 General Orders (New Series), No. 6, 4 Jun. 1920 (UCDA: P7/A/45).

year continued deterioration in relations with the public became noticeable elsewhere, particularly in Kerry and Limerick.<sup>27</sup> By the turn of 1920, police in Donegal, Sligo, Roscommon, and Longford were also commenting on an increased atmosphere of hostility.<sup>28</sup> Reports indicate a dramatic surge of dissent and intimidation aimed against the police in the first six months of 1920, with the number of reported IRA outrages peaking in July.<sup>29</sup> In one week that month there were 78 reported offences against the police, including six threats to policemen and 29 to their suppliers and tradesmen.<sup>30</sup> Donal O'Sullivan has stated that there was no boycott in 12 Irish counties, but a survey of the available police reports and compensation claims makes it clear that no county was entirely free of violence or threats against police or those close to them.<sup>31</sup> Policemen and their relatives were, though, generally safer in the north-east.<sup>32</sup> Between 1917 and December 1921, 35 members of the RIC were killed in Ulster, 8 per cent of the total, and 12 of those were killed in Cavan (1), Donegal (6), and Monaghan (5).<sup>33</sup> Within the six most north-eastern counties, intimidation against police was less frequently reported and usually localised around areas with strong or mixed Catholic populations like South Armagh, Belfast in County Antrim, Newry in County Down, and Lisnaskea and Enniskillen in County Fermanagh.<sup>34</sup>

W. J. Lowe has described threats against policemen, their families, and sympathisers as 'deeply rooted traditions in Ireland' and the most common method of threatening a policeman was an age-old device: the anonymous letter.<sup>35</sup> Death threats of varying lengths and detail were delivered – with little or no risk to the sender – to police stations and homes. Some contained drawings, often of a coffin or a revolver, or made specific reference to recent acts of violence and threatened the same fate.<sup>36</sup> A letter received by a sergeant in Brosna, County Kerry, for instance, contained a list of RIC men who had been killed or wounded by 'our brother Volunteers during the week'.<sup>37</sup> The frequency of this form of intimidation and its nature – scribbled notes, crudely drawn guns or coffins, the use of pseudonyms, and

27 See MCRs, Jun.–Dec. 1919 (TNA: CO 904/109–10).

28 See MCRs, CIs, Donegal, Sligo, Roscommon and Longford, Jan.–Feb. 1920 (/111).

29 See Weekly summaries (/148–50).

30 Weekly summaries, Jul. 1920 (/148).

31 O'Sullivan, *The Irish constabularies 1822–1922*, p. 314; MCRs, CIs and IG, 1919–1921 (/108–116); Weekly summaries (/148–50); IGC claims (CO 762/3–212).

32 Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp. 46–7; Matthew Lewis, *Frank Aiken's war: the Irish revolution, 1916–1923* (Dublin, 2014), p. 63; McCluskey, *Tyrone*, p. 96.

33 See Table 4.1.

34 MCRs, CIs and IG, 1919–1921 (/108–16); Weekly summaries (/148–50).

35 Lowe, 'The war against the R.I.C.', pp. 99, 102.

36 See Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/148–50).

37 Weekly summaries, May 1920 (/148).

specific references to the deaths of others – closely mirrors the letters sent by agrarian agitators to landlords, agents, and bailiffs in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

When a member of the force was at home or on leave, and away from the comparative protection of his barracks, he was most vulnerable and did not have to form part of an ambushed patrol to come under fire. Between 1919 and 1921, 412 serving policemen were shot and killed in Ireland (there had been no casualties between 1917 and 1918). Almost 30 per cent had not been engaged in police activity when killed but had been alone or unarmed, travelling to or from work, taking a walk, visiting the local shop, leaving mass.<sup>39</sup> Everyday tasks suddenly became potentially dangerous for the Irish policeman. There were also opportunities for threatening raids on police homes. This was a method particularly favoured by the IRA to dissuade men whom they believed had committed to joining the force. It offered a convenient means to attack isolated policemen but also served to reinforce the idea that the IRA were always watching, that they knew exactly who was coming and going in their area, further eroding any sense of security. Raids generally met with mixed results and depended on the individual target. For every man who was compelled to resign there was another who brushed off the threat and reported back to his barracks for duty.<sup>40</sup>

Policemen and candidates were most easily accessible through their families. Parents were frequently subject to threats of violence – usually by letter or armed raid – unless they brought their sons home. The idea of targeting parents to convince policemen to resign and take up a job in civil life had first been advocated in 1919 but no formal scheme adopted.<sup>41</sup> By July 1920, Chief Secretary Sir Hamar Greenwood reported on a ‘growing tendency to intimidate or victimise’ the relatives of policemen.<sup>42</sup> Some months later, an IRA weekly memorandum noted that the number of RIC resignations was continuing unabated and in ‘very many cases these are stated to be brought about by pressure exerted by their relatives at home who are suffering from a tacit boycott because of them’; the old RIC had become the ‘pointers’ for the ‘Black and Tans’ and ‘None of his friends or relatives must be allowed to forget this to him. They cannot of course be held responsible for him and must not therefore be actually boycotted, but they must bear his shame.’<sup>43</sup>

38 Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, pp. 150–6.

39 This figure is based on a survey of police killings described in Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland, 1919–1922* (Cork, 2000).

40 See, for example, Thomas Calnan who resigned after a raid on his home and Thomas Drury who returned to his station after a similar experience (TNA: CO 904/149).

41 See BMH WS 580 (John Duffy).

42 Secret weekly summary to the Cabinet, 5 Jul. 1920 (TNA: CAB 27/108/SIC 8).

43 ‘Weekly Memorandum No. 5’, 30 Oct. 1920 (NLI: MS 739).

Local IRA units may have taken heed of such success, but often ignored the memorandum's final instruction. In August 1920, for instance, the Cavan county inspector reported that three farmers had received threatening letters because their sons were in the RIC and notices were posted up warning others to boycott them. One had already called his son home.<sup>44</sup> This more aggressive approach in part stemmed from necessity. By mid-1920, the men who might be easily intimidated out of their jobs had already left. Those remaining were men who had resolved to stay for the duration or recruits who had joined in 1919 and 1920. The minority enlisting in Ireland were well aware of the conditions of service in the RIC but had decided to join anyway, and were therefore less likely to resign on the basis of a nasty letter or warning.

The RIC General Personnel Register lists 108 Irish-born police who resigned from the force between 1919 and 1921 and explicitly cited IRA intimidation. Over half (58) had joined the force after 1 January 1920 and 50 were still in training, yet to be assigned to a station. The decreasing impact of personal threatening letters, compared to persecution of a policeman's family, can be seen as only 17 claimed to have been personally affected by intimidation or fear (and only one directly cited a threatening letter) while the remainder of the sample (91, or 84 per cent) blamed intimidation of, or pressure from, their family. All but two of the recruits in training claimed family had been involved in their decision.<sup>45</sup> A policeman could feel assured that he was able to protect his own person, and may have felt safe in the training depot or armed with colleagues in a fortified barracks, but could do nothing to protect his family who, due to RIC regulations, were not in the same county. Hugh Cunniffe joined the RIC from Roscommon on 5 April 1920. Four days later, a group of masked and armed men entered his father's house and made him swear he would bring his son home. Cunniffe resigned on 11 April having spent less than a week in the Phoenix Park Depot in Dublin.<sup>46</sup> Most directly referenced intimidation or boycotting against their parents but 15 offered a more obtuse explanation ('The wish of his people'; 'Parents want him home'; 'Mother anxious he should resign') that suggested fear or political conviction on the part of parents. The far greater number of

44 MCRs, CI, Cavan, Aug. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

45 Figures compiled from a survey of the RIC General Personnel Register (HO 184/30-7). These figures exclude two English-born policemen who blamed family pressure or intimidation for the resignation and a further seven who withdrew their request or later rejoined the RIC and were disbanded in 1922. It also excludes at least 242 men whose stated reason for resignation was vague – 'family circumstances', 'required at home', 'private affairs', 'dissatisfied', etc. – or gave no reason at all, and potentially many others who were not as truthful as they might have been. For a more detailed analysis of RIC resignation, see Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp. 34-9.

46 RIC General Personnel Register (/36); Weekly summaries, Apr. 1920 (CO 904/148).



men admitting resignation for the sake of family at home, however, may not fully reflect realities on the ground but rather hint at a greater willingness to admit this as a reason. It was less cowardly, perhaps, to fear for your family's safety than for your own.

A breakdown of a sample of RIC resignations because of personal or family fear and intimidation by county of service or county of birth offers an insight into the nature of police intimidation across counties (see Table 1.1). The policemen who were personally intimidated are, with the notable exception of Roscommon, almost all from Munster counties where violence (and violence against the police) was greatest.<sup>47</sup> The county of birth has been tabulated for the men claiming family influence, as many specifically mentioned parents, and a policemen's family were most likely to have remained in his county of birth. The distribution of these men suggests a particularly effective campaign against police families in Cork, but also in the 'quieter' counties Roscommon and Leitrim. Evidence from local newspapers offers evidence that something similar was also the case in Cavan – among the highest number of resignations in the sample with seven. In February 1919, for instance, RIC recruits along the Cavan/Leitrim border were visited by 'armed and disguised men who made them promise to remain at home, after which a volley of shots were fired'. The father of one candidate, who had already left, followed his son and convinced him to return.<sup>48</sup> With the exception of the Cavan natives, only two of the men citing family intimidation had been born in Ulster, and only one (a native of Belfast) was born in the six counties that became Northern Ireland, pointing to a comparatively safer environment for police and their families there.

Boycotting and intimidation brought much hardship and difficulty to police wives and children. The county inspector for Galway West Riding described the conditions of service there and noted how police wives 'are miserable, and their children suffer in schools, and nobody cares'.<sup>49</sup> Kate Scully, the widow of a district inspector whose son served at the same rank, told the IGC that even 'Priests at the Cathedral would not say good morning to us'.<sup>50</sup> As well as the indignity and social exclusion that came with being related to a member of a boycotted force, they were also often the victims of intimidation. Letters and raids warned wives either to force their husband's resignation or leave the locality. The accommodation of many RIC families was targeted and furniture and other possessions burned. Landlords were

47 See Table 4.1.

48 *Anglo-Celt*, 28 Feb. 1919.

49 MCRs, CI, Galway W.R., Aug. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

50 Kate Scully claim (CO 762/14/2); MCRs, CI, Kerry, Apr. 1920 (CO 904/111); Among the most dramatic was the case of Mrs Donnellan and Mrs Sullivan in Kerry. See Weekly summaries, Jun. 1920 (CO 904/148).

**Table 1.1 Police resignations by county because of personal or family fear and intimidation**

	Personal fear and intimidation	Family fear and intimidation
	<i>Sample 17</i>	<i>Sample 91</i>
	County stationed in	County of birth
Antrim	0	1
Armagh	0	0
Carlow	0	0
Cavan	0	7
Clare	2	2
Cork	2	12
Donegal	0	5
Down	0	0
Dublin	0	0
Fermanagh	0	1
Galway	0	7
Kerry	3	4
Kildare	0	2
Kilkenny	0	0
King's	0	2
Leitrim	0	11
Limerick	0	5
Londonderry	0	0
Longford	0	1
Louth	0	0
Mayo	1	7
Meath	0	1
Monaghan	0	0
Queen's	0	1
Roscommon	3	10
Sligo	0	6
Tipperary	3	2
Tyrone	0	0
Waterford	0	0
Westmeath	0	2
Wexford	1	1
Wicklow	0	1
No Station	2	

*Source:* RIC General Personnel Register (HO 184/30–7).

instructed not to let property to police families or to evict those already lodged. Other RIC families suffered from the retailers' boycott. James Goulden's father was stationed in Mayo and he remembered how 'For some time before [Easter, 1920] we had found difficulty in getting milk and had to use condensed milk'.<sup>51</sup> More seriously, the *Constabulary Gazette* reported on the wife and children of a policeman who were 'boycotted to starving point' as they were forced to pay three times the price for supplies and could only secure them 'at irregular hours and by stealth'.<sup>52</sup> Experiences could vary drastically, but even the possibility that necessities might be denied was worthy of anxiety.

For its part, GHQ was opposed to the harassment of wives and children. The commander of the Dingle IRA sought clarification on the proposed extent of the boycott:

1. are people to refuse *to sell them food*.
2. if so are they to refuse to sell food to & for their wives and children & milk for their babies!
3. one or two women who cook and wash for them – are they to be made give up their jobs
4. If a trader has a contract with them for supplies is he to be compelled to break the contract?
5. Are doctors [or] nurses to be allowed to attend police.<sup>53</sup>

He was told that people independent of the police must refuse to sell them food, traders must break any contracts with the police, and barrack servants were to be made to leave their posts, but the police could be allowed to buy food and milk and doctors were not to be prevented from attending police and their families.<sup>54</sup> Goulden's family found that 'on occasions on which any child was ill we always managed to get supplies' and a boycott notice in Roscommon requested that merchants 'supply all policeman's wives and children'.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, a boycotting order in Donegal did 'not require that food and other necessaries be refused to the families of policemen, but traders are required to keep a check on the supply in such cases, as will guard against

51 BMH WS 1340 (J. R. W. Goulden).

52 *Constabulary Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1921.

53 Commandant Dingle Battalion to GHQ, 10 Jun. 1920 (MAI: A/0494).

54 GHQ to Dingle, n.d. (A/0494).

55 BMH WS 1340 (J. R. W. Goulden); Weekly summaries, Aug. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/149).

such supplies being used by the police force generally'.<sup>56</sup> Policeman's son Patrick Shea was adamant that in most of the country families like his 'were not, as some have said, treated as outcasts by their neighbours; they bought their groceries and sent their children to school to make friends in spite of the advice of the extremists'.<sup>57</sup> When a doctor in Galway who had been treating a wounded Auxiliary received a threatening letter, IRA Chief of Staff Richard Mulcahy warned the commandant of the Galway Brigade that 'As far as Hospitals and Hospital Staffs are concerned they must be regarded as common Institutions ministering to all. Dr. O'Malley ... should be given any protection that may be necessary and also given assurance that this warning is a bogus one as far as you are concerned'.<sup>58</sup>

The most common victims of IRA intimidation were those who provided labour, supplies, and information to the RIC. From 16 March 1920 to 18 December 1921, there were 164 reported threats to policemen compared with 513 against tradesmen and suppliers (and the actual difference was probably much wider as policemen were more likely to report threats than members of the public).<sup>59</sup> Michael Casey from Shrule, County Galway, was boycotted in 1920 and later remarked that 'at the time the Rebels only had to raise their finger and the people stopped away'.<sup>60</sup> In a rural community where everybody knew everybody else and a stretched police force could not adequately protect them, those considered 'friendly' to the RIC were highly susceptible to suspicion and retribution. If the IRA could convince their communities to deny the RIC transport, necessities, and information, as well as social interaction, they would effectively cease to function. The police had little access to their own means of transportation and relied on the use of privately owned carts and motor vehicles to convey everything from turf to prisoners. The owners of carts and cars used by police were threatened and some had their carts destroyed. Kerry Volunteer James Fitzgerald recalled seizing a common cart that had been used to transfer turf to the local barracks and burying it in Kinvara Strand.<sup>61</sup> A motor car hired by the police in Leitrim had its wheels removed to prevent its future use.<sup>62</sup> Further, a lack of information and willing witnesses meant an inability either to arrest or prosecute offenders. Those who cut turf for the RIC, provided them with milk, butter, labour, and other necessities were sent threatening letters warning them to cease their association and notices were posted up in towns warning the public of the

56 'Proclamation of Boycott of R.I.C.', West Donegal Brigade, 26 Jun. 1920 (NLI: MS 739).

57 Patrick Shea, *Voices and the sound of drums: an Irish autobiography* (Galway, 1981), p. 65.

58 Mulcahy to OC Galway Brigade, 8 Mar. 1920 (UCDA: P7/A/17).

59 Figures compiled from RIC weekly returns of outrages (TNA: CO 904/148-50).

60 Michael Casey claim (CO 762/23/6).

61 BMH WS 999 (James Fitzgerald).

62 Weekly summaries, Apr. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/148).

consequences of dealing with ‘the enemy’. The punishment for women who kept company or were friendly with Crown forces was often to have their hair cut off, a grim visual reminder of their alleged transgression.<sup>63</sup>

Fear, diminished prospects, or radical conviction convinced many hundreds of RIC men to resign between 1919 and 1921.<sup>64</sup> But 63 per cent of those serving in 1919 were disbanded in 1922.<sup>65</sup> What of these men and their decision to stay? Resigning immediately brought a reduced pension and limited opportunities to secure new means of employment.<sup>66</sup> Further, there was no guarantee of quiet acceptance back into home communities. David Neligan, a Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) detective who worked for IRA intelligence, remarked later that ‘no effort was made by anybody to provide alternative employment or to help them return to civilian life. The result was that they could see nothing ahead but starvation. So literally they stuck to their guns and fought their own countrymen – to the last.’<sup>67</sup> As a policeman himself, Neligan was perhaps more likely to sympathise on this level than most. David Fitzpatrick has pointed to the large numbers who did leave but the logic Neligan highlighted must have been relevant to thousands more decisions made as violence intensified.<sup>68</sup> In December 1920, Daniel Crowley told the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland that he had resigned from the RIC ‘because of the misgovernment of the English in Ireland’, but when asked why others like him stayed on replied, ‘Well, I guess they remain just for their living. That is all.’<sup>69</sup>

Policemen’s children offered similar reflections. Cecil King’s father, a policeman in Sligo, was one of five brothers from a poor family who had joined the RIC as a career. King has described how ‘the I.R.A. made repeated overtures to my father to resign from the force, but he refused, preferring fear of death by bullet to the alternative – a life of abject penury and a brand of cowardice.’<sup>70</sup> Patrick Shea believed that for his father (a policeman who supported Home Rule but opposed physical-force nationalism)

it would be less than just to say that if the possibility of quitting the force ever came into his mind, as indeed it must have, his decision was

63 For more on this, see Chapter 4.

64 Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 202. For a similar view from a contemporary policeman, see BMH WS 509 (J. J. McConnell).

65 Lowe, ‘The war against the R.I.C.’, p. 106.

66 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp. 5–7; Malcolm, *The Irish policeman*, pp. 57–61.

67 David Neligan, *The spy in the castle* (Dublin 1999; 1st edn. London, 1968), pp. 80–1.

68 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp. 34–5.

69 *Evidence on conditions in Ireland: comprising the complete testimony, affidavits and exhibits presented before the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland* (Washington, DC, 1921), pp. 385, 389.

70 Quoted in Malcolm, *The Irish policeman*, p. 227.

influenced any more by ideological considerations than by the practical problems of a middle-aged, kindly man with a young family and no occupation.<sup>71</sup>

Seán O'Faoláin's father was a gentle man who had never issued a summons during his career and retired 'before the revolutionary spirit after 1916 spread all over the country'. Had he still been in the force, O'Faoláin speculated that he would also have stuck to his guns, 'not, to be sure, after any deep conscience-searchings about the conflicting demands involved in the idea of loyalty, but for a quite simple and unarguable reason: "Oh please, dear kind Jesus, look after my poor little children ... Help me to work for them as long as I live."' <sup>72</sup>

Those who worked for the police faced a similar dilemma. In Adare, County Limerick, two armed and masked men entered the house of a barrack servant and attempted to force her to leave her employment. When she refused, arguing 'it was her sole means of earning a livelihood and had six children to support', the raiders left her unharmed.<sup>73</sup> This attitude made sense when one considers the case of Johanna Hanafin of Castlegregory, County Kerry. Hanafin had complied with an IRA demand to give up cooking, washing, and sewing for the RIC in June 1920 but two years later found herself writing a letter to Dáil Éireann describing her current position: penniless, unable to find work, and living in a cabin that was falling down around her. She claimed compensation, which had been promised but was not yet forthcoming.<sup>74</sup>

The boycott generated a complex set of economic considerations for the inhabitants of an affected community. By refusing to work for, or trade with, the RIC, members of the community would inevitably suffer a loss of income. Conversely, deviants ran the risk of suffering a boycott themselves. A Donegal boycotting order made this ominously clear: 'Business people must make their choice of the custom of their neighbours or the cowardly ruffians of the R.I.C. A sensible businessman will be able to judge which pays the best in the long run.'<sup>75</sup> Where political or personal affiliation did not discourage trade with police, the fear of personal injury had to outweigh any potential economic loss. In Donoghmore, County Cork, a notice was posted on a church gate declaring that as Philip and Thomas Barrett continued to trade with 'Enemy forces', anyone seen to be interacting with them would

71 Shea, *Voices and the sound of drums*, p. 31.

72 Seán O'Faoláin, *Vive moi! an autobiography* (London, 1965), pp. 35–6.

73 Weekly summaries, May 1920 (TNA: CO 904/148).

74 Johanna Hanafin, Kerry to 'Dail Eireann', 14 Jun. 1922 (NAI: DECC/13/1).

75 'Proclamation of Boycott of R.I.C.', West Donegal Brigade, 26 Jun. 1920 (NLI: MS 739).

be 'shot at sight'. The following month a notice was posted claiming that as the Barrett brothers had 'apologised to the Irish Republican Government', the previous proclamation against them was withdrawn.<sup>76</sup> Complying with a boycott imposed on a neighbouring trader by the IRA could reduce competition and provide a convenient excuse to refuse to pay bills, as one boycotted trader in Kilkee, County Clare, alleged.<sup>77</sup>

Donal O'Sullivan has pointed out that most people were willing to serve RIC members, if only clandestinely, as they were considered good customers.<sup>78</sup> In many localities, the local RIC would take for themselves what was needed and leave payment behind, or commandeer transport otherwise refused. As time went on, however, some traders who had been adhering to the boycott had a change of heart. In January 1920, the Roscommon county inspector commented that 'The majority of the people are not in favour of the criminal campaign and realise it is not good for them to boycott or display hostility to the Crown Forces.'<sup>79</sup> By August, the *Irish Times* reported on a meeting of traders in Castlerea where it was proposed to remove a police boycott that had been in place with the local Volunteers, unsurprisingly, 'strongly opposed to the decision of the traders' meeting'.<sup>80</sup> Roscommon Volunteer Thomas Crawley believed traders there had continued to supply the RIC anyway under the pretence that the goods had been commandeered.<sup>81</sup> Another Roscommon Volunteer pointed out that shopkeepers in Boyle were notified of the boycott in October 1920 but it was ignored; 'One or two only tried it first'. The local IRA prevented traders from supplying turf to the RIC but one man was physically dragged on his pony and trap to the local barracks where the police took his turf and gave him the money.<sup>82</sup> The British army claimed that similar attempts to boycott soldiers from spring 1920 were 'generally futile'.<sup>83</sup>

Tom Carney resigned as a policeman and joined the IRA in Mayo. He later told Ernie O'Malley that

In Thurles at that time the R.I.C. had to commandeer all the goods they wanted (for no one would sell them food or drink or material – at

76 Weekly summaries, Mar. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/148).

77 J.J. Keane to Austin Stack, 30 Sep. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/34).

78 O'Sullivan, *The Irish constabularies*, pp. 313–14.

79 MCRs, CI, Roscommon, Jan. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/114).

80 *Irish Times*, 18 Aug. 1920. Similar decisions were arrived at in other parts of the country: see Lowe, 'The war against the R.I.C.', p. 105.

81 BMH WS 718 (Thomas Crawley).

82 Jim Fehilly (UCDA: P7b/131).

83 'Record of the Rebellion in Ireland 1920–21 and the part played by the army in dealing with it, Volume IV' (TNA: WO 141/93).

least no one was supposed to sell them necessities). On patrol if we went in for a drink the publican refused to serve us and at Two Mile Borris ... the patrol had to go inside the counter, draw the pints and go to the till for the change.

But in Mayo 'there was no boycott of the R.I.C. ... The Tans walked out with the best looking girls from the village of Kiltimagh'.<sup>84</sup> Where the IRA was unable to maintain pressure on suppliers, many seem to have been willing to return to supplying the police. Additionally, reprisals by Crown forces may have persuaded traders to abandon boycotting in order to protect their property from damage.<sup>85</sup> IRA veteran Joseph Clancy acknowledged as much when he recalled that Dalystown, County Galway, 'contained a number of people who, from hostility towards the I.R.A. or fear of reprisals, would not hesitate to report to the police or military that we were lying in ambush'.<sup>86</sup>

Some IRA veterans admitted that the boycott against the RIC actually increased the belligerence of some of its members. Martin Fallon, a Roscommon Volunteer, believed

The effects of this boycott were a doubtful gain. While it did help to drive a wedge between the R.I.C. and the people, very few of them resigned as a result. Instead, it seemed to make them stubborn and arrogant and, in this way, I am afraid we antagonised some of them who would be good friends of ours. We forgot they were Irishmen, and there is an old saying that you can lead an Irishman, but you can't drive him.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, Patrick Cassidy from Mayo found, 'We did not succeed in making any substantial number of the police resign; rather, I think the boycott had the opposite effect and only hardened them and made them sullen and arrogant towards the people.' He recalled that in revenge for the annoyance caused by the boycott, the RIC in his area began to summon traders and anyone associated with the IRA to court for 'every little trivial offence that they could find'. Cassidy did, however, add that the 'deep void' created between police and public was very useful for what was to follow later.<sup>88</sup> Clearly, some policemen who may have had political sympathies with the

84 Tom Carney (UCDA: P7b/109).

85 Lowe, 'The war against the R.I.C.', p. 105.

86 BMH WS 1370 (Joseph Clancy).

87 BMH WS 1121 (Martin Fallon).

88 BMH WS 1017 (Patrick Cassidy).



rebels were turned away by the tactics employed against them, including men who may have been useful. Much later, Sean Gibbons felt that ‘we could have made more use of the Royal Irish Constabulary, but it was too difficult to break the unapproachability that had grown up around them and, further, we regarded them as enemies’, while a Volunteer in Roscommon described how three constables who had given them information resigned from the force, thus breaking the link.<sup>89</sup>

For all the violence and indignities they suffered, Irish policemen were not solely the victims of intimidation and coercion. David Leeson has argued that Irish-born police were just as likely to perpetrate violence as their British counterparts: ‘When British police and Auxiliaries took reprisals, they were following the bad example set by their Irish comrades.’ Leeson has used contemporary witness descriptions of Crown reprisals to determine that Irish police were often present among parties carrying out acts of violence and, on occasion, the exclusive participants. This violence, he contends, was circumstance- rather than character-led and it was aspects of the IRA’s own campaign of terror against the police that drove individuals to fight back. Among the explanations for reprisals identified by Leeson are the RIC boycott, which infuriated police (‘Being threatened was one thing. Being despised was quite another’), and the failure of the legal system, as witnesses refused to come forward, assize sessions collapsed, and coroners’ inquiries into the deaths of comrades failed to pass satisfactory conclusions. ‘Isolated, alienated, some constables rejected the force itself: they resigned, they retired, or they became passive, “useless”. Others rejected the government and the people but remained loyal to their fellow police, turning to self-help in place of due process – vengeance in place of justice.’<sup>90</sup>

Outrage statistics indicate a large drop in the number of cases of intimidation in December 1920 and January 1921. These figures began steadily to rise again in the months before the July Truce, but never again reached the peak of spring 1920.<sup>91</sup> In January and February 1921, county inspectors across the country were reporting that, while there was still much violence and unrest, relations between the police and public were improving and there was a greater willingness to come forward with information in certain areas.<sup>92</sup> This does not mean that the campaign of intimidation had been a success and was no longer necessary, but instead points to a new emphasis

89 BMH WS 927 (Sean Gibbons); BMH WS 964 (Sean Glancy).

90 Leeson, *Black and Tans*, pp. 91, 196–7, 203–15.

91 Returns of number of cases of intimidation against the RIC contained in Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/148–50).

92 IG and CI MCRs (CO 904/113–14).

for revolutionary violence. In March 1921, the commandant of the Cork No. 2 Brigade asked Mulcahy:

Is it time we get the Irish people, no matter who they are, not to freely supply the enemy? Several people have large contracts for meat, oats and dozens of other important supplies. It seems ridiculous to have the civil population supplying the enemy; while the Army is in the field to cut off supplies etc. If they force supplies from the people, it is alright, but then it will take time and men to do it. ... If we rigidly put in force that none of the civilian population speak or communicate with them, it will break up their all important Intelligence Department.<sup>93</sup>

As the police moved further from reach, tactics changed and softer targets became the focus: families, friends, and the local community. The nature of violence, and of suspicion and punishment, also changed and the war within communities had by 1921 entered a new phase. Testimony from compensation claimants describe an escalation of boycotting, intimidation, and harm throughout 1921 and beyond for individuals who continued to assist the police.<sup>94</sup>

Efforts to persecute 'peelers' during the Irish revolution had much in common with nineteenth-century agrarian agitation. It comprised mainly of low-level, local activity. It was sporadic in intensity and effectiveness. While there was some central direction, it depended for its impetus on local leadership. W. J. Lowe described how the IRA's campaign of threats, intimidation, and violence 'effectively destroyed the R.I.C. without the necessity of defeating it'.<sup>95</sup> But Donal O'Sullivan has instead written that the RIC boycott was 'not the big success ... which its instigators had hoped for, or claimed it to be'.<sup>96</sup> The reality was, perhaps, somewhere in between. Some traders adhered to the boycott in support of the republican campaign, but also because they were afraid of the consequences if they did not. Others refused to comply with the order as they were loyal to the Crown, related to a policeman, or because they could not afford – or did not wish – to suffer financial loss. The boycott thus became difficult to maintain over a long period. A combination of war weariness (from combatants and civilians) and an increasingly entrenched enemy meant that by 1921 it had often become inadequate. A new, more aggressive approach was needed and that approach often resulted in violence by and against the police. But,

93 OC Cork No. 2 Brigade to CS, 19 Mar. 1921 (P7/A/38).

94 There are many examples among the IGC claims (CO 762/2–212).

95 Lowe, 'The war against the R.I.C.', p. 117.

96 O'Sullivan, *The Irish constabularies*, p. 315.

neither of those two extremes – resignation or reprisal – was the lot of all policemen. Some veterans interviewed by John Brewer continued to perform many conventional police duties, even in areas traditionally associated with violence.<sup>97</sup> The intimidation and persecution suffered by most policemen in Ireland was non-violent and the threat of violence was often indirect. In this sense, they shared a common experience with other Crown servants involved in law and order.

### Magistrates and civil servants

The RIC and the military were the most obvious representatives of the British administration in Ireland. But what of the civil servants in Dublin Castle, who silently ran all aspects of British rule in Ireland, or the government officials who administered local and civil affairs? A locally elected justice of the peace (JP) or full-time stipendiary resident magistrate (RM) tasked with administering petty justice? A Crown solicitor who helped prosecute republicans? Or a servant of the postal and telegraph service (the civil service's largest department) responsible for the distribution of information? All were, in theory at least, stigmatised by their profession as supporters of British rule. In 1918, all civil servants had been required to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Some who had refused for political reasons were suspended and dismissed, including Diarmuid O'Hegarty and Tom McArdle, who later became prominent servants of the underground Dáil government.<sup>98</sup> In doing so they formed a distinct minority and only about 400 civil servants (1.5 per cent of the total) were dismissed for disloyal political activities between 1916 and 1921.<sup>99</sup> The rest, whether they agreed with it, or simply preferred to keep their jobs, took the oath and continued their employment throughout the Revolution. This section will explore civil servants as deviants and victims, focusing on the recorded experiences of the civil servants who openly defied the IRA, and were subjected to violence and intimidation as a result. It will begin with those who served the law of the Crown.

The main attraction of an unpaid, honorary commission of the peace was the social status it offered. JPs, as an obvious local manifestation of the British legal system, were subject to a direct republican edict calling on them

97 Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 129.

98 BMH WS 452 (Michael McDunphy). For a detailed administrative history of the Irish civil service during the Irish revolution and beyond, see Maguire, *The civil service and the revolution in Ireland*.

99 Fergus Campbell, 'Who ruled Ireland? The Irish administration, 1879–1914', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Sep. 2007), p. 642 n. 61.

to resign their commissions. A JP in Cork received a threatening letter from the ‘Competent Military Authority’ declaring:

Our attention has been drawn to the fact that you are still a magistrate under the despotic government that is the essence of every crime more devilish than Satan himself viz murderers, church desecrators, robbers, torturers of human beings, as a matter of fact violators of every principle of civilised Christian morality and civilisation ever established ... We hereby notify that you are to hand in your resignation and have same published within a week from the receipt of this notice. Failing this you shall be summarily dealt with by the Irish Republican Army.<sup>100</sup>

In general, such calls proved successful. In Cavan, for instance, the RIC reported that 15 justices resigned during July 1920 alone.<sup>101</sup> Edward Aylward, a Kilkenny Volunteer, believed that ‘Justices of the Peace were generally substantial farmers and merchants and, feeling that their activities as British Justices were contrary to the popular feeling at the time, a large number, if not most of them resigned in Kilkenny as well as all over the country’.<sup>102</sup> Among the 15 Cavan magistrates who resigned in July 1920, six wrote to the Lord Chancellor to inform him they had done so as they ‘no longer wish to be associated with an Executive whose actions are subversive of equity and justice’, and this was published in the *Anglo-Celt*. The same *Anglo-Celt* issue named another three who remained more circumspect about their reasons.<sup>103</sup> The circumstances of individual cases often remain unclear. Thomas McGovern told the IGC he was beaten when he refused to resign his commission in Cavan. One of his referees claimed not to have first-hand knowledge of the case and would only admit that ‘he may have been ordered to resign his commission but I don’t know whether he did so or if it was fear which made him do so’.<sup>104</sup>

The majority required little or no persuasion but the ‘task of dealing with the recalcitrant few’, held Clare Volunteer Joseph Daly, ‘became one for the I.R.A. to tackle’.<sup>105</sup> A threatening letter like the one above could be enough to encourage a JP who had not already stood down but on occasion

100 Contained in Lieutenant Colonel George Tarry claim (TNA: CO 762/9/12). For a similar letter, see that received by William Wolfe in Jasper Ungood-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen* (Cork, 2008), pp. 121–2.

101 MCRs, CI, Fermanagh and Cavan, Jul. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

102 BMH WS 980 (Edward J. Aylward).

103 *Anglo-Celt*, 17 Jul. 1920. Two Leitrim JPs were also listed.

104 Thomas McGovern claim (TNA: CO 762/109/7).

105 BMH WS 1253 (Joseph Daly).

firmer measures were adopted. The IRA personally visited Catholic JPs in Monaghan in December 1920 and 'ordered them to resign, which they did'.<sup>106</sup> In Kilkenny, an ex-soldier and JP, Captain Daniel Howlett, was believed to be 'a danger to the movement and had or was likely to assist the enemy'.<sup>107</sup> He was kidnapped, held for three days, tried, and acquitted having agreed to resign his commission. The RIC reported that when Howlett resigned he refused to give any information.<sup>108</sup> In Roscommon, a JP who seconded a vote of sympathy for a 'Black and Tan' killed in his area was 'raided & fined & apologised & promised not to sit at British Court again'.<sup>109</sup> Cork JP Charles Sealy-King left Ireland on 10 July 1921 having been kidnapped and held captive for ten days. Despite the Truce coming into operation the following day, he felt unable to return to Ireland 'on account of threats and continuing conspiracy against me'.<sup>110</sup> Edwin Swanton, another Cork JP, had refused to resign his commission and instead had his jurisdiction expanded to allow him to sit where another JP could not be found. On 10 July 1921, he was kidnapped and held for ten weeks before managing to escape to England, returning to Ireland in December. Despite the length of his absence, it was claimed that Swanton 'never resigned'.<sup>111</sup>

In isolated cases, physical violence was used and one JP, Martin Mulvihill of County Kerry, was so badly beaten during a raid in November 1920 that he was subsequently required to wear a truss.<sup>112</sup> In Cork, two justices were killed in 1921, seemingly because they refused to resign their commissions.<sup>113</sup> George Frend, described as 'a man of heroic consistency' and 'one of the most uncompromising & staunchest supporters of British Government in Ireland', was shot on 28 December 1920 and died some days later. A referee for his wife's compensation claim wrote that he 'was murdered because he refused to resign his Commission of the Peace' and was returning home having re-established a petty sessions court in Moneygall. Frend had acted against a number of tenants for refusal to pay rent and the added dimension of a land dispute may help to explain his fate. Further trouble related to the estate on which the family held their land may also offer a potential motivation for the shooting.<sup>114</sup> A referee for magistrate William Farren's

106 Report from Monaghan Brigade, Dec. 1920 in Epitomes of seized documents (LHCMA: 7/24).

107 BMH WS 1609 (Michael O'Connor).

108 MCRS, CI Kilkenny, Aug. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

109 S. Roscommon Brigade Monthly Report, June 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/17).

110 Charles Sealy-King claim (TNA: CO 762/82/17). Sealy-King's house was burned in 1923.

111 Richard Swanton claim (CO 762/27/5).

112 Martin Mulvihill claim (CO 762/18/10).

113 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 299.

114 Lucy Fanny Frend claim (TNA: CO 762/175/7).

compensation claim, for example, believed that an alleged boycott was partly due to land he would not give up and partly because he insisted on carrying out all his duties.<sup>115</sup> A magistrate's local reputation could, after all, dictate his reception and treatment. Olga Pyne Clarke remarked in her memoir that her family was 'very fortunate because even though my grandfather was a J.P., he was known to be just'.<sup>116</sup>

JPs did not have the protection of either arms or steel shutters afforded to policemen and soldiers. This knowledge, and reports of the killing of their colleagues, certainly made a decision to step aside voluntarily more appealing. Living in their family homes, in communities where they were well known, they became easy targets for persecution. For the same reason, it was usually unnecessary to intimidate their families as proxy.<sup>117</sup> Where intimidation affected family members, it was commonly the result of the 'shock' of house raids or death threats. Martin Mulvihill's wife became nervous and suffered from shock as a result of threats to his life, particularly after the raid during which he was beaten.<sup>118</sup> Businesses run by spouses or other relatives could also suffer from boycotting. After Edwin Swanton was kidnapped, his father's drapery business was adversely affected: 'Customers were afraid to enter his house, and went to other houses' because 'it was always well known [Edwin's] actions had [his father's] full approval'.<sup>119</sup>

Unlike those in paid employment, JPs had no financial incentive to continue their work. In fact, Denis O'Carroll, having refused to resign his commission and stop dealing with the Local Government Board (LGB), claimed he was first denied a pay increase as clerk to the local Union and District Council in Castlecomer, County Kilkenny, and then forced to resign under pressure of dismissal.<sup>120</sup> The minority of JPs who continued to attend to their duties, therefore, did so out of an obstinate sense of loyalty to the Crown. JPs who applied to the IGC emphasised how they had stuck to their principles when others around had failed to do so. In Cavan, Joseph Benison did not resign when 'almost all the other magistrates did' and 'was the last civil magistrate to adjudicate on the local bench'; Martin Mulvihill attended to his duties in Kerry 'singly to the last when other J.P.s were afraid to

115 William J. Farren claim (/24/4).

116 Olga Pyne Clarke, *She came of decent people* (London, 1985), p. 53.

117 For an exceptional case, see BMH WS 1253 (Joseph Daly); MCRs, CI, Clare, Jun. and Jul. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

118 Martin Mulvihill claim (TNA: CO 762/18/10). This was particularly noticeable after the Truce when police protection was withdrawn. See, for examples, Jonathon Darby claim (/11/1) and William Henry Faussett claim (/42/12). Gilbert Hanly claimed his health and that of his sister totally broke down following post-Truce threatening letters and raids: Gilbert J. Hanly claim (/50/2).

119 Richard Swanton claim (/27/5).

120 Denis O'Carroll claim (/60/14).

attend'; Edwin Swanton was 'the last Justice of the Peace who acted in West Cork'; John Willis acted when seven others had refused to.<sup>121</sup> Lieutenant Colonel George Tarry referred to his 'active loyalty and of the very grave risks I ran in my efforts to keep the flag flying' as the 'only magistrate who continued to attend' in his district in Cork.<sup>122</sup> William Farren's persistence in flying the Union flag outside his home was considered 'foolhardy'.<sup>123</sup>

These sterner men also had other connections to the British government that perhaps help explain their willingness to defy the IRA so openly. Joseph Benison was 'the largest Protestant and Unionist Landowner' in his district.<sup>124</sup> Edwin Swanton was a managing director of the unionist *Skibbereen Eagle* newspaper.<sup>125</sup> Martin Mulvihill was a retired RIC head constable and publican who continued to supply the police in defiance of the IRA boycott.<sup>126</sup> William Farren lost sons killed in the Great War and Lieutenant Colonel Tarry earned his commission in army headquarters during the war (though the committee accused him of exaggerating his army service).<sup>127</sup> John Willis was a member of the executive of the Irish Unionist Alliance, supplied the RIC with goods and, most damning of all from the IRA's perspective, claimed to have passed information to the military. He was compelled to flee Ireland in April 1921 'under pain of death'.<sup>128</sup> Their professed determination to resist may be partly the result of bravado or playing up to a committee that stressed allegiance to the Crown as a criterion for payment, but it seems clear that the justices who defied the IRA or overcame intimidation displayed a more rigid form of loyalty than many other IGC applicants. Frustration and abhorrence at the republican campaign may have galvanised a few (just as Crown force excesses alienated others) but, unlike policemen, they did not fear unemployment and destitution. What these men stood to lose was not a livelihood but what R. B. McDowell has described as 'a coveted suffix, an indication of status or success'.<sup>129</sup> It was a symbol of the old order and their standing within it that these men wished to maintain and in many cases it meant active rather than passive resistance. Their personal wealth meant they often had the resources and social connections to survive economic

121 Joseph Arthur Benison claim (/14/3); Martin Mulvihill claim (/18/10); Richard Swanton claim (/27/5); John Willis claim (/9/8).

122 Lieutenant Colonel George Tarry claim (/9/12).

123 William J. Farren claim (/27/4).

124 Joseph Arthur Benison claim (/14/3).

125 Richard Swanton claim (/27/5).

126 Martin Mulvihill claim (/18/10).

127 William J. Farren claim (/27/4).

128 John Willis claim (/9/8).

129 R. B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline: the fate of the southern unionists* (Dublin, 1997), p. 83.

sanctions but that privilege and status was one of the very things that made them anathema to local republicans.

Reported cases of intimidation against magistrates are insignificant; in 1921, they are virtually non-existent.<sup>130</sup> Intimidation was often unnecessary in the first instance, as many justices saw no reason to risk the wrath of republicans, and direct threats and persecution were less likely to reach the ears of the RIC. Some JPs responded to revolution with pragmatic inactivity, silently neglecting their duties in the hope of being left alone. A Waterford intelligence report from July 1921 noted that a number of JPs were reported to have resigned but ‘may be only lying low. Only T.F.J. Higgins (City) and Sir J.H. Forde (City) attend Sessions – so it is impossible to know exactly who has resigned. An announcement in the press may be only a blind.’<sup>131</sup> In the Waterford No. 1 area all but two were considered to be ‘playing a waiting game – and don’t attend any court’.<sup>132</sup> Peter Hart found one JP who claimed to have angered the IRA by refusing to resign, but whose name disappeared from the published list in *Thom’s Directory* in 1921.<sup>133</sup> Further, the growing popularity of republican courts over their British counterparts (whether through fear or preference) undermined the position of justices in their local communities and diminished their threat to the separatist movement.

Those in paid positions faced a different proposition. William Codd had served as a process server in Carlow since 1908. ‘During the troubled times’, he wrote in his application for compensation, ‘my life became a perfect misery to me.’ Having continued to work despite receiving threatening letters, he had stones thrown at his house at night and eventually gave up the post in 1923. Codd was, in his own words, ‘known to be a loyalist’ and had two brothers in the RIC, which probably drew hostile attention to him.<sup>134</sup> IRA veteran Peter Howley delighted in telling how a Galway process server named Whelan had his processes burned and ‘roared with fright’ when he was told he would be thrown on the fire, but was let go and told to take the long way home.<sup>135</sup> More serious was the case of Bernard Mailey, a civil bill officer and sheriff’s deputy in Donegal. Having been ‘the only sheriff’s officer in the county’ to continue his duty, despite regular death threats, Mailey was kidnapped on his way home from mass and shot dead in October 1921. His wife claimed compensation from the IGC as her ‘health was completely shattered’ by the murder of her husband ‘following a long period of apprehension from day to day that the threats frequently made would end as

130 See Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/148–50).

131 Intelligence report, Waterford No. 1, Jul. 1921 (NLI: MS 31,215)

132 1st Southern Division Intelligence, Jun.–Aug. 1921 (MS 31,210).

133 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 281 n. 58.

134 William Codd claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/8).

135 BMH WS 1379 (Peter Howley).



they did'.<sup>136</sup> The deputy Crown solicitor in Sligo, who claimed to have made hundreds of prosecutions for sedition, was sentenced to death by the IRA while the Crown solicitors for Leitrim and Galway were boycotted, lost most of their private practice for refusing to attend Dáil courts, and emigrated after the Treaty.<sup>137</sup> The Crown solicitor in Cork was sentenced to death by the IRA on at least three separate occasions and narrowly escaped execution.<sup>138</sup> These men all had to consider the financial implications of resignation. A civil bill officer in Carlow, for example, resigned in April 1921 at the request of the IRA and Carlow County Council losing his salary of £15 a year. He was 'not sorry' for resigning (his son was a 'Volunteers Policeman here in Carlow') but had a wife to support and rent to pay and enquired about funds to recoup his lost earnings.<sup>139</sup> William Codd made sure to point out in his compensation claim that his position as process server was worth £30 per year to him.<sup>140</sup>

RMs made up a tiny but powerful proportion of the legal system in Ireland and a proportionally high number suffered lethal violence after 1919. Sir Christopher Lynch-Robinson reflected on his time as a RM in his 1951 memoir:

In certain parts of the country they started shooting R.M.s. My old friend Wolfe Flanagan was shot on the steps of the church in Newry when he was coming out after attending Mass; Milling was shot in his house in Westport; Alan Bell was dragged out of a tram in Dublin and shot in broad daylight in cold blood. Another was caught and buried alive – so it was said – in the sands in County Galway. At any moment, it might have become the official policy of Sinn Féin to liquidate the R.M.s. and if that happened, there would be no respecting of persons. Personal popularity would save none of us.<sup>141</sup>

His father, Sir Henry Robinson, thought it 'unfortunate' that other RMs were under the 'delusion that because they were personally popular with the people they would not be assassinated', citing Bell, who insisted on living outside a 'protected area'.<sup>142</sup> As it happened, no official policy to 'liquidate the R.M.s' was established, but the fear was prevalent for Lynch-Robinson who found

136 Sarah Mailey claim (TNA: CO 762/173/4).

137 McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, p. 86.

138 Years later his would-be assassins apparently became some of his best friends and Wolfe went on to have a successful career in the Irish Free State. See Jasper Ungood-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen* (Cork, 2008); David Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy: Irish Protestant histories since 1795* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 215–21.

139 James O'Reilly, Carlow to Liam Stack, 23 Jan. 1922 (NAI: DECC/11/10).

140 William Codd claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/8).

141 Sir Christopher Lynch-Robinson, *Last of the Irish R.M.s* (London, 1951), p. 157.

142 Sir Henry Robinson, *Memories: wise and otherwise* (London, 1923), pp. 300–1.

that such thoughts meant travelling alone in his car, ‘when at any moment I might be ambushed and shot, was a remarkably unpleasant experience’.<sup>143</sup> But personal feelings of threat seem to have done little to prevent RMs carrying on their duties and there is no evidence of resignations through fear. While Sir Henry Robinson was sympathetic to the plight of RMs, who did not receive the protection afforded to English-born officials in Dublin Castle, George Duggan, a first division clerk in the Chief Secretary’s Office, asserted that their only risk was ‘the trenches cut across roads that broke the axles of un-wary motors’; cases of violence and kidnapping were ‘exceptions’.<sup>144</sup>

One who had a pleasant enough experience of revolution was C. P. Crane, a Yorkshire-born former RIC officer and resident magistrate who served in Kerry until his retirement in June 1920. While driving away from a court sitting in 1919, he was surrounded by a ‘savage booing mob, some of whom shook their fists in my face, shouting “You will be dead in six months.”’<sup>145</sup> That winter, his driver ‘came to the conclusion, “for his wife’s sake,” that he could no longer bear the danger of driving with me’.<sup>146</sup> These incidents aside, however, Crane enjoyed his time in Kerry:

As far as I was personally concerned, I experienced no incivility from my neighbours. No threat of any kind was ever used towards me personally, either by letter or act at any time ... I met with nothing but courtesy up to the very last. As an English official I was warned by personal friends to be careful when I went on my long drives week after week alone, not because of my official or private acts, but merely because I was one of the ‘foreign garrison,’ as it was called. The local doctor met me cheerfully morning after morning with the remark, ‘Well, you are alive still?’ – to which I cheerfully replied. I continued my lonely journeys all through the country and never suspected or believed in the possibility of any harm up to the end of my life in Kerry. During forty-one years in ‘disturbed’ districts I never had a threatening letter; I never had police protection, and only on a very few occasions did I carry arms ... So the weeks passed by in seeming security. The fishing in the spring of 1920 was extraordinary.<sup>147</sup>

The Crown force’s *Weekly Summary* told its readers in October 1920 that while unpaid JPs were resigning under threat, applications for stipendiary

143 Lynch-Robinson, *Last of the Irish R.M.s.*, p. 157.

144 Robinson, *Memories*, pp. 293–4; ‘Periscope’ [C. G. Duggan], ‘The last days of Dublin Castle’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, Vol. 212 (Aug. 1922), p. 175.

145 C. P. Crane, *Memories of a resident magistrate 1880–1920* (Edinburgh, 1938), p. 249.

146 Crane *Memories*, p. 245.

147 Crane, *Memories*, pp. 260–1.

magistrates, 'not withstanding the risks they had to run', was outweighing necessity. Significantly, their salaries had been increased. It was noted that it was 'doubtful whether an unpaid magistracy is suitable for Ireland at all'.<sup>148</sup>

Judges were even better able to avoid republican hostility. Duggan remarked that they ran some personal risk but were of little practical use when cases did not come forward. 'The townspeople', he suggested, 'probably looked upon them for the most part as braces of amiable gentlemen engaged in the harmless pastime of flogging a dead horse, and received the cue from headquarters not to interfere'.<sup>149</sup> In the upper echelons of the legal system, it was those who made themselves prominent by enthusiastic work that felt most at risk. W. E. Wylie, legal advisor to the Irish government and a prosecutor during the trials after the Easter Rising, told Mark Sturgis that he was 'in real danger'.<sup>150</sup> Wylie was, in Sturgis's opinion, 'the only member of the legal big wigs who faces the music, except the Chief Crown Solicitor, and as such may lose his life'. The lord chancellor, in contrast, 'does nothing and apparently thinks of nothing but the best way to show SF that he is neutral and passive', was a 'coward and a shirker, and by God a thief too since he continues to draw his salary'; the attorney general was 'afraid to set foot in Ireland'; the solicitor general 'a fool'. Emphasising the safe position judges were believed to hold, Wylie felt his appointment as a supreme court judge would make him immune to punishment and feared he 'may get assassinated on the brink of safety' while he awaited confirmation in November 1920. Sturgis was sceptical that he would be forgiven by 'the Shinns' but eventually concluded that he would probably not be troubled owing to his popularity.<sup>151</sup>

It was the high-ranking Dublin Castle officials involved in political work and the English civil servants sent to Dublin during a major reorganisation that were moved with their families into Dublin Castle or given an armed police escort.<sup>152</sup> As shown by Fergus Campbell, despite any progress towards a 'greening' of the civil service, the top jobs in the Irish civil service remained largely the preserve of middle-class Protestants with links to the old Ascendancy.<sup>153</sup> This, allied to their role in implementing the British

148 *The Weekly Summary*, 1 Oct. 1920.

149 'Persicope', 'The last days of Dublin Castle', p. 174.

150 Mark Sturgis diary, 29 Sep. 1920 (TNA: PRO 30/59/2). For a biography of Wylie, see León Ó Broin, *W. E. Wylie and the Irish revolution 1916–1921* (Dublin, 1989).

151 Mark Sturgis diary, 29 Sep. 1920 (TNA: PRO 30/59/2).

152 Lawrence McBride, *The greening of Dublin Castle: the transformation of bureaucratic and judicial personnel in Ireland, 1892–1922* (Washington, DC, 1991), pp. 287–8.

153 Campbell, 'The Irish administration', pp. 623, 641–2. Campbell argues here that restrictions on Catholic upward mobility 'provided a powerful motive for revolution' among educated Catholics.

government's coercive measures, meant that it was higher-ranking officials who were deemed the most likely targets among the civil service for republican aggression. A notable example was Sir Henry Robinson, vice-president of the LGB. Though not strictly involved in politics, Robinson was, in his own words, 'regarded as a leading official of the British Government and a representative of the old British ascendancy in Ireland'. He was largely blamed for the decision to withdraw government grants from local councils who failed to submit their accounts for audit with the LGB, and his detailed knowledge of the country and constant contact with the government meant he 'was in great danger from the rebels and was protected by armed detectives & frequently had to be taken about in armoured cars'.<sup>154</sup>

The feeling of fear experienced by these officials did not always match concerns for their safety. In his 1923 memoir, Robinson related how he eventually decided to dispense with personal protection, afforded after a threatening letter, as they were 'a challenge rather than a protection' (comments conveniently left out of his compensation application).<sup>155</sup> James Woulfe Flanagan, a resident magistrate killed by the IRA in Newry, County Down in June 1922, was found to have been opposed to constant guarding and turned down personal protection.<sup>156</sup> An RUC memo pointed out that an escort could not 'guarantee that the person concerned will not be murdered' but would it was hoped 'assist to catch the assassin!'<sup>157</sup> The killing of Sir Henry Wilson in London in June 1922 prompted concerns from the Northern Ireland government about the safety of important officials.<sup>158</sup> Judges and RMs in the north had generally been opposed to the 'inconvenience' of constant protection (particularly from untrained B Specials) and, when an order offered an armed guard on their homes and a personal escort, some officials protested. County Inspector Robert Dunlop insisted 'the majority of the R.M's strongly object to constant protection', and one claimed, 'I have always done my duty without fear or favour. I am not the least afraid to go about unaccompanied'; a personal escort was 'a useless expense'.<sup>159</sup> It was originally made clear that protection would be given to all 'Resident Magistrates whether they desire it or not' but soon the RUC informed its men that those who refused protection would 'accept responsibility'.<sup>160</sup>

154 Sir H. A. Robinson claim (TNA: CO 762/32/24).

155 Robinson, *Memories*, pp. 303–6.

156 'Protection of Resident Magistrates', 1922 (PRONI: HA/32/1/136). He had received a threatening letter the previous month: *Irish Times*, 10 Jun. 1922.

157 Memo, RUC Belfast, 4 Jul. 1922 (MAI: BMH CD/310/9).

158 C. G. Wickham to IG, CIs, and County Commanders RUC (MAI: BMH CD/310/9).

159 'Protection of Resident Magistrates', 1922 (PRONI: HA/32/1/136).

160 A. P. Magill to IG, RUC, 30 Jun. 1922; Memo, RUC Belfast, 4 Jul. 1922 (MAI: BMH CD/310/9).

In August 1920, the British Cabinet discussed the situation of the English civil servants then attached to the Irish Executive. It was stated that they had previously been 'immune from the attacks of Sinn Fein' but the implementation of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act might change that. The impact that accommodating these men in Dublin Castle (a step agreed to be necessary) would have on their usefulness was discussed but it was argued that both the threat faced and the negative impact of being quartered in the castle was not as great as anticipated. It was decided that the men should remain.<sup>161</sup> When an order came for those in Dublin Castle to carry a pass and photograph, Mark Sturgis felt it was 'more dangerous to have passes than none' (probably because it marked them out as targets) but was willing to go along with the order.<sup>162</sup> Sturgis's diaries emphasise how he enjoyed himself in Ireland and suffered nothing like siege conditions after his move into Dublin Castle. Rather, Sturgis felt the benefits of landed society and hospitality, with lunch meetings, weekends in Powerscourt, horse-riding, and trips to the Abbey filling the pages of his diary.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, George Duggan related the story of a LGB official who passed his day 'by a prolonged luncheon hour', reading in a second-hand bookstore and watching cricket. As control of local government by his department had 'virtually ceased', 'Time glided pleasantly by'.<sup>164</sup>

The postal service was the largest employer within the civil service. As far back as 1914, it was in the lower ranks of the civil service, and the postal service in particular, that a large proportion of the people 'treasonable to England' were believed to be found, rather than among the top officials.<sup>165</sup> Postmen became victims of IRA aggression not so often for disloyalty or any threat they posed to the movement, but for the information it was their job to carry. Letters meant for the RIC or Dublin Castle were an important source of information and regularly intercepted. Money transferred by post offered another useful reason to raid the mail; Cavan Volunteer Seán Sheridan told the BMH about a raid in March 1920 when £75 of old-age pension money was taken.<sup>166</sup> In February 1919, it was reported that a policeman and a rural postman in Limerick had received threatening letters 'for doing their duty', but in comparison with similar attacks on the RIC the numbers of incidents contained in police reports are insignificant.<sup>167</sup> When

161 Cabinet conclusions, 13 Aug. 1920 (TNA: CAB/23/22).

162 Mark Sturgis diary, 16 Dec. 1920 (PRO 30/59/3).

163 Michael Hopkinson (ed.), *The last days of Dublin Castle: the Mark Sturgis diaries* (Dublin, 1999), p. 9.

164 'Periscope', 'The last days of Dublin Castle', p. 173.

165 Campbell, 'The Irish administration', p. 642.

166 BMH WS 1613 (Seán Sheridan).

167 MCRs, CI, Limerick, Feb. 1919 (TNA: CO 904/108).

a postman fell victim to IRA violence another connection to the Crown was often noted. When a Tipperary postman received a threatening letter in January 1920, the CI noted that the motive was 'his friendly relations to police and military', while a postman in Fermanagh received a letter stating that he had been 'convicted of being a police spy'.<sup>168</sup> Michael Hogan, an ex-soldier from County Cork, received a threatening letter warning him to give up his job, as 'no ex-soldiers are wanted', and a referee for postman Denis Enright's compensation claim believed 'his service in the Navy did make him unpopular'.<sup>169</sup> After rural postman Charles Part was shot dead on his rounds and his son wounded near Keady in County Armagh ('the residents in this locality are practically all Sinn Feiners of a very bad, dirty type', noted a report), the letters were 'untouched' and the motive believed to be that Part was 'blamed for giving tips to the S/Constabulary re road mines'; 'The Part family lived in bad terms with the immediate neighbours'.<sup>170</sup>

The rank and file of the civil service suffered little from revolutionary terror. A clear distinction was made between civil servants engaged in regular, administrative duties (the majority) and those involved in political work. Patrick Shea, son of an RIC sergeant and later permanent secretary in the Northern Ireland civil service, wrote that while members of the RIC were labelled as 'enemies of their country', 'civilians in the Government service were exempted from accusations of disloyalty'.<sup>171</sup> As Niamh Brennan has pointed out, they 'did not wear uniforms or patrol the streets or raid houses', but were 'invisible targets and as such went largely undetected by those who regarded them as traitors'.<sup>172</sup> George Duggan surmised that:

The test to which each citizen was put in Sinn Fein's crucible appears to have been – was he, or was he not engaged in tracking down disaffection? Those not so engaged were left alone. The civil servant remained untouched though his master was an alien Government, for his activities were either necessary and helpful to Sinn Fein, as, for example, the postal service, or were harmless and futile, as for example the Local Government Board and the Inland Revenue.<sup>173</sup>

168 MCRs, CI, Tipperary N.R., Jan. 1920 (CO 904/111); Weekly summaries, May 1921 (CO 904/150).

169 Weekly summaries (CO 904/148); Denis Enright claim (CO 762/36/4).

170 'I.D.I., Armagh' to Divisional Commissioner, 3 May 1922; Report, RUC Armagh, 5 May 1922 (PRONI: HA/32/1297).

171 Shea, *Voices and the sound of drums*, p. 28.

172 Niamh Mary Brennan, 'Compensating southern-Irish loyalists after the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1922–23', unpublished PhD thesis (University College Dublin, 1994), p. 132.

173 'Periscope', 'The last days of Dublin Castle', p. 175.

The places of work of LGB and Revenue employees were under threat from IRA raids for books and other documents but they were generally safe themselves. Coastguards were in a similar position as their stations were burned but they were left unharmed.<sup>174</sup> The work of the rank and file in the civil service was not carried out in the public sphere and unconnected to the political or martial situation making it possible to continue to work (and receive payment) without drawing undue attention. For Duggan, it was ‘desirable not to be too outspoken in public’ and ‘Tact, an absence of vindictiveness, and moderation of speech and action, were qualities which bore their fruit’ in avoiding trouble.<sup>175</sup> One civil servant described himself as ‘classed among the *general* loyal subjects who took no side and therefore were in no trouble whatsoever. Because of loyalty or otherwise’. He thought his wife foolish for mixing in politics.<sup>176</sup> It was other labels, actions or perceived offences that drew attention. James C. Donnelly was a head messenger for the National Health Insurance Commission in Dublin who was said to have been ‘especially open to danger’ as an Ulster-born ex-soldier. Donnelly further asserted that he had refused to train Dublin Volunteers. His wife’s nursing home was raided and boycotted and they were ‘finally driven’ out of Ireland in 1923 as her health became seriously affected by the ‘boycotting and intimidation and fear of being murdered’.<sup>177</sup> Bernard O’Beirne from County Leitrim worked in the Inland Revenue department. Between May 1920 and January 1923 he reported six raids on his home and other persecution. Like Donnelly, it was not his profession but his family background that seems to have brought trouble: two sons served in the Great War, one later joining the RIC; O’Beirne refused to bring his son back from the RIC and resign as a JP; his young daughter gave milk to the local police.<sup>178</sup>

The intimidation of Donnelly and O’Beirne was not part of any official republican policy. A little over two weeks before the Truce, the minister for home affairs, Austin Stack, circulated a memorandum to Dáil ministers ‘regarding the action to be taken against officials of the Enemy Government other than the Armed forces’, grading the ‘usurping foreign Government of this country (apart from the British Army and Police)’ into nine categories:

- (1) Dublin Castle officials, including the Chief Secretary, the Under Secretary, the Attorney General and Solicitor General, the Chief Crown Solicitor, and their many subordinates.

174 See RIC reports on raids on coastguard stations and revenue offices contained in TNA: CO 904/108–15.

175 ‘Periscope’, ‘The last days of Dublin Castle’, pp. 174, 175.

176 Ellen Jane Ryan claim (TNA: CO 762/186/13).

177 Clara L. and James C. Donnelly claim (CO 762/91/5).

178 Bernard F. O’Beirne claim (CO 762/168/7).

- (2) The members of the Privy Council.
- (3) The Lord Chancellor and the other Judges of the 'Supreme Court of Judicature in Ireland'.
- (4) The officials of the 'Four Courts'.
- (5) Recorders and County Court Judges.
- (6) Clerks of the Crown and Peace, Crown Prosecutors and Crown Solicitors.
- (7) Sheriffs and Under Sheriffs, Bailiffs and Process Servers.
- (8) Civil Servants engaged in the imposition and collection of taxes, Custom Duties and the like.
- (9) Other Civil Servants.

Category 1 (and to some extent category 2) were 'declared enemies who are responsible for the killing and other outrages' as they directed British policy and would be 'at least compelled to resign', along with The Lord Chancellor and high court judges. Categories 4 to 8 were seen as 'essential to the administration of British Law in Ireland, and if all these could be compelled to resign the Writ of the English Sovereign would not run in any part of the country'. If the others could be made to resign, the remaining bulk of ordinary civil servants ('not very harmful of themselves, form part of the enemy's administrative machine, and without whom he would be seriously handicapped if not entirely impotent') could be left over for a later decision.<sup>179</sup> Though Stack wished for preparations to begin on drafting a decree, Éamon de Valera asked that no action be taken during peace negotiations and ultimately the advent of the Truce meant that the policy never progressed.<sup>180</sup> Another memo, entitled 'Offensive against Integral Morale of the Enemy' and possibly from around the same time but directed to the IRA, noted that an offensive against 'Enemy Civil Personnel need not be violent. Most of

179 Diarmuid O'Hegarty to each cabinet minister, 24 Jun. 1921; Memorandum from Minister for Home Affairs to cabinet ministers, 22 June 1921 (NAI: DÉ 2/296).

180 Stack to O'Hegarty, 4 Jul. 1921 (NAI: DÉ 2/296). Collins was in favour of the proposals and had written to de Valera highlighting his desire to introduce a 'well thought out onslaught on all the Departments, which operate on behalf of the Foreign Government in Ireland' through legislation making it illegal to enforce 'English law' in Ireland and introducing 'certain penalties' against those who did: Collins to de Valera, 27 Jun. 1921 (ibid.); Collins to O'Hegarty, 30 Jun. 1921 (NAI: DÉ 2/296).



the people concerned are men over whom a moral ascendancy can be easily secured'. 'Key men', such as Crown solicitors and excise supervisors, could have their offices destroyed. They and 'any branch who used their official position actively and vindictively' were to be 'singled out and frightened into quiescence. After a short period, it is likely that these persons would accept our Civil Services without questioning'.<sup>181</sup>

In pointing out to the Cabinet that the 'Local Civil Service, composed entirely of Irishmen, while in a sense not disloyal, is politically directed and exposed as it is to every kind of pressure and in many cases of intimidation, cannot be relied upon in the execution of a vigorous policy', Sir John Anderson perhaps best summed up their position in revolutionary Ireland.<sup>182</sup> Occupying a somewhat awkward quasi-political position and not immune to everyday threat and fear, they remained largely inconsequential to the military campaign. Major R. W. H. O'Neill, MP for Mid Antrim, underestimated the willing pragmatism of most civil servants when he proclaimed during negotiations on transfers to the new northern state that 'it is well known that to a large extent, the Civil Service in Dublin – not, perhaps, in the case of the highest officials – is imbued with the doctrines which find acceptance among the majority of the people in that part of the country'.<sup>183</sup> As Dublin Volunteer Charlie Dalton put it when complaining about the futility of using government servants for intelligence gathering, 'The fact that they occupied pensionable positions, even though they had mild national leanings, did not induce them to be of help to the Republican movement'.<sup>184</sup>

Neither were they much use to the British campaign. Only a very small minority of civil servants felt that it was unsafe for them to remain in the country after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. An employee of the Public Record Office in Dublin requested a transfer to London when he and his lodger received a threatening letter warning them to leave the country.<sup>185</sup> Benjamin Tilly, employed in the Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction, was an ex-soldier with family connections to the RIC who had received threatening letters and 'fled the wrath' to come to England. Though it was claimed he had left the country by his own choice, he was eventually granted compulsory retirement when no suitable transfer was found.<sup>186</sup> Under the terms of the Treaty civil servants who did not wish to remain

181 'Offensive against Integral Morale of the Enemy' unsigned, n.d. [1921?] (UCDA: P7/A/42).

182 Quoted in Francis J. Costello, *The Irish revolution and its aftermath, 1916–1923: years of revolt* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 79–80.

183 Quoted in McBride, *The greening of Dublin Castle*, p. 275.

184 BMH WS 434 (Charles Dalton).

185 Brennan, 'Compensating southern-Irish loyalists', pp. 126–7.

186 Benjamin Tilly file (NAI: FIN 1/1089).

in the service of the Free State could retire on pension or, in special cases, apply for a transfer to the civil service in Britain or Northern Ireland (though this was not actively encouraged). Benjamin Tilly was really an exception that proves the rule and, as Niamh Brennan found, some 90 per cent of civil servants stayed where they were. The small numbers who did wish to leave puts in perspective Edward Carson's argument that among the ranks of the Irish civil service was found a section of the 'abandoned loyalist minority'.<sup>187</sup>

For most Crown servants, the experience of revolution was quite different from that of policemen and soldiers. As the only unpaid position under consideration here, the experience of a JP was unique again. JPs were a visible and accessible manifestation of the British legal system in Ireland, an example of the old social order in a community, and were targeted as a result. Without a financial incentive to continue with their work, those who resisted displayed a stubborn form of loyalty that was less receptive to standard methods of intimidation. RMs, on the other hand, were small in number, well paid and often unconcerned about their personal safety. Though a number of their colleagues were killed, this does not seem to have deterred the remainder, handicapped as they were in carrying out their duties. For most other servants of the legal system, it took some form of direct opposition or defiance to bring the attention of the IRA. Intelligence lists were kept to monitor RMs, JPs, petty session officers, Crown solicitors, post offices, and railway stations.<sup>188</sup> A GHQ order included a reference to the 'keeping of records of all Government officials and hostile people'.<sup>189</sup> Martin Maguire has pointed to the panic that surrounded the death of Alan Bell and concluded that 'the killing of a civil servant clearly had a much greater impact on the administrative machine than that of a policeman or soldier'.<sup>190</sup> But, as Niamh Brennan suggested, 'it would be fair to say that the revolution in Ireland made only a marginal impact on the great body of Irish civil servants'.<sup>191</sup> For the majority, relatively little changed with the coming of the new order.

187 Brennan, 'Compensating southern-Irish loyalists', p. 126.

188 See, for example, NLI, Florence O'Donoghue Papers, esp. MS 31,202, MS 31,214, and MS 31,215.

189 'Intelligence 1.11.1920. Orders signed by Deputy Chief of Staff', in Epitome of captured IRA documents (LHCMA: 7/24).

190 Maguire, *The civil service and the revolution in Ireland*, p. 105.

191 Brennan, 'Compensating southern-Irish loyalists', p. 133.

## Collecting the Rates: Dáil Éireann Local Government and the IRA

One of the most ambitious experiments by the underground Dáil Éireann was their takeover of local government from the British LGB. In April 1919, W. T. Cosgrave was appointed Dáil minister for local government, with Kevin O'Higgins later taking up position as his assistant. The ministry was unable to achieve much until the 1920 local elections saw landslide victories for Sinn Féin candidates. In June 1920, while the local elections were still under way, the Dáil local government department issued instructions to all local bodies to pass resolutions declaring their allegiance to Dáil Éireann and refusal to communicate with the LGB. Most county councils in the southern 26 counties obliged. Following the elections, one of the key tasks for the department was maintaining and funding the infrastructure of local government while insisting on defiance of the LGB among local bodies.<sup>1</sup> Despite the chaotic conditions of revolution, they were able to achieve this to a remarkable degree.

In July 1920, the British government decided to deal with the subversion of local bodies by withdrawing all grants and advances from any council that refused to obey its instructions to submit their books for audit. In another attempt to wrest control back from the separatists, claims for malicious injury (either by IRA or Crown forces) would be charged against the rates. The locally collected poor rate accounted for about 80 per cent of county council revenue in 1918 and 1919; the withdrawal of government grants therefore put extra pressure on the rates to pay for councils' services and made vital the protection of these funds. In response, the Dáil devised a scheme that asked collectors to refuse to lodge rates collected with the LGB-sanctioned treasurer (usually a local bank) but instead with secret trustees ('men of standing in the community and of unimpeachable character'). The money

<sup>1</sup> For a succinct summary of the takeover of local administration, see Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp. 154–7.

would be received from collectors, and later distributed, by a bonded 'paymaster'.<sup>2</sup> To remove them from their obligations to the LGB, collectors would resign only to be immediately reappointed by their councils.

This scheme was first launched by Clare County Council on its own initiative but was recommended for all other county councils 'similarly situated' by a Dáil commission of enquiry into local government in August 1920.<sup>3</sup> With economy and prudent spending, councils could still realistically hope to operate on poor rate revenue alone. But this could only be achieved if rates were collected and made available in a timely and efficient manner. 'From the time local authorities were instructed to take measures to safeguard public funds', DELG secretary T. J. McArdle recalled, 'the collection of rates became a burning question'.<sup>4</sup> Tom Garvin has remarked that the collection of rates during this period 'remained a chronic, general and apparently insoluble problem'.<sup>5</sup> Since David Fitzpatrick's pioneering study of Clare first examined the revolution in local government, county studies have continued to followed suit, yet a short section in Garvin's chapter on local government in his 1996 book, *1922: the birth of Irish democracy*, remains the most detailed account of the collection of the poor rate from 1920 to 1922.<sup>6</sup> This chapter will build on that work and offer a fuller analysis of resistance and coercion in the rate collection.

### The failure to pay or collect rates

Taxes are rarely popular and the local rates had always been the subject of dissent, complaint, and opposition. Revolution only added to the potential for disagreement. Tom Garvin has noted that loyalist ratepayers 'resisted paying rates to a putatively treasonous Sinn Féin council in late 1920' and political aversion to the republican counter-state made some usually reliable ratepayers unwilling to hand over money to 'illegally appointed' Dáil collectors.<sup>7</sup> Church of Ireland rector Revd Robert Wade, for instance, mentioned his refusal to pay rates to the 'Sinn Fein collector' as evidence of his 'allegiance to the Government of the United Kingdom' when applying to the IGC.<sup>8</sup> Arthur

2 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

3 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp. 157–60.

4 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

5 Tom Garvin, *1922: The birth of Irish democracy* (Dublin, 1996), p. 74.

6 See Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp. 154–64; Garvin, *1922*, pp. 63–91, esp. 73–7. For local government as described in other county studies, see Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, pp. 19–35; Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, pp. 89–111.

7 Garvin, *1922*, p. 72.

8 Revd Robert C. Wade claim (TNA: CO 762/23/9).

Gick, from Ballymore Eustace, County Kildare, informed the chief secretary in September 1921 that ‘An attempt has been made to collect the rates in this district and the collector, illegally appointed, called upon me for my rates. In obedience to the notice issued by Government I refused payment.’<sup>9</sup> Ethel Peacocke, mother of Colonel Warren Peacocke, shot by the IRA in West Cork, received a demand for rates and wrote to Dáil Éireann to remind them that ‘your armies have already cruelly murdered my son, burned down the house on which the rates are assessed, and sold for your own purposes all my property in the gardens’; ‘I always understood taxes were levied for the protection and enjoyment of life and property, and I should think it is an unheard of case to demand them where both life and property have been wilfully and cruelly destroyed.’<sup>10</sup>

But, more often than not, political allegiance was not the most pressing issue at stake for a ratepayer called upon by a republican collector. Decisions to obey or resist were, instead, characterised more by prevarication than loyalty.

Ratepayers certainly took advantage of disturbed conditions and confusion after 1920 to avoid or delay paying rates, as Michael Farry and Marie Coleman have found in Sligo and Longford respectively.<sup>11</sup> Ratepayers’ traditional demand of value for money also remained and was, if anything, accentuated as the cost of war and withdrawal of British grants resulted in significant rate increases from 1920. In a January 1921 report, Cosgrave acknowledged that ‘when the customary essential services were furnished by the rate raising bodies the rate payers accepted their responsibilities where their wants were supplied’.<sup>12</sup> Rising costs and shrinking revenue made it difficult to keep meeting the various ‘wants’ of outspoken ratepayers. Roads, for example, were constantly being dug up on IRA orders and re-laid on demand of the Crown forces, while increased police and military patrols further contributed to their deterioration. Repairing the damaged roads would potentially affect the guerrilla war, invoking IRA disapproval, and many local councils had not the funds to do so anyway, embittering road workers as well as users. One collector reported to the secretary of Galway County Council that several large ratepayers had informed him they ‘do not intend paying because they have not got

9 Arthur E. Gick to Chief Secretary, 27 Sep. 1921 (NAI: DELG 13/11).

10 *Impartial Reporter*, 9 Feb. 1922. Colonel Peacocke was alleged to be the leader of a loyalist ‘Anti-Sinn Féin Society’ in West Cork. He was shot by the IRA in May 1921 and the family home, Skevanish House in Innishannon, was burned the following month.

11 Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, p. 20; Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, p. 94.

12 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

anything for their money, and the most objection they have is owing to the bad state of the roads'.<sup>13</sup>

By July 1921, many roads were in an advanced state of disrepair and Cosgrave's department and the county councils were caught in a series of dilemmas: without the rate money councils were unable to meet their liabilities while many ratepayers did not want to pay for services they could not see; when Monaghan county council resolved to stop all road works in the county, the secretary, opposed to the decision, wrote to Cosgrave that 'a shortage of funds was *not* the reason for dismissing all the workers but the alleged reason for this ill advised step was that "we are at war & the roads should not be repaired for the use of the enemy"'.<sup>14</sup> Monaghan IRA commander Eoin O'Duffy (a council surveyor by profession) defended the policy as part of 'the general scheme of economy whereby only absolutely essential services were retained' and a necessity to 'hamper enemy activity' ('the enemy', he declared, 'is almost 2,000 strong in the County and motor traffic is largely confined to them and the loyalists – very few of our people get permits'). O'Duffy also speculated that 'the saving affected by cutting off all road expenditure would exceed any rates the Council might possibly receive from the Unionists should the Council continue to repair the roads. Besides we have no guarantee that if road work were continued the Unionists would pay the rates'. But admitted that 'I don't know what is being done in other Counties similarly situated and find it difficult to give a decision on the matter', suggesting that Unionist councillors be asked to undertake a pledge that if road works were resumed, the rates would be 'paid promptly, say inside a month'.<sup>15</sup>

Simple economics also affected the collection. Some ratepayers who were in arrears claimed they were more than willing to support the Dáil government and pay their dues but simply could not afford to. The Irish economy was weak in 1920 and by late 1921 a general depression had hit the sale of livestock and other produce. Following an enquiry into the collection in Fermanagh in early 1922, rate collectors in the county explained that 'the ratepayers had not the money, and were at present unable to sell their cattle', 'the rates were unreasonable – the rates being more than the rent, and if they were not materially reduced they would not be able to be collected next year at all', and 'I do not expect to get in the rates in my district, as the farmers are not able to pay them'.<sup>16</sup> When a Cork collector, finding it

13 Patrick Corbett to Secretary, Galway County Council, 17 Jan. 1922 (NAI: DELG 11/23).

14 Secretary, Monaghan County Council to Cosgrave, 6 May 1921 (DELG 23/14).

15 O'Duffy to CS, 27 May 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/22). For a full survey of O'Duffy's role in the conflict and influence on Monaghan County Council, see Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 25–73.

16 *Impartial Reporter*, 9 Feb. 1922.

impossible to collect in his town ‘owing to the depression in trade generally’, applied for an extension to his collection period in September 1921, the ministry sympathetically sanctioned the request.<sup>17</sup> In Donegal, ratepayer Philip McLaughlin wrote directly to Cosgrave: ‘I have always paid my rates & I always expect to do so, but I am sorry to inform you that I shall not be able to pay them yet for another month or fortnight when I will get some money and pay them. I hope you will give me sparence that long.’<sup>18</sup> Patrick McCorriston was similarly ‘quite willing to pay rates but I am not able to do so until November. I have no stock or crop to sell as I let the land every year. I will pay as soon as ever I let it and will thank you to give me no trouble as I have tried my best to get it but it is impossible.’<sup>19</sup> Another ratepayer in Celbridge, County Kildare, told Cosgrave he ‘had a year’s stock of cattle and I cannot get an offer on even one of them so that is the reason why it [the rates] is not paid’, tellingly adding, ‘it will not be necessary to use Compulsion on me as I have always supported anything in connection with Dail Eireann and means to do so (as all Dail Collectors know)’.<sup>20</sup>

Uncertainty about the political settlement after the Truce encouraged some ratepayers to await the result of peace negotiations before handing over their hard-earned cash. A ratepayer in Dunfanaghy, County Donegal, for example, received a demand notice from the local Dáil Éireann sanctioned collector in September 1921 which he refused to pay ‘till he sees how matters settle down’. The Dunfanaghy RIC considered that ratepayers were unhappy at having to pay such high rates, non-payment was a ‘protest’, and rates would all be paid eventually.<sup>21</sup> By October 1921, Seán Duffý believed the arrears in Wicklow were around £5,000 and remarked that ‘Something should be done, because I imagine some ratepayers are inclined to take advantage of the Truce and treat the Republican Government with contempt.’<sup>22</sup> The bad example of individuals encouraged others, as noted by the Dáil ministry’s inspector for King’s County: ‘when one man in a townland defies the rate-collector & refuses to contribute his portion, his neighbours seeing him getting off free will be sure to follow suit with the result that you will soon after have no rates coming in’.<sup>23</sup> Shaking up the main protagonists was often considered a suitable remedy. An IRA leader in Kerry informed the secretary of the county council that ratepayers who would have paid before were no longer doing so as a result of Farmers’ Union activity. He suggested that ‘If a few of

17 Jeremiah O’Mahoney to Cork County Council, 28 Sep. 1921 (NAI: DELG 6/44).

18 Philip McLaughlin to Cosgrave, 27 Oct. 1921 (7/22).

19 Patrick McCorriston to Cosgrave, 24 Sep. 1921 (7/22).

20 J. MacAsey to Cosgrave, 16 Oct. 1921 (13/11).

21 RIC Breaches of the Truce, Donegal (TNA: CO 904/151).

22 Seán Duffý to Minister for Home Affairs, 1 Oct. 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/210/4/1).

23 Dunne to Chief of Inspection, 3 Aug. 1921 (NAI: DELG 15/11).

the ringleaders were kidnapped or something that way it would also have a great effect as there are dozens of people who are only watching this no rate movement and who would pay should it be put down; waverers'.<sup>24</sup>

Even within a region the reasons for dissent could vary. In Cavan, where the rate struck was widely considered excessive and the council inefficient, the registrar of the East Cavan District Court wrote to the minister for home affairs, Austin Stack, outlining the difficulties with the collection in the county. He blamed a misunderstanding about the use of the rates and the conditions of the Truce: 'some of them believe that they are paying for Malicious Injury claims, more thought they would, I suppose, take advantage of the times and that there was no law to compel them'.<sup>25</sup> A report from the county's Dáil inspector confirmed some of the registrar's remarks:

There are undoubtedly difficulties in connection with the rate-collection in this County though I fear none of them arises from the misapprehension of the ratepayers as to the uses of the rates. Some ratepayers are trying to take advantage of the times to get out of paying while others are suffering from the present slump in prices and according to the ratecollectors are not able to pay presently. In the districts bordering Monaghan as I have previously reported, the Collectors were told the Monaghan people paid no rates so why should they be paid in Cavan.<sup>26</sup>

Locally organised opposition groups regularly appeared. According to Tom Garvin, this was (ironically) more likely to be successful in 'remote, poorer and "republican" counties'.<sup>27</sup> Among the most active were ratepayers' associations and the Farmers' Union who usually highlighted an unjustifiably high rate or the imprudent distribution of council funds as their chief grievances. The Dublin Farmers' Union brought a case against the legality of the rate struck in July 1921 and the County Dublin Ratepayers' Association (a prominent organiser of ratepayer opposition) wrote to the council demanding that Cosgrave conduct an enquiry into the rate struck for the present year.<sup>28</sup> The Farmers' Union and ratepayers' associations were similarly active in Kerry. A list of 'Prominent People v Rates' from Ballylongford, County

24 Sean S. O'Coilean to Cosgrave, 20 Oct. 1921 (7/22). The increased results secured by sending 'strangers' from outside the area was also pointed out.

25 Registrar, East Cavan District Court to Stack, forwarded to Cosgrave, 5 Nov. 1921 (4/13).

26 Dáil Inspector's report, Cavan, Oct. 1921 (4/13).

27 Garvin, *1922*, p. 70.

28 'Report re Dublin County Rates', n.d.; Minutes, Dublin County Council, 6 August 1921 (NAI: DELG 9/18).



Kerry, named both the president and the secretary of the local Farmers' Union branch along with two others, Thomas O'Connor and Thomas Kissane, who had apparently claimed, respectively, that: 'they beat the landlords already & they were able to do the same against the rates' and 'if they stuck together they would beat the rate as every man's cow could not be carried' (a reference to the practice of seizing property in lieu of unpaid rates).<sup>29</sup> A meeting of farmers and ratepayers in October 1921, chaired by Thomas O'Connor, resolved that only 10 shillings in the pound would be paid:

The sudden fall in prices, and cannot dispose of their surplus stock ... The sick poor is not attended to. The roads are not repaired &c., consequently why pay a staff of officials for doing nothing, whilst the ratepayers must work hard to make ends meet, and regards their present action as a necessity and not as a hostile opposition to the present Council.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, in South Kerry, ratepayers in Bonane proposed a rate of eight shillings in the pound, while those in Glenflesk refused to pay any rates until the matter of deputies being paid 'for doing nothing' was addressed.<sup>31</sup>

Monaghan County Council was well managed, relatively efficient, and able to strike a rate well below that in neighbouring Cavan. The most significant problem facing the council in Monaghan was 'loyalist' ratepayers, who contributed over half of the total rates in the county. The Dáil ministry's inspector in Monaghan noted that the stoppage of road works was 'strongly resented by the Contractors and, more important, by the workmen concerned. More important still it gave handle to the large Ratepayers – mainly Unionist Farmers – not to pay their Rates as they were not getting the value expressly stated in the demand notes'.<sup>32</sup> It was feared that any threat of legal proceedings would be ineffective as locals believed that the Dáil department would not willingly enter a British court and 'the ratepayers, especially the Unionists amongst them "will call our bluff"'.<sup>33</sup> By September 1921, arrangements were being looked into with Eoin O'Duffy to get the Monaghan IRA involved but not because of loyalist opposition. Rather, the collectors were not doing their jobs.<sup>34</sup>

29 Sean S. O'Coilean to Cosgrave, 20 Oct. 1921 (7/22).

30 John Doran, County Kerry to Secretary, Kerry County Council, 24 Oct. 1921 (12/16).

31 M. O'Shea, County Kerry to Secretary, Kerry County Council, 24 Oct. 1921; 'Sec Glenflesk Club' to Secretary, Kerry County Council (12/16).

32 Inspector for Monaghan to [?]Chief of Inspection, 11 May 1921 (23/14).

33 DELG report to Diarmuid O'Hegarty, c.Feb. 1921 (DÉ 2/155).

34 Report on Meeting of Monaghan County Council, unsigned, 30 Sep. 1921 (DELG 23/14).

This was a particularly unpleasant time to be a rate collector. Not only was there the usual opposition to the payment of rates but from 1920 collectors were embroiled in the ongoing battle between the LGB and Dáil department. T. J. McArdle later recorded that:

As soon as the banks were deprived of the treasurership to local authorities and trustees appointed to take charge of the funds, trouble began with the rate collectors. The collectors held that under their bonds they were bound to lodge the monies with the banks as treasurers and some refused to hand over the monies to the trustees whom they regarded as not being the officially appointed treasurers.<sup>35</sup>

Allegiance to Dáil Éireann or the LGB was not always the most important issue at stake, and practical concerns often trumped politics. Collectors were concerned about the legal implications of lodging rate money with an unauthorised or illegal body, fearing that if republican local government were to fail, money lodged anywhere other than the LGB-sanctioned treasurer would not be recognised, leaving the collector and his sureties, under their official bond, liable for any money collected and lodged in this way.<sup>36</sup> They were not necessarily taking sides. Many of the collectors who were politically or ideologically opposed to the Dáil's instructions had either resigned or been replaced by their councils. The remaining collectors had offered, in Kevin O'Higgins's words, 'a tacit acceptance of the new situation and duties it involved'; non-compliance was now tantamount to treason.<sup>37</sup> To appease one of the collectors' main concerns, the decision to dispense with a bank as treasurer was quickly reversed in many counties. But replacements for resigned or dismissed collectors caused a further problem. They did not receive the sanction of the LGB and were, therefore, not legally entitled to collect rates. In many counties they were successfully harassed by the RIC and some unlucky collectors imprisoned. Moreover, ratepayers occasionally refused to regard receipts issued by them as valid and were understandably reluctant to pay.<sup>38</sup> For those who might decide to resign – a difficult decision to make without the immediate prospect of new employment – the status of their pension was crucial. In January 1921, nine collectors resigned in Dublin

35 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

36 LGB circular to rate collectors, 11 Nov. 1920 (NAI: DÉ 2/155).

37 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle). Extracts from the circular were published in an article in the *Evening News* and reproduced in the police propaganda newspaper *The Weekly Summary*, 7 Jan. 1921. The article claimed that the 'phraseology indicates that the revolutionary government is in serious financial difficulties'.

38 For discussion of these issues, see copies of minutes of meetings of county councils (NAI: DELG).

and immediately requested their pensions be fixed; seven had been raided and had their books and accounts taken by armed men.<sup>39</sup> ‘Not knowing which persecutor would prevail’, as David Fitzpatrick has put it, ‘many collectors retreated into canny inactivity’.<sup>40</sup>

In early December 1920, the instructions of the Dáil ministry were modified to appease collectors, who were instructed to lodge into a local bank and immediately write a crossed cheque payable to the county council for the amount lodged. The council secretary would then cash the cheque and transfer the money to the newly appointed trustees. A week later, all local bodies were instructed to indemnify their rate collectors against any loss sustained in following the Dáil ministry’s instructions.<sup>41</sup> The changes, however, had little effect on the attitude of disobedient collectors and by the end of the month it became clear that they were either holding collected money themselves or, worse, not collecting at all. In Westmeath, for example, only three collectors agreed to the Dáil proposal while 17 made it clear that they were only prepared to lodge to an officially appointed treasurer.<sup>42</sup>

For its part, the LGB had advised collectors to lodge the money into an account in their own name and retain it there.<sup>43</sup> On 21 December, O’Higgins addressed a long and typically bullish circular to rate collectors claiming that one of the means employed by the LGB to overthrow republican local government was ‘to endeavour to impede the collection of rates by bluffing the rate collectors’ but the ‘very thin bluffing should not impress anyone ... these threats of dismissal [from the LGB] only serve to make those who issue them ridiculous’ – it was, after all, the councils who paid salaries and pensions. O’Higgins assured collectors that they were in a strong position, even by English law, if they followed their council’s instructions and that in the ‘extremely unlikely’ event of their suffering any financial loss they were indemnified by the local bodies. Collectors were then offered a stark warning:

Any rate collector who throws in his lot with the enemy and endeavours to force his Council to conform to enemy regulations by a refusal to resign or to collect the rates is warned that in doing so he is acting as a public enemy and will be appropriately dealt with ... If the rates are not promptly collected suffering will ensue for the poor who are depending on outdoor relief; unemployment will ensue owing

39 Minutes, Dublin County Council, 20 Jan. 1921 (9/18).

40 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 161.

41 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

42 Adjourned meeting of Westmeath County Council, 25 Nov. 1920 (NAI: DELG 30/11).

43 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

to Councils being unable to continue road work, and for all these hardships and privations the public will hold the collectors responsible who endeavoured to force his Council to so dispose of the public monies as to please them at the mercy of the enemy for the payment of what the enemy smugly terms ‘criminal and malicious injury claims.’

After this circular, the department would ‘appeal no more, but ... act sternly and swiftly as a Government in a state of war ... “Collect or resign, or take the consequences”.’<sup>44</sup>

There was a threat of violence for those who wished to interpret it as such: Dublin Castle official Mark Sturgis wrote in his diary that, ‘By way of an Xmas card’, the rate collectors had received ‘a circular letter threatening them in so many words with death if they do not collect rates and hand them over to the illegal treasurers’.<sup>45</sup> When an RIC head constable was followed on a train and, disembarking at the station in Ballybrack, asked if he would pay his rates, a police complaint suggested that ‘Two police were murdered at this station some time ago & the manner in which the question was asked combined with the association of this station implied a distinct threat’.<sup>46</sup> There was also a financial threat for the rate collectors who stood liable for amounts collected. O’Higgins’ circular was typical of many that were issued by his department and targeted at rate payers, collectors, and council officials, containing a mixture of explanation, justification, thinly veiled threat, and appeal to patriotism.<sup>47</sup> In Dublin, where a number of hostile urban councils had withheld money, O’Higgins himself asked if direct action could be taken against the offending bodies: ‘Who signs the paying orders and where are they kept? If these people were tackled early some morning and compelled to make these paying orders or cheques payable to the Secretary or to yourself as Chairman, they would be kept in custody until cash was obtained.’<sup>48</sup>

44 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

45 Mark Sturgis diary, 24 Dec. 1920 (TNA: PRO 30/59/3).

46 Temporary CI, Kerry to Daniel Mulvihill, 1 Dec. 1921. Mulvihill argued that the alleged offender ‘did not use any threats’ and received a reply stating that ‘If the H.C. has not paid his rates there is a legal method of compelling him to do so without subjecting him to interference in public from an irresponsible youth’ (UCDA: P64/7 (35)).

47 See, for example, BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle); Circular from O’Higgins, 30 Dec. 1920 (NLI: MS 11,404).

48 O’Higgins to Chairman, Dublin County Council, 15 Feb. 1921 (NAI: DELG 9/18). O’Higgins had previously suggested cutting off the water, gas, and other services as a ‘last resort’: O’Higgins to Secretary, Dublin County Council, 14 Feb. 1921 (9/18). A similar suggestion was made, but not carried out, in Limerick: ‘Particulars of Rates in Limerick Boro Council’, 18 Apr. 1921 (17/5).

### The IRA: collecting rates and overcoming opposition

In his letter to the chief secretary, Kildare ratepayer Arthur Gick complained that:

The District authority, acting under orders from the Dail crew have published in the Leinster Leader newspaper of Sept. 24th a list of 'Defaulters' who, like myself, have been loyal to the orders of the proper authority. The Dail has by public notice branded all such 'Defaulters' as 'Public enemies'. We know what this means. I beg to enquire what protection I can be given in the likely event of an attempt being made to collect my rates by force, or an attempt being made to levy a distress on my property?<sup>49</sup>

Another loyalist ratepayer in Carlow later claimed that he paid rates to the LGB collector in March 1921 but was then forced to pay the same rates to a republican collector accompanied by armed men, fined an extra £5, and subsequently boycotted.<sup>50</sup> Though not explicitly stated, it was implied that the 'armed men' were members of the IRA. How then, did the Dáil department endeavour to coerce defaulting ratepayers to pay their dues and convince recalcitrant collectors to collect and lodge them, and what role did the IRA play?

On 10 January 1921, the ministry made a number of policy decisions to deal with the collection of rates, again stating that collectors who failed to lodge in accordance with department instructions should resign or be dismissed, but this time that they would be replaced, if necessary, with an 'outdoor staff'; county councils were informed that 'Lists of defaulters [were] to be forwarded to the Department of Local Government and to be dealt with by the defence Department when necessary'.<sup>51</sup> In making use of the department of defence, County Clare once again led the way. The chairman of Clare County Council was prominent Volunteer leader Michael Brennan and in February 1921 the Clare IRA raided the homes of rate collectors, seized their books and took away over £8,000 in cash. The IRA and Irish Republican Police took over the duties of rate collection in the county and company captains became responsible for the collection in their areas, which were overseen by their battalion OC. Money collected was then handed over to a nominee of the brigade council.<sup>52</sup> This did not go unnoticed and a

49 Arthur E. Gick to Chief Secretary, 27 Sep. 1921 (13/11).

50 John Minion claim (TNA: CO 762/186/9).

51 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

52 BMH WS 1072 (Seán McNamara); BMH WS 1288 (Michael Gleeson).

March 1921 police report mentioned that the 'I.R.A. have agents through the county collecting Rates'.<sup>53</sup>

In the short term, this action brought a noticeable improvement and the collection for the period ending May 1921 was practically closed by April.<sup>54</sup> Similar action was later taken in Sligo where rate collectors had refused to hand the money they had collected over to the council in the absence of a LGB sanctioned treasurer. At a council meeting on 11 December 1920, the chairman announced that the failure of rate collectors to comply with the instructions of the council had left the council in a 'complete state of financial embarrassment'.<sup>55</sup> In spring 1921, the Sligo IRA went a step further than their Clare counterparts and apprehended disobedient rate collectors, also recovering £8,000. 'It was subsequently stated that in consequence of the action of the I.R.A. a total sum of £80,000 (including the £8,000) was collected in rates and paid to the Co. Council'.<sup>56</sup> In neighbouring Roscommon, collector Joseph Jordan was arrested by the IRA in October 1920 and taken to an 'unknown destination', following a warrant issued by the Dáil department. Contrary to department instructions, Jordan had 'lodged the full amount of his collection to his own private bank account and wrote the English Local Government Board for instructions as to the disposal of these funds – the property of the Roscommon ratepayers'. The council secretary was urged by O'Higgins to compel Jordan to surrender his books and accounts and make out a cheque for the money he had collected, payable to the council's paymaster. 'In addition to any penalty the [republican] Court may see fit', Jordan was to be dismissed without pension.<sup>57</sup> In December, O'Higgins informed the acting chairman of the council that Jordan's books were in RIC custody but he had given his 'word of honour to get the books back from the police and give them to the proper persons'. Providing he had handed over the requested cheques he could be released and allowed to fulfil his promise (after which he would be dismissed).<sup>58</sup>

The case of four Sligo collectors is evidence of the pressure that needed to be applied repeatedly to both payers and collectors ('unfit and unworthy of the position they occupy') who continued to cause their county council problems in November 1921. After the secretary declared that it 'should

53 MCRs, CI, Clare, Mar. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/114).

54 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 161; BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

55 Minutes, Sligo County Council, 11 Dec. 1920 (NAI: DELG 26/9).

56 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle). Seized books were returned to Sligo County Council in Jan. 1922 (NAI: DELG 26/9).

57 O'Higgins to Secretary, Roscommon County Council, 19 Oct. 1920 (DELG 25/11).

58 O'Higgins to Acting Chairman, Roscommon County Council, 20 Dec. 1920 (25/11). Jordan later took legal action against the council on the grounds that he had signed two cheques to the county council 'under duress'.

seriously consider what is the best course to pursue in the object of bringing them to a sense of their duty', the council decided simply to dismiss one (McHugh, Tubbercurry), dismiss another (Gilmartin, Sligo) 'on the grounds of gross negligence, insubordination and inefficiency', and allow two others (McGloin and Kennedy, Sligo Rural) a week to close their accounts.<sup>59</sup> The following month, however, the Dáil inspector recorded that McHugh (who had actually been allowed to resign) had promised to hand over money but nothing had been done to make him 'fulfil his promise' and 'necessary measures' should be taken against him; the 'laxity' shown by the council in allowing McGloin to retain money he had collected was 'too palpable for comment'; and the mess left behind by Gilmartin was 'more serious than as yet contemplated'. 'The County Council gave this man too much rope ... the Secretary is not determined enough and likes to take the smoothest course'.<sup>60</sup>

The correspondence between the Dáil department and county councils is, unsurprisingly, vague when referring to the 'measures' to be taken by the IRA in the collection of rates. One King's County collector, for example, simply suggested that three defaulters in his area 'get a quiet shaking up'.<sup>61</sup> Methods of dealing with defaulters varied. In Westmeath, James Duignam was approached by three Volunteers (one of whom was alleged to be the rate collector for the area) at 5 p.m. on a November evening and asked to get down from his horse and cart. When he refused, one of the men took a revolver from his pocket and threatened to shoot him. Duignam's horse and cart were then taken to a stable on a nearby farm but were returned when he paid the men fifteen shillings for rates and one shilling for the cost of the summons to a Dáil court he had ignored.<sup>62</sup> In Ballybunion, County Kerry, Patrick Collins was woken in the early hours one morning to find a large quantity of his hay on fire. When asked why the fire was not reported to the police, Collins replied that he had been visited by 'Sinn Fein' who 'had the matter in hands and he would be entitled to some compensation later on'. The reporting RIC officer was certain that Collins had refused to pay his rates to the IRA and believed the hay was burned 'as revenge for the refusal and to intimidate him into paying them in future'.<sup>63</sup>

Abraham and Robert Watchorn, farmers in Tullow, County Carlow, both claimed that on the same night they had cows seized by the local rate collector and armed Volunteers after they refused to pay.<sup>64</sup> In Tinahely, County

59 Minutes, Sligo County Council, 24 Sep. 1921 (26/9)

60 Inspector, Sligo, 16 Nov. 1921 (26/9).

61 Report by James McIntyre, King's County, attached to letter from J. Bulfin, 23 Jul. 1921 (15/11).

62 Breaches of the Truce, Westmeath (TNA: CO 904/156A).

63 Breaches of the Truce, Kerry (/153).

64 Abraham Watchorn claim; Robert Watchorn claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/13).

Wicklow, the rate collector seized three cows belonging to the defaulting Samuel Watchorn with the sanction of the council and local republican police. The collector claimed 'there were a certain number of ratepayers who absolutely refused to pay their rates' and 'Watchorn seemed to me to be one of the leaders of these ratepayers in their refusal, as many of them told me they would pay their rates when Watchorn did'. The action appeared to have a good effect as the collector subsequently found 'no difficulty in getting the rates from these people. I believe they were an organised ring'.<sup>65</sup> Kidnapping was less common, but in Listowel, County Kerry ('a persistent trouble spot in the eyes of the Dáil'),<sup>66</sup> three brothers were taken away and put before a republican court for 'refusing to pay rates and other offences'. Cattle were also taken but returned on satisfactory payment of their dues.<sup>67</sup> An unfortunate tenant in Donegal was inadvertently put in a difficult position by attempts to coerce his landlord ('a Die hard loyalist') who was refusing to pay rates. He was warned by the collector not to pay rent but argued that 'if I pay any rent Sienn Feinn will seize all I have in the house & if I dont pay the rent the landlord will throw me out which they have done a few weeks ago as the R.I.C. have full controle & a free hand here'.<sup>68</sup> His predicament, caught between two opposing forces, was not uncommon.

In some areas, Volunteers accompanied the local collectors as they went about their work. In Longford, the CI reported that 'the rate collectors, in some cases, go about with an escort of I.R.A.' but speculated that 'this is probably to see that the rate collector accounts for rates collected, to the satisfaction of Sinn Fein, as much as to oversee the people into paying'.<sup>69</sup> On the afternoon of 20 October 1921, a labourer named Patrick Carr reported to the local RIC that 'Sinn Fein police were in his house and were going to seize for rates, and that he required protection'. When the RIC arrived they found seven men in Carr's home. One of these men stated that he had been sent to collect £1 16s.10d. based on a warrant issued a few days previously. The RIC considered it strange that the council's rate collector was not there and the Volunteer conceded 'that he considered this was the rate collector's work and that they should not have been sent on it'. The seven men left having been told by the RIC that they would not be collecting anything that day. After

65 James O'Rourke to Mulcahy, 6 Dec. 1921 (MAI: LE/5). The RIC contended that this was a breach of the Truce while O'Rourke maintained he was not overstepping his duty as collector.

66 Garvin, 1922, p. 75

67 Breaches of the Truce, Kerry (TNA: CO 904/153); Reports on Dillon family, Nov. 1921 (UCDA: P64/7 (27), (28), (29)). A family dog was also shot by the republican police who visited the Dillons, apparently after it was set on them.

68 E. J. O'Doherty to J. E. Dalton, 30 Nov. 1921 (MAI: LE/4/16B).

69 MCRs, IG, Oct. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/116).



the men had left, Carr pointed out that he would pay the amount when he got a chance; however, the RIC officer noted that Carr 'is a very poor man and there does not appear to be £1's worth of furniture in the house'.<sup>70</sup>

A traditional recourse for collectors dealing with recalcitrance was the parish and district courts, and under the Dáil system collectors could take proceedings in a republican alternative. This, of course, could only be carried out when and where republican courts were fully functioning. In Monaghan, for example, it was not until October 1921 that a resolution was passed calling on collectors to make use of the republican system. 'The Courts being down in working order will greatly facilitate matters as the mere threat of bringing them into same should cause a good many to pay', noted the Dáil inspector for the county.<sup>71</sup> The same month, Seán Duffy enquired with the minister for home affairs if rate defaulters 'are to be brought before *our* courts' in Wexford and Wicklow, where 'this matter is giving some trouble'.<sup>72</sup> Dáil courts experienced their most active period during the Truce and remained busy with cases against defaulting ratepayers.<sup>73</sup> Defendants recorded in surviving clerks' reports from three parishes in Queen's County, for instance, were exclusively rate defaulters.<sup>74</sup> Collectors had been legally entitled to seize property from defaulters in lieu of amounts due and under the Dáil system it was usually the IRA or Irish Republican Police who carried out seizures.

The lack of a functioning republican court system where decrees could be adequately enforced hindered the collection. Using the British system as an alternative to prosecute defaulters, meanwhile, was unacceptable to republicans but highlighted the often shifting and contradictory nature of the allegiance of local bodies. When a prominent professional was summoned to the Dublin police court, he pointed out 'the inconsistent attitude of the Corporation, who, while pretending to conform to the decrees of Dail Eireann, yet came to court to invoke the aid of British law to enforce payment of the rates'. Believing the attitude of the council was 'distinctly inconsistent', 'he sought an assurance that if he now paid his rates he would not be called upon by some other authority to again pay them'.<sup>75</sup> Deficiencies or weaknesses in the republican system could cause further problems. In Queen's County, a number of people who had withheld their rates were summoned and collectors had deposited costs with the court. 'Strangely enough', the Dáil inspector reported, 'I understand that where decrees were granted no costs were included. In other cases, as long as a

70 Breaches of the Truce, Leitrim (/153).

71 Inspector, Monaghan, 12 Oct. 1921 (NAI: DELG 23/14).

72 Seán Duffy to Minister for Home Affairs, 1 Oct. 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/210/4/1).

73 See Breaches of the Truce files (TNA: CO 904/153-156A).

74 Clerks' reports, Arles, Graighuecullen, Doonane, Oct. 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/210/5/1).

75 *Impartial Reporter*, 17 Feb. 1921.

month's grace was extended to defaulters'.<sup>76</sup> This left the collectors out of pocket and unwilling to take further cases to court. Another of the county's rate collectors complained in March 1922 that he had brought defaulters to court and received decrees against them but had heard nothing since.<sup>77</sup> The problem was never fully resolved and similar complaints were repeated throughout 1922 and 1923.<sup>78</sup>

In November 1921, Cosgrave told the minister for home affairs of the 'overwhelming case against the Court in Kerry as regards the Rate collection' and asked if he 'would be able to take such action as shall ensure the Rate Collectors shall get full and speedy redress against defaulting Ratepayers'. Two collectors in Tarbert had been dealing with opposition from the local Farmers' Union, a recurrent problem in the county (and elsewhere). The local republican justice was head of the union and when the collectors brought defaulting ratepayers to the republican court they 'got no satisfaction'. 'Unless the Courts will act impartially and unless the Decrees are executed with despatch it is hopeless to think of satisfactory Rate collection here', noted the unimpressed Dáil inspector. A new branch of the Farmers' Union was set up in Lixnaw, and they also proposed not to pay rates. In that locality, receipts for the 1920 collection were in the hands of republican police, some of whom were accused of trying to collect rates when their 'own people have not paid theirs'. The inspector believed that if the courts were working properly and decrees promptly executed there would be an 'immediate and general improvement'. One major complaint was the prohibitive cost of taking proceedings: deposit fees were high and Kerry courts were failing to award costs against prosecuted defaulters. Under the 'English Courts', the collectors claimed they could formerly 'get justice done much more cheaply'. Another was the length of time it took to execute decrees; a failure of the court to enforce its own rulings. One collector, who had a number of outstanding decrees to his name, was apparently 'fed up' with the courts and another 'knows of only one case where distraint was carried out and therefore saw no use in prosecuting defaulters'. The inspector appealed to the Dáil Ministry of Home Affairs to do something to rectify the situation.<sup>79</sup> On 16 November, Stack informed Cosgrave that he was writing to all the registrars in Kerry on the matter and asking the chief of police to issue special instructions to his officers. The clerk for the district court in north Kerry immediately reported a marked improvement:

76 Inspector's report, Queen's County, 2 Jan. 1922 (NAI: DELG 24/7). See also, Clerks' reports, Arles, Graighuecullen, Doonane, Oct. 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/210/5/1).

77 James Brennan to Secretary, Queen's County Council, 23 Mar. 1922 (DELG 24/7).

78 See, for example, correspondence in Dáil courts files (NAI: DECC/11/12; 13/1; 13/5).

79 Cosgrave to Stack, 10 November 1921 with enclosed extracts from reports of Dáil Inspector, Kerry (NAI: DELG 12/16).

in some districts organised opposition is being offered to the payment of the rates but the gang is being broken and those people who have had to pay costs now are very sorry that they ever allowed civil bills to go out against them. This week the [republican] Police seized 7 heads of cattle on foot of a decree for rates for one party, overpowered three of the men who tried to resist them, also seizing one revolver from them. This seizure and arrest has frightened the others. Several were in yesterday paying up. Our Justices of the District Court and Listowel Parish Court have always granted decrees for rates in every case. These are being collected in day by day. Last week I got over £160 from one man and have over £50 this week for the same Rate Collector.

The full cooperation of the local IRA had been promised and they were expected to 'break the gang' soon.<sup>80</sup>

Leitrim was one of the country's most impoverished counties and caused much trouble for the new local administrators. The Dáil inspector ruefully noted in June that 'the whole crux is the Collectors ... the number of defaulting ratepayers would be very small and any money the Collectors have not got they could have if they continued collecting – they have almost ceased collecting'. The collectors were apparently unwilling to hand over their collections in the absence of a LGB-sanctioned treasurer.<sup>81</sup> Their attitude was probably further hardened as a number of collectors were raided and had their books and money stolen. Patrick Curran was raided three times. According to the Dáil inspector there was 'some local dispute in this case of long standing, and besides the man is not "popular" in his District and the people absolutely refuse to pay him any rates'. Curran later resigned his position but his successors were initially hampered by the lack of records. Other collectors also had their books taken by local anti-rates bodies or individuals, leading to what the inspector termed 'an epidemic of raids on Collectors in this County, and same have had a marked bad effect on the collection, and also the Collectors'; he recommended that 'Defence' be contacted with a view to securing return of the books.<sup>82</sup> The situation was further complicated as the chairman of the council was on the run and the paymaster elected to replace the Northern Bank as treasurer was in prison (the bank could not be reappointed owing to the Belfast boycott).<sup>83</sup>

By October 1921, the situation in Leitrim was desperate. Substantial amounts dating back to 1920 remained uncollected and for the last moiety,

80 Clerk, District Court, North Kerry to Stack, 19 Nov. 1921 (12/16).

81 Inspector's report, Leitrim, 18 Jun. 1921 (16/9).

82 Inspector's report, Leitrim, 27 Jul. 1921 (16/9).

83 See correspondence on Leitrim County Council (16/9).

due to be closed on 30 September, only £1,085 had been lodged out of a sum just shy of £49,000.<sup>84</sup> Anti-rates meetings were organised in parishes across the county in September and October to oppose the high rate struck. A meeting of the Aughavas ratepayers in South Leitrim protested on the grounds that ‘the rate struck is exorbitant & unjust and out of all proportions in comparison with the neighbouring counties viz Cavan, Longford & Roscommon. We as loyal subjects of Dail Eireann are prepared to pay a just rate’.<sup>85</sup> Eamon O’Carroll, the ministry’s inspector, attended another meeting in Drumreilly and, failing to satisfy the crowd, had to fire over the heads of agitators.<sup>86</sup> A letter from one Leitrim collector offers a revealing insight into the position in his collection district and is worth quoting at length:

It seems to me there is some undercurrent secretly working to prevent payment of rates.

...

I tried to explain to the people the cause of the present increase in the Rates, and appealed to their patriotism, showing them that the British Government stopped giving the grants to the County they were legally entitled to – because they would not levy malicious injury decrees which if they did would be far more than the present rate – now, they were doing the work the enemy Government desired them to do by opposing the rate levied by their own elected representatives and sanctioned by the Governing authority in Ireland (Dail Eireann) But the no-rate cry can find more favour with the people, and the people who raises it will be more popular than he who says they must pay.

...

At present the collection is a most difficult, and if something is not soon done, an impossible task. People who profess to be great Sinn Feiners are as much opposed to it as others.

It is true that the people may be a bit pressed owing to the bad fairs and markets, but there are a great many who could pay and will not.

I called on some policemen who are ratepayers and they refused, saying that everyone was objecting and that they were right, as it was both exorbitant and illegal, apparently well pleased of the fact. It is only by the adoption of strong and vigorous measures, will this

84 [Chief of Inspection?] to [DELG?], 7 Oct. 1921 (16/9).

85 Aughavas Rate Payers Association to Stack (16/9).

86 [Chief of Inspection?] to [DELG?], 7 Oct. 1921 (16/9).

resistance be broke down, and the sooner it is done the better for the welfare of Local Administration.<sup>87</sup>

Though they could, perhaps, be accused of being unreasonable, maybe even irrational, the anti-rates agitators in Leitrim were not generally disloyal to the republic; many were ‘Sinn Feiners’. They were poor farmers hit by high taxation and low income. They were also subject to rumour, gossip, the lure of the crowd, and tempting thoughts of getting away without paying at all. When income and livelihoods were at stake, and the opportunity presented itself, members of the public were prepared to defy the IRA in a way that was not based around politics, loyalty, or allegiance but self-interest.

It was proposed in early October that, rather than succumbing to what Tom Garvin has described as occasional ‘Dark and almost wistful thoughts of expelling Leitrim from the new state’, a drastic measure was proposed to ensure the collection would begin in earnest to save the council from bankruptcy.<sup>88</sup> Following a report from O’Carroll, Cosgrave was informed that he had ‘absolutely no alternative but to ask the Ministry to give instructions to the Defence Department to send a picked body of about 40 active and intelligent men to collect rates in this County’.<sup>89</sup> On 10 October, Cosgrave and O’Higgins submitted a memo to the Dáil Cabinet ‘on condition of Rate Collection in County Leitrim to show the need for extraordinary methods in this County’. It pointed to an

irreconcilable anti-rate attitude in this County and there is reason to believe that no local efforts can possibly remedy this state of affairs. The local I.R.A. could not and probably would not cope with it as it is to be feared that many of its members are identified with the opposition to the payment of rates.<sup>90</sup>

The cost of this ‘expedition’ would be borne by a levy paid by defaulters on top of the rates due. Concerns about any possible breach of the Truce, then in operation, were dismissed and the operation was considered absolutely necessary to avert a complete collapse of local administration in the county.<sup>91</sup> The plan was passed by the Dáil Cabinet and, in November, Chief of

87 W. Guckian to Inspector, 18 Oct. 1921 (16/9).

88 Garvin, 1922, p. 76.

89 Inspector’s report, Leitrim, 7 Oct. 1920 (NAI: DÉ 2/466).

90 ‘Memo on condition of Rate Collection in County Leitrim to show the need for extraordinary methods in this County’, 10 Oct. 1921 (NAI: DELG 16/9). See also Dáil records (DÉ 2/466) and correspondence in Mulcahy Papers (UCDA: P7/A/29).

91 ‘Memo on condition of Rate Collection in County Leitrim’, 10 Oct. 1921 (NAI: DELG 16/9).

Staff Richard Mulcahy contacted Seán MacEoin (now commandant of the IRA's Western Division).<sup>92</sup> The proposed operation was an unrepresentative and exceptional response to an extreme situation but does highlight the importance placed on the department of defence in dealing with this type of defiance. The decision to send in outsiders is indicative both of local IRA opposition and the increased coercive value of the unknown enforcer.

Michael Farry has written about IRA interference in local government in Sligo, where members of the IRA repeatedly influenced appointments and elections to ensure that trustworthy republicans occupied positions of influence.<sup>93</sup> Sligo was not unique and leading Volunteers Michael Brennan, Seán Wall, and Eoin O'Duffy asserted a similar influence on the councils in Clare, Limerick, and Monaghan respectively.<sup>94</sup> But the extent to which the IRA could, or attempted to, influence local government varied. Marie Coleman, for instance, found minimal IRA interference in Longford.<sup>95</sup> Much of the IRA's interaction with local councils was characterised (like the ratepayers') by self-interest. Tom Garvin connected 'direct IRA interference in Sligo politics' to 'a fear of not getting a slice of the action in the form of local service jobs'.<sup>96</sup> After the IRA collected £8,000 of rates in Sligo, they insisted on keeping £1,000 as payment (for a group of supposed 'volunteers') resulting in conflict with both the council and Dáil department.<sup>97</sup> In early 1922, Sligo County Council proposed to strike a rate for the maintenance of the IRA in the county but Cosgrave rebuffed the 'illegal' rate.<sup>98</sup> The ministry had, however, no objection to members of the IRA claiming against the rates for work lost when called up for duty.<sup>99</sup> Garvin and Coleman have similarly pointed out that defiance of the Dáil's cost-cutting hospital amalgamation scheme (in which some Volunteers were involved) was motivated by the very same vested interests and fear of lost employment.<sup>100</sup>

92 Mulcahy to Cosgrave, 16 Nov. 1921 (16/9). MacEoin promised the cooperation of the OC of the North Leitrim Brigade.

93 Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, pp. 27–30.

94 Brennan was chairman of Clare County Council. For Wall's influence, see BMH WS 680 (John O'Dwyer) and for O'Duffy's, McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p. 50.

95 Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, p. 101.

96 Garvin, *1922*, p. 82.

97 Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, pp. 20–1.

98 Minutes, Sligo County Council, 4 Mar. 1922; Cosgrave to Secretary, Sligo County Council, 5 Apr. 1922 (NAI: DELG 26/9).

99 See response to Chairman of Road Committee, Westmeath County Council, 6 Dec. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/35).

100 Garvin, *1922*, p. 81; Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, p. 98.

### Local realities and the rate collection

There was no uniform policy formulated or implemented by the IRA hierarchy for dealing with the rate collection. Action authorised by Cosgrave's department or GHQ was designed to meet unique circumstances at county or district level. Volunteers were, in theory at least, only allowed to act with the approval of GHQ. The Meath Brigade OC denied assistance to rate collectors hoping to make seizures against defaulters when approached directly by the county council chairman 'as there was not even an order of court made out against the defaulters and hence he felt he would be taking instructions from a Local Govt Body if he sent on a detachment'. The IRA adjutant general (Gearóid O'Sullivan) noted that 'Some arrangement must be made by which O/C's will receive orders from the proper quarters' and Cosgrave reminded the council chairman that the IRA 'can be subject to no authority whatever save their own executive'.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, in West Connemara, County Galway, the local OC reluctantly sent men to assist with the collection following a request from the Dáil inspector. When he asked if he had behaved correctly, the adjutant general accepted that 'Your position was a very awkward one because it amounted to taking orders from a person not connected to the Army'. O'Sullivan believed 'The payment of rates is a very important matter' but complained to Mulcahy that 'This is not the first time Inspectors from this Board [local government] have attempted to issue instructions to our forces. It must not be allowed to recur'; Mulcahy agreed and informed the minister for defence that 'irregular action of this kind may create trouble, the fact that it is irregular tends to breed indiscipline and to blur the idea that each portion of the Government machinery has its own particular authority'.<sup>102</sup> In reply, Cosgrave admitted that 'the Inspector of this Department seems to have outstepped his duty' and promised that the issue would be raised at a meeting of inspectors and definite instructions given.<sup>103</sup> Soon after, the secretary of the county council observed that IRA assistance had been a 'marked success for about three days when the O.C. withdrew the men on the grounds that instructions did not come from the proper quarters'. He argued it 'would be a decided advantage if the assistance of the police or army could be enlisted for a short period' and asked (with unrecorded

101 AG to CS, forwarded to Cosgrave with handwritten note, n.d. [Sep. 1920?] (NAI: DELG 22/17). Mulcahy was similarly worried that trouble could arise if judges and others were not clear on this point: Cosgrave to Chairman, Meath County Council, 25 Sep. 1920 (22/17).

102 OC West Connemara to AG, 20 Oct. 1921; AG to OC West Connemara, 21 Oct. 1921; AG to CS, 21 Oct. 1921; CS to MD, 24 Oct. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/30).

103 Cosgrave to CS, 1 Nov. 1921 (/30).

result) ‘that representations be made to secure this object’.<sup>104</sup> Such conflict over the use of the IRA for the rate collection can be seen as a neat example of wider conflict between the practitioners of the civil and military sides of the republican campaign.

Uniformity of application was always hard to achieve and Volunteers could step outside of the unity of the organisation to operate based on personal preference. In Queen’s County, a ‘serious report’ was made to the minister for home affairs when a court called to prosecute defaulting ratepayers was interrupted by ‘a man named Pender who said he was a Volunteer’. ‘The Justices were threatened and an attempt made to kill one of them.’<sup>105</sup> Pender was also alleged to have called the wife of the court registrar ‘vile names’ in a language ‘one could only expect from an English soldier’ and the local court organiser believed that ‘a regular “Reign of Terror” exists in this part of the county owing to the action of the Penders’.<sup>106</sup> In Limerick, where the IRA controlled the county council, the commandant of the West Limerick Brigade reported to Cosgrave that a charge was pending against a brigade officer for attending an anti-rates meeting in Glin, where a resolution was passed protesting against the heavy rate in the area, in his capacity as an IRA officer and signing the resolution using ‘the name and authority of the I.R.A.’<sup>107</sup> Some members of the Leitrim IRA were actively opposed to the rate collection but in North Leitrim Cosgrave was promised the help of the local OC and one rate collector there reported that the Volunteers in his district had helpfully advised him to ask the Dáil inspector to attend an anti-rates meeting ‘As the opposition is growing daily both in number and determination’.<sup>108</sup> In Ardara, County Donegal, James Gilven complained to Cosgrave that, on the one hand, ‘ratecollectors are intimidating the people by going around the country accompanied by I.R.A. forces threatening to take cattle and other goods unless this *unjust* rate is paid’ and, on the other, ‘members of the I.R.A. force were threatened to be sent to an unknown destination because they refused to serve Civil Bill Processes on their neighbours and relations for the recovery of these rates’.<sup>109</sup> Cosgrave replied with a stern confirmation that ‘The Ministry for Local Government will not tolerate any opposition to the collection of rates, and will support any strong measures taken by Local Authorities to deal with such opposition.’<sup>110</sup>

104 J. L. S. to ?, 29 Oct. 1921 (NAI: DELG 11/23).

105 Seán Duffy to MHA, 15 Nov. 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/210/4/1).

106 Seán Duffy to MHA, 19 Nov. 1921, 29 Nov. 1921 (/210/4/1).

107 OC West Limerick Brigade to Cosgrave, 16 Dec. 1921 (NAI: DELG 17/15).

108 Charles Flynn to Inspector, Leitrim, 12 Nov. 1921 (16/9).

109 James Gilven to Cosgrave n.d. [Dec. 1921?] (7/22).

110 Cosgrave to Gilven, n.d. [Dec. 1921?] (7/22).



Volunteers were both enforcers and opponents of the rate collection, indicating a revealing dichotomy within the organisation. In most other aspects of daily life, nonconformity was equated to hostility and regularly treated as such; those who defaulted on their rates or refused to collect them were considered by the ministry to be assisting the enemy. It was, then, surely serious that there was dissent within the organisation but nobody seems to have made this distinction or, if they did, it does not appear to have been voiced. Tom Garvin has suggested that even when Volunteers did enforce the collection they often did so reluctantly. Many were the sons of ratepayers or ratepayers themselves. Further, they 'tended to have other things on their minds'.<sup>111</sup> The OC in West Connemara, County Galway, who had ordered local Volunteers to assist with the collection in Carna, reported that 'personally I do not think it is work that Volunteers should be detailed to do & I know the men do not like it. But I also believe that the payment of the rates is necessary for the successful function of our Local Government & it was for this reason I consented to give the men.'<sup>112</sup> Rates had never been popular, particularly among farmers, and 'in many counties the soldiers of the Republic had sympathy with the resistance to paying rates, even to the embattled republic'.<sup>113</sup>

The desire to avoid alienating the local population offered another potential motivation for opposing the collection. A collector in Leitrim was told by the registrar of the local republican court (an IRA officer) that the area's Volunteers had decided to 'give no assistance in the collection of rates ... as they (the volunteers) did not want ... the country against them'. The collector was to be allowed to make seizures but complained that when attempting to sell seized livestock to do so, had been forced, 'on the strength of the volunteers', to accept a portion of the payment with the promise of the balance 'at a future date', making the practice of seizing 'almost absurd'.<sup>114</sup> When local bodies of IRA operated in this way, there was very little the Dáil ministry or GHQ could do to reign them in.

The experiences of two rate collectors from different counties reveal the complexities of the rate collection. Hugh Dolan of Dowra, County Cavan, was appointed for the Enniskillen No. 2 Rural District, which fell under the administration of Cavan County Council. He had received the unanimous backing of the council in his appointment despite tendering for a higher fee than his competitors. Friends of the defeated candidates soon 'endeavoured

111 Garvin, *1922*, p. 69.

112 OC West Connemara to AG, 20 Oct. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/30).

113 Garvin, *1922*, p. 74.

114 McMorro, County Leitrim to Dáil Inspector, Leitrim, 13 Oct. 1921 (NAI: DELG 16/9).

and partly succeeded in creating a certain prejudice against Mr. Dolan, and hampered very much his work as Collector'. One of the ringleaders had, in fact, paid his and others' rates directly to the secretary of the council rather than handing them to Dolan. 'The present situation is that the Collection of Rates in this District is practically at a stand-still', wrote the council's secretary, 'the majority seemingly only too pleased to take advantage of the opposition offered to escape their liabilities for the present at least'.<sup>115</sup> At a county council meeting in August, a petition calling for Dolan's dismissal had been presented and it was decided to bring the matter before Cosgrave to obtain whatever support was necessary to allow Dolan to continue his work.<sup>116</sup> By late October it was feared that the collection would remain unfinished in Enniskillen No. 2. In November the council proposed to send a 'Special Commissioner' to Dolan's aid but Cosgrave insisted the ministry were unable to understand the need for such action as 'if the Rate Collector utilises the powers he already possesses he should be quite able to complete the Collection'.<sup>117</sup>

Finding his authority inadequate, Dolan soon enlisted the persuasive powers of the IRA. On 27 November, the OC of the neighbouring South Fermanagh Brigade visited the two figureheads of the opposition and compelled them to sign a declaration that they would pay their rates on or before 6 December. Dolan intended to summon the others to a republican arbitration court.<sup>118</sup> Outsiders were brought in not only for the added fear of the unknown, but also for local political reasons. The anti-rates body in the area, Dolan alleged, had founded a local Sinn Féin Club that was 'in reality simply a means of furthering their work against him'. The club secretary was one of the two ringleaders and the treasurer was Edward Scanlon. Scanlon, 'though a District Councillor and a Volunteer', was refusing to pay his rates and claiming he would pay when everyone else did.<sup>119</sup> But in spite of some more minor trouble over the costs of summons to the local Dáil court, the action against the anti-rates body in Dolan's district eventually paid off. In February, it was reported that he was about to close his collection for the six-month period ending October 1921 and he attributed the 'break-down of opposition ... partly to action taken from Sinn Fein Headquarters with regard to a local club – Dubally – and partly to help which he himself obtained from Members of the I.R.A. belonging to a neighbouring county'.<sup>120</sup>

115 William Finlay (secretary, Cavan County Council) to Cosgrave, 16 Aug. 1921 (4/13).

116 Minutes, Cavan County Council, 10 Aug. 1921 (4/13).

117 Finlay to Cosgrave, 24 Oct. 1921; Minutes, Finance Committee, Cavan County Council, 9 Nov. 1921; Cosgrave to Finlay, 29 Nov. 1921 (4/13).

118 Inspector, Cavan to Chief of Inspection, 2 Dec. 1921 (4/13).

119 Inspector's report, Cavan, forwarded by Cosgrave to Secretary, Sinn Féin, 5 Dec. 1921 (4/13).

120 Inspector's report, Cavan, 20 Feb. 1922 (4/13).

T. J. Quinn was a long-serving rate collector in Gort, County Galway, and like Dolan became subject to local opposition and personal enmity, but for quite different reasons. Sometime before mid-July 1921, Quinn was fired at and wounded by ‘unknown men’ and applied to a British court for £2,000 compensation. The Dáil inspector received conflicting reports on his character:

One [informant] thinks the reason personal enmity, another agrarian trouble, the third because he is reported as having entertained the [Black and Tans]. It is hard to get the truth of the matter. It is also said that he sent to a certain house for poteen for B’s and T’s. Two of my informants say he is not Republican, third says he is sympathetic. One described him as ‘a cute loyalist and twister’ ... I was speaking to him today in Union, but was not aware of fact at time. Discussing peace prospects he gave me the impression he was Republican, but I believe he is as plausible as are made [*sic*]. On the whole he apparently is not trusted locally.

Quinn had previously come to the attention of the IRA when he was taken to a republican court and fined for asking publicans not to comply with an IRA order to close early.<sup>121</sup> On 21 July 1921, Quinn wrote to Cosgrave asking for instructions, pointing out that ‘the public decision appears to be to pay no rates – I have seen notices pasted up here to that effect, and as you may know “it is a popular cry not to pay” ... There is a general strike against the payment of rates.’<sup>122</sup> In August 1921, he complained in detail to both Cosgrave and Éamonn Duggan, chief liaison officer during the Truce, about the unfair treatment he had suffered, most notably at the hands of the IRA:

A grave injustice has been inflicted not only on me by depriving me of my poundage fees, but, also on the ratepayers as both moieties will now come in one slap on them ... Why I am singled out for special attack, I fail to understand – The Sub Sherriff of Galway, a Unionist Rate Collector tells me he can get the Volunteers to assist him in collecting rates and that my district is not properly organised. Why it looks so much like malice and jealousy in my case? The public are talking of the ill treatment meted out considering all I have done to save people from disaster. – *If made a general rule, throughout the Country, I should not complain*, Mr De Valera said quite recently that the I.R.A. were

121 Inspector’s report, Galway, 15 Jul. 1921 (11/23).

122 Thomas Quinn to Cosgrave, 21 Jul. 1921 (4/13).

subject to the Civil Population, that is not so here apparently. It is not fair play to rule me with the Military sword considering the terms of the truce.<sup>123</sup>

It soon became clear why members of the IRA might be opposed to Quinn. When collecting the first half of the rates in 1920, he had requested and received the assistance of the local Volunteers but for the second collection 'went for the assistance of the R.I.C. and ignored the Volunteers'. Further, while receiving treatment in a Dublin hospital (presumably after he was shot at and wounded) he received a wire from a man in Gort that was subsequently found on the body of an RIC district inspector, killed during the Ballyturin ambush, implying he had passed information to the police.<sup>124</sup> The minister for defence (Cathal Brugha) admitted that 'our people should not have acted in this matter without instructions' with the caveat that 'when a person of the type of T. J. Quinn is allowed to remain as Ratecollector under a Republican Council, Republican forces are tempted to take things into their own hands'.<sup>125</sup>

At the same time, the OC of the South Galway IRA wrote to the county council secretary to outline the brigade officers' decision that 'under no circumstances can T. J. Quinn be ever again allowed to collect rates in this area. The reason for this decision is that this man, at a critical point in the War, was guilty, to a very serious degree, of Association with the Enemy'. Full IRA assistance would be provided to a collector who 'meets with the approval of the Republican Authorities'. The alternative was to hand the books over to the Galway Brigade who would 'see that the full rates are handed into your Council'.<sup>126</sup> Remarkably, the chairman of the county council's finance committee was not in favour of sacking Quinn ('It is an unfortunate time to change collectors and money is very badly needed') and when Quinn did leave in November 1921, the Dáil ministry noted that it would be unfair to refuse him a pension: evidence of the very different priorities operating between military and civil authorities.<sup>127</sup>

123 Quinn to Cosgrave, 7 Aug. 1921; Quinn to Duggan, 8 Aug. 1921 (4/13). The portion quoted above is from the letter to Duggan.

124 1st Battalion, South West Galway Brigade to [DELG?], 12 Aug. 1921 (4/13).

125 Brugha to Cosgrave, 25 Aug. 1921 (4/13).

126 OC South Galway to Secretary, Galway County Council, 28 Nov. 1921 (4/13).

127 Chairman, Galway County Council Finance Committee to [?], 3 Sep. 1921; [Cosgrave?] to Brugha, 28 Nov. 1921 (4/13).

### Conclusion

In an April 1922 report, Cosgrave paid the following tribute to the IRA:

The Department willingly and gratefully acknowledges the value and importance of the various services rendered Local Government by the Army, and frankly acknowledges that the success which attended local government administration depended on the help so rendered.<sup>128</sup>

The success (if incomplete and inconsistent) of IRA cooperation in the rate collection re-emphasises the coercive power of the gunman in Irish communal life at this time. Following anti-rates agitation in Clonbur, County Galway, where the collector and local magistrates were intimidated by organised crowds, Cosgrave notified the minister for defence that the serious situation developing in the area could be ‘nipped in the bud if drastic action is taken by your Department such as has been taken in other districts with success’.<sup>129</sup> Within a few days it was reported that ‘very little further opposition to the payment of rates in the Clonbur District’ was to be expected.<sup>130</sup> Even if, as Tom Garvin has stated, the IRA ‘felt that they had far better things to be doing than enforce an unpopular levy’ both they and the weaker republican police were regularly at the heart of the rate collection.<sup>131</sup> They may or may not have agreed with it, but they often followed their orders and carried out raids, seizures, and kidnappings; they ran courts that summoned and decreed against defaulters. The army’s role in the rate collection is simultaneously evidence of the difficult relationship between the civil and military campaigns and brings into question any assumption of a blanket unity of purpose across the republican army, as IRA leaders and local government administrators clashed over its status and use and members stepped outside of the organisation to protest or agitate against the rates.

Parallels can be drawn with other forms of social coercion carried out by the IRA – such as the RIC boycott examined in Chapter 1 – and its success depended to a large extent on the willingness of the local council to pursue strong measures, the strength of the local IRA and their desire to act, and the power of parish and district republican courts to prosecute and enforce decrees.

128 BMH WS 501 (T. J. McArdle).

129 Cosgrave to Brugha, 15 Nov. 1921 (NAI: DELG 11/23).

130 L.E. O’Dea to Secretary, Galway County Council, 17 Nov. 1921, forwarded to Cosgrave, 21 Nov. 1921 (11/23).

131 Garvin, *1922*, p. 74.

One notable difference is the lack of violence; while violence was threatened and implied, there do not seem to be any definite cases where rate defaulters were shot for their refusal to pay. A statement issued by Dublin Castle suggested that Thomas Shannon had been shot in Kilrush, County Clare after he had 'tried to sever his connection with Sinn Fein' and 'demurred' paying rates to a 'Sinn Fein' collector 'as he might have to pay them again to the legally appointed officers of the Crown', but other reports on the killing remained inconclusive about the perpetrator or the motivation.<sup>132</sup> Many of those politically opposed to the collection, of course, paid quietly and unobtrusively. A circular from Kerry County Council, for instance, considered that 'the citizens of this country who did not see eye to eye with their Republican fellow-countrymen deserve credit for their punctuality in paying their rates last year'.<sup>133</sup> Unlike the police boycott, there was also a significant portion of the IRA who sympathised with the opposition to payment of rates and, just as their colleagues coerced neighbours into paying, they encouraged them not to. In this case, opposition does not always imply disloyalty towards the separatist government, but was often simply a case of embattled ratepayers trying to hold on to their cash in a time of economic depression. There were many reasons for defaulting and many means employed to overcome it, but the rates question was never adequately solved and remained a troubling issue for the leaders of local government throughout 1922.

132 *Impartial Reporter*, 7 Apr. 1921; *Irish Examiner*, 30 May 1921; *Freeman's Journal*, 1 Jun. 1921.

133 Notice from Kerry County Council to 'Ratepayers and General Public', Kerry County Council, (NAI: DELG 12/16).

### 3

## Civilians and Communities I: Non-cooperation and Defiance

Chapter 2 has introduced civilian defiance and IRA coercion in the context of the local machinations of Dáil Éireann, specifically through local government and the collection of the poor rate. It has also shown the centrality of violence and intimidation (subtle or otherwise) to the upholding of the republican counter-state at a local level. This chapter will explore civilian non-cooperation, and its motivation, more broadly from three perspectives. It will begin by exploring two illustrative examples of Dáil Éireann edicts enforced by local IRA units: the Dáil courts and the Belfast boycott. The courts and the boycott are among the best documented examples of Dáil edicts and have already been subject to substantial scholarly work from a political and administrative point of view, allowing the focus here to remain on local manoeuvring and IRA participation. The focus will then move to another monetary collection enforced by the IRA: the arms fund levy. As an exclusively ‘army’, rather than ‘civil’, collection, the arms fund offers a useful comparison with that of the poor rate and will serve to emphasise the prevalence of the behaviour noted in Chapter 2. The final two sections will explore the influence of community politics and personal relationships on loyalism, examining the extent to which well-established community behaviour and personal interest influenced the guerrilla campaign, and vice versa. First, general conclusions will be offered before those conclusions are tested with a study of loyalists and the perception and creation of loyalty in one ‘southern’ Irish community (Arva, County Cavan) based on a detailed reading of compensation claims to the IGC and complementary material.

### Dáil Éireann edicts

The court network established by the Dáil government as an alternative to the British legal system was one of the most widely reported pieces of

republican civil work during the Irish Revolution.<sup>1</sup> On 18 June 1919, Dáil Éireann passed a decree allowing for a scheme of ‘National Arbitration Courts’ in every county in Ireland. According to Dáil court judge Kevin O’Shiel, the purpose of arbitration courts was to replace IRA ‘courts martial’ that had been keeping law and order in parts of the country where the police had been withdrawn.<sup>2</sup> Courts along the lines advocated years earlier by Arthur Griffith had sprung up in 1917 and the Dáil decree borrowed heavily from a system founded in West Clare.<sup>3</sup> A year later, Minister for Home Affairs, Austin Stack, was authorised to establish a supreme court, district courts, and parish courts with criminal and civil jurisdiction, marking a move from the guise of voluntary arbitration to ‘mandatory and coercive jurisdiction’; the Dáil decree gave courts the power to compel the attendance of witnesses and enforce judgments. The outbreak of agrarian disturbances throughout 1919 and 1920 simultaneously encouraged the establishment of the Dáil Land Commission with land courts presided over by O’Shiel and Conor Maguire.<sup>4</sup> The IRA served two functions in this process: first, ensuring attendance at republican sittings and non-attendance at British courts and, secondly, enforcing judgments and rulings.

The courts decreed in 1919 only resembled the voluntary arbitration tribunals envisaged by the Dáil superficially. In practice they were, as David Fitzpatrick has suggested, ‘more often the instruments of factional coercion than preservers of neighbourliness’. The rules of the courts in West Clare allowed for mandatory judgments, guards posted to keep the peace, and fines for breaches of licensing laws. In early 1920, it was reported that Volunteers cooperated with local Sinn Féin in administering justice, and in one case in Kilrush, refusal to bring a case to the Dáil court was met with shots fired, a notice posted on the chapel gates from the ‘Competent Military Authority’, and boycotting. By September 1920, the ‘polite fiction of “voluntary arbitration” was quietly forgotten’.<sup>5</sup>

Edward Egan was summoned to a republican court in Nenagh, County Tipperary, in June 1921, along with his neighbours: ‘we were all threatened by the I.R.A. and told that if we attended, we would have to put up with the

1 For a contemporaneous discussion of the origins and workings of the Dáil Courts, see *The constructive work of Dáil Éireann, No. 1* (Dublin, 1921). For detailed modern treatments, see Mary Kotsonouris, *Retreat from revolution: the Dáil courts, 1920–24* (Dublin, 1994); Mary Kotsonouris, *The winding-up of the Dáil courts, 1922–1925: an obvious duty* (Dublin, 2004), esp. pp. 1–24; David Foxton, *Revolutionary lawyers: Sinn Féin and crown courts in Ireland and Britain, 1916–1923* (Dublin 2008).

2 BMH WS 1770 (Kevin O’Shiel).

3 Kotsonouris, *The winding up of the Dáil Courts*, p. 7.

4 Foxton, *Revolutionary lawyers*, pp. 188–9.

5 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp. 145–6.



consequences. I was the only one who attended Assizes as I considered it my duty to do so, as a loyal citizen of British Empire'.<sup>6</sup> Adherence to the law of the Crown alone was only enough to keep stubborn and committed loyalists like Egan away from 'illegal' Dáil courts and their success often depended on the local balance of power. Where the IRA was comparatively weak, or the Crown forces energetic in suppression, local civilians were more likely to stay away. On one end of the spectrum was Leitrim, where the RIC reported in April 1921 that 'no one dares hold S.F. Courts', while on the other was Longford, where Marie Coleman has attributed some of the success of the courts there to a relative lack of harassment from Crown forces.<sup>7</sup> The dominant actor could essentially dictate the behaviour of civilians. In Maynooth, County Kildare, a man ordered to leave the country by a republican court in November 1920 refused to do so and 'having local backing' defied 'S.F. to touch him'.<sup>8</sup>

The success of local Dáil courts in turn generated a financial incentive to favour them over the British alternative. As business moved away from official assizes and petty sessions, solicitors, 'even those who had no sympathy with Sinn Féin, found it necessary, if they were to retain their business, to practise in the Courts'.<sup>9</sup> One solicitor who refused to do so reflected sadly that 'even old loyalists who were shopkeepers went to Sinn Féin solicitors'.<sup>10</sup> In that sense, the campaign of IRA intimidation was remarkably successful. In Waterford – 'still freer from Sinn Féin influence than any other county in the [6th] Divisional Area' – all jurors failed to appear at the assizes in July 1920 'owing to Sinn Féin intimidation'.<sup>11</sup> The county inspector was unimpressed with jurors 'frightened away by silly threatening letters written in a Garret in a back lane in Waterford' but conceded that it was indicative of conditions at the time.<sup>12</sup> Staying away was not a simple decision either and substantial fines were imposed for non-attendance.<sup>13</sup> Leitrim Volunteer Charles Pinkman remembered kidnapping jurors with their own permission

6 Edward Egan claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/9). The judge, he proudly asserted, commended him for his bravery.

7 MCRs, CI, Leitrim, Apr. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115); Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, p. 107.

8 MCRs, CI, Kildare, Nov. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/113).

9 BMH WS 708 (Conor A. Maguire).

10 McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, p. 86.

11 Weekly Intelligence Summary, 6th Division, 12 Jul. 1920 (IWM: P363).

12 MCRs, CI, Waterford, Jul. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/112). For a similar case in Galway, see Leeson, *Black and Tans*, p. 10.

13 The Grand Jurors in Waterford were fined £100, the Common Jurors £25, and the Petty Jurors £10: Weekly Intelligence Summary, 6th Division, 12 Jul. 1920 (IWM: P363). For a description of similar conditions in Galway, see Leeson, *Black and Tans*, p. 43.

as ‘none of them were willing or anxious to attend the court’ and this saved them from being fined for non-attendance.<sup>14</sup>

Reports of British court sittings with little or no work to do are also testament to a significant amount of public support for the republican alternative.<sup>15</sup> The RIC remained sceptical about the voluntary nature of participation but other British officials admitted that litigants went willingly, if only because they had no other means of redress.<sup>16</sup> At a meeting in the House of Commons in July 1920, Winston Churchill offered several instances ‘when no redress could be obtained from the ordinary courts and no protection from the Government, where the loyalists had applied to S.F. Courts and been well treated’. Unionist politician Hamilton Cuffe, Lord Desart, asked whether those who used Dáil courts ‘for the protection of life or property or to obtain the necessaries of life’ would be considered offenders. ‘This question was being asked by many in Ireland who desired to act loyally, but can only in this way get protection’.<sup>17</sup> Loyalists who participated in the republican system were often willing to offer effusive praise for its fair administration of justice.<sup>18</sup> But David Fitzpatrick has also pointed out that litigants were most likely to attend the court session they felt would treat them most favourably.<sup>19</sup> The comment of one observer succinctly summarised the disparate reasons among those who flocked to the new courts: ‘Clients arrived in the hope that the judgements given would be more lenient than in the established British Courts, clients came from patriotic motives, from motives of adventure, and not least because they dared not stay away. Intimidation was present here as elsewhere.’<sup>20</sup>

In June 1921, the Dáil organiser in Cavan reported that there were no courts held in Ballyconnell or Corlough and people ‘who used to seek redress of their grievances in these courts are turning to the enemy courts again’. Volunteers had been forced to stop cases going to quarter sessions and set up a ‘Volunteer court’.<sup>21</sup> Six months later, a West Cavan solicitor wrote to the minister for home affairs on behalf of a client who had a decree for £3 awarded against him by the county court judge in 1919 and confirmed at

14 BMH WS 1263 (Charles Pinkman).

15 Foxton, *Revolutionary lawyers*, p. 192.

16 See, for example, MCRS, CI, Mayo, Jun. 1920; Cork ER, Aug. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112); Meath, Oct. 1920 (/113).

17 ‘Memorandum of a meeting held on July 15th at the House of Commons’ (TNA: PRO 30/67/43).

18 See, for example, Kotsounouris, *Retreat from revolution*, p. 24; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 145; O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 87, Foxton, *Revolutionary lawyers*, p. 191.

19 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 151.

20 Joice M. Nankivell and Sydney Loch, *Ireland in travail* (London, 1922), pp. 145–6.

21 Report from ‘S Ua B’, organiser, Cavan, 6 Jun. 1921 (NAI: DECC/10/3).

the spring assizes in 1920. 'In order to avoid a seizure by the Sheriff', he claimed, 'the Defendant paid amount of Decree but he is still of opinion that the Decree was a most unjust one having regard to the evidence given on the hearing'. Perhaps feeling he might get a more palatable outcome from republican justice, the client wished for his case to be heard in a Dáil court. For good measure, the solicitor added that the 'Defendant at all times would be prepared to have the case heard by a Local Court but same were not functioning at the time and as the Plaintiff issued a Civil Bill for the British Court the Defendant had no alternative but defend same'.<sup>22</sup> The registrar for the East Cavan courts reported similar requests the same month.<sup>23</sup> Defendants could also take advantage of the absence of coercion to avoid paying decrees made against them. A Limerick shopkeeper, for example, complained in April 1922 that a decree for £131 12s. 7d. secured at the Alton district court twelve months earlier had yet to be paid.<sup>24</sup> Part of the strategies adopted by canny civilians included finding ways to take advantage of disturbed conditions to serve their own financial interests.

Similar behaviour was reflected in the Belfast boycott, an ultimately unsuccessful and counter-productive programme instituted as a protest against sectarian disturbances and partition. Following a petition from Sean MacEntee, Sinn Féin leaders in Belfast, and other republicans, the Dáil cabinet reluctantly agreed to a limited boycott of Belfast banks and insurance companies in August 1920. The boycott was introduced in immediate response to the expulsion of Catholic workers from Belfast shipyards in July 1920 but had been developed in Galway as early as 1919. By September 1920, possibly without Dáil sanction, the ban became general and drew much initial support from local government bodies, trade unions, and Catholic clergy. An advisory committee was formed, inspectors appointed, and enforcement committees created around the country to ensure the boycott was obeyed. The aim was to punish Belfast, 'the commercial capital of the country', economically. Aside from provoking the reinstatement of expelled Catholic workers in Belfast, it was hoped the boycott would provide clear evidence to loyalists that the six counties could not prosper economically alone.<sup>25</sup> Enforcing the boycott and punishing deviants was usually left to the local IRA and, in Peter Hart's words, it 'was enforced with threats, guns, and kerosene'.<sup>26</sup>

22 G. F. Maloney to MHA, 9 Jan. 1922 (/10/3).

23 Registrar, East Cavan to MHA, 12 Jan. 1922 (/10/2).

24 P. C. Dwane, Limerick, to MHA, 13 Apr. 1922 (/13/5).

25 D. S. Johnson, 'The Belfast Boycott, 1920–1922', in L. A. Clarkson and J. M. Goldstrom (eds.), *Irish population, economy, and society: essays in honour of the late K. H. Connell* (Oxford, 1981); Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary government in Ireland: Dáil Éireann, 1919–22* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 168–72.

26 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 102.

The overarching failures of the Belfast boycott and its ultimately counter-productive impetus have been well documented.<sup>27</sup> But why did local traders and customers obey or ignore? Cavan ex-soldier and Orangeman Robert Browne insisted that his allegiance to the government prevented him from obeying the local boycott. He claimed that despite being ‘frequently approached by strange men who cautioned me not to buy or sell any more Belfast or British goods ... or I “would be shot on sight”’, he and his mother continued to trade with Belfast and ‘generally to act as British subjects’.<sup>28</sup> Browne, though, was not necessarily representative, and loyalty to the Crown was often less important than a desire to preserve a business and livelihood. The threat of violence encouraged many other loyalists to give up their association with Belfast. John Cox worked as a salesman in Donegal and Fermanagh for a Belfast bread company but was eventually driven from his home and forced to move to Belfast in July 1921. His workmen had been threatened with shooting and, as one of them put it, ‘I knew well what it would mean for me if I continued to work, so I immediately informed Mr. Cox and ceased working’.<sup>29</sup> Joseph Knott told the IGC that his business was ruined as Belfast travellers were ejected from his Leitrim hotel and he was ‘threatened under severe penalty not to take them in again’.<sup>30</sup> Cork native Thomas Stewart (a Protestant and Freemason) worked as a travelling salesman for a Belfast tobacco firm and claimed he was repeatedly held up and compelled by the IRA to resign his position in February 1921.<sup>31</sup>

At a local level, the imperatives to accede to the Belfast boycott were as often financial as political. Southern traders usually bought from Belfast firms as they were the cheapest or most convenient source available; boycott director Joseph MacDonagh acknowledged that wholesale prices were higher in Dublin than in Belfast. MacDonagh also remarked that Belfast firms were sending their best salesmen to ‘sell goods at any price’ just to keep their connections.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, at a meeting about the boycott in Killeshandra, County Cavan, attended by a local Volunteer representative, concerns about shortages of goods were aired alongside fears from traders who transacted all their business with Belfast firms.<sup>33</sup> A heated debate about the motives behind a

27 See, for example, Johnson, ‘Belfast boycott’, p. 307; Lynch, *The northern IRA*, p. 44; Terence Dooley, ‘From the Belfast boycott to the Boundary Commission: fears and hopes in County Monaghan’, *Clogher Record*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1994), pp. 93–4.

28 Robert Alexander Browne claim (TNA: CO 762/95/20).

29 John J. Cox claim (/175/4).

30 Joseph Knott claim (/32/9).

31 Thomas Stewart claim (/168/21).

32 Joseph MacDonagh to Department of Finance, 8 Jan. 1921 and 18 Jan. 1921 (NAI: DÉ 2/261).

33 *Anglo-Celt*, 18 Sep. 1920.

'white list' of acceptable traders published in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, is evidence of the difficulty with which politics was disentangled from economics as Protestants were believed to have been deliberately targeted.<sup>34</sup> The Unionist *Impartial Reporter* declared that it was really nothing to do with Belfast: 'The whole boycott is a matter of trade jealousy, organised by a few shop assistants for the benefit of their masters, and some insurance agents', 'a religious boycott to capture business from the Protestant business houses'.<sup>35</sup>

As the punishment was financial – fines were inflicted rather than personal injuries and produce burned rather than homes or property – the decision to stock or buy 'prohibited' goods was primarily motivated by economic concerns. If their political convictions did not make the decision for them, traders had to be convinced that the potential loss of goods and customers outweighed the extra cost of sourcing from Dublin or elsewhere. The Monaghan IRA seems to have been particularly successful in this regard.<sup>36</sup> 'On the whole', declared OC Eoin O'Duffy in a report to GHQ, 'the people are now coming well into line as they see it does not pay to buy this stuff, no matter how cheap, and get it destroyed'.<sup>37</sup> Where a boycott was threatened for non-payment of a fine, there was usually little resistance offered and fines were paid relatively freely. The price of a fine appeared insignificant when compared to the potential cost of a prolonged public boycott.

The results achieved within communities by publishing blacklists emphasises this point. A national blacklist of offending firms was published in March 1921, followed by a more comprehensive list in May. Local lists were also published at the request of boycott committees. The lists, declared a Labour Department report, 'had the effect of bringing many of the offenders into line'.<sup>38</sup> Individuals unlucky enough to find themselves listed could only undo the damage by issuing an apology and paying a fine to the local boycott committee. Those on a list compiled in Monaghan were required to sign a guarantee not to offend again, return all Belfast goods to their consignee, and pay whatever fine had been imposed.<sup>39</sup> Eoin O'Duffy reported in April 1921 that 'several merchants including unionists have fallen in with our wishes and paid pretty stiff fines to have their names removed from the black lists'.<sup>40</sup>

34 *Impartial Reporter*, 11 Aug. 1921; 15 Sep. 1921; 6 Oct. 1921.

35 *Impartial Reporter*, 11 Aug. 1921.

36 Dooley, 'From the Belfast boycott to the Boundary Commission'; Terence Dooley, 'Monaghan Protestants in a time of crisis, 1919–22', in R. V. Comerford, et al. (eds.), *Religion, conflict and coexistence in Ireland: essays presented to Monsignor Patrick Corish* (Dublin, 1990).

37 Monthly Report, Monaghan Brigade, Feb. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/39).

38 'Labour Department Report', c.Jul. 1921 (MAI: A/0602).

39 Dooley, 'Monaghan Protestants in a time of crisis', p. 247.

40 Monthly Report, Monaghan Brigade, Apr. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/39).

The IRA worked in tandem with local boycott committees in producing and distributing these lists. In March 1921, it was reported in Cavan that a circular headed 'I.R.A.' was distributed giving the names of 23 Ballybay businesses and 'urging the public not to enter these establishments'.<sup>41</sup> The circulation of blacklists in the county prompted some listed traders to deny the offence but also encouraged others to publish apologies in the *Anglo-Celt* to secure a reprieve.<sup>42</sup>

The greatest failing of the Belfast boycott at a local level was the inconsistency of its application. D. S. Johnson has described how the beginning of the boycott was marked with confusion and insufficient organisation. The arrest of its first organiser, Joe Henderson, in October 1920 did not help. Shortly before he replaced Henderson as director, Joseph MacDonagh claimed that the boycott was 'unsatisfactory on the whole' and that it 'should be enforced ruthlessly or not at all'.<sup>43</sup> Despite some improvement under MacDonagh, the boycott was weak in most counties and Terence Dooley has described Monaghan as the 'only area where the boycott was effectively enforced'.<sup>44</sup> When carried out determinedly it could be near absolute in a town: the North Roscommon Brigade reported that a boycott was enforced on two traders dealing with Belfast and 'settled satisfactorily' while all but nine or ten had removed their accounts from the Northern Bank.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, in April 1921 the police in Queen's County noted a failed boycott on a Protestant farmer for dealing in Belfast goods 'as the majority of the customers paid no attention to the warning notices and the boycott was withdrawn'.<sup>46</sup> The Dáil labour department highlighted some 'weak points' in the boycott system, including 'leakage of Belfast goods' into north-west Connaught where two successive organisers had been arrested.<sup>47</sup> When republican demands had financial implications, as often they did, behaviour was notably affected. A shortage of copper coins in Navan was remedied with a supply from Belfast and meant that the boycott was simply 'forgotten in the rush for the coin'.<sup>48</sup>

41 *Anglo-Celt*, 26 Mar. 1921.

42 See for examples, *Anglo-Celt*, 21 May 1921, 28 May 1921, 2 Jun. 1921.

43 Joseph MacDonagh to Department of Finance, 8 Jan. 1921 and 18 Jan. 1921 (NAI: DÉ 2/261).

44 Dooley, 'From the Belfast boycott to the Boundary Commission', p. 90.

45 'Monthly Diary of Activities', North Roscommon, c.June 1921 (NLI: MS 33,913(5)).

46 MCRs, CI, Queen's County, Apr. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115).

47 'Labour Department Report', c.Jul. 1921 (MAI: A/0602).

48 *The Weekly Summary*, 12 Nov. 1920. The reproduction of a report from the *Irish Independent* is entitled 'Edict Made Ridiculous'.

### The arms levy

On 5 December 1920, Edmund Griffin of Castleisland, County Kerry, was asked to pay a £4 levy imposed by the local IRA company. Griffin refused to pay and over the coming months repeated overtures were similarly rebuffed. Edmund Griffin did not seem a likely candidate to provide opposition to Castleisland's republicans. His son, who got into an argument with some Volunteers and was threatened with a revolver, had been a Volunteer himself 'since "they started" and never refused any duty imposed on him as such'; after the row he had been 'afraid he'd be shot and labelled a "spy" to the eternal disgrace of his family'. Some months earlier when an outhouse belonging to the father of the Volunteer who had made the original levy demand was burned down by Crown forces, Edmund Griffin had brought him some hay to keep him going. Griffin had refused to pay £4, not because he was opposed to the republican cause, nor because he opposed any use that might be made of the money, but because he felt it was unfair: he 'offered £2.10 the amount assessed on others of larger valuation than his. His valuation is £28.5. Others assessed at £2.10 had a valuation of £40. His offer of £2.10 was refused'.<sup>49</sup> Griffin's case is an indicative example of the complexities surrounding the collection of money to fund the IRA's guerrilla war.

Collections for arms and dependants' funds were raised and collected at a parish level, usually in the form of a vaguely defined 'levy'. The levy was often based on how much a local company felt they might expect to get. In some cases, amounts were calculated based on the valuation of an owner's property, but demands varied. In parts of Cork, for example, *3d.* in the pound was required but in Sligo it was as high as *6d.* in the pound.<sup>50</sup> In some cases a flat sum was demanded while in others the levy was struck simply 'according to what the local company believed a man could pay'.<sup>51</sup>

In November 1920, a demand notice was handed to residents in the Cork No. 3 Brigade area:

49 Patrick Brennan, S.C., to Mulcahy, 12 Dec. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/35).

50 The figure for Cork is given in some BMH accounts that mention the levy. Edward Young claims that in the case of shopkeepers and others the amount was based on what they thought they could get (WS 1402). Jim Hunt mentions *6d.* in the pound in Sligo (WS 905).

51 The RIC in Monaghan reported that £10 was requested in parishes there while people in Roscommon were 'intimidated into paying a tax of £1 towards the upkeep of the I.R.A.': MCRs, CIs, Monaghan and Roscommon, Jan. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/114); Seán Gibbons 'would not take less than £10' in Mayo (BMH WS 927); Vice OC, Cork No. 1 to OC, Cork No. 1, 26 Nov. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/27).

A collection is being made in this area, by authority of the General Head Quarters of our Army, to enable me to carry on the work of arming the Volunteers in this Brigade, and so sustaining and increasing the fight waged against the enemy here. You are asked to subscribe a fair amount. It is for your own protection as well as for the national good. The enemy forces are running loose whenever they get an opportunity. They are murdering defenceless people. They are pillaging, burning, outraging, wherever they go. Arms are needed to meet them and to beat them. Money is required to get the arms. That is the plain statement of the case. It is no appeal. It is just a request to every man and every woman who believes in Ireland to help the Army of Ireland to carry on the fight. During the next week collectors appointed by the Officer-in-charge of the area will call on you.

Readers of the Crown force newssheet *The Weekly Summary* were informed that the demand was made ‘regardless of their political views’ and accompanied by a ‘verbal threat that, unless the amount fixed is paid in cash, goods to that value will be seized’.<sup>52</sup> On 3 December, IRA General Order No. 15 called for brigade commandants to organise a collection where each company would cover its own area. A ‘leaflet’ along the lines of that sent out by Cork No. 3 (who had, apparently, collected over £5,000 in three nights) would be prepared and distributed.<sup>53</sup> There was now a national directive for the local collection of funds.

Much of the surviving testimony of Volunteers gives the impression that levy demands were, for the most part, paid up cheerfully. Luke Duffy told Ernie O’Malley that the fund was ‘subscribed to generously’ in Mayo while Thomas McNerney claimed that ‘The local people were very good indeed. They subscribed generously to the arms fund and other collections’ in Galway.<sup>54</sup> In Tipperary, Martin Needham maintained that the ‘response to this levy around Lorrha was very good. I can recall only four defaulters, and they were all loyalists’.<sup>55</sup> IRA Veterans from Ulster similarly record little or no hostility towards their collections.<sup>56</sup> Charles McGinley was content to offer the reflection that in Donegal levies were ‘difficult to collect where not

52 *The Weekly Summary*, 19 Nov. 1920.

53 General Order No. 15 (New Series), 1920, 3 Dec. 1920 (NLI: MS 739). Seamus Robinson claimed he suggested the levy to GHQ to ‘spread the burden’ of feeding and housing Volunteers (BMH WS 1721).

54 Luke Duffy (UCDA: P17b/107); BMH WS 1105 (Thomas McNerney).

55 BMH WS 1323 (Martin Needham).

56 See, for example, BMH WS 693 (Patrick Maguire); BMH WS 1327 (Patrick O’Donnell); BMH WS 853 (Peadar Barry); BMH WS 458 (Seán Corr).



given voluntarily' without any elaboration.<sup>57</sup> Conscious of potential hostility, some local units in Ulster seem to have deliberately avoided conflict with loyalists. Edward Fullerton stated that in his area of County Down 'All the Nationalist business houses were asked to subscribe and, in some cases, Unionist business people were approached and a few subscribed', while Thomas Carragher recalled that 'we got subscriptions in most nationalist houses. We did not, however, call for subscriptions at Unionist houses'.<sup>58</sup> In Tyrone, the RIC reported a collection carried out by 'strangers, who were in some instances, shown the most likely houses, by local guides'. It was 'believed that they got very little money, and that most people refused them' but prosecutions were made impossible 'as the people who are otherwise well-disposed, are afraid to give information'.<sup>59</sup>

In the south, it was the Cork BMH witnesses who were often most forthcoming about hostility towards their collections. Seán Healy claimed that when a call was made for voluntary subscription, only the 'faithful few' responded. It was decided to place a levy on those who could pay and 'threats of drastic action had frequently to be used to secure payments of those levies. In some cases we commandeered goods'.<sup>60</sup> Both Con Calnan and Denis Murphy noted that it took threats about the seizure of cattle and other property to convince reluctant landowners to hand over cash.<sup>61</sup> In Bandon, where there was a significant loyalist population, Jeremiah Deasy remembered that 'all supporters of the national movement were approached and the levy collected without difficulty' but 'the hostile element – a goodly number of British loyalists' had to be 'tackled' and 'dealt with' separately.<sup>62</sup> Deasy was not unusual in labelling the unwilling as 'British loyalists', and they are often described as 'loyalist', 'Protestant loyalist', 'Unionist', or simply 'hostile', conveniently placing them in a distinct, separate, and easily definable minority.<sup>63</sup> Resistance to levies was more complex, though, than that.

Some of those who refused to pay were indeed politically opposed to the IRA and the purpose for which money was collected. In Bandon, County

57 BMH WS 1483 (Charles McGinley).

58 BMH WS 890 (Edward Fullerton); BMH WS 681 (Thomas Carragher).

59 MCRs, IG, Jul. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/115).

60 BMH WS 1479 (Seán Healy). In Waterford, Moses Roche (BMH WS 1129) made a similar claim: 'I cannot state with truth that this levy was paid up in every case without protest; indeed it became necessary at times to threaten certain people ... but under threat, they paid.'

61 BMH WS 1317 (Cornelius Calnan); BMH WS 1318 (Denis Murphy). They were members of the Cork No. 3 and 2 columns respectively.

62 BMH WS 1738 (Jeremiah Deasy).

63 See, for example, BMH WS 603 (Stephen O'Brien); BMH WS 1563 (Michael Dineen); BMH 1595 (Seamus Babington); BMH WS 1738 (Jeremiah Deasy).

Cork, Joseph Brennan, an uncle of two Volunteers in the area, was levied £20 but was 'opposed to the Republican movement and he has refused to pay'. Described as 'naturally a stubborn man', Brennan's nephew confirmed that 'he is sincere enough in his political convictions'.<sup>64</sup> Many of the loyalists who later sought compensation from the IGC claimed to have 'refused' to 'subscribe' to republican funds before the Truce. W. H. Smyth of Cork was not untypical in declaring that he had refused to give 'any countenance, support or subscription to the rebels'.<sup>65</sup> GHQ, so often out of touch with local attitudes and realities, was uneasy about forcing levies on political opponents. General Order No. 15 stated that the collection for the arms fund 'should be made thoroughly' and 'None but declared enemies should be left unapproached'.<sup>66</sup> In July, Richard Mulcahy (quoting Kevin O'Higgins) informed the OC of Cork No. 3 that 'It will be understood, of course by any Volunteer that it is not "a perfectly natural and proper thing" to enforce the collection of any levy, by taking property from or attacking the person of any non-Republican who refused to subscribe'.<sup>67</sup> Liam Lynch, OC of the 1st Southern Division, was similarly informed that the seizure of goods from those who refused to pay levies was 'not in keeping with the spirit of General Order no 15'.<sup>68</sup>

A dislike of republican levies did not, however, necessarily indicate straightforward political dissent. In November 1920, Arthur Griffith received a letter from Ballinamore, County Leitrim:

We have recently received notices to pay to Officers of the Volunteers sums of money up to £2.10 to buy arms etc. We should like to know are those Orders from Headquarters or have they power to act on their own initiative? Having nothing against a Republic, as such, but resenting raids on our houses by armed and masked men, articles taken (not arms), dragged from our homes, revolvers fired over our heads, we naturally would like to know are we supposed to support acts of this description by subscriptions.

In response, the adjutant general wrote to the commandant of the Leitrim Brigade asking for a report on the raids and 'the suggested collection of money contrary to the will of the subscribers'. There had been a number of similar complaints from the north Midlands and it was made clear that

64 Kevin O'Higgins to MD, 13 Jun. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/20).

65 W. H. Smyth claim (TNA: CO 762/36/18).

66 General Order No. 15 (New Series), 3 Dec. 1920 (NLI: MS 739).

67 CS to OC Cork No. 3 (UCDA: P7/A/20).

68 CS to OC 1st Southern Division, 9 Jul. 1921 (/20).

the cause of complaint should be removed.<sup>69</sup> Writing in 1928, a Cork Sinn Féin member and republican supporter who had subscribed to the Dáil loan as a matter of ‘National Duty’, described how he had also paid towards the arms fund: ‘This Army Levy was compulsory – at least in the country – and the majority subscribed more through fear than love. There were no exceptions made. Everyone had to stump up if not in cash – in kind, if not directly – indirectly.’ The lines between ‘fear’ and ‘love’ were not necessarily set in stone. ‘I don’t know under what cat-e-gory I should be placed but I’ll leave it an open question.’<sup>70</sup> In the difficult conditions of revolution civilians could find themselves torn between personal preference, the practicalities of everyday life, and the pressures applied by armed actors.

The Dáil loan, floated and collected to fund the republican counter-government between August 1919 and July 1920, though more overtly a voluntary collection, saw a similar dynamic. Stephen Gwynn claimed the collection used the methods of a ‘regime of forced levy, effectively carried out and producing large sums’, but Edward MacLysaght believed that ‘If any further proof of the whole-hearted support of the people were wanted it would be furnished by the remarkable response on the part of the small farmers – never too eager to subscribe to sentimental causes – when Michael Collins launched the First Dáil Loan.’<sup>71</sup> IRA testimony (problematic in its own ways) emphasises the ease with which it was collected – ‘The loan was taken up well by the people and well subscribed’ – but the police felt it was anything but willing.<sup>72</sup> The county inspector in Mayo commented on the IRA collecting for the Dáil loan ‘by persuasion and where that failed by intimidation’. A local meeting about the loan was ‘very small and unrepresentative. But of course intimidation will do the rest.’ Shortly after the loan was floated, the county inspector in Kerry reported that it was ‘not likely to meet any measure of support’ and added that many people who feared they would be ‘intimidated into subscribing’ had been pleased with its suppression. In Cork West Riding, the county inspector reported that police action disrupted collections ‘to which many people subscribe through absolute fear’ and in Kerry money was handed over but people were ‘afraid to report and afraid to admit to the police that they have been asked for subscriptions’. Another Mayo report insisted that subscriptions ‘were coming

69 J. S. Callister, Ballinamore, County Leitrim to Griffith, c.Nov. 1920; AG to OC Leitrim Brigade, 9 Nov. 1920, captured IRA documents (TNA: CO 904/168/1).

70 Jeremiah Keane to ‘Ned’, 30 Sep. 1928 (NLI: MS 31,325).

71 Quoted in Mitchell, *Revolutionary government in Ireland*, p. 63.

72 BMH WS 692 (James Quigley). For similar comments, see BMH WS 1288 (Michael Gleeson); BMH WS 1279 (Sean Clifford); BMH 659 (Justin A. McCarthy); BMH WS 1659 (Mortimer Curtin).

out by fear and terrorism rather than from Love and devotion and when all failed threats developed into ... facts'.<sup>73</sup>

In his memoir, British director of intelligence Sir Ormonde Winter wrote that many loyalists were 'forced to contribute to the Irish Republican loan to secure immunity. If instead of subscribing to the loan they evinced sympathy with the Crown forces, they ran the risk of being shot or having their houses burnt down over their heads by the rebels'.<sup>74</sup> There is no evidence of anyone being shot or having property burned specifically as a punishment for refusing to pay towards the Dáil fund but, perhaps, the fear was enough. Arthur Mitchell has described the idea that 'some Unionists purchased bonds as insurance for the future' as 'conceivable but unlikely'.<sup>75</sup> More likely, then, paying into the loan was a way for those who were otherwise loyal to the Crown to avoid becoming targets. When a list of subscribers was found among captured documents, Winter was surprised at the 'price that had been paid for immunity', and also to find the names of some of his personal friends.<sup>76</sup>

### Defiance and community politics

Civilian behaviour regularly conformed to pre-revolutionary norms based on personal interest. Likewise, notions of loyalty and dissent were influenced by survival instinct and could be shifted within communities by the presence or absence of intimidation. In the town of Kilkee, County Clare, Michael Keane and his son suffered from a trade boycott from May to November 1921. The lengthy file of correspondence on their case highlights the prominence of local conditions in the working of IRA intimidation. An IRA 'Court of Enquiry' confirmed that the Keanes were accused of 'Entertaining enemy police'; Michael Keane allegedly gave information leading to a raid and J. J. Keane was said to have accompanied 'Black and Tans' when a man was threatened with shooting.<sup>77</sup> Denying the more serious charges against his family, J. J. Keane and his solicitor took advantage of the Truce to approach, among others, Austin Stack in the hope of ending the boycott.

Keane admitted that he had been in contact with the local police but asserted that 'We only did the same as practically every house and persons in Kilkee who were not boycotted or charged.' Others in the town, he claimed,

73 MCRs, CIs, Kerry, Mayo, Cork W.R., Sep.–Dec. 1919 (TNA: CO 904/110).

74 Sir Ormonde Winter, *Winter's tale: an autobiography* (London, 1955), p. 299.

75 Mitchell, *Revolutionary government in Ireland*, p. 63.

76 Winter, *Winter's tale*, pp. 299–300.

77 'Brigade Military Court of Enquiry, West Clare', Kilkee, 21 Sep. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/34).

'had 3 times more to do with the police than we had'. On the verge of having to close down their businesses in October, J. J. Keane described the effect of the boycott:

Picture for yourself a man's business places closed down since last May, not a 1/- coming in to feed or keep his wife & 5 children, to destroy the milk of 5 cows morn. & evg. For 5 months. His own people friends & cousins daren't speak to himself or his family.

They had property damaged in May 1921, the boycott had cost them over £1,200, and their name was 'Disgraced all over the country'. Keane maintained that the whole trouble was the result of personal spite and a grudge with one neighbour in particular, Thomas Marrinan, with whom the family had a falling out several years earlier.<sup>78</sup> Marrinan happened to be a member of the Kilkee IRA and a battalion vice-commandant.<sup>79</sup> Among the many in Kilkee guilty of association with the 'enemy', Keane protested that he was singled out 'because I had an old enemy, who taking advantage of the Truce & under the protection of Sinn Fein used his influence to victimise & blackguard ourselves and our business'.<sup>80</sup> An IRA enquiry at brigade level, unsurprisingly, believed it had found enough evidence to verify guilt but GHQ found it difficult to discern the truth amidst local rivalries, claims, and counter-claims. They remained unconvinced and unable to substantiate most of the accusations.<sup>81</sup> Divisional OC Michael Brennan was unsympathetic towards the Keanes' plight and claimed to have informed Michael Keane that, if he had been in charge in West Clare before the Truce, 'at least the son would have been shot'. The boycott was, though, eventually lifted 'as the Government has decided that the financial loss which had been inflicted on him met the case.' But Keane's excuse that he was no worse than anyone else in the town only served as proof to Brennan that 'practically the whole population of Kilkee should have been shot': 'I pointed out that if a few of the worst offenders like the Keane family had been executed, such a good example might have shown the others the error of their ways.'<sup>82</sup>

Aside from the obvious difficulty of distancing political activity from personal feuds and jealousies, the case of the Keane family points to perspectives that can be gleaned from viewing revolutionary intimidation in a town or parish setting. Why, first of all, were so many of the town's

78 J. J. Keane, Kilkee to Liaison Officer, 22 Sep. 1921 (/34).

79 BMH WS 809 (David Conroy).

80 J. J. Keane to T. Murphy, 18 Oct. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/34).

81 O/C Police, West Clare to O/C Police, 23 Sep. 1921; MD to CS, 15 Nov. 1921 (/34).

82 Michael Brennan to OC 1st Western Division, 22 Nov. 1921 (/34).

inhabitants willing and able to defy the IRA and maintain friendly discourse with the police? The Crown forces had maintained a strong presence in Kilkee up to the Truce. The town had been the scene of early police persecution and in 1918 policemen were stoned by locals and a constable tied to a railing, but by September 1920 their control was strong enough to ensure the suspension of Dáil court sittings.<sup>83</sup> An IRA veteran from the area later admitted that it was one of three towns completely held by ‘the enemy’.<sup>84</sup> The town clearly had a culture of interaction with the police, which was renewed as their strength increased and it became safe to do so. J. J. Keane pointed out that Joseph Greene, who made an accusation against his father, ‘proved that any time he himself had a complaint to make that it was to the R.I.C. he went’; at the IRA enquiry Greene admitted he was on ‘good terms’ with the local RIC sergeant. Keane also accused Thomas Marrinan and his brother of drinking with the police.<sup>85</sup>

The behaviour of Kilkee’s inhabitants would surely have been punished by the republican element in the town had they been in a position to do so. When an opportunity arose during the Truce, for instance, they were not slow to single out a vulnerable group for persecution. In October 1921, the Kilkee garrison was concentrated in nearby Kilrush. As soon as the Crown forces had left, the families who remained were reported as ‘having a bad time there; being pushed about and jeered at as they go through the streets’ (a breach of the Truce for which Michael Brennan publicly ‘expressed regret’).<sup>86</sup> But if police strength played an important part in the level of hostility shown towards them in Kilkee, why were the Keane family so effectively boycotted over five months? J. J. Keane suggested one explanation: ‘There would be a good many people glad to have our places closed down for good as there is over £2000 due by them to us & they say they needn’t pay same.’<sup>87</sup> Self-interest and economic concern, it has been seen, frequently motivated collaboration (in Cork, Florrie O’Donoghue referred to a ‘garrison clique’ who were loyal to the Crown through ‘sentiment and self-interest’<sup>88</sup>). Where there was no effective IRA deterrent, the people of Kilkee served their own interests and ignored the RIC boycott but, equally, where local disruption offered a chance to avoid paying a bill, they were willing to accede to another boycott ordered by the local IRA. This was not uncommon. During the Civil War

83 MCRs, CI, Clare, Jun. 1918 (TNA: CO 904/106); BMH WS 474 (Liam Haugh); Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 151.

84 BMH WS 474 (Liam Haugh).

85 J. J. Keane to MHA, 30 Sep. 1921; ‘Brigade Military Court of Enquiry, West Clare’, 21 Sep. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/34).

86 MCRs, IG, Oct. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/116); Breaches of the Truce, Clare (/151).

87 J. J. Keane to Stack, 30 Sep. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/34).

88 Quoted in Murphy, *The year of disappearances*, p. 83.

the National Army reported that around Newcastlewest, County Limerick, the 'country people' backed the republicans as they could 'avoid payment of both their civil debt and their rates and taxes ... whilst chaos reigned' but the 'town's people are supporters of the Army for the same reason, that they will get their accounts paid when more lawful times arrive'.<sup>89</sup> In a broader context, Stathis Kalyvas has shown that in civil war, the higher the level of control exercised by a political actor the greater the level of collaboration. 'Loyalty' can be acquired through the provision of 'mutual benefits' as much as by ideological commitment.<sup>90</sup>

Disputes arising from personal antipathies are not uncommon in a community setting and the conditions of guerrilla war could accentuate or generate animosity, accusations, and counter-accusations. In his study of community-based intimidation during 'Troubles' era Northern Ireland, John Darby found that an 'intimidatory culture', where rumours and suggestions mixed with the experience of violence to create perception, could breed a menacing atmosphere 'more subtle and invidious' than cruder forms of violence.<sup>91</sup> Edmund Griffin's son, mentioned above, had been terrified that a local row would bring the 'eternal disgrace' of being shot as a spy. In March 1921, Richard Foley, a farmer from Youghal, County Cork, had sheep stolen by local Volunteers in lieu of a levy it was alleged he had refused to pay. Foley claimed that one of the Volunteers had 'tried to blacken my character and said he was afraid I would give information to the Black & Tans' but insisted that 'I am and always was as good an Irishmen as any of those men' and 'Even in the past my family were well known to be staunch Nationalists.' The local Volunteers had little sympathy, stating that he 'was never on friendly terms with our people' and 'has always been a source of trouble in that particular area'. The local Volunteers fined Foley for 'having attempted to prevent people from contributing to the levy and spreading false reports about the I.R.A.' and though Foley believed his treatment 'was all private spite and done simply to cause me trouble and annoyance', the Volunteers argued that 'if such action was not taken, we would not have had such a good collection.' But it is Foley's membership of the problematic Farmer's Union that may most adequately explain the hostility: 'practically every member of the Farmers Union, with one or two honourable exceptions are NOT even members of the political side of our movement and unless we act very carefully they will attempt to draw wedges into our organisation'.<sup>92</sup>

89 Quoted in Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 160.

90 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 111–14.

91 John Darby, *Intimidation and the control of conflict in Northern Ireland* (New York, 1986), pp. 96–8.

92 Statement by Vice-Commandant, Cork No. 1, Nov. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/27).

Complaints like Foley's about earlier IRA conduct often surfaced after the Truce and were usually met with equally stern rebuttals from local IRA commanders. In Bailieborough, County Cavan, for instance, a publican was fined for serving alcohol after a fundraising dance and complained to his TD, Arthur Griffith, that 'I have given subscriptions time after time to the Sinn Fein & Volunteer organisations & ... have been victimised by an alien Government, through supporting Sinn Fein (being refused permits for my motor van and lorry). The Volunteer concerned countered that Lee had not had permits refused but, in fact, offered his van to the RIC while refusing it to the local Sinn Féin band. The sardonic explanation offered was that 'he may have contributed to the Volunteer and Sinn Fein Organisations, but men carrying on such a business as he generally do, as it is to their own benefit to be popular'.<sup>93</sup>

Such interaction could be potentially dangerous to those on the wrong side. In January 1922, Kate Fehilly complained to Michael Collins that her ex-soldier husband 'has been and is being persecuted by the I.R.A., since last March. ... It must at once strike you that this is a hard condition especially when he is not conscious of having done wrong. ... There is no such thing as a direct charge and trial to give him an opportunity of defending himself.' The local battalion's vice-commandant offered the ominous defence that 'My policy was that those who were not for us at the time were against us, and as I had been informed Fehilly was in touch with the enemy, I naturally presumed he was hostile and even suspected him of giving information to the enemy.' Kate Fehilly was accused of being 'in constant touch with the enemy as she used wash in the Barracks'. The brigade adjutant was willing to accept that 'They both seem to be of the type that proved a constant menace to the National movement', while the divisional adjutant believed 'it is clear that Fehilly and his wife have been long connected with and in the employment of the enemy', before recommending deportation.<sup>94</sup>

Foley, Lee, and Fehilly are all examples of the varying ways civilians could fall into conflict with the IRA. The final section of this chapter will explore this further and examine how a group of self-proclaimed loyalists experienced the revolution in a single community.

93 Philip Lee to Arthur Griffith, 26 Aug. 1921; Hugh Maguire to Chief of Police, 3 Sep. 1921 (/35).

94 Kate Fehilly to Michael Collins, 10 Jan. 1922; Statement by Vice Comdt 2nd Batt Cork No. 3 Bde regarding Mr Fehilly; Statement by Vice Comdt 2nd Batt Cork No. 3 Brigade; Adjutant, Cork No. 3 to Adjutant, 1st Southern Division, 10 Feb. 1922; Adjutant, 1st Southern Division to Adjutant General, 15 Feb. 1922 (MAI: A/0659).



### Defiance in Arva, County Cavan

Arva is located in the west of County Cavan, bordering two provinces (Leinster and Connaught) and two counties (Leitrim and Longford). In 1911, the District Electoral Division (DED) of Arva comprised over 1,800 residents, including 650 in Arva town. Over 65 per cent of the district's population were under the age of 40, with 20 per cent aged 10 or under. Non-Catholics accounted for 32 per cent of the population (the majority of whom were Church of Ireland but also included Methodists, Presbyterians, and Brethren), a far higher proportion than the 19 per cent in the rest of the county.<sup>95</sup> Most of the district's Protestant population was concentrated in a number of surrounding townlands and only 14 per cent of the town's urban population were non-Catholic.

In the late 1920s, at least 37 residents of Arva and the surrounding district applied for compensation to the Irish Grants Committee. In doing so, they were among over 4,000 or so self-proclaimed southern Irish loyalists who put their own definition of loss and loyalty on paper. The second IGC had first met in October 1928 with a remit to decide on cases of compensation to southern Irish loyalists for loss and injury sustained between 11 July 1921 and 12 May 1923. Applicants had to prove any losses suffered were the result of their 'allegiance to the Government of the United Kingdom'.<sup>96</sup> The files are a rich source of first-hand, near contemporary witness testimony covering a broad range of experiences, but are also applications for compensation and thus open to embellishment, reconstruction, or fictionalisation. This section will make use of the forms submitted by the Arva sample to move towards a broader appreciation of the loyalist experience in a community setting. The aim will not be to paint Arva as a 'typical' district during the Irish Revolution, but to examine how intimidation and coercion worked or failed in one locality. A further aim will be to examine the strength of the files of the IGC as a means of assessing intimidation and coercion during the revolution.

Who were the Arva sample? Demographically, they were unrepresentative. A disproportionate number were urban dwellers; 15 (40 per cent) were resident in Arva town, which only housed about a third of the total

95 W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821–1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 66–70; 1911 census returns, Arva DED (census.national-archives.ie) (Jan. 2015).

96 For the origins and work of the IGC and its predecessors, see Brennan, 'Compensating southern-Irish loyalists'; Niamh Brennan, 'A political minefield: southern Irish loyalists, the Irish Grants Committee and the British government, 1922–31', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 119 (May 1997); McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, pp. 130–62; Clark, *Everyday violence*, pp. 18–53.

population. Males made up a significant majority of claimants (76 per cent) despite only accounting for just over half of the total population and, even for a district with a large non-Catholic minority, Protestants are over-represented, accounting for 28 applicants (75 per cent, made up of 25 members of the Church of Ireland and 3 Methodists). Applicants were also generally older, with a median age of 50 (including 7 who were in their seventh decade). If the sample is not demographically typical, they are characteristic of the county neighbours who applied for compensation with the IGC. A survey of 86 Cavan applicants shows an identical median age of 50, a similar gender imbalance in favour of males at 78 per cent, and a similarly high proportion of non-Catholic applicants at 78 per cent. The professional make-up of both samples further suggests a common profile but one out of kilter with the demographics of the county. In Cavan in 1911, 30 per cent of the population were categorised as in agricultural employment, 6 per cent industrial, 2 per cent professional, 2 per cent domestic, and 59 per cent 'indefinite' or 'non-productive'.<sup>97</sup> By way of contrast, as seen in Table 3.1, almost 60 per cent of Cavan IGC applicants worked in agriculture, the vast majority land-owning farmers, and almost 30 per cent in commerce or industry. The high percentages of commercial and industrial applicants in Arva, and the relative absence of unskilled labourers, are indicative of an urban and a middle-class base to loyalism in the area.

Only nine fatalities directly related to revolutionary conflict were recorded in Cavan between January 1919 and December 1921 and in that period no civilian was killed in Arva.<sup>98</sup> The Longford IRA shot two policemen stationed in the town on the morning of 1 May 1921 after they had crossed into County Longford on private business.<sup>99</sup> A successful attack on Arva RIC barracks on 25 September 1920, the first in the county, was the single dramatic military event in revolutionary Arva and effectively left the area without a police presence for a period. By February 1921, the authorities had responded to calls for the restoration of police with the arrival of a garrison of 'Black and Tans' into the town.<sup>100</sup> It was these police who were the only victims of shooting attacks in the region.<sup>101</sup>

97 Figures are calculated from returns in 'Population (Ireland): census returns, 1911', Table XIX, Occupations, Cavan (HCPP: Cmd. 6051, Vol. CXVI.1, pp. 58–68).

98 Eunan O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing during the war of independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers', in James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (eds.), *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: historical perspectives* (Dublin, 2013), p. 328.

99 *Anglo-Celt*, 7 May 1921; MCRs, CI, Longford, May 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115); BMH WS 440 (Seamus Conway); BMH WS 496 (Francis Davis); BMH WS 396 (Sean Sexton); BMH WS 436 (James McKeown); Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland, 1919–1922* (Cork, 2000), pp. 227–8.

100 MCRs, CI, Cavan Feb. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/114).

101 See, for example, report of fifteen police fired at returning from a fair at Gowna, 5 May 1921 (TNA: CO 904/150).

**Table 3.1 Demographics of Cavan Irish Grants  
Committee claimants**

	Arva sample	Cavan sample, including Arva
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	28 (76%)	67 (78%)
Female	9 (24%)	19 (22%)
<i>Totals</i>	37	86
<b>Age</b>		
Median age	50	50
<b>Occupation</b>		
Agricultural	21 (57%)	49 (57%)
Commercial	8 (22%)	13 (15%)
Domestic	0	0
Industrial	6 (16%)	12 (14%)
Professional	0	7 (8%)
Unemployed/unknown	2 (5%)	5 (6%)
<b>Religion</b>		
Catholic	9 (24%)	19 (22%)
Protestant	28 (76%)	65 (76%)
Unknown	0	2 (2%)

*Note:* There are 95 application files catalogued for County Cavan but several have been excluded here (as well as any claims potentially catalogued incorrectly and not consulted). Three applicants requested a form but subsequently failed to submit while six were catalogued as Cavan applicants but claimed for losses suffered in other counties. A box containing one Cavan file is missing. Two files each covering losses suffered by two individuals (a married couple and two neighbours) have been enumerated as four individuals. The Arva sample includes nine claims from townlands in the small Bruce Hall and Drumcarban District Electoral Divisions owing to their proximity to Arva and close identification with the Arva community.

*Sources:* Irish Grants Committee Claims (CO 762/3–202); 1901/1911 census returns (census.nationarchives.ie). Occupations apply to individual applicants or the head of the household where no occupation is given in the records for the individual. Categories for occupations are taken from ‘Population (Ireland): census returns, 1911’ (HCPP: Cmd. 6051, Vol. CXVI.1).

Available evidence suggests there was little armed loyalist resistance to the IRA in Arva. The only recorded instance of Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) activity in Arva uncovered for this study was, ironically, directed against a loyalist. In January 1921, a group of armed men entered the premises of Jennie Elliott (later a successful IGC applicant) and, 'by show of force, presenting revolvers', took away £30 worth of goods. Elliott was handed a note from "A" Company, 1st Battalion U.V.F.' stating 'These clothes are at present commandeered by the Ulster Volunteer Force'.<sup>102</sup> Three of the IGC applicants claimed to have been members of the UVF but William Irwin and William Carleton do not seem to have been active by 1920.<sup>103</sup> James Black wrote that he had been a member of the UVF on his application form, and in a later letter to the committee that he had 'done the Loyal Volunteers patrols at night for six months when the Civil power had left this locality'; these patrols were organised by Lord Farnham, a leading figure of Cavan Unionism.<sup>104</sup> Farnham's 'Loyal Volunteers' was probably one of the local independent loyalist organisations that emerged in 1920 and 1921 alongside the official reformation of the UVF in mid-1920.<sup>105</sup> As they seem to have been a direct response to the temporary withdrawal of the RIC from the area, the group probably folded again once a new garrison of police had been installed. Police reports suggest they had little success preventing IRA incursion.<sup>106</sup>

After the attack on Arva police barracks in September 1920, it was reported that 'a large quantity of rifles, revolvers, and ammunition belonging to Ulster Volunteers' stored in the barracks had been 'taken away in motor cars by the raiders'.<sup>107</sup> This was surely a significant blow to any attempt to arm loyalists in the area, but it preceded the raid on Jennie Elliott's shop meaning the organisation, or at least the name, had not entirely disappeared. As a force to oppose the IRA, however, they were seemingly ineffective. Farnham's 'Loyal Volunteers' were restricted to, in James Black's words, 'striving to be on the look out for armed raiders that was prowling the country'.<sup>108</sup> There was clearly a tradition of UVF membership in the area. In 1914, 55.8 per cent of eligible adult males were members of the UVF in Cavan, the highest percentage in Ulster.<sup>109</sup> Failure to have partition extended

102 *Anglo-Celt*, 28 Jan. 1922.

103 William Irwin claim (TNA: IGC CO 762/174/4); William Henry Carleton claim (78/6). Hereafter, IGC claims will be referenced by their box and file number, as with Carleton above.

104 James Black claim (172/13).

105 Tim Bowman, *Carson's army: the Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910–22* (Manchester, 2007), p. 197.

106 MCRs, CI, Cavan, Dec. 1920, Jan. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/113, 114).

107 *Irish Times*, 5 Oct. 1920.

108 James Black claim (172/13).

109 Fitzpatrick, *Descedancy*, p. 244.

to include Cavan took much of the heart out of organised loyalism in the county and the creation of the Special Constabularies in the six counties drew some active men across the border, but the UVF was certainly alive in Cavan in 1920 and 1921.<sup>110</sup> Loyalists in Arva still had access to some arms by 1921, but the exact make-up and organisation of armed loyalism in the area, and in Cavan as a whole, needs further research. Whatever its composition or strength, the UVF or its equivalents do not seem to have been in a position to prevent threats, damage to property, and boycotting of loyalists in Arva.

The Department of Finance compensation files held in the National Archives of Ireland and the Compensation (Ireland) Commission Register of Claimants for Cavan hold applications for seven of the current sample.<sup>111</sup> George Cartwright (who died before his claim was awarded) was granted £930 at an undefended county court hearing for the burning of his home.<sup>112</sup> Jennie Elliott had also claimed compensation through the county courts.<sup>113</sup> The IGC stipulated that claimants should have previously applied to the Irish Free State for compensation but this was not strictly enforced and an explanation that no application was made through fear, threats, or even ignorance was accepted.<sup>114</sup> Only four explained that fears for their safety prevented them applying to the Free State.<sup>115</sup> James McCabe and Harriet Johnston declined to mention that they had applied for, and received, Free State compensation.<sup>116</sup> Most of those who had already sought redress through the Free State were clearly discouraged from applying to the IGC – two had requested application forms but decided against submitting a claim<sup>117</sup> – but this new scheme of redress also encouraged others to come

110 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, pp. 43–4; some adult males left Arva to join the USC in Fermanagh, see Charles Woods claim (74/9) and James Black claim (172/13); for references to the UVF in Cavan, see MCRs, CI, Cavan, Dec. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/113) and *Meath Chronicle*, 9 Apr. 1921.

111 Jennie Elliott, George Cartwright, James McCabe, William Carleton, George Hill, and James and Harriet Johnston (who submitted a joint claim). Department of Finance compensation claims, Shaw Commission (NAI: FIN/COMP/SHAW/381/1-460); Department of Finance compensation claims, post-Truce, Cavan (NAI: FIN/COMP/A381/1(2)-A381/412(2)); Compensation (Ireland) Commission Register of Claimants, Cavan (TNA: CO 905/1).

112 *Anglo-Celt*, 15 Apr. 1922. Cartwright's wife told the IGC that the case had been defended in court in 1924 and compensation reduced to £879 and again reopened in 1925 with a further reduction to £600: George Cartwright claim (TNA: CO 762/98/1).

113 *Anglo-Celt*, 28 Jan. 1922.

114 Brennan, 'A political minefield', p. 416.

115 John Lang claim (186/6); James Young claim (175/22); William Irwin claim (174/4); James Black claim (172/3).

116 James McCabe claim (29/13); Harriet Johnston claim (103/2).

117 Thomas Smith claim (NAI: FIN/COMP/SHAW/381/435) and Thomas H. Smith claim (TNA: CO 762/21/10); O'Donnell Brothers claim (63/2). A claim by the

forward for the first time, and to do so specifically as southern Irish loyalists. That they now came forward, some having admitted to being previously frightened, suggests that any fear of retribution had significantly subsided and was unlikely to have deterred many others from applying. The sample, therefore, offers an imperfect but useful insight into the character and nature of loyalists and loyalism in Cavan.

All 13 applications from the town described a loss of trade as a result of an IRA boycott. Three urban applicants (Richard Hewitt, Johnston Hewitt, and George Hill) claimed for additional losses owing to damage to property or looting and another (Jennie Elliott) for a stolen motor car.<sup>118</sup> Boycotting was reported by eight of the rural applicants while one also claimed for the loss of his milk trade.<sup>119</sup> Mary Sheridan claimed for the loss of her ex-soldier son's income after he was threatened and forced to quit the area.<sup>120</sup> Four farmers lost access to land: James Johnston was prevented from selling his farm, driven from his land in April 1921 and later forced to accept £600 for it (the land was valued at £1,000); both George W. Cartwright and James Young were removed from their land but later able to return; George Cartwright (no relation of George W. Cartwright) had his home burned on 13 March 1922; William Carleton, a neighbour of Cartwright's, fled his own home after a raid by armed and masked men left him fearing the same treatment and was reinstated in July 1924.<sup>121</sup> Some 12 applicants reported raids on their homes, most of which took place in the first half of 1922.

Only five of the Arva sample (11 per cent) described suffering physical violence. George Jackson claimed to have been beaten during a raid in April 1922.<sup>122</sup> His sister, Martha, who lived in the same house, claimed the same raiders struck her on the head; she had also been shot at and wounded as she cycled to warn William Carleton that his house was to be burned down.<sup>123</sup> During a June 1922 raid, Charles Woods' son was allegedly 'kidnapped' and badly beaten, losing nine of his teeth, before being used as protection by

O'Donnell Brothers is listed in the Compensation (Ireland) Commission Register of Claimants, Cavan (TNA: CO 905/1) but no corresponding file exists.

118 William Pinkerton (TNA: CO 762/183/19), husband of claimant Katie Pinkerton, submitted a letter to the IGC describing his loss of employment having been forced to leave his job at the local mill where he was the only Protestant but did not submit his claim in time and is not included in the sample.

119 John Scott claim (175/17).

120 Mary Sheridan claim (51/9).

121 James Johnston claim (41/4); George Cartwright claim (98/1); George Cartwright claim (NAI: FIN/COMP/A381/30(2)). Martha Jackson claimed that she had housed the Cartwrights 'at great risk of life': (TNA: CO 904/175/11); William Carleton claim (78/6); William Carleton claim (NAI: FIN/COMP/A381/336(2)).

122 George Jackson claim (TNA: CO 762/175/12).

123 Martha Jackson claim (175/11).

raiders as they visited other homes.<sup>124</sup> Thomas Johnston was beaten with a rifle butt ‘inflicting a severe wound and causing considerable loss of blood’, while his brother Wilson was also assaulted. Thomas did not have the wound medically treated for a number of months, he said, as he was two miles from a doctor and afraid to make the journey.<sup>125</sup> George Cartwright told the county court he had been hit with the butt of a rifle on the night his house was burned, but did not mention this on his IGC claim form.<sup>126</sup>

Boycotting, by far the most common complaint, was directly related to the arrival of ‘Black and Tans’ in February 1921 (though applicants ubiquitously refer to them incorrectly as ‘Auxiliaries’). The testimony in the claim files describe how the arrival of new police customers in February 1921 prompted a number of traders to open business with them, thereby marking themselves as deviant in the eyes of the IRA, and continued to do so in spite of warnings to stop. With police intervention curtailed by the Truce, boycotting increased in frequency and intensity.<sup>127</sup> The rural population became particularly exposed after the Truce (the local IRA made a point of noting that ‘The R.I.C. in Arva have limited their patrols to the town’).<sup>128</sup> A referee for applicant Richard Kemp described the efficiency of the boycott he suffered:

So perfect was the system of espionage of the I.R.A. and their friends that once a man incurred their censure it was absolutely impossible for him to sell cattle or goods publicly but if one of their own favourites bought privately, at half the value of the article, they conveniently shut their eyes.<sup>129</sup>

By mid-1922 the restricted police presence had been completely withdrawn.

Receipt of an award by the IGC was contingent on the applicant proving that any loss was on account of their allegiance to the Crown. The definitions of loyalty and behaviour provided by the applicants therefore offer valuable insights into applicants’ sense of their own loyalism or, at the very least, the loyalism they felt would be most appealing. In Irish revolutionary

124 Charles Woods claim (74/9). Woods claimed that another man was also kidnapped on the same night and later died in a lunatic asylum, but no related claim seems to have been submitted to the IGC.

125 Thomas Johnston claim (169/6).

126 *Anglo-Celt*, 15 Apr. 1922.

127 See, for example, Lizzie Anderson claim (TNA: CO 762/174/30); Mary Anne Curtis claim (170/4); John Lang claim (186/6).

128 Adjutant, West Cavan Brigade to Divisional Adjutant, 1st Midland Division, 24 Oct. 1921 (MAI: A/0678).

129 William John McCaughey to IGC, 20 Sep. 1928 in Richard Kemp claim (TNA: CO 762/187/10).

historiography the one act that has come, more than any other, to dominate the discussion on the behaviour of loyalists is informing.<sup>130</sup> But informing is notably rare among the sample testimony. While a certain reticence may have remained regarding such admissions when applications were being written up, proving one had done so was likely to add substantial weight to a claim. Michael Culley is the only Arva applicant who directly mentions an instance where he passed information to the police, warning two police constables of an impending raid the night before Arva barracks was burned.<sup>131</sup> In a reference on behalf of the Jackson siblings, one of the constables claimed on good authority that a Jackson brother (he does not specify which) informed the police of another impending raid. Copies of threatening letters are included among their correspondence:

NOTICE. Take Notice. You are giving the Black and Tans information. Stop it or you will be shot. Spy. Beware. Sooner or later we will get you. Signed I.R.A.

Notice. Take Notice. You are giving information to the Police. You saved them from a ambush on the Bruse Bray. You informed on Commandant McKeown. You tried to get him dun in. Trator beware. Sooner or later will get you. Signed I.R.A.

The Jacksons all mention being *accused* of informing, but make no mention of passing information themselves. There seems to be little doubt that the Jacksons assisted both the RIC and their loyalist neighbours, but it is not so clear if that went as far as informing. A former RIC district inspector for the area offered a different explanation: ‘In August 1920 a party of military from Cavan surprised a number of men at midnight near Jackson’s house, and fired on and wounded a member of the party. In view of this fact local suspicion was aroused that the Jackson family was passing information to the military.’<sup>132</sup> Several other applicants also describe being *accused* of being RIC informers, or include letters from referees who insist they gave information, but do not themselves describe a particular instance where

130 The most dominant example concerns the victims of the ‘Bandon Valley massacre’ in April 1922. For recent scholarship, see Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, pp. 221–9, Barry Keane, *Massacre in West Cork: the Dunmanway and Ballygroman killings* (Cork, 2014), John M. Regan, ‘The “Bandon Valley massacre” as a historical problem’, *History*, Vol. 97 (2012), pp. 70–98. For Peter Hart’s description of the killings, the work that has prompted the literature above, see Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp. 273–92.

131 Michael J. Culley claim (TNA: CO 762/171/12).

132 William Jackson claim (/175/13); Martha Jackson claim (/175/11); George Jackson (/175/12).



they did so.<sup>133</sup> As will be seen later, suspicion often outweighed any hard evidence of informing.

The loyalists of Arva did not have to fulfil the role of informer to feel they had done their loyal duty. The most common evidence of allegiance offered was a less dramatic connection to the Crown forces: 21 claimed to have provided the RIC with supplies, services, and hospitality (but not information); 12 of the sample offered a direct personal or family connection to service in the police or military, while six of the Protestant applicants described an association with a loyalist organisation. For the purposes of receiving redress for losses and indignities suffered, this definition of allegiance proved problematic. The IGC was adamant that the ‘*nexus* between loyalty and injury should be established’ but acknowledged that this was ‘often difficult’.<sup>134</sup> Socialising with Crown forces was, as R. B. McDowell has noted, normal social behaviour for loyalists.<sup>135</sup> Compensation claimants were often unsuccessful in their attempts to prove that this ‘normal’ pre-Truce behaviour equated to loyalty. Boycotts were also difficult to identify and quantify and eight of the 14 applicants (57 per cent) who claimed their businesses were boycotted in the town received no award. The three who did receive compensation had also claimed for separate losses and were only compensated for these, meaning that almost 80 per cent of claims for urban boycotts were rejected. This is a far higher rejection rate than the overall IGC figure of 44.5 per cent, but why were Arva town’s loyalists significantly less likely to receive an award?<sup>136</sup> There was little doubt on the committee’s part that these claimants had supplied the town’s Crown forces. Rather, the issue was whether they had suffered a loss of trade solely on the basis of a boycott and whether that boycott was the result of their allegiance to the British government.

Simon Henry Hewitt, for instance, claimed he had a successful business as a vintner, grocer, and auctioneer prior to 1921. When the new garrison of police arrived in February 1921 they ‘flocked’ to him for ‘liquid refreshments and tobacco as I was the only loyalist publican in the Town’. Soon ‘the Sinn F[einers] issued an edict that none of these should deal with me, and so my business was rigidly boycotted by the local rebels who “blacklisted me” as one who had supported the “Foreign Enemy” (meaning England)’. The committee rejected Hewitt’s claim, noting his passbook lodgements did not match a statement that his profits went from £200 per annum before 1921

133 Maggie Masterson claim (175/16); James McCabe claim (29/13); William Scott claim (170/13).

134 IGC Report of Committee, Nov. 1930 (TNA: CO 762/212).

135 McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, p. 87.

136 IGC Report of Committee, Nov. 1930 (TNA: CO 762/212).

to nil afterwards. Further, his lodgements indicated an increase in 1920 and 1921 and only a marginal drop afterwards. Committee secretary, Major A. Reid Jamieson, concluded that it was 'preposterous for applicant to claim he was the victim of an extensive boycott and I submit that his loss of profit was due to economic conditions and trade depression'. Attempts by Hewitt's wife and Revd W. A. MacDougall<sup>137</sup> to explain the discrepancy were to no avail.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, Richard Hewitt claimed he was boycotted for supplying meat to the RIC. MacDougall confirmed that Hewitt had been raided and recalled some threats made against him but could not be sure about a boycott. Jamieson similarly concluded that 'the Royal Irish Constabulary and Government Forces were such good customers, that other trade could be ignored; boycotting made it impossible to trade for a time, but that the departure of their customers was the chief cause of the loss'.<sup>139</sup> Serving Crown forces during the 'troubled times' was their main basis for loyalty but how does one prove one did so because of an avowed loyalty to British rule in Ireland and not simply because it made financial sense? Incidentally, no applicants mention serving the Crown forces in the town before 1921, or a loss of profits after the burning of Arva barracks in 1920.

The committee's rationale in dealing with claims can tell as much as the applicants' own testimony and for that reason it is important to understand the criteria by which they were judged. Grants were awarded based on a 'thorough examination of references, medical certificates, bank and account books and expert evidence'.<sup>140</sup> Applicants to the scheme were required to provide the names of two 'responsible persons' from whom the committee could obtain references, with local clergymen, bank managers, solicitors, and policeman most often listed; applicants from the same community usually drew from a small pool of respected individuals. Many claims were forwarded through the Southern Irish Loyalist Relief Association (SILRA) and letters of reference often came from sources that can be easily identified as fellow loyalists (neighbours who had also applied, former policemen and soldiers, etc.) A survey of the Arva claims highlights the difficulty in securing an award. The total amount claimed was over £25,000 but the total received just over £7,200. Almost half of the Arva applicants (17, or 45 per cent) received no award, matching the overall failure rate. Of those, 11 were considered insufficiently substantiated by referees, but only one (that

137 William Alcorn MacDougall (1868–1943) was, unusually, educated at the Royal University of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin. He was ordained in 1893 and had been a curate in Donegal and the incumbent in parishes in Leitrim and Cavan before appointment to Arva. In 1934, he became canon of Drumleas.

138 Simon Henry Hewitt claim (/196/13).

139 Richard Hewitt claim (/168/12).

140 Brennan, 'A political minefield', p. 416.

of Maggie Masterson) was considered 'Not Genuine'. Bernard Matthews and Mary Sheridan's claims were deemed 'Out of Scope', James Young was found to be unable to provide any evidence of his losses, and Richard Kemp received 'no recommendation'.<sup>141</sup> British 'anxiety as to whether the Irish Grants Committee has satisfied themselves that the claimants, in whose favour recommendations has been made, were really loyalists' led to a Cabinet question and subsequent enquiries yielding little cause for concern.<sup>142</sup> By the time it concluded, the IGC was satisfied that it had kept the margin for error as small as possible and was impressed with the 'bona fides' of the majority of claimants.<sup>143</sup>

This is not to assume that there were not issues with the committee's sourcing of information. When the local Garda Síochána and Office of Public Works investigated George Cartwright's Damage to Property claim in 1923, for instance, they heard that 'somebody had years ago been evicted from the farm, and advantage was taken by irregulars of the trouble then existing, to get possession of the farm' and noted that Cartwright's wife and daughter had offered no explanation for the burning.<sup>144</sup> Cartwright's various accounts of the events surrounding the burning are consistent, and not in dispute, but he repeatedly neglected to mention a potential agrarian motivation for the burning and his claim file suggests that the IGC remained unaware of it. Miriam Moffitt has noticed something similar with claims submitted by the McNeill family in Aughavas, County Leitrim.<sup>145</sup> Community politics were complex enough for those investigating incidents while they were happening; at a remove of almost a decade it became far more difficult again.

The committee's most important referee for the area was also not without its problems. Revd W. A. MacDougall, Church of Ireland rector for the parish, was the most common referee submitted by applicants and considered by the committee to be 'a very respectable reference'.<sup>146</sup> MacDougall had,

141 Some 2,237 of 4,032 claims had grants recommended, 895 were rejected as they were outside the scope of the committee, and a relatively small number were considered bogus: IGC Report of Committee, Nov. 1930 (TNA: CO, 762/212).

142 'Claims of Irish Loyalists (Report on Cabinet Committee)', Dec. 1927 (TNA: DO 117/82).

143 IGC Report of Committee, Nov. 1930 (TNA: CO 904/212).

144 Garda Thomas Cassidy to Superintendent, Cavan, 5 Aug. 1923 and report for Office of Public Works by inspecting officer in George Cartwright claim (NAI: FIN/COMP/A381/30(2)).

145 Miriam Moffitt, 'Protestant tenant farmers and the Land League in north Connacht', in Carla King and Robert McNamara (eds.), *The west of Ireland: new perspectives on the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 108–9.

146 Major A. Reid Jamieson in Charles Woods claim (TNA: CO 762/74/9). For claims influenced by MacDougall's evidence, see, for example, Johnston Hewitt claim (168/11); William Scott claim (170/13); John Scott claim (175/17); James McCabe claim (/29/13).

though, only been appointed incumbent in Arva in February 1921 and had limited knowledge of the pre-Truce loyalty of Arva residents. When asked to provide a reference for Peter McBrien he admitted as much and recommended that McBrien seek another referee.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, as the Church of Ireland rector, MacDougall had his strongest social, personal, or spiritual connections with his co-religionists (even then, he often claimed to have been unaware of individual raids or boycotts against Church of Ireland applicants). None of the Roman Catholic applicants from the district received an award and this was at least in part due to MacDougall's failure to provide suitable evidence on their behalf. He had, in fact, suggested that the committee 'give all the Protestant claimants some little compensation for they all suffered more or less for their attachment to the British connexion'.<sup>148</sup> Ellen Reilly bitterly remarked, and not without reason, that 'A friend told me that I had no chance of getting anything from your Committee as I am a Roman Catholic, evidently my friend was correct in his opinion'.<sup>149</sup> More generally, the 'reliable persons' recommended by the committee were members of the educated middle class and, therefore, potentially subject to the influence of the class, religious, and gender divisions inevitably generated within communities. Rather than favouring the applicants, this was often to their detriment. Gemma Clark has also noticed 'snobbery' within the process, indicating that 'the British government generously compensated those better able to articulate their cause or provide references from a respected community figure'.<sup>150</sup>

Community politics, personality clashes, jealousy, and grudges could guide the evidence available to the committee and provide both a cautionary note when dealing with the claim files and further evidence of community politics in action. Friends may have supported each other, while neighbours who did not back a claimant did not necessarily want news of their evidence to travel. Local solicitor William Reid was unable to confirm the details of Michael Culley's claim and hoped his letter would not be read by anyone outside the committee 'as it might get me into serious trouble here'.<sup>151</sup> John Scott was 'under the impression that someone who does not wish him well has written to the committee to prejudice his case'.<sup>152</sup> One W. Johnston wrote to SILRA stating that a number of applicants from the area were, in fact, 'well-known Republicans and were responsible for many of the outrages which took place in his district'. Johnston appeared, to Major

147 Revd W. A. MacDougall to IGC, 16 May 1927 in Peter McBrien claim (58/13).

148 MacDougall to IGC, 6 Sep. 1928 in Johnston Hewitt claim (168/11).

149 Ellen Reilly claim (54/2).

150 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 26.

151 William Reid to IGC, 1927 in Michael J. Culley claim (171/12).

152 John Scott claim (175/17).

I. H. G. White of SILRA, to be ‘somewhat illiterate’ but had named James McCabe, Patrick Drumm, and Maggie Masterson (along with two others of whom there appears to be no record of an application).<sup>153</sup> McCabe, Drumm, and Masterson all had their claims rejected, though the influence of this additional evidence is not clear. Only Masterson’s was described as ‘not genuine’, but she had several references from neighbours and RIC pensioners supporting her claims to loyalty.<sup>154</sup> Further, the realities of life in a small community made interaction with both sides of the revolutionary divide almost inevitable. Jennie Elliott had goods commandeered by members of the IRA but also, as noted above, by “‘A’ Company 1st Battalion U.V.F.”<sup>155</sup> To Revd MacDougall, William Scott, an ex-soldier and policeman, was ‘not a mere lip loyalist’ but he had also escaped murder owing to his having ‘a couple of friends among the rebels’.<sup>156</sup>

The records of the Irish Grants Committee forcefully highlight the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of adequately defining loyalty and equating it satisfactorily with civilian behaviour. Just as it is not ‘historically acceptable’ to ‘portray Ulster unionists as unswerving imperialists and opponents of home rule’, neither is it suitable to assume that ‘southern loyalists’ were a homogenous and unwavering faction.<sup>157</sup> Even categorising Cavan loyalists as ‘southern’, as the IGC did, is a consequence of partition and potentially distorts the reality of experience and perception for many of those loyalists. The loyalty put in application forms was, by its very nature, dictated by and adapted to suit the task of declaring ‘allegiance to the government of the United Kingdom’. At least 20 of the sample (74 per cent) (all Protestant) signed the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant or Women’s Declaration in September 1912, an assertion of a specifically Ulster and defiantly ‘unionist’ identity and far from an act of loyalty towards the Crown.<sup>158</sup> Unsurprisingly, this went unmentioned on the covenanters’ application forms. David Fitzpatrick has estimated that in Cavan 71.3 per cent of non-Catholic males aged over 16 signed the Covenant and 65.4

153 Major I. H. G. White to Major Jamieson, 17 Apr. 1928 in Maggie Masterson claim (175/16).

154 Maggie Masterson claim (175/16).

155 Jennie Elliott claim (168/19); *Anglo-Celt*, 28 Jan. 1922.

156 MacDougall to IGC, 9 Jul. 1928 in William Scott claim (TNA: CO 762/170/13).

157 David Fitzpatrick, ‘Historians and the commemoration of Irish conflicts, 1912–23’, in John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds.), *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution, 1912–1923* (Dublin, 2013), p. 128.

158 Figure is derived from a search of the digitised Ulster Covenant signatures for Arva and the surrounding areas (PRONI: online) (accessed Apr. 2015). One of the non-covenanters (Wilson Johnston) was under the prescribed minimum age of sixteen for signatories. For a discussion of the ambiguous commitments covenanters believed they were making, see Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, pp. 118–21.

per cent of non-Catholic females over the age of 16 signed the Women's Declaration.<sup>159</sup> The Arva IGC sample were, therefore, marginally more enthusiastic covenanters in 1912 but it is also worth noting the influence of communal pressure. As Fitzpatrick has noted, 'majoritarian solidarity had unpleasant results for dissenters' and 'non-participants risked being denounced as renegades or traitors, facing the prospects of violence, abuse, intimidation, and social ostracism'.<sup>160</sup> Loyalists and Protestants were just as likely to waver, to adapt their preferences to suit their conditions, or simply to hope to be left alone, as their nationalist and Catholic neighbours.

### Conclusion

Local responses to the IRA, the nature of defiance, and its motivations, were fluid, shifting, and rarely simple. At their heart they were dictated by Kalyvas' two key motivators for civilian behaviour during irregular war: survival instinct and economic concern.<sup>161</sup> Reaction to a boycott, levy, collection, or Dáil edict, whether cooperation or resistance, was as much dictated by its potential economic impact as it was by any strongly held political allegiances, even where those were present. This influence can be seen within Joost Augusteijn's analysis of the mobilisation of the IRA and its regional spread. Augusteijn has argued that communities could have a restrictive effect on IRA activity and Volunteers who lived and worked in their home communities were reluctant to put the safety and property of family and neighbours at risk by engaging in operations that might bring reprisals. It was when they were forced to break their ties with their local communities and go 'on the run' that they were more likely to initiate offensive action as the consequences for the local population became subordinate to the cause. Intended victims had to be sufficiently ostracised from the community and enough opposition endured to encourage men to take the campaign 'on the run' and thus remove themselves from the restraints of family and neighbours.<sup>162</sup> At the heart of this was an acceptance, however superficial or reluctant, that the financial costs of war could influence public opinion and that excessive attacks or reprisals by either side could alienate support for either side.

Civilian responses to revolutionary activity are also, in many ways, personal. Stubbornness and fearlessness are often unpredictable traits, as are

159 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p. 243.

160 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p. 107.

161 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 104.

162 Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, pp. 312–34.

submission and cowardice. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the records of the IGC. Some claimants described how threats and intimidation produced 'extreme bodily fear' or 'intense mental anxiety', or how they supplied food, money, or accommodation 'at the point of the rifle & revolver'.<sup>163</sup> Others simply became more obdurate or could view threats 'as not in any way serious ... not robust'.<sup>164</sup> Civilian reactions are also intensely local. In the Irish revolutionary context, the civilian and community responses to the republican guerrilla campaign were firmly dictated by local conditions. A letter threatening death in Cork, where lethal violence was an increasingly regular occurrence, could have a very different meaning to a similar letter posted in County Wicklow. The occurrence of defiance was influenced by the nature and frequency of punishment. Where behaviour was profitable and went unpunished, it was unlikely to stop; where non-lethal methods were found to be inadequate, they could be followed by lethal methods. Equally, the disposition and character of local Volunteers and collective units – their individual concerns, preoccupations, suspicions, and perceptions – determined the 'offences' that became worthy of punishment, and the form of that punishment. The following chapter will examine punishment and violence, both lethal and non-lethal, and discuss the marked regional variations that are such a striking feature of Irish revolutionary activity.

163 John McGovern claim (TNA: CO 762/109/6); John C. Beresford claim (/144/1); John O'Donoghue claim (/27/13).

164 Thomas Moran claim (/9/6).

## Civilians and Communities II: Coercion and Punishment

In his seminal work on irregular conflict, *The logic of violence in civil war*, Stathis Kalyvas argued that political actors invariably seek the exclusive collaboration of the whole population. Active collaboration – such as sharing information, carrying or hiding arms, and providing supplies or accommodation – is only required from a minority but compliance from the rest of the population should be exclusive. Collaboration with the opposition must also be prevented. Armed actors, therefore, ‘prefer exclusive but incomplete collaboration to nonexclusive collaboration (such as neutrality or hedging) ... they prefer a low level of collaboration to no collaboration at all’. Allowing defiance or defection to go unchecked can result in it increasing and becoming overwhelming.<sup>1</sup> Faced, as Chapter 3 has shown, with incomplete cooperation, how did the IRA punish ‘ordinary’ defiance and deal with the far more dangerous ‘spies and informers’ that occupied much of their attention? This chapter will divide IRA punishment into two main categories: non-lethal and lethal. It will explore the nature of each in relation to the perceived offences that prompted it. A key area of debate among the historiography of the Irish Revolution is the victimisation of specific minority groups and this chapter will also explore the violence suffered by loyalists, most particularly Protestants and ex-servicemen, and ask if they were disproportionate or deliberate victims of excessively violent retribution. The chapter will then examine the punishment inflicted on women who defied the will of the IRA before finishing with a discussion of regional variations.

1 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 104.



### Non-lethal violence as punishment

Following Chapter 3, the vast majority of civilian defiance can be considered minor, or everyday. Most were not informers or enemy agents but instead guilty of ‘non-cooperation’ and ‘nonconformity’.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of a guerrilla war, non-cooperation was an affront to the authority of the army of the republic and, if left unhindered, potentially dangerous. Though insignificant in isolation, minor acts had a recognised potential to accumulate and spread. To that end, individual or communal instances of defiance were punished. If a pattern can be established among the wildly varying and often chaotic conditions of the many small wars that comprised the Irish Revolution, then it might be suggested that the punishment usually fit the perceived offence. Chapter 1 has already highlighted the reciprocal nature of punishment seen in the RIC boycott – those who contravened the boycott were most often boycotted themselves – and Chapter 2 has shown the use of threats, but not physical violence, to deal with recalcitrant ratepayers. A similar response is found with defiance of Dáil and IRA edicts, as highlighted with case studies examined in Chapter 2, the Belfast boycott and the arms fund levy.

In both cases the act of non-cooperation was essentially financial: selling or purchasing prohibited goods or refusing to contribute money. The punishment, in the vast majority of cases, was either directly or indirectly financial. Disobeying the Belfast boycott resulted in fines, more boycotting, and ‘blacklists’ of offenders. Pre-emptive attacks on traders saw trains and railway stations raided and goods believed to be coming from boycotted Belfast firms either taken away by armed men or burned on site. There were, for example, seven cases of the destruction of goods coming from Belfast reported to the RIC in Cavan in April 1921 alone.<sup>3</sup> Pickets were regularly kept outside stations to monitor incoming produce and threats made that the picket would extend to a shop supplying prohibited goods.<sup>4</sup> If goods were found to have made it to a trader and were put on sale, the premises were visited with the same results. The burning of goods, like other punishments with a potentially strong visual element, could be used as an act against the offender and a warning to others. Dublin Volunteer Joseph Kinsella claimed that ‘when we had petrol or paraffin oil we would make a display by burning’.<sup>5</sup> Usually, a supplier or trader was the victim but in Monaghan

2 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 298.

3 MCRs, CI, Cavan, Apr. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115).

4 For examples of pickets at railway stations in Cavan, see *Anglo-Celt*, 2 Oct. 1920, 23 Oct. 1920.

5 BMH WS 476 (Joseph Kinsella).

goods were destroyed after a customer had purchased them. 'In this way the boycott campaign became more effective as the country people feared to visit shops on which the boycott ban was placed.'<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the *Anglo-Celt* saw the confiscation of Belfast goods from customers as a 'new phase' of the boycott in Cootehill, County Cavan.<sup>7</sup>

Commercial travellers and the agents of Belfast firms were driven from towns where they attempted to do business. Though boycott director Joseph MacDonagh presumed that the 'hands of the I.R.A. are too full for the Minister of Defence to instruct them to do the cleaning out of the commercial travellers', some were met with IRA resistance.<sup>8</sup> In Navan, County Meath, for example, the local IRA ordered Belfast cattle dealers who had been frequent customers at the town's fair to leave the county in September 1920.<sup>9</sup> One unlucky agent was 'arrested and later ducked in canal' by the Dublin Brigade Active Service Unit.<sup>10</sup> But attempting to forbid commercial travellers, for whom this was a livelihood rather than a decision about where to procure goods, was not always a success, as William Stapleton recalled: 'commercial travellers and others were, I understand, contacted and warned to cease ... In many cases this approach met with reasonable success, but in many cases traders persisted'. He remembered one man who refused to comply with the Belfast Boycott unit 'practically telling them they could do their damndest'.<sup>11</sup>

Potential levy defaulters usually faced a similarly fiscal dilemma.<sup>12</sup> The first response to defaulting was the seizure of livestock, often of a much greater value than the amount levied. If cash was not forthcoming, the livestock was sold and the excess raised (it was said) returned to the defaulter. In the context of the arms levy, this mode of punishment made sense, offering immediate access to the money local Volunteers felt they had been denied (and desperately needed to fund their war); destruction of property or physical violence may have frightened recalcitrants or encouraged others to pay, but the money, which was after all the focus of the exercise, still needed to be secured. Volunteers seem to have been reluctant, perhaps surprisingly given the opportunities presented, to steal money for the arms levy. In Roslea, County Fermanagh, one account recalled how 'anyone that didn't contribute had their houses raided and goods taken, but no money would be taken'. Raiders took shoes, clothes,

6 BMH WS 740 (John McGahey).

7 *Anglo-Celt*, 16 Apr. 1921.

8 Joseph MacDonagh to Department of Finance, c.18 Jan. 1921 (NAI: DÉ 2/261).

9 Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath*, p. 208.

10 Dublin Brigade Diary of Operations, Mar. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/39).

11 BMH WS 822 (William James Stapleton).

12 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 36.

an umbrella, and some bread, but not cash.<sup>13</sup> Similar logic dictated the imposition of fines, another common punishment. In Cork, Richard Foley received a notice stating that ‘Owing to the trouble and annoyance given by *you* in connection with the collection of our recent demand it has been decided to impose a fine of £3 on you.’ The note warned that in the result of non-compliance, ‘imperative instructions’ would be carried out, and was signed ‘Beware, I.R.A.’<sup>14</sup> Unlike Foley, who disputed his own ‘fine’, the knowledge that an additional fine was potentially forthcoming acted as a deterrent against some who may have felt inclined to try and avoid paying. The path of least resistance was often the most sensible.

In other cases, the punishment was more extreme. Geoffrey Thompson was asked for £100. When he refused to pay – though he was hardly likely to have £100 to hand anyway – ten men from the local IRA company were billeted on him for over a month. In Skibbereen, another man was threatened with a revolver, tied up, blindfolded, had his beard cut, and was tortured with a razor.<sup>15</sup> More severe treatment may have reflected additional ‘crimes’ or personal perceptions: the Skibbereen native was accused of ‘keeping all his neighbours from subscribing to the Arms Fund’ and Thompson was an ex-soldier. When it was proposed to fine an ‘extra well-to-do’ Protestant farmer £50, Richard Mulcahy casually suggested that, ‘If you think 100 can be got as a fine he should be fined this amount.’<sup>16</sup>

On its own, refusing to pay a levy (or resulting fine) was unlikely to result in death but, like other incidents of minor defiance, it drew attention to an individual as uncooperative, ‘hostile’, or ‘suspect’ and some of these individuals formed, in Peter Hart’s words, ‘a large class of instant enemies’.<sup>17</sup> Amid the right (or wrong) circumstances it could bring serious trouble. The shooting of John Harrison in County Leitrim in April 1921, Eunan O’Halpin has found, ‘was the culmination of a dispute which began the previous October when Harrison refused to contribute to an IRA levy’.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, three of the victims of the ‘Bandon Valley Massacre’ of April 1922 were alleged to have refused to contribute to an

13 Quoted in Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 146.

14 Notice from ‘Headquarters’, IRA, 7 Mar. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/27).

15 Geoffrey Thompson claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/13); Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 81. For an example of leniency, see CI John Regan’s anecdote about his sister who was asked for a contribution in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The memoirs of John M. Regan, a Catholic officer in the RIC and RUC, 1909–1948* (Dublin, 2007), p. 152.

16 OC Cork No. 2 to CS, 19 Mar. 1921; CS to OC Cork No. 2, 26 Mar. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/38).

17 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 81.

18 Eunan O’Halpin, ‘The Military Service Pensions Project and Irish history: a personal perspective’, in Patrick Brennan and Catriona Crowe (eds.), *A guide to the Military Service (1916–1923) pensions collection* (Dublin, 2012), p. 153.

arms fund.<sup>19</sup> Among loyalist compensation claims, a refusal to pay a levy was often cited as the act that first brought persecution. Albert Empey ‘refused to pay levies to the I.R.A. and was boycotted for this reason’.<sup>20</sup> Anna Maria Camier of County Cork ‘was known to be a loyalist. I was boycotted in 1920 because of my refusal to subscribe to the I.R.A. funds’.<sup>21</sup> Mary Harding and her husband refused to force their son to resign from the RIC and to stop entertaining three nephews in the Royal Navy, but ‘In 1921, we were asked to subscribe to the I.R.A. funds, and when my husband refused, we were boycotted.’<sup>22</sup>

It was not always possible to ‘deal’ with levy defaulters during the war but the Truce period offered an opportunity for retrospective punishment. Many of the victims of post-Truce intimidation claimed to have offended the IRA before July 1921. In Tipperary, a threatening letter told Ada Vere-Hunt (a ‘bloody Protestant’) that she had ‘made a dear bargain when ye kept money from us’.<sup>23</sup> Albert Empey, who had refused to pay an earlier IRA levy, was forced to pay an extra £40 to get his crops threshed owing to a boycott imposed after the Truce.<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Johnson of County Cork had a bicycle and harness stolen in March 1922 and IRA men billeted on her in June; she ‘had always refused to give money to the I.R.A. when they asked for it’.<sup>25</sup> Such recurring narratives may, however, be potentially misleading. Refusing republican demands before the Truce, for which no IGC compensation would be offered, could be offered as evidence of loyalty, while levies paid under duress after the Truce were a recoverable loss. Nevertheless, there is enough testimony to suggest that cases occurred where those who had been untouched or inaccessible were victimised when it became much safer to do so. In counties Limerick, Tipperary, and Waterford, for instance, Gemma Clark has noted the ‘strong evidence that shopkeepers, hoteliers and others were actively punished during the Civil War for their previous loyalties’.<sup>26</sup> This could also be the case in areas where the local IRA had been relatively inactive. Laura Bayne was ‘In safety during the trouble as all around feared reprisals if I was injured’, but in June 1922 the kiosk from which she had supplied Auxiliaries in Gormanston, County

19 Ungoed-Thomas, *Jasper*, pp.115–16; Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 286. See also the case of John Harrison, in Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Problematic killing during the war of independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers’, in Kelly and Lyons, *Death and dying in Ireland*.

20 Albert Empey claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/9).

21 Anna Maria Camier claim (/3/8).

22 Mary Harding claim (/3/10).

23 Quoted in Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 111.

24 Frederick William Barkman claim (PRONI: D989/3/10).

25 Elizabeth Johnson claim (TNA: CO 762/183/4).

26 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 141.

Meath, was destroyed.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Thomas Galbraith noted that after the RIC had left Abbeyleix, Queen's County, in March 1922, the IRA began to intimidate his regular customers and many of them became afraid to deal with him.<sup>28</sup>

Destruction of property and boycotting were economic punishments. Aside from its social and psychological impact, ostracism from a community could be financially devastating for a small farmer, shopkeeper, or publican. Other acts of punishment had a similar effect. Arson to property or crops could deprive the victim of a home and a livelihood, while cattle driving and animal maiming (acts of violence most often equated with agrarian agitation) 'struck at the heart of farm life by attacking the very thing ... that generates wealth'.<sup>29</sup> Some Volunteers remained reluctant to inflict lethal punishment, even for serious offences: 'We could get our way by other means. We didn't want to kill anyone.'<sup>30</sup> Boycotts, fines, and damage to property saved the victim from 'murder' and relieved the perpetrator from the legal (and psychological) consequences of committing violent acts.<sup>31</sup>

### Lethal violence as punishment

Between January 1919 and December 1921, the IRA killed at least 277 civilians and, of those, 186 (or 65 per cent) were executed as 'spies'.<sup>32</sup> In absolute terms, this is a small figure in the context of other cases of twentieth century irregular conflict and is dwarfed by thousands of recorded and unrecorded incidents of non-violent intimidation or unpunished civilian deviance. But even if most of those who fell foul of the IRA did not experience physical violence, the influence of killing was felt beyond its direct victims and fatal violence remains critical to an understanding of the nature of coercion during the Irish Revolution. Kalyvas has highlighted two key motivations for the use of lethal violence against civilians in irregular warfare. This first is tactical: targeting an individual or group to remove a specific risk. The second is strategic: 'to deter others from engaging in similar behaviour'.<sup>33</sup> For the purpose of this chapter, it is necessary to ask why the IRA inflicted lethal violence on civilians, and to explore its impact on local communities.

27 Laura Leah Bayne claim (TNA: CO 762/18/11).

28 Thomas Adolphus Galbraith claim (PRONI: D989/B/3).

29 Clark, *Everyday violence*, pp. 85–9, 115–25, 151.

30 Quoted in Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath*, p. 192.

31 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 140.

32 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', pp. 328–9.

33 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 27.

A report from the OC of the Offaly Brigade entitled 'Remarks on Execution of Spies' highlights a 'strategic' use of lethal violence in the Irish context:

It was definitely established ... that these men [executed by the IRA] were continuously communicating with the Enemy and helping to point out houses in which officers of the Battn were staying. Warning in such cases is useless. Its only result in a few cases here in which suspected spys were warned was that these men joined the Black & Tans. There have been numerous and continuous arrests in the district and spying is rampant.<sup>34</sup>

In the reports which follow of five executions, only one specifically mentions that the victim was threatened in advance: Michael Reilly, an ex-soldier shot in June 1921, was 'warned on two occasions' about his interaction with the police and military, but ignored the warnings.<sup>35</sup> The OC in Offaly hoped that the killings would 'have a salutary effect' and the use of lethal violence can be, as Kalyvas points out, 'strategic and tactical at the same time'.<sup>36</sup> The advent of the Truce somewhat negated their impact on others (if not, of course, relatives and friends) but they did prompt the police to introduce measures allowing information to be received 'in such a way as not to endanger the lives of informants'.<sup>37</sup>

The execution of a suspected or convicted civilian informer was justified on the grounds that they were a danger to the movement and the safety of local Volunteers. Charles Townshend has pointed out that it is 'impossible at this remove to assess the assertion (or admission) that spies represented a major threat to the IRA's survival' or, indeed, to judge the overall effectiveness of the IRA's attempts to detect and punish informers.<sup>38</sup> But the perception that informers had to be dealt with severely can be observed widely within the movement. In South Roscommon it was argued that 'we must first wipe out spies and informers before any action of importance is successful'.<sup>39</sup> Clare commander Michael Brennan declared that a 'wholesale wiping-out policy for people associating with the enemy seems to me to be essential'.<sup>40</sup>

34 OC Offaly Brigade, 'Remarks on Execution of Spies', 1921 (NLI: MS 33,913(4)).

35 'Report on "Court of Enquiry" and "execution" of Michael Reilly, ex-soldier, Cloghan', 1921 (MS 33,913(4)).

36 OC Offaly Brigade, 'Remarks on Execution of Spies', 1921 (MS 33,913(4); Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 27.

37 MRCs, CI, King's County, Jun. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115).

38 Townshend, *The republic*, p. 265.

39 South Roscommon Brigade quoted in Townshend, *The republic*, p. 262.

40 Brennan to CS, 29 Mar. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/38).

Cork No. 2 believed that all communication with the enemy should be cut off as 'We cannot afford to wait for spies'.<sup>41</sup> In Ulster, where the IRA faced the additional threat of loyalist paramilitaries, local units spoke of a 'large unionist and antagonistic population' and complained that 'owing to the fact that there are so many unionists in the district, it is hard to carry out an ambush'.<sup>42</sup> As the intelligence officer in Cork No. 1 brigade later put it, 'civilian spies were considered by us to be the most dangerous of all ... and unless they were quickly and severely dealt with would create havoc in our organisation'.<sup>43</sup> By April 1921, GHQ had become uneasy about the reputational consequences of executing civilians – the OC of Cork No. 2 was instructed not to do 'anything exceptional ... until you hear further from us' and General Order No. 20 stipulated that executions be ratified by the brigade commandant and reported to GHQ – but local fears often won out over pragmatic patience.<sup>44</sup>

The placing of the bodies of executed civilians in public areas where they would be easily found and the labelling of corpses with cards identifying them as 'spies' and 'informers' (the 'performance' of killing) was strategic. Both the body and the label pinned to it aimed to 'communicate a message to the relatives, friends, and local community of the deceased'.<sup>45</sup> Notes served as a visceral and particularly gruesome threat to others about the consequences of their behaviour: 'Spies and informers, beware – I.R.A.'; 'Convicted spy. This is the penalty for all those who associate with the Aux. Cadets, the Black and Tans and the RIC'; 'Traitors beware, the I.R.A. never forgets'.<sup>46</sup> The labels and the intimate nature of this type of violence combined as the conflict escalated to form something of a 'language of violence' that was clearly understood by the whole community. As Anne Dolan has pointed out, this was a very different, and very specific, kind of violence; it was a form of death with an immediately obvious message. As reports of the execution of alleged spies continued, people were 'schooled quickly in its etiquettes' and came to understand its consequences.<sup>47</sup> This violence works most effectively as intimidation when those it targets with terror can quickly recognise and interpret it as such.

41 OC Cork No. 2 to CS, 19 Mar. 1921 (/38).

42 Lurgan and Kiltel battalions, Armagh, quoted in Lewis, *Frank Aiken's war*, p. 76.

43 BMH WS 574 (Robert C. Ahern).

44 CS to OC Cork No. 2, 26 Mar. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/38); General Order No. 20 (New Series), 'Spies', 20 Apr. 1920 (NLI: MS 739).

45 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 171.

46 Labels found on the bodies of Patrick Briody, Cavan, *Anglo-Celt*, 28 May 1921; James Beale, Cork, Military enquiry in lieu of inquest, 16 Feb. 1921 (TNA: WO 35/146B/4); Arthur Vickers, Kerry, *Irish Independent*, p. 15 Apr. 1921.

47 Dolan, 'Spies and informers beware ...', pp. 159–66.

The most immediate influence was on the person who found the body, often a relative, but labels were also regularly reproduced in local and national newspaper reports and their impact disseminated, generating an immediate stigma that was keenly felt in the local community. After a statement was circulated about a body labelled as a spy in Dunmore, County Galway, the local parish priest announced at Sunday service that the IRA was not 'concerned in the tragedy' and 'regret is expressed at the pain caused by the suggestion that the victim was a spy'.<sup>48</sup> Families were often keen to point out that a loved one was innocent of any dubious activity: 'I cannot account for his death in any way and so far as I know he had no enemies'; 'To the best of my knowledge my son did not belong to any political society'; 'my father had no political opinions and belonged to no organisation'.<sup>49</sup> In communities where individuals could recognise and identify with the dead, and 'know all the reasons why the dead had died', it was much easier to apply the label than shake it off afterwards.<sup>50</sup>

The careful labelling of corpses also gave the impression of due process and inferred legitimacy on the killing of civilians. Those who had been killed were (regardless of the details of their alleged offences) 'spies', 'informers', and had been 'convicted'. Testimony from the BMH also suggests that the men involved in, or associated with, the killing drew moral comfort 'from using the language of due process to describe the steps by which civilian spies were killed' and 'the belief that a spy had received the fairest treatment available in the circumstances'.<sup>51</sup> Some cards explicitly described a system of justice: 'Tried, sentenced and shot by I.R.A. Spies and informers beware'.<sup>52</sup> The sharp increase of labelled bodies in the months before the Truce in July 1921 is indicative of both the increased brutality of the conflict and the confirmed status of civilians as legitimate targets for punishment.<sup>53</sup> As in the case of David Walsh, a shell-shocked ex-soldier shot as a spy after 12 Volunteers were killed in an ambush at Clonmult, County Cork, executing a civilian 'spy' could also provide a convenient 'scapegoat' for IRA incompetence.<sup>54</sup> In addition, there is an unconfirmed number of 'missing' civilian dead. By 'disappearing' bodies the IRA relinquished some of the public

48 *Irish Independent*, 1 Jun. 1921.

49 Military enquiries in lieu of inquest, James Blagriff (TNA: WO 35/146B/7); Michael Coen (/147A/83); Patrick O'Connell (/155B/39).

50 Dolan, 'Spies and informers beware ...', p. 169.

51 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 324.

52 Labels attached to the bodies of William Good, Cork, and Robert Healy, Tipperary, *Irish Independent*, 30 Mar. 1921, 17 Jun. 1921.

53 See, for example, MCRs, IG, May–Jul. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115–16) where bodies are regularly referred to as having been found with the 'usual notice'.

54 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', pp. 325–6.



impact and legitimacy of a labelled victim but gained increased security as British forces were not alerted and others marked for the same punishment less likely to flee.<sup>55</sup> But it is also worth considering the potentially powerful cumulative effect of rumours and gossip surrounding the disappearance of individuals within a community.<sup>56</sup>

The escalation of violence and the increasing success of British intelligence in 1921 coincided with sterner penalties against suspected civilian informers. As Joost Augusteijn has noted: ‘The more serious fighting developed at the end of 1920 made informing increasingly life threatening to Volunteers. As a result, the punishments became harsher, resulting in several, sometimes unwarranted, executions.’<sup>57</sup> Before 1921, no civilian spies had been executed in Armagh and South Down, and one alleged informer in Newry had been ‘banished’ rather than shot. But in June 1921, the IRA in Camlough executed two men, both members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH).<sup>58</sup> This killing was an indication, as Dolan has pointed out, of a turning point, evidence that the nature of war had changed.<sup>59</sup> It was also a sign that warnings, threats, and intimidation had failed. In Queen’s County, a man seen ‘going from house to house spying’ and ‘seen in company with the military and police on two occasions by local Volunteers’ was court-martialled and warned to leave the area. When he did not he was rearrested, told ‘it was too many chances he got’, and executed.<sup>60</sup> A superior of the battalion vice commandant responsible for the execution hinted at the justification for the killing: ‘There are several persons in this area strongly suspected of spying but it is practically impossible to get proof of their guilt. In one case where a suspect was warned to leave the district he joined the Black and Tans and has since convicted several men arrested in the district on various charges.’<sup>61</sup> Resorting to lethal violence was both an act of intimidation and a tacit admission that in some places warnings had become ineffective and sterner measures were needed.

But to what extent were local populations intimidated by lethal violence? After an armed raid during which bombs were thrown in his window, William Latimer, a Methodist farmer from Mohill, County Leitrim, surrendered to the raiders to protect his family. He was taken from his house and shot dead

55 O’Halpin, ‘Problematic killing’, p. 339.

56 See Darby, *Intimidation and the control of conflict*, pp. 54–5.

57 Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 290.

58 Lewis, *Aiken’s war*, pp. 81–3.

59 Anne Dolan, ‘Ending war in a “sportsmanlike manner”: the milestone of revolution, 1919–23’, in Thomas Hachey (ed.), *Turning points in twentieth century Irish history* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 21–38.

60 Vice Commandant, 3rd Battalion, Laois Brigade, 29 May 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/17).

61 Unsigned letter forwarded to CS, 17 Jun. 1921 (/17).

on the night of 30 March 1921.<sup>62</sup> Latimer, described as ‘a loyalist farmer’, had given information about an IRA camp to the local doctor who passed it on to the police, leading to the deaths of six Volunteers. After her husband’s death, Latimer’s wife’s health ‘completely broke down and she left home and went to live with her father’.<sup>63</sup> The killing also had an effect on Latimer’s neighbours. Notices were sent around the area warning others that they would meet the same fate. John Dobson received one letter telling him to ‘clear out before a month or you will be shot there and then like the spy Latimer’ and another that if any reprisals took place he would ‘suffer the extreme penalty’. Dobson did not leave but was described as ‘one of the few local loyalists who either through fear, or in order to stand well with the majority, absented themselves from the funeral’.<sup>64</sup> ‘In those days notices were genuine & had to be treated as such’, as another recipient of a threatening letter referencing Latimer put it.<sup>65</sup> A farming partner of Latimer’s who helped Latimer’s family, and assisted with his burial, became the victim of a rigorous local boycott. Having been kidnapped along with his son and held captive for 14 days they had, he alleged, ‘to sleep out & in different places every night’ leading to the death of his son from exposure in 1925.<sup>66</sup> David McNeill, whose family were described by the RIC as ‘Protestants and staunch Loyalists’, was raided on 18 April by, it was believed, the same men who killed Latimer. He escaped through a window, left the area, and had not returned by November 1921, the same month another attack on his family was reported.<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Thompson’s son was said to have fled the country at the same time as the local doctor who had received Latimer’s information.<sup>68</sup>

Just over three weeks after the death of William Latimer, another Protestant farmer was shot dead nearby. John Harrison, a Methodist and father of twelve, was taken from his home on 22 April, his body ‘riddled with bullets’, and part of his skull shattered. Around Harrison’s neck was tied (using his own bootlace) a card bearing the words ‘Informers and Traitors Beware!’<sup>69</sup> A ‘quiet and inoffensive man’, his family insisted that he took no part in politics on any side and was on excellent terms with his neighbours but the RIC believed that Harrison had ‘refused to pay a levy for I.R.A.

62 *Anglo-Celt*, 9 Apr. 1921.

63 ‘Case No. 9, Class C’, Isabella Latimer (TNA: CO 905/17); MCRs, CI, Leitrim, Mar. 1921 (904/114); O’Halpin, ‘Problematic killing’, pp. 333–4.

64 John J. Dobson claim (TNA: CO 762/36/12).

65 Joseph Knott claim (/32/9). He had already been targeted under the Belfast boycott and for housing an RIC officer.

66 Thomas Cunningham claim (/98/15).

67 Breaches of the Truce, Leitrim, Nov. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/153).

68 Elizabeth Thompson claim (762/174/2).

69 *Anglo-Celt*, 30 Apr. 1921.

and hence the murder'; the levy, it seems, had provoked a long-running dispute with the local IRA. This second killing had 'put the loyal people of the community in a state of terror'. 'Several Protestant farmers', a police report claimed, 'have since left the locality and others are preparing to leave as they have been threatened with the extreme penalty. The situation is very serious and I think steps ought to be taken to break the terror under which the loyal people live'.<sup>70</sup> George Davidson later confirmed a Protestant exodus, describing the district as 'boiling' after the killings.<sup>71</sup> The shooting of Latimer and Harrison emphasises the effect that the proximity of violence could have on the fear or perceived threat posed to others in a community. Though the only two civilians killed by the IRA in County Leitrim, they nevertheless had a significant effect on the local population, their rarity perhaps adding to the shock.<sup>72</sup> If Latimer's killing was punishment for the deaths of IRA men, then the notice pinned around Harrison's neck indicates that his was primarily a warning.

Applicants to the IGC often commented directly on the effect of the shooting of a neighbour or colleague. While Jane Cobbe's husband was approached and forced to sign over a piece of land in Queen's County to armed men she 'feared that he would be murdered if he did not do so, as on the previous night a loyalist named John Poynton, who lived about 80 yards away, was taken out and shot'.<sup>73</sup> In Cork, where more civilians were killed than anywhere else, John Bolster Barrett of Kilbrittain described how:

Many of my friends and neighbours of the same political adherence were murdered in West Cork, some in their beds, a few more shot on the way to and from Bandon whither they had gone for food. I am a member of the Church of Ireland and I was told on two occasions by Sinn Féiners that all Protestants in West Cork were going to be shot ... I had therefore to sleep in the fields ... I have never been restored to the health I enjoyed previous to 1920.<sup>74</sup>

After his business partner was killed in Youghal, John Brookes claimed to suffer from 'constant fear that I would be shot'.<sup>75</sup> As part of Henry Hoskin's attempt to prove he fled home fearing his life, he pointed out that 'Two

70 *Irish Independent*, 23 Apr. 1921; *Anglo-Celt*, 30 Apr. 1921; MCRs, CI, Leitrim, Apr. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115); O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 333.

71 G. G. Davidson claim (TNA: CO 762/42/13).

72 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 329.

73 Jane Cobbe claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/8).

74 John Bolster Barrett claim (/3/8).

75 John Brookes claim (TNA: CO 762/50/3).

Protestants were shot in Clonakilty that month'.<sup>76</sup> One of the effects of the infamous Dunmanway and Bandon Valley killings in April 1922 was an immediate sense of panic and the flight (though often temporary) of many of the victims' Protestant neighbours. Alice Hodder described to her mother how 'For two weeks afterwards there wasn't standing room on any of the boats or mail trains leaving Cork for England. All loyalist refugees who were either fleeing in terror or had been ordered out of the country'.<sup>77</sup> The legacy of the killings reverberated throughout the West Cork loyalist community. Wesley Bateman 'had to leave for England at the time of the West Cork murders in 1922'; John Barry Deane was threatened 'in 1922 when the terrorism was at its worst and when many loyalists were shot around Bandon including a brother solicitor'<sup>78</sup> in the adjoining town'; William Bryan was 'a well known Protestant Loyalist. Several Loyalists were shot in their houses at Bandon at the time'.<sup>79</sup>

In this context, it does not necessarily matter if local IRA units were actually planning, or ever intended, a purge of Protestants and loyalists in a neighbourhood. It is the perception of what was happening among those on the ground that is most important. The Irish Unionist Alliance was proclaiming 'Anarchy in the West of Ireland', 'A Reign of Terror', a 'Massacre of Irish Protestants', and printing an 'Appalling List of Victims'.<sup>80</sup> If these messages, or some like them, took any sort of hold in southern Irish communities, and were reinforced with known examples (particularly local examples), there was enough potential to create an atmosphere of terror well beyond the reality.

Most civilians, regardless of political allegiance and location, were vulnerable to threats and the fear of violence but the response to a death threat could depend on the individual involved and feelings of perceived personal safety, bravery, or stubbornness unique to that person. In Kildare, where the IRA killed five civilians up to December 1921, Paul Fawcett Goodwin, an ex-soldier who had survived the Great War, described how he was threatened and 'left the country at once'.<sup>81</sup> Conversely, John Martyn of Queen's County insisted he was 'told by Republicans to leave the country' but 'refused to go

76 Henry Hoskin claim (/66/10).

77 Alice Hodder to her mother, 28 May 1922 (CO 739/16).

78 Francis Fitzmaurice. See Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 273.

79 Wesley Bateman claim (TNA: CO 762/50/13); John Barry Deane claim (/37/1); William Bryan claim (/15/3).

80 Irish Unionist Alliance pamphlets (PRONI: D989C/1/39, /40, /68). Some were printed and presumably aimed for distribution in Britain, but others were produced and printed in Dublin.

81 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 328; Paul Fawcett Goodwin claim (PRONI: D989/B/3/9).

and was boycotted'.<sup>82</sup> Many applicants to the IGC who suffered no physical injuries recalled fearing that they 'would be shot'. In Cavan, James Heaslip's wife was said to have 'remained out in fields at night in terror of being shot', Patrick McGrath's mother suffered ill-health 'as she had a continual fear of fatal happenings', and a Mayo applicant described how he felt he could not return home to gather testimony in his favour as the population in the West of Ireland were constantly 'in terror of their lives'.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, many of the victims of revolutionary persecution proved themselves to be remarkably resolute and either hung on in the face of violence and intimidation or left and came back as soon as they felt they could.<sup>84</sup>

### Loyalists

To republican minds, it was loyalists, broadly conceived, who were most likely to offer resistance. Chapter 1 has already discussed policemen, civil servants, and their families. Another minority group with a strong tradition of allegiance to the Crown was the Protestant population, the majority members of the Church of Ireland but also including Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians. Indeed, the standing of Protestants during the Revolution has been a continued source of debate and discussion. But to what extent did the IRA deliberately and disproportionately target Protestants and other identifiable groups of loyalists for violent punishment? Joost Augusteijn has suggested that 'Protestants, who remained largely aloof from the struggle, were initially not targets for intimidation' but as the conflict escalated during 1921 'became increasingly targeted by the Volunteers'.<sup>85</sup> The compensation testimony of Protestant applicants to the IGC adds weight to Augusteijn's assertion. The Protestant applicants of County Cavan often gave instances of 'loyalty' that stretched back before 1919 and to the Home Rule Crisis and Great War – 'I was a loyalist organiser at the time of the signing of the Ulster Covenant'; 'always known as a staunch loyalist and never hid our views'; 'two brothers who served their King and Country'; 'deep personal interest in Red Cross work' – but described instances of intimidation or harm in 1921 and, most often, in 1922.<sup>86</sup> The terms of the committee's remit, only allowing

82 John Martyn claim (/3/11).

83 James Heaslip claim (TNA: CO 762/139/1); Patrick McGrath claim (/60/7); T. J. Lush claim (/21/11).

84 Andy Bielenberg, 'Exodus: the emigration of southern Irish protestants during the Irish war of independence and the Civil War', *Past and Present*, 218 (2013), p. 211.

85 Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 294.

86 Arthur McClean (TNA: CO 762/183/2); M. E. Lord claim (/142/3); Ann J. Cox claim (/175/5); Elizabeth Adams (/137/9).

claims after 11 July 1921, may distort this picture to some extent, but it is nevertheless a revealing pattern given the flexible timeframe in which loyalty could be proved.<sup>87</sup>

British civil servant and political polemicist Lionel Curtis wrote that ‘Protestants in the South do not complain of persecution on sectarian grounds. If Protestant farmers are murdered, it is not by reason of their religion, but rather because they are under suspicion as loyalists. The distinction is a fine, but a real one.’<sup>88</sup> But when labels were effortlessly applied and perceptions influenced discourse, distinct categories became less easy to define. Isabel O’Connor, an English Protestant, was simply ‘one of the lot they wished to drive out.’<sup>89</sup> Mary Fletcher claimed to be from the ‘class which always supported British rule.’<sup>90</sup> When a Protestant referred to their ‘lot’ or their ‘class’ in their compensation application they were usually ambiguous and could refer to denomination, political allegiance, social standing, or a combination of the three. Ella Browne, for instance, was, in her own words, ‘an enemy on account of my class, a Protestant and a loyalist.’<sup>91</sup> Loyalty and religion could be variously co-dependent or mutually exclusive. Bandon Church of Ireland Protestant Joseph Northridge suggested that it was association with the Crown, rather than religion, that singled people out: ‘It was only persons who were known for their allegiance to the Government ... who were driven or tried to be driven out.’<sup>92</sup> Richard Falkiner, a Protestant farmer in Galway, similarly remarked that ‘only loyalists suffered victimisation such as I and my family experienced’ and did not mention his religion. But for William Bradfield in Cork, it was ‘only loyal people and Church people who were interfered with in my district.’<sup>93</sup> The firm emphasis on loyalty displayed in the applications must be, to some extent, dictated by the IGC’s demand that applicants prove their allegiance to the British government, but the fluctuating connections made between loyalty, defiance, and religion offer a sense of the ill-defined boundaries in operation. As will be argued further in Chapter 6, religion was a significant factor in determining how community groups identified themselves and each other. It could influence

87 Some claimants may have changed or amended dates to suit when pressed by the committee: see, for example, Robert Graham claim (/164/11).

88 Pat Walsh (ed.), *Ireland (1921)* with an introduction to the Anglo-Irish treaty and the ‘lost world’ of Imperial Ireland by Lionel Curtis and Henry Harrison on South Africa and Ireland (Belfast, 2002), p. 60.

89 Isabel O’Connor claim (/170/22).

90 Mary Fletcher claim (/134/11).

91 Ella Browne claim (/60/18).

92 Joseph Northridge claim (/37/2); Anne Applebe and son claim (/37/4).

93 William B. Bradfield claim (/186/14).

the perception and punishment of deviants to varying degrees without being a single defining feature of their treatment.

In the case of another social group noted as loyalists, ex-servicemen, religion was not as immediately relevant – many were Roman Catholic – but they were subject to a similar system of labelling and acknowledgment. Jane Leonard was the first historian to look seriously at the ex-soldiers of the Boer War and Great War as victims of republican violence. Leonard described how ‘Ex-soldiers engendered both envy and hatred in the I.R.A. They were envied for their military skill and the rewards this had brought ... They were despised for having fought in the British army’; they were ‘natural’, ‘soft’ targets for the IRA, particularly as the RIC and military became more entrenched and less accessible.<sup>94</sup> More recently, Paul Taylor has explored the experiences of returning Great War veterans from 1918 to 1939. Taylor argues that Leonard and other historians who have noted the frequency of IRA violence against ex-soldiers have overestimated their status as victims. For Taylor, behaviour was the key determinant and it was rarely a war record alone that encouraged attacks on ex-soldiers.<sup>95</sup> But if Leonard can be accused of overstating the impact of revolutionary violence on ex-soldiers, then Taylor underestimates it. By its crudest measurement, fatalities, ex-servicemen were disproportionate victims of IRA violence. Eunan O’Halpin’s research on the dead of the Irish Revolution has concluded that almost half (47 per cent) of those killed by the IRA as spies were ex-servicemen. The extent of the targeting of ex-soldiers is most striking in counties with low overall levels of fatal violence. The IRA in Waterford, for instance, executed two civilian spies, in Wexford and Louth one each, and all were ex-soldiers. Four of the five civilian spies shot in Meath were ex-soldiers as were 75 per cent of all civilians killed by the IRA in King’s County. In contrast, no ex-soldiers were shot by the IRA in the six counties that became Northern Ireland and only two in Ulster (one each in Cavan and Monaghan).<sup>96</sup>

Ex-soldiers were certainly more likely to interact socially and personally with Crown forces but were not necessarily any more likely to have useful information to pass on. After the killing of Hugh Newman, a Cavan farmer and ex-soldier, shot and labelled as a spy, the CI flatly denied he had been in contact with the police: ‘He never gave us any information nor had any to give as the I.R.A. take good care that Loyal people such as this ex-soldier will be kept in the dark as to their movements or intended movements.’<sup>97</sup>

94 Jane Leonard, ‘Getting them at last: The I.R.A. and ex-servicemen’, in Fitzpatrick, *Revolution?*, pp. 119–29.

95 Paul Taylor, *Heroes or traitors? Experiences of southern Irish soldiers returning from the Great War, 1919–1939* (Liverpool, 2015), pp. 1–79.

96 O’Halpin, ‘Problematic killing’, p. 332.

97 MCRs, CI, Cavan, Jun. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115).

This suggests that, if they were not targeted for their former service to the Crown alone, there was certainly less reticence about shooting when they transgressed. Taylor is surely correct to point out that 'their military background would draw suspicion' but a suggestion that this alone 'could help to explain why a significant percentage of civilian spies killed by the IRA were ex-servicemen' is unsatisfactory. It did not take a connection to the Crown forces as strong as former service to bring a civilian under the notice of the IRA. Indeed, ex-soldiers, by Taylor's calculation, only account for 262 of over 4,000 claims to the IGC.<sup>98</sup> When Taylor's careful analysis of incidents of intimidation is taken in to account, the high proportion of fatalities among ex-soldiers becomes more, rather than less, significant. Among the IGC claims, ex-servicemen (only 73 of whom described war service as a cause of intimidation) were not any more likely to claim compensation for revolutionary loss based on their proportion of the population in any county.<sup>99</sup>

If ex-servicemen were no more likely to fall subject to intimidation, coercion, or persecution, they were, in many counties, far more likely to be shot as a punishment for defiance. Local historian Donal Hall has found no evidence of a 'campaign' against ex-servicemen in Louth, but the Louth IRA killed two civilians, including only one 'spy' who was an ex-soldier.<sup>100</sup> For reluctant shooters, a former military man may have made a more palatable target. Men with former military service were also, perhaps, both more accessible and more dangerous somewhere like Waterford where traditional Redmondite support remained strong or in Kildare where there was a large military presence based around the Curragh army camp. As Augusteijn has pointed out, returning ex-soldiers had already been alienated to some degree from their communities and 'Killing people considered to be "outsiders" has always been easier than shooting one of your own.'<sup>101</sup> For those doing the killing it was also, perhaps, easier to rationalise and justify the killing of a man who had himself fought, held a gun, and, in all probability, killed. 'Ex-soldier', like 'Protestant', was an epithet applied to an individual remarkably often in newspapers, police reports, IRA records, witness testimony, and compensation claims. This alone is enough to suggest that a British military record should not be ignored as a factor that influenced community relationships.

Like the majority of civilians studied by Stathis Kalyvas who displayed 'a combination of weak preferences and opportunism', those whose political

98 Taylor, *Heroes or traitors*, pp. 41, 44.

99 Taylor, *Heroes or traitors*, pp. 44–6, 75–9.

100 Donal Hall quoted in Taylor, *Heroes or traitors*, p. 25; O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 329.

101 Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 293.



loyalties lay towards the Crown often deliberately avoided behaviour that might bring them into conflict with local republicans.<sup>102</sup> For all those who gave information, whether for money, out of political conviction, or prompted by frustration or revulsion, there were the ‘majority’ who, as police chief Sir Ormonde Winter put it, ‘remained inarticulate’.<sup>103</sup> This silence was often maddening but police officials, army commanders, and prominent loyalists accepted that it was, to a large degree, inevitable. Lord Desart argued that:

We blame, & rightly blame, the respectable people for never giving information, but it is only fair to remember that while the vengeance of Sinn Fein is almost assured, it is demonstrated that the Government afford no effective protection against such vengeance, and I am not sure that where such a terrorism is established the authorities would get much assistance in any country from people who cannot protect themselves, whose property is vulnerable, & who have wives and children to think of.<sup>104</sup>

RIC County Inspector John Regan, who held a ‘strong contempt’ for many ‘southern loyalists’, was nevertheless similarly conscious of the dangerous position they were in. Among those whom he believed ‘well deserved the name of loyalist’ were some who ‘maintained what might be termed a strict neutrality. They did not conceal the fact that their sympathies were not with the IRA but kept aloof from both sides.’ ‘They could not be blamed for this’, he opined in his memoir, ‘situated as they were in the country districts, at the mercy of their enemies and without protection of any kind, it would have been unreasonable to expect them to do anything to provoke IRA action against them.’<sup>105</sup>

Despite craving their information, police remained aware of the danger posed to those suspected of informing. Even in Cavan, where the IRA killed three civilians (in comparison with 89 in Cork), the police avoided contact with known loyalists for their own safety:

A very close watch is kept over all the County, on people who are known to be on friendly terms with the police, the result being that, in the interests of the well-disposed the police avoid as much as possible

102 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 101–3.

103 Peter Hart (ed.), *British intelligence in Ireland, 1920–1921, the final reports* (Cork, 2002), p. 82. Winter made the same claim in his memoir *Winter’s tale*, pp. 293, 299, 301.

104 Desart to Middleton, 27 Mar. 1920 (TNA: PRO 30/67/42).

105 Augusteijn, *The memoirs of John M. Regan*, pp. 149–50.

getting in touch with such people, as the slightest suspicion is sufficient in the eyes of the I.R.A. to justify the murder of suspected persons.<sup>106</sup>

Very often loyalists did not have intelligence of any use anyway. An IRA 'Intelligence Report' from May 1920, captured by British forces, noted: 'Our information about girls walking with "Peelers" (which are few) is that they give no information because they are not in a position to get any'.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Meath IRA veteran Peter O'Connell told Oliver Coogan that in Carnaross they 'strongly suspected or knew for definite' who was giving information 'but most of them had useless or wrong information ... we might warn them but most of the time we just ignored them because they were harmless'.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, during a conflict when the authorities insisted that many of those killed 'never gave us any information' or 'had given no information to me', any talk could be dangerous and self-preservation often won out over political allegiance.<sup>109</sup> Loyalists were not short of examples they might wish to avoid. Hugh Newman was described by the Cavan county inspector as 'a fine type of manhood who spoke his mind freely. He was a R.C. in religion but a strong opponent of S.F. & said so. This was the cause of his murder as even from the I.R.A. point of view this man was a spy'.<sup>110</sup> Edward Beirne, shot dead in Roscommon in April 1921, having assisting wounded policemen at the scene of an ambush, was similarly described by a local sergeant as 'a loyal man and on very friendly terms with the police. He was opposed to the Sinn Fein movement and frequently expressed his views forcefully'.<sup>111</sup>

John Darby's work has demonstrated that along with 'actual physical harm' and 'actual threat', civilians were subject to intimidation by 'perceived environmental threat'.<sup>112</sup> Many civilians feared that any unwarranted or suspicious behaviour would bring vengeance from an omnipotent IRA without them ever having been personally harmed or threatened. J. H. Long wanted to bring refreshments to wounded soldiers but was told not to by his wife 'as there were spies of the I.R.A. all round'.<sup>113</sup> Susan McNamara of County Clare acknowledged that 'some of the timid minded left off calling

106 MCRs, CI, Cavan, Jun. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115); O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 328.

107 Epitome of documents taken from Eileen McGrane, arrested 1 Jan. 1921 (LHCMA: 7/24).

108 Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath*, p. 164.

109 MCRs, CI, Cavan, Jun. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/115). Military inquiry in lieu of inquest, Francis C. Boyle, Jun. 1921 (WO 35/146B/10).

110 MCRs, CI, Cavan, Jun. 1921 (CO 904/115).

111 Military inquiry in lieu of inquest, Edward Beirne, Apr. 1921 (WO 35/146B/5).

112 Darby, *Intimidation and the control of conflict*, pp. 52–7.

113 J. H. Long claim (TNA: CO 762/27/14).

to my place. Personally I could not blame them as their own safety was of paramount importance to them.<sup>114</sup>

The loyalist experience in Ulster is, for the most part, unique. In a broader sense, the Revolution there was more firmly drawn along sectarian lines, certainly in the six counties that later became Northern Ireland, but also, to some extent, in Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan. The ‘main axis of violence’ was inter-communal and based on religious grounds (Catholic versus Protestant) rather than between the IRA and the Crown forces or (later) the Northern state.<sup>115</sup> The very distinct labelling of civilian ‘enemies’ as ‘Protestant’, however, is less obvious in Ulster, particularly in areas with small Protestant minorities, where ‘nationalists preferred to define their Protestant victims in terms of non-religious identities’.<sup>116</sup> In all but the areas with significant Catholic/nationalist majorities, and unlike their outnumbered and outgunned brethren in the south, Ulster loyalists were as likely to be the perpetrators of violent punishment as its victims. Paramilitaries, vigilance groups, local militias, and the state-sponsored Special Constabularies defended their communities from republican or nationalist intrusion but also carried out pre-emptive and retaliatory violence.<sup>117</sup> In Belfast (the subject of Chapter 5), for instance, organised and unorganised loyalists killed at least 18 civilians and three IRA up to December 1921.<sup>118</sup> ‘Loyalist death squads’ also killed at least 38 civilians outside of Belfast.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, what Tim Wilson has described as ‘militant loyalists’ in Ulster enjoyed a ‘large degree of support – or, at least, tolerance – from a unionist community that entertained a strong sense of ownership over its “defenders”’.<sup>120</sup>

Kalyvas has acknowledged that when the motivations for acts of violence can be discerned, they are often mixed and contradictory and can include a combination of factors including hate, peer pressure, obedience, honour, rituals, and collective imaginaries.<sup>121</sup> The Irish case was no different and a combination of any of those things could define the victims of violence. Equally, perceived, individual acts of defiance and the behaviour and attitudes of local IRA units could determine both the victims and the extent of persecution. Importantly, it was rarely as simple as to be defined by one single factor. As David Fitzpatrick has put it, ‘all motives are mixed, some

114 Susan McNamara claim (TNA: CO 762/23/15).

115 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 17.

116 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 136.

117 For loyalist paramilitary groups and militias, see Bowman, *Carson’s army*, pp. 190–201.

118 Eunan O’Halpin and Daithí O Corráin, *The dead of the Irish Revolution* (forthcoming).

I am grateful to Professor O’Halpin for sharing these figures.

119 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp. 108, 150.

120 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp. 75, 108–9.

121 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 24–5.

are deliberately concealed, and others are unconscious'.<sup>122</sup> Neither was the deliberate targeting of Protestants and ex-servicemen in Ireland unduly severe between 1919 and 1921 in a comparative sense. And though nothing close to a systematic, widespread campaign against minority groups took place in Ireland, the first six months of 1922 saw an escalating scale of violence against 'unwanted' groups. Increased suspicion of, and violence against, Protestants and ex-servicemen was matched by heightened anxiety among those groups. The increasingly intense atmosphere of reprisal and counter-reprisal that began in 1921 can be said to have reached its peak during the Civil War of 1922–23.<sup>123</sup>

### 'Women spies'

The IRA killed at least three female 'spies and informers' between 1919 and 1921.<sup>124</sup> All three followed an order setting out the procedure for dealing with such cases. General Order No. 13 on 'Women Spies', issued in November 1920, instructed that:

Where there is evidence that a woman is a spy or is doing petty spy work, the Brigade Commandant whose area is involved will get up a Court of Enquiry to examine the evidence against her. If the Court finds her guilty of the charge, she shall then be advised accordingly and, except in the case of an Irishwoman, be ordered to leave the country within seven days. It shall be intimated to her that only consideration of her sex prevents the infliction of the statutory punishment of death. A formal public statement of the conviction shall be issued in poster or leaflet form, or both, according to the local circumstances, as a warning and a preventative.

In 'dangerous and insistent cases' commanders were ordered to seek instructions from GHQ.<sup>125</sup> The shooting of Kate Carroll, Mary Lindsay, and Bridget Noble constituted a breach of this order. As Eunan O'Halpin has pointed out, the executions of Carroll in Monaghan and Lindsay in

122 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p. 160.

123 See Clark, *Everyday violence*, pp. 136, 176, 197–9, 203.

124 See the execution of Mary Lindsay in Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp. 308–10, Kate Carroll in McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, pp. 65–6, and Bridget Noble in O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', pp. 336–7. O'Halpin suggests there may be more, unconfirmed cases.

125 General Orders (New Series), 1920, No. 13 'Women Spies', 9 Nov. 1920 (UCDA: P7/A/45).

Cork proved a particular source of embarrassment to GHQ and, if anything, highlighted the necessity for a separate procedure for women. Those notable exceptions aside, however, suspected women informers were generally treated differently from men in even the most violent counties.<sup>126</sup>

In July 1921, Ernie O'Malley wrote to Richard Mulcahy arguing that 'women spies' should be shot, adding bitterly that some 'are only hiding behind their skirts', but there remained a general aversion to sanctioning the execution of women.<sup>127</sup> Seán Healy recalled orders to deal with a female informer in Cork, a 'fiend' who 'hated the army of the people, and openly boasted that she would get all the I.R.A. men she knew hanged or shot by her English masters'. Healy was clear on her crimes, but recalled that this was a 'more delicate problem'; the 'shooting of women being abhorrent to soldiers generally, we decided to take her prisoner in the first instance.'<sup>128</sup> When Michael Brennan wrote to Mulcahy asking what action to take regarding 'one notoriously bad case in which the girl concerned has defied the Volunteers when she was warned & another of a *girl who has applied for a job as a woman searcher*', Mulcahy suggested that Brennan consider 'the various ways in which from your knowledge of their circumstances, you consider they can be punished'.<sup>129</sup> It was Edward O'Toole who was targeted for his wife's defiance in Tipperary when he was threatened with the 'extreme penalty' if he did not remove her from her employment in the local barracks.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, a notice posted in Killavillen, County Kerry, reminded local 'girls' that 'England's soldiers shot down their brothers' but it was the soldiers who were warned that 'if they are found with girls, they will be shot'.<sup>131</sup> It was also recognised outside the IRA that women would, in most instances, be treated differently from men. Elizabeth Thompson was accused along with William Latimer of giving information in Leitrim. Latimer was shot and one of Thompson's IGC referees remarked that 'probably she *would have been murdered* but being a *woman*.' Her son, presumably under the same assumption, was said to have emigrated soon after Latimer's killing.<sup>132</sup>

126 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', pp. 334–5. For violence against women by Crown forces, see Louise Ryan, "'Drunken Tans": representations of sex and violence in the Anglo-Irish War', *Feminist Review*, No. 66 (2000), pp. 73–94 and, more recently, Marie Coleman, 'Violence against women during the Irish War of Independence, 1919–21', in Ferriter and Riordan, *Years of turbulence*, esp. pp. 143–55.

127 O'Malley to CS, 4 Jul. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/21). In reply, Mulcahy confirmed that women must not be executed without reporting to GHQ first.

128 BMH WS 1,643 (Seán Healy). The alleged informer managed to escape before she was apprehended.

129 Brennan to CS, c.Jun. 1921; CS to Brennan, 12 Apr. 1921 (/17).

130 Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/148).

131 Threatening notice in Tralee, Kerry (/148).

132 Elizabeth Thompson claim (TNA: CO 762/174/2).

A sample of 120 non-lethal outrages directed specifically against women, taken from précis compiled by the RIC of incidents against police, their families, and their tradesmen and suppliers, offers a snapshot of the nature of punishment inflicted on women by the IRA. In each case the victims had family in the RIC (22 were policemen's wives), employment in local barracks, trade links with Crown forces, or courtships with a policeman or soldier. In the eyes of the IRA they were all assisting the enemy and potential sources of damaging information. In the reports, many had been warned against giving information but only four were directly accused of being a 'spy' or 'informer'.<sup>133</sup> Just over half (62, or 52 per cent) of the outrages came in the form of threatening letters or notices. In 19 of the reports the police noted that lethal violence had been directly threatened or implied: 'your days shall be numbered and ended'; 'your existence in this world will be short and sharp'; 'we warn you for the last time to cease or you will be sorry'.<sup>134</sup> The other threatening behaviours suffered by the women in the sample comprised raids on their homes by armed (and often masked) men (19 incidents) and damage to property (7 incidents). Raiders occasionally demanded or stole money but were usually satisfied with a verbal warning. Although the men who amassed outside Jane Healy's house in Mayo 'used filthy language and acted in a blackguardly manner', in only one case did a home raid result in physical violence when Winifred Molloy, a barrack servant in Tubbercurry, County Sligo, was struck on the shoulder with a gun.<sup>135</sup>

There are no reports of rape or sexual violence against women among the précis and, notwithstanding reticence in reporting such crime, it seems to have remained relatively rare during the Irish Revolution. In Ulster, for instance, the absence of recorded allegations of the rape of Protestant women by the IRA suggests that cases were infrequent as any propaganda opportunities offered by the allegations were unlikely to be spurned.<sup>136</sup> Gemma Clark has shown that in Munster, 'besides a few shocking cases', there is similarly little evidence of rape during the Civil War.<sup>137</sup> The physical violence often suffered by men is similarly absent among the reported incidents and the cases of 'other violence' found in Figure 4.1 are unpleasant but unrepresentative. A Miss Slattery in Tipperary was 'assaulted' and had her bicycle stolen, the family of a constable was physically removed from their home in Roscommon, and in King's County a 14-year-old girl was tied to a tree and

133 Mrs Roddy, Monaghan (TNA: CO 904/148); Alice Averill, Tyrone (/149); Mrs McNulty and Mrs Lynch, Roscommon (/150).

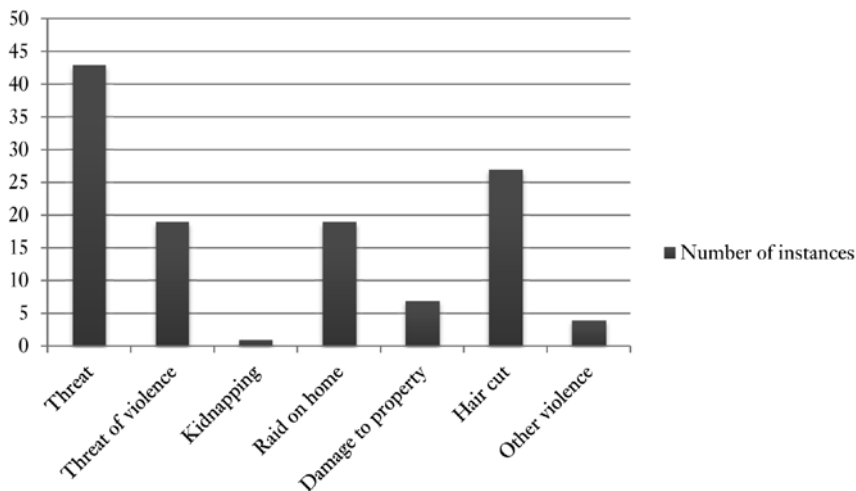
134 Mrs Githin, Fermanagh; Alice Gourley, Tipperary, Mary Brien, Tipperary S.R. (/148).

135 Jane Lynch, Mayo (/150); Winifred Molloy, Sligo (/148).

136 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 120.

137 Clark, *Everyday violence*, pp. 186–93.

**Figure 4.1 Outrages against women,  
May 1920–December 1921**



Sources: Weekly summaries of outrages against the police (TNA: CO 904/148–50).

interrogated about her policeman brother.<sup>138</sup> The nastiest was the insertion of three metal rings in the buttocks of Roscommon woman Mary Green as a punishment for transporting milk for the police in her cart.<sup>139</sup>

A survey of 19 female claimants to the IGC from County Cavan records a similar absence of physical violence. Ann J. Cox's house was entered by armed men in 1922; the raiders demanded money 'and threatened to burn me out if I refused to obey', warning on their way out that 'We will come back and shoot you if we ever hear anything about this'. She claimed that her nerves were 'ruined' by the raid and her invalided sister had never recovered from the shock.<sup>140</sup> Elizabeth Adams was shot at when a neighbour who was standing next to her was hit and seriously wounded. The following day her house was raided and within a month she had been 'arrested', held for three days, and tried at a local court. A referee remarked that, 'It is believed she would have been shot only that she herself is a good rifle and revolver shot.'<sup>141</sup> In March 1922, Martha Jackson was 'attacked by the rebels who fired point blank at me but owing to the darkness of the night and also that I lay prone on the ground, I am thankful to

138 Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/150).

139 Weekly summaries (/149).

140 Ann J. Cox claim (CO 762/175/5).

141 Elizabeth Adams claim (/137/9).

say my life was saved'. The following month she was 'badly abused' and rendered unconscious by raiders who beat her on the head, necessitating the use of spectacles afterwards.<sup>142</sup> Another applicant was accidentally shot and wounded by a member of the RIC.<sup>143</sup> The majority, however, were victims of non-physical intimidation and eight were the alleged victims of an IRA boycott in the district of Arva.

The most common act of physical violence carried out against women by the IRA was the cutting of hair, with 27 cases (23 per cent) found among the sample. Some public notices made it explicitly clear that women who interacted with the Crown forces would have their hair cropped. In Mallow, County Cork, a notice posted on the chapel gate warned that 'Any girls speaking to the police from this day forward are liable to the penalty of hair cut'. A Galway notice threatened that women found in company with the police would have 'their hair cut and their ears amputated'.<sup>144</sup> The cropping of hair offered a grimly visual reminder of transgression to the victim and an immediate warning to others. In Wicklow, 'young girls' were warned against keeping company with Crown forces and any who disobeyed would 'have her hair cut off so that she will be held in contempt by all loyal citizens of the "Irish Republic"'.<sup>145</sup> Hair cutting – equally carried out by Crown forces<sup>146</sup> – might also be seen, as Tim Wilson has observed, 'as a sexualised punishment in that it targeted the femininity of (usually Catholic) women who were held to have betrayed their national responsibilities'.<sup>147</sup> This was a punishment aimed directly at women and usually replaced shooting as the ultimate penalty for female defiance. In at least four of the cases, hair cutting followed threatening letters that had been ignored.<sup>148</sup> Two victims of hair cropping in Clare were told they 'were lucky they were not being shot', but in only two of the 27 cases was cropping accompanied by additional violence.<sup>149</sup> Norah Walsh was taken from her home in Kerry by armed and masked men, 'where they cut her hair off and tarred her head'. After Maggie Lacy's hair was cut in Tipperary she was 'dragged 200 yards through the fields and thrown into a ditch among briars'. In April 1920, Maggie and Alice Donovan were brought outside at midnight and subjected to a 'court martial' where

142 Martha Jackson claim (/175/11).

143 Matilda Magee claim (/94/6).

144 Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/148).

145 Weekly summaries (/149).

146 Coleman, 'Violence against women', p. 141. Coleman has identified hair cutting as 'gender violence', rather than sexual violence, violence aimed at victims because of their gender but not involving sexual contact.

147 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 120.

148 Julia Kennedy, Wicklow; Mary Maloney, Tipperary; Kate Kelly, Longford; Nina Wright, Longford (TNA: CO 904/148–50).

149 Minnie Keane and Annie O'Shea, Clare (/149).



they 'were convicted and ordered to be shot through the heart', but after an objection from one of the crowd 'it was then decided to cut off their hair, which was done with a scissors'.<sup>150</sup>

The regional distribution of the sample of incidents against women broadly reflects wider patterns of violence. Incidents were most common in two counties with reputations for violence: Cork and Kerry, with 12 and 11 respectively. There is a reasonable geographical spread among the other counties but no incidents were reported in four 'quiet' counties (Armagh, Derry, Kildare, and Meath) and only nine reported in total in Ulster (one in Antrim, three in Down, two in Fermanagh, two in Monaghan, and one in Tyrone). Hair cropping is found in twelve counties, most commonly in Kerry, with four instances, and three cases are found in Galway, Longford, Kilkenny, and Clare.

Women were just as capable and just as likely, if not more so, than their male neighbours to interact with the Crown forces; in Cork, for example, at least four women informed on the IRA.<sup>151</sup> But they were almost certain to avoid lethal violence, and when physical violence was used, it was most often violence adapted specifically for women. Women were regular victims of IRA intimidation but were less likely to appear as victims in police reports and less likely to apply later for compensation to the IGC. Marie Coleman has suggested that informally defined ideas on morality and acceptable violence, the considerations of a national and international propaganda war, and the prominence of female activists in the republican movement, may have all restrained violence (both lethal and sexual) against women, and ensured that those who defied the IRA were usually treated differently to men.<sup>152</sup> In terms of lethal violence, Seán Healy's belief that shooting women was 'abhorrent to soldiers' may suggest an additional explanation linked to contemporary morality and perceptions about women's roles in combat. In many eyes (not just male), women could play a significant part in the struggle but they were not necessarily 'soldiers' on the same terms as the men, an attitude encapsulated in a rejection of Margaret Skinnider's military service pension application in 1925: 'the above mentioned Act is only applicable to soldiers as generally understood in the masculine sense'.<sup>153</sup> For the same

150 Norah Walsh, Kerry and Maggie and Alice Donovan (/48); Maggie Lacy, Tipperary (/49).

151 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 304.

152 Coleman, 'Violence against women', pp. 151–2.

153 Letter to Maighread Ni Scineadora, 2 Apr. 1925 (MAI: W1/P/724). For a recent astute study of women's attitudes towards their own participation in the Easter Rising, see Senia Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women, 1900–1918* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 181–93. Charles Townshend has written that Cumann na mBan, the women's republican organisation, saw itself as a 'military organisation' but 'equally definitely specified that

reasons that it may have been easier to shoot an ex-soldier, therefore, it was also more difficult to shoot a woman.

Though violence against the ‘female person’ was comparatively rare in revolutionary Ireland, it also worth noting, as Gemma Clark does, the psychological effects of violence on the female relatives – wives, sisters, mothers – of the men who were its victims: ‘Attacks on the home during the revolutionary period arguably affected women more seriously than they did the men at whom the violence purportedly was aimed.’<sup>154</sup>

### Regional variations

It is clear that the extent and nature of coercive violence employed by the IRA was subject to significant regional variation. Important studies by Erhard Rumpf, Tom Garvin, David Fitzpatrick, and Peter Hart have mapped and attempted to explain disparities in revolutionary activity across the country.<sup>155</sup> This work has taken the administrative county as its standard unit. Though ordinary life was not always experienced in a ‘county’ – more often in a town or parish – and within county boundaries there are significant variations, the county approach makes sense in this context. As Hart pointed out, using counties allows for comparative analysis with census, electoral, and other similar data. The county was also ‘the basis for Volunteer organisation’ and ‘operations within a local county were almost always carried out by local men’, facilitating a pairing of actions with social characteristics and environment.<sup>156</sup> This work has also necessarily focused on available and quantifiable datasets such as demographics, crime, election results, membership rolls, and fatal violence. Indeed, Hart wrote that the most reliable method of judging the intensity of revolutionary activity was ‘by those killed or wounded by bullets or bombs’, while Gemma Clark has concluded that ‘It is more difficult to pinpoint prolonged campaigns of intimidation’.<sup>157</sup> An understanding of regional variation in intimidation and coercive violence is, then, to be found by examining fatal violence.

Hart’s important study of the distribution of IRA violence has found that it was ‘overwhelmingly concentrated in the southern province of Munster

its military role was auxiliary’ and made no serious effort to secure arms: Townshend, *The republic*, pp. 47–52.

154 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 192.

155 Rumpf and Hepburn, *Nationalism and socialism*; Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics*; Fitzpatrick, ‘The geography of Irish nationalism’, pp. 113–44; Hart, ‘The geography of revolution’, pp. 142–76.

156 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, pp. 33–5.

157 Hart, ‘The geography of revolution’, pp. 144–5; Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 196.

(with the exception of county Waterford) and in the city of Dublin'. Beyond those areas, only Longford in Leinster and Monaghan in Ulster have a notable record for violent IRA activity. There are also significant variations in the intensity of violence over time, both nationally and within county boundaries. Broadly, violence increased dramatically from late 1920 and was at a peak when the Truce was called in July 1921. But this was not universal. While Cork remained a consistent source of IRA violence from 1917, Clare faded badly after 1920 having led the way between 1917 and 1919. Most of Longford's violence was seen between 1920 and 1921 and most of the slow-starters never caught up with the IRA units who had been shooting early and often.<sup>158</sup>

Non-lethal, and particularly non-violent, activity is much more difficult to map satisfactorily. Monthly police reports on incidents of intimidation and non-lethal violence are patchy and often dictated by the reporting style of a county inspector or his subordinate. In March 1920, the RIC began to compile statistics and *précis* of outrages against the police, their families, their tradesmen and suppliers, and against magistrates.<sup>159</sup> The statistics do not give dates, locations, or specifics of outrages beyond a set of pre-defined categories but accompanying *précis* do provide this detail and often include additional information, such as possible motives and precedents. They are not comprehensive, however, even for the limited number of 'outrages' that were reported to the police.<sup>160</sup> Cases of non-violent intimidation (excluding shooting, except where the police believed it was solely to intimidate) account for 695 incidents; the RIC recorded 2,719 outrages against the police, families, and suppliers from March 1920 to December 1921 and 16,304 total 'outrages' by 'Sinn Fein'. The data for non-violent intimidation becomes even more limited, and troublesome, in 1921. There are 520 *précis* on incidents of intimidation for the period March to December 1920 but only 175 for the whole of 1921.<sup>161</sup> As lethal violence dramatically increased after 1921, the priority moved towards reporting incidents of shooting and away from threatening letters, raids on homes, seizures and destruction of property, and robberies (which often went unreported anyway). What was considered important enough to warrant a summary may well have been further dictated by levels of other violence in each county and, as Anne Dolan has suggested, what constituted an 'outrage' could vary over time and

158 Hart, 'The geography of revolution', pp. 146–55.

159 Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/148–50).

160 Lowe, 'The war against the R.I.C', p. 89.

161 The figures for outrages recorded by the police are calculated from weekly return sheets and an analysis of the available *précis* (TNA: CO 904/148–50).

place; an apparently minor incident in a county like Cork viewed far more seriously somewhere else.<sup>162</sup>

The inadequacies of the material make it impossible to produce satisfactory statistics on the distribution of incidents of intimidation and coercion but certain patterns on the nature of IRA punishment can be discerned from an examination of lethal violence against civilians and the police. By all metrics in Table 4.1, Cork leads the way. In terms of overall fatalities, the 495 recorded for Cork is by far the highest, followed by Antrim (almost all in Belfast) and Dublin (the majority from the city). Cork's violent record is all the more notable when it is observed that the Cork IRA killed one less civilian than the bottom 25 counties combined; less than five civilians were killed by the IRA in 14 of the 32 counties. The figures also make clear the reciprocal nature of violence. Along with Cork, the Munster counties Tipperary, Kerry, and Clare all feature prominently among the figures for total, police, and civilian casualties. Similarly, the IRA in 'quieter' counties, those with fewer than 20 total fatalities, were less likely to shoot either civilians or policemen. They were also marginally more likely to shoot civilians than policemen, suggesting a preference for unarmed targets. The Munster IRA inflicted 135 (49 per cent) of civilian casualties and 243 (56 per cent) of police casualties up to December 1921 while Ulster units killed 27 civilians (10 per cent) and 49 police (11 per cent).

The density or rurality of an area may not necessarily dictate the likelihood of violent activity,<sup>163</sup> but if lethal violence was also used to 'strategic' effect, as outlined above, then its impact may be influenced by proximity. Moving away from absolute figures towards those based on population (as Hart does) offers a slightly different dynamic, as seen in Table 4.2. The intensity of violence in Cork is confirmed by its proportion of total fatalities per 10,000 people (12.6) and the number of civilians killed by the IRA per 10,000 people (2.27), significantly higher than any other county. Following Cork in terms of a *pro rata* distribution of civilian fatalities by the IRA is, perhaps surprisingly, King's County (1.41). In absolute terms, King's is on the lower end of the scale but a civilian living in King's was proportionally more likely to be shot by the IRA than in any county bar Cork. Similarly, total fatalities per 10,000 people are almost the same in Carlow (3.6) as in Antrim (3.9). This is not to say that communities in King's County or Carlow experienced a more intense conflict. Rurality in King's, for instance, is not noticeably high (71 per cent), but the county's population

162 Anne Dolan, "'The shadow of a great fear': terror and revolutionary Ireland", in Fitzpatrick, *Terror in Ireland*, pp. 34–5.

163 Fitzpatrick, 'The geography of nationalism', pp. 133–6; Hart, 'The geography of revolution', p. 160.

Table 4.1 Lethal violence by county, 1919–1921

County	Total fatalities	Civilians killed by IRA	Police killed by IRA	Fatalities per 10,000 people	Civilians killed by IRA per 10,000 people
Antrim	224	9	14	3.9	0.15
Armagh	28	3	4	2.3	0.25
Carlow	13	4	1	3.6	1.10
Cavan	9	3	1	1.0	0.33
Clare	95	5	30	9.1	0.48
Cork	495	89	86	12.6	2.27
Donegal	20	2	6	1.2	0.12
Down	28	1	5	1.4	0.05
Dublin	309	37	39	6.5	0.78
Fermanagh	9	2	5	1.5	0.32
Galway	58	7	13	3.2	0.38
Kerry	136	15	37	8.5	0.94
Kildare	12	5	3	1.8	0.75
Kilkenny	19	5	3	2.5	0.67
King's	21	8	5	3.7	1.41
Leitrim	15	2	1	2.4	0.31
Limerick	121	7	39	8.5	0.49
Londonderry	41	0	7	2.9	0.00
Longford	26	5	15	5.9	1.14
Louth	26	2	3	4.1	0.31
Mayo	43	2	19	2.2	0.10
Meath	17	7	2	2.6	1.08
Monaghan	25	7	5	3.5	0.98
Queen's	10	4	1	1.8	0.73
Roscommon	58	10	13	6.2	1.06
Sligo	18	1	16	2.3	0.13
Tipperary	152	16	41	10.0	1.05
Tyrone	16	1	2	1.1	0.07
Waterford	35	3	10	4.2	0.36
Westmeath	18	6	4	3.0	1.00
Wexford	23	6	3	2.2	0.59
Wicklow	7	0	3	1.2	0.00

*Sources:* Total and civilian fatalities are taken from Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Problematic killing during the war of independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers’, in James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (eds.), *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: historical perspectives* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 332–3; and police killed by the IRA from Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland, 1919–1922* (Cork, 2000), pp. 30–272. Police include Royal Irish Constabulary, Dublin Metropolitan Police, Ulster Special Constabulary, and Harbour Police.

**Table 4.2 Population, religion, density, and rurality by county, 1911**

County	Population	Non-Catholic population (percentage)	Population density	Rurality (percentage)
Antrim	580,811	77.1	0.28	70.1
Armagh	120,291	54.67	0.39	65.5
Carlow	36,252	10.7	0.16	69.8
Cavan	91,173	18.53	0.2	89.7
Clare	104,232	1.85	0.13	85.7
Cork	392,104	9.13	0.17	63.1
Donegal	168,537	21.07	0.14	91.2
Down	204,303	68.43	0.34	67.1
Dublin	477,196	20.26	0.79	33.7
Fermanagh	61,836	43.81	0.15	89.7
Galway	182,224	2.36	0.13	84.3
Kerry	159,691	2.73	0.14	83.3
Kildare	66,627	17.92	0.16	72.7
Kilkenny	74,962	5.02	0.15	78.8
King's	56,832	9.94	0.12	71
Leitrim	63,582	8.52	0.17	94.3
Limerick	143,069	4.68	0.16	64.7
Londonderry	140,625	54.2	0.2	59.6
Longford	43,820	8.03	0.17	84.9
Louth	63,665	8.42	0.32	55.1
Mayo	192,177	2.13	0.15	89
Meath	65,091	6.81	0.11	86.1
Monaghan	71,445	25.32	0.23	83.8
Queen's	54,629	11.25	0.13	79.4
Roscommon	93,956	2.36	0.16	90.9
Sligo	79,045	8.75	0.18	83.5
Tipperary	152,433	5.42	0.15	70.7
Tyrone	142,665	46.71	0.18	82.9
Waterford	83,966	5.44	0.13	53.5
Westmeath	59,986	8.68	0.14	74
Wexford	102,273	7.68	0.18	74.3
Wicklow	60,711	20.93	0.12	67.3

*Sources:* Populations for each county are taken from W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821–1971* (Dublin, 1978); population density is taken from ‘Census of Ireland, 1911. General report, with tables and appendices’, Table 47 (HCPP: Cmd. 6663, Vol. CXVI.1, p. 130); rurality refers to the percentage of inhabitants living outside towns of 500 inhabitants or more and is taken from David Fitzpatrick, ‘The geography of Irish nationalism 1910–21’, *Past and Present*, 78 (1978), p. 138.

was well spread out and ranks thirtieth in population density at 0.12. It is in the metropolitan centres of Dublin (0.79 density and 33.7 per cent rurality) and Antrim (0.28 density and 70.1 per cent rurality) that communities were closest to death, with Dublin enduring 6.5 fatalities (and 0.79 civilian fatalities by the IRA) per 10,000 people and Belfast accounting for almost all of the 3.9 fatalities per 10,000 people in Antrim. The nature of violence in these places was, however, distinct from Cork, King's, and elsewhere. Most of the dead in Belfast were victims of impersonal killing by sniping, riot, or explosion; in densely populated Dublin city, locals were far less likely to know a policeman or near neighbour who had been killed than an inhabitant of Bandon or Dunmanway in West Cork.<sup>164</sup>

The distribution of loyalist compensation claims offers one, albeit similarly limited, metric by which to measure non-lethal activity. If the number of claims is taken as an indicator of the intensity of persecution against self-proclaimed loyalists, then the figures can offer an insight into the pattern of intimidation and coercion. The figures in Table 4.3 cannot be satisfactorily compared with those in Table 4.1, however, as the losses considered by the committee were exclusively post-Truce. If an individual claim is seen as a single victim of IRA persecution or punishment this can only most accurately represent the post-Truce period, though many of those who claimed also referred to incidents of pre-Truce persecution. Nevertheless, the figures represent a useful index for non-lethal violence after the Truce. Broadly, the distribution of claims matches the patterns of violence in Table 4.1: Cork leads the way both absolutely and *pro rata*, and Munster accounts for almost half of the total number of claims. King's County's understated status in terms of IRA activity is again obvious with a total of 100 claims (17.6 per 10,000 people). Like Cavan, a significant proportion of claims originated in one district, in this case Mountrath, where there was a reasonably large non-Catholic population (12.5 per cent in 1911).<sup>165</sup>

There are no figures for the six counties that became Northern Ireland but the 'lost counties' of Ulster offer a useful test for IGC claims as a measure of non-lethal violence against loyalists. In these 'southern' counties, containing strong, and often armed and organised, loyalist communities, one might expect either notably large returns, as the volume of loyalists and Protestants generated significant IRA defiance and punishment, or notably small returns, as concentrated groups of loyalists defended their communities or remained inaccessible. In the three counties, the number of loyalist claims is out of proportion with levels of lethal violence. Cavan, the least violent

164 For the impersonal nature of violence in Belfast, see Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, pp. 247–50 and in Dublin, see Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, pp. 327–32.

165 See 1911 census returns (census.nationalarchives.ie) (23 Sep. 2013).

**Table 4.3 Claimants to Irish Grants Committee by county and province**

Leinster	Ulster		Munster		Connacht		
Carlow	76	Cavan	95	Clare	336	Galway	125
Dublin	218	Monaghan	19	Cork	797	Leitrim	79
Kildare	48	Donegal	113	Kerry	185	Mayo	142
Kilkenny	32			Limerick	120	Roscommon	72
King's	100			Tipperary	279	Sligo	71
Longford	43			Waterford	41		
Louth	14						
Meath	25						
Queen's	284						
Westmeath	37						
Wexford	51						
Wicklow	48						
<i>Totals</i>	976		227		1,758		489

*Sources:* Claims catalogued by county in TNA: CO 762/3-202. The figures provided are as catalogued on the online finding aid ([discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk)) and are subject to cataloguing errors and discrepancies. Applicants who had left the Irish Free State were generally catalogued according to the county in which they claimed to have suffered the loss, with the exception of 27 applicants residing in Fermanagh, excluded from these figures. A relatively small number of cases were incorrectly catalogued; see, for example, Chapter 3 on claims from County Cavan.

of the three by most metrics, sees 95 claims (10.4 per 10,000 people) while Monaghan, the most violent, sees only 19 (2.6 per 10,000). Donegal, similar to Cavan in terms of violence, is somewhere in the middle with 113 claims but only 6.7 per 10,000.

Queen's County offers something of an anomaly: 284 claims (51.9 per 10,000 people), well out of kilter with any of the measures of violence in Table 4.1 (1.8 civilian fatalities per 10,000 and 0.73 civilians killed by the IRA per 10,000). While everyday violence in most other counties seems to have worked in tandem with lethal violence – where one is strong so is the other – the opposite is the case in Queen's. There, despite being unlikely to experience physical violence, a significant number of loyalists believed they had been the victims of low-level agitation based on their political and religious definitions. A long-running land dispute in Luggacurran created an intimidatory (but not necessarily violent) atmosphere, feelings



of resentment, and generated several IGC applications among Protestant 'planters', and is suggestive of the way local political, social, and agrarian circumstances combined to create and define the revolutionary experience in a region.<sup>166</sup> While the discrepancy is still difficult to explain fully, and may encompass a range of explanations, including the influence of peer pressure in a decision to seek redress or not, the prominence of Queen's among IGC claimants (and King's high levels of *pro rata* violence) emphasises the value of moving the discussion of the IRA's War of Independence away from a historiography dominated by 'violent' counties and towards a greater understanding of the everyday acts of revolution.

### Conclusion

Where a county was more violent, and the IRA more inclined to shoot policemen, civilians were more likely to suffer lethal violent or non-violent punishment for acts of defiance. Everyday acts of harm and threat did not operate in isolation to the less common ambushes and executions but combined to dictate the atmosphere of violence and fear in an individual community. Punishment was selective, discriminate, and (usually) designed to match the perceived offence. Thus, the response to a levy defaulter was a threat or the seizure of property; uncooperative litigants were kidnapped to prevent their attendance at British courts; boycotts were enforced by spreading their scale. 'Spies and informers' offered a more immediate physical threat and lethal violence was therefore viewed as an acceptable and necessary punishment. Even still, it remained more common for informing to be treated leniently or go unpunished. Irish nationalists held an idealised self-image that included chivalry to women and this generally contributed to a more restrained approach to female defiance.<sup>167</sup> Women were relatively rarely physically assaulted and only very occasionally shot. The cutting of hair was seen as the limit of sanction in most cases. But away from the upper limits of violent punishment, women were equally capable of deviance and therefore liable to be threatened, raided, fined, have their property damaged, or their business boycotted. The nature of community life effectively created its own boundaries, its own means of resistance, its own reasons for suspicion or fear, and its own methods of enforcement.

The most common violence witnessed here was non-lethal and often had a financial rather than physical effect. Other common forms of irregular

166 For a full survey of Luggacurran in this period, see Leigh-Ann Coffey, *The planters of Luggacurran, County Laois: a Protestant community, 1879–1927* (Dublin, 2006).

167 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 119.

violence – rioting, sniping, stone throwing, etc. – are notably absent. It was only in Belfast, unique in the context of Irish revolutionary violence, that such communal violence was found to any great extent. For the city's residents, it was this communal violence that dominated their experience of the Irish Revolution, and its timing. Belfast will be the subject of the next chapter.

## Defying the IRA in Belfast

The violence that took place in Belfast between 1920 and 1922 was unique in revolutionary Ireland. Peter Hart has described the conflict there as ‘a communal war and a sectarian war, fought on the basis of ethnic mobilisation rather than paramilitary organisation’.<sup>1</sup> Violence comprised rioting, sniping, bombing, burning, reprisal killing, and forced expulsion. Belfast followed its own revolutionary timeline and, in A. C. Hepburn’s words, ‘appeared to be one of the most peaceful places in Ireland’ until it witnessed a wave of rioting in July 1920 that coincided with the removal of thousands of Catholic workers from the city’s shipyards.<sup>2</sup> The following two years saw peaks of violence, usually around the traditional Orange celebrations in July, followed by periods of relative peace and culminating in the most intense period of violence during the first six months of 1922.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the violence formed part of a longer tradition of ethnic rioting and communal disturbances dating back to the 1850s and continuing to the present day.<sup>4</sup> As intense as it was, there was little that was new about violence in Belfast at this time.

A label commonly used, then and since, to describe the violence that occurred in Belfast (and similarly in Lisburn) against Catholics between 1920 and 1922 is ‘pogrom’ and Tim Wilson has referred to a ‘competition in murder’ whereby rival communities used violence aimed at inflicting enough suffering to bring about defeat for the opposition.<sup>5</sup> Though Catholics were disproportionate victims of violence, both sides of the religious divide

1 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 249.

2 A. C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland* (Oxford, 2008), p. 205.

3 For detailed surveys of the nature of violence in Belfast, see Alan F. Parkinson, *Belfast’s unholy war: the troubles of the 1920s* (Dublin, 2004); McDermott, *Northern divisions*; Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, esp. pp. 66–89; Niall Cunningham, “‘The doctrine of vicarious punishment’: space, religion and the Belfast Troubles, 1920–22”, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 40 (2013), pp. 52–66.

4 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 249.

5 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 198.

perpetrated violence against the rival community ranging from intimidation and expulsion to killing.

Estimates of fatalities from two years of violence have varied from 409 to 498.<sup>6</sup> Eunan O’Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin have counted 225 deaths as a result of political violence between January 1919 and December 1921.<sup>7</sup> In addition, up to 2,000 serious injuries were inflicted.<sup>8</sup> Robert Lynch has recorded 650 homes burned, 8,000 civilians forced from their homes, and 6,000 from their jobs in 1920 alone, while estimates for evictions and workplace expulsions for the full two years are as high as 23,000 and 10,000 respectively.<sup>9</sup> It is often impossible, though, to identify the perpetrators of lethal violence in Belfast and non-lethal activity is even more difficult to track. Threatening letters, a staple of Irish political and radical agitation, barely register among the limited police outrage statistics available. In May 1922, for example, ‘Sinn Fein’ threatening letters comprised only six of 264 reported outrages and ‘had very little effect’.<sup>10</sup> In July, the Grand Jury of the Belfast Commission heard that intimidation by threatening letter accounted for 29 of 721 outrages during the period under review; the previous period had only marked a marginally higher proportion of 31 out of 676 outrages.<sup>11</sup> Reports of breaches of the Truce after 11 July 1921 are unenlightening and, as one civil servant remarked, ‘The value of these Returns may, I think, be estimated from the *nil* Return for Belfast for week ended 26th instant.’<sup>12</sup> Daily reports submitted by the RIC Commissioner detail shooting, raiding, bombing, and other acts of physical violence carried out by rival parties in the city. Victims and perpetrators are categorised by religion, rarely by membership of a paramilitary organisation, and most low-level activity went unrecorded.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that ‘a systematic campaign of intimidation’ was inflicted against civilians on both sides of the religious divide in the city.<sup>14</sup>

Even within the confines of Belfast city, there are regional variations in the civilian experience of violence and intimidation. Tim Wilson has

6 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 248; Parkinson, *Belfast’s unholy war*, p. 13.

7 O’Halpin and Ó Corráin (eds.), *The dead of the Irish revolution*. I am grateful to Professor Eunan O’Halpin for sharing these figures before their publication. See, also Table 4.2.

8 Parkinson, *Belfast’s unholy war*, p. 13. Robert Lynch has recorded a significantly lower figure of 1,100 wounded: Robert Lynch, ‘The people’s protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the “Belfast Pogroms”, 1920–22’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr. 2008), p. 375.

9 Lynch, ‘“Belfast Pogroms”, 1920–22’, p. 375; Parkinson, *Belfast’s unholy war*, p. 13.

10 Divisional Commissioner, RIC, Bi-Monthly Reports, 1921–22 (PRONI: HA/5/152).

11 *Irish Times*, 18 Jul. 1922.

12 Liaison Officers’ Reports, ‘Breaches of the Truce by Sinn Fein’ (PRONI: HA/32/1/4).

13 RIC Commissioner’s Reports, Belfast, Nov. 1921–Mar. 1922 (HA/5/149–50).

14 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 247.

demonstrated that violence was overwhelmingly concentrated in the working-class areas of the city. The neighbourhoods of the middle-class bourgeoisie were largely unaffected and they were only exposed to danger while crossing working-class districts on their way to the (largely peaceful) city centre. Dangerous as those trips could be, middle-class memoirs tend to reflect a sense of adventure rather than terror.<sup>15</sup> Fatalities were heavily concentrated around a small number of districts, all directly outside the city centre, and the areas with the highest density of violence are found where heavily segregated areas of Catholics and Protestants meet. Physical barriers (such as factories running between the Catholic Falls and Protestant Shankill Roads) and the built environment of the city served to limit and channel violence.<sup>16</sup> The concentration of violence in small, urban areas added to its intensity but even within affected areas there were noticeable ‘micro-boundaries’ to be observed. Locals remained acutely aware of these boundaries.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the difficulty of quantitatively tracking everyday violence in Belfast, this chapter will attempt to assess interaction between the IRA and both sides of the communal divide in Belfast, analysing as far as possible the nature of and motivation for civilian defiance. It will also discuss IRA punishment and the restrictions under which it was carried out. But first, it will examine the relationship between the IRA and the civilian population as depicted in witness statements and military pension applications.

### Volunteer recollections of violence in Belfast

Northern Volunteers are generally under-represented among the record of the Bureau of Military History and the relatively small number of Belfast veterans who did leave testimony with the BMH offer little insight into their interaction with the civilian population. Most are simply keen to emphasise that they were operating in a ‘hostile’ environment. Thomas Flynn insisted that ‘70% of the population’ were ‘actively against us’, while intelligence officer David McGuinness reflected on the one-sided nature of the intelligence war in Belfast: ‘British Intelligence organisation in Belfast area had an overwhelming amount of material to work on, such as ‘A’, ‘B’, and ‘C’ Special Constabulary, and at least 75 per cent of the civil population.’<sup>18</sup>

15 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp. 176–81.

16 Cunningham, ‘Space, religion and the Belfast Troubles’, pp. 58–61.

17 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 178.

18 BMH WS 429 (Thomas Flynn); BMH WS 417 (David McGuinness). Some of the issues surrounding the use of the BMH are briefly outlined in the concluding chapter.

Seamus McKenna compared the situation in Belfast unfavourably to that in Dublin where

the majority of the population were sympathetic and those who were not, were afraid to display hostility in any way. The position was different in Belfast where we had three-fourths of the population bitterly hostile (and many of them actively so), worse than one would find in an English city.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the repeated implication that most Catholics were either actively or passively hostile to the IRA, the Catholic population as a whole is framed as exposed, vulnerable, and (reluctantly) in need of republican protection from Protestant incursion. In contrast to the narrative painted elsewhere in the BMH, in Belfast the civilian population are not active participants in the independence struggle; Thomas Flynn is the only Belfast veteran to refer directly to civilian collaboration with the IRA: ‘The ordinary Nationalist civilian did not take an active part in these attacks [on the ‘Orange’ element]. These people, however, made their houses available to the I.R.A. and helped us in every way possible. They fed us and made every possible provision for our comfort.’<sup>20</sup>

A similar trend is evident in the 1920s and 1930s when Belfast IRA veterans applied for military service pensions.<sup>21</sup> In a reference for Roger MacCorley, Seamus Woods wrote: ‘As O/C No 1 Brigade 3rd Division his duties included the defence of the Catholic civilian population who were subject to constant attack from a hostile majority in Belfast.’<sup>22</sup> As they went on to do later with the BMH, Belfast veterans repeatedly emphasised the difficulty of operating in the city. Seán O’Neill, former OC of the Belfast Brigade, hoped the pensions committee ‘fully appreciate the circumstances amid which the Northern and particularly the Belfast I.R.A. had to work, and I would remind them that after the Treaty their work was carried on under the Craig regime, under which there was little hope of political amnesty’.<sup>23</sup> James McCarra, who also had service in Dublin and Glasgow, remarked that ‘it was more difficult to

19 BMH WS 1016 (Seamus McKenna).

20 BMH WS 429 (Thomas Flynn).

21 The following is based on applications for Military Service Pensions submitted by veterans of the Belfast IRA and made available online in the first official releases of pension application records by the MAI in 2014.

22 Roger Edmund MacCorley application (MAI: W24/SP/12076). Frank Magee insisted that MacCorley was ‘one of (if not the) best men in Belfast’ while Woods confirmed that he ‘had the *best* I.R.A. record I know of’.

23 Seán O’Neill to President, Military Service Regulation Board, 13 Jun. 1935 in Patrick McCarragher application (34/REF/7576).

be an I.R.A. man in Belfast', while John McCoy, an IRA officer in Armagh and later a BMH investigator, confirmed that 'In Belfast you would not get 40 yards when somebody, some of the so-called civilians would fire on you.'<sup>24</sup>

When recording a war record for posterity or applying for a pension based on hierarchical definitions of 'active service' it made sense to draw attention to the unique risks inherent in republican activity in the city.<sup>25</sup> The process of applying for a pension also forced Belfast veterans to think again about the enemies they had faced and define who it was they had been on active service against. While preparing for the submission of Belfast claims Denis McCullough, chair of the 'Belfast Battalion 1916' committee, went as far as producing an 'Explanatory statement of special circumstances connected with the National Struggle in Belfast Area'. The statement pointed to the heavy odds stacked against the Belfast IRA. By 1920, it claimed, the 'Nationalist element' were protected by 1,200 Volunteers but 'This force was opposed by 64,000 (Official figures) – composed of (a) British military, (b) R.I.C., (c) A. B. and C. Special Constabulary – armed, (d) Imperial Guard – armed.' Moreover, 'I.R.A. forces were fighting amongst a hostile civil population and all through the struggle for Independence these forces in Belfast and District were handicapped much more than any other unit in Ireland in this respect.'<sup>26</sup> In his sworn statement on behalf of colleague Patrick McCarragher, Roger MacCorley similarly emphasised that 'The general atmosphere there was that out of a population of 400,000 ... you had about 2,000 or 3,000 sympathisers. Every man's hand, even the hand of the so-called nationalists, were turned against us. Even membership in the Organisation was particularly dangerous.'<sup>27</sup>

There are frequent admissions of significant and dangerous hostility among the Catholic/nationalist population but often a reluctance to engage with or define that hostility, both in terms of its practitioners and its nature. Hugh O'Neill's endorsement of Belfast Fianna member Robert Graham failed to acknowledge the Catholic community at all in its definition of 'enemy': 'The applicant was to my personal knowledge very active in all operations against the enemy. Whether the enemy was R.I.C., Specials or hostile loyalists.'<sup>28</sup> Tom McNally, one of only four Belfast IRA veterans to

24 James McCarra application (MAI: 34/REF/21270); Patrick McCarragher application (34/REF/7576).

25 For the genesis and administration of the pension scheme, see Marie Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions for veterans of the Irish Revolution, 1916–1923', *War in History*, 20(2), pp. 201–21.

26 'Explanatory statement of special circumstances connected with the National Struggle in Belfast Area' (MAI: IRA Nominal Rolls, Belfast Brigade, RO/402).

27 Patrick McCarragher application (34/REF/7576).

28 Robert Graham application (24/SP/4349).

provide an interview to Ernie O'Malley, was unusual in stating a clear sense of the origin of Catholic hostility: 'A lot of our own you couldn't trust ... the Catholic population with their Hibernian background would let you down suddenly all the time'; 'The Hibernians were of no use to us. Indeed, they were a menace through their weakness.'<sup>29</sup> In his BMH statement, McNally more explicitly equated the 'anti-national' Catholic element with Hibernianism: 'it was quite clear to me that some of our Catholic neighbours were not reliable – particularly the A.O.H. brand and this is a point I would like to emphasise.' For McNally, the IRA in Belfast were not only up against 'the Unionist elements' but also 'the A.O.H. elements, plus the very large ex-British soldier family type were antagonistic and were prepared to give information to the authorities.'<sup>30</sup>

As will be seen, the Catholic population in Belfast had a complex and shifting relationship with the IRA and, while the city's religious divide made it easy to identify Protestant/loyalist enemies, the Catholic community were much more difficult to label. In describing their experiences years later, Belfast IRA veterans attempted to apply sense and logic to their war by placing it within a framework that did not always reflect its messy and often contradictory reality.

### The IRA and the Catholic population

When drawing attention to deviants within the Catholic community, Belfast's militant republicans spoke vaguely: 'the anti-Irish element of the population'; 'never a very strong National outlook at best'; 'so-called nationalists'.<sup>31</sup> It is clear both from contemporary documents and later accounts that republican activists in Belfast recognised that they did not enjoy, and had perhaps never expected, universal support from within the Catholic community. The IRA's primary focus on the conflict against Britain did not reflect the needs or desires of most of their co-religionists and they were, as Robert Lynch has pointed out, 'very much divorced by choice from the mainstream of the Catholic civilian population'.<sup>32</sup> In that context it made sense, as Tom McNally did, to apportion blame to the AOH. Politically, the Catholic population remained loyal to moderate nationalism as seen by the comfortable victory of Joseph Devlin, Irish Parliamentary

29 Tom McNally (UCDA: P17b/99).

30 BMH WS 410 (Thomas McNally).

31 'Report on Situation in No. 1 (Belfast) Brigade', attachment to OC 3rd Northern Division to CS, 20 Jul. 1922; Adjutant, 3rd Northern Division to CS, 7 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77); Patrick McCarragher application (MAI: 34/REF/7576).

32 Lynch, "Belfast Pogroms", 1920–22, p. 384.



Party politician and national president of the AOH, over Éamon de Valera in the May 1921 general election. Hibernians were regularly victims of IRA violence.<sup>33</sup> Tim Wilson, however, has argued perceptively that across Ulster there was far more fluidity at the grass roots between republicans and Hibernians than has often been allowed.<sup>34</sup> When Belfast native James McStravick was interned in 1922, for instance, a local AOH branch wrote to the Minister for Home Affairs on his behalf to attest that ‘Mr McStravick is a respectable member of society, and we can vouch that he has never been connected with any illegal organisations’ but was, in fact, ‘an uncompromising opponent of Sinn Fein in all the local elections, and in proof of that statement I may add that he is an active member of the “John Redmond” and “Joseph Devlin” Branches of the United Irish League’. McStravick’s son was an alleged IRA activist and enquiries were made about a case of mistaken identity but the RUC insisted their intelligence was sound, adding that ‘Too much reliance cannot be placed on the authority of the A.O.H. (B of E) as in documents found in St Mary’s Hall it was ascertained that one of their most important members evidently was in close touch with the I.R.A.’ McStravick’s own plea to secure his release, in which he emphasised his service with the Royal Irish Rifles during the Boer War and lamented that he was now ‘Lying on Board a Prison Ship after being a True British Loyal Subject to H.M. The King’, further emphasises the potential fluidity of allegiance.<sup>35</sup>

Catholic ex-soldiers from the Great War were a potentially problematic group for Belfast republicans. Some certainly joined the IRA and Tom McNally told Ernie O’Malley that republicans ‘had to rely upon the Irish Volunteers and on some of the ex-soldiers’.<sup>36</sup> Ex-servicemen who joined after the Truce were regarded with suspicion or even open hostility and denied positions of responsibility or access to important information.<sup>37</sup> Many more remained completely aloof of republicanism. A *Belfast Telegraph* report on the shipyard expulsions pointed out that ‘Loyalist workers’ were graciously ‘prepared to hold out the hand of fellowship to those of their Roman Catholic fellow-workmen, some of whom were ex-Servicemen, who were avowed Loyalists’.<sup>38</sup> One Catholic ex-soldier wrote to Joseph Devlin after he had been removed from his job, proclaiming himself an ‘Irish Nationalist’ and wishing to ‘expose the infernal lie that none but Sinn Feiners was expelled

33 Lynch, “Belfast Pogroms”, 1920–22’, pp. 382–3; Lynch, *Northern IRA*, p. 99.

34 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp. 130–2.

35 Internment Files, James McStravick (PRONI: HA/5/1494).

36 Tom McNally statement (UCDA: P17b/99). See, also, Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 130 n. 68.

37 Lynch, *Northern IRA*, p. 82.

38 *Belfast Telegraph*, 3 Aug. 1920.

from work in Belfast'.<sup>39</sup> Devlin informed British Prime Minister David Lloyd George that the case was 'only typical of hundreds of others whom I know'.<sup>40</sup> In another recorded case, Thomas Bailie was expelled from Harland and Wolff and, despite complying with the wishes of a 'Vigilance Committee' to supply two respectable Protestant referees, was not allowed to resume work. Bailie complained that his treatment was evidence of a purely anti-Catholic 'pogrom' and described himself as 'a Loyal R.C. ex-serviceman'. Remarkably, he had tried to join the B Special Constabulary but had been threatened with death and 'was not called on for duty as he was the only R.C. who joined up from the place in which he lives, and it was not considered advisable to do so'.<sup>41</sup> Catholic policemen, on the other hand, could be some of the IRA's most valuable sources of information.<sup>42</sup>

The Catholic clergy also offered resistance to the IRA. Seamus Woods reported in June 1922 that some priests 'have said from the pulpit that they will not give absolution to anyone who is a member of a secret military Organisation. They have refused to hear Fianna boys' Confessions'.<sup>43</sup> Thomas Fitzpatrick was forced to evacuate a church he had been guarding during curfew hours when the parish priest informed his men that 'he had arranged with the British military to guard the church for him'.<sup>44</sup> Roger MacCorley remembered covertly taking possession of rifles held by a priest who had insisted that 'under no circumstances were these arms to get into the hands of the I.R.A.'.<sup>45</sup> More seriously, it was later alleged that an unidentified member of the clergy had caused the postponement of a meticulously planned operation to burn Belfast city centre in retaliation for the burning of Cork city by Auxiliaries in December 1920. Patrick McCarragher learned that 'a Volunteer made a confession to a Priest and the Priest happened to be an Imperialist and he notified the authorities. The morning it was to take place, the 1st January [1922], the whole centre of the City was infested with British military'. Roger MacCorley offered a slightly different but equally damning version of events: 'The Bishop got wind of it some way and evidently got in touch with Hqrs. here and Hqrs. in Belfast and the whole thing got called off

39 Michael Cunningham to Joseph Devlin, 29 Oct. 1920 (PAL: LG/F/6/3/27).

40 Devlin to David Lloyd George, 1 Nov. 1920 (PAL: LG/F/6/3/27). See also, Lloyd George to Edward Carson, 2 Nov. 1920 (PAL: LG/F/6/3/27).

41 Thomas George Bailie to [Craigavon?], 14 Sept. 1922; DI for IG, RUC Belfast to Secretary, Minister for Home Affairs, 13 Oct. 1922 (PRONI: HA/32/1/291).

42 Tom McNally statement (UCDA: O'Malley notebooks, P17b/99); file on Denis Sheehan (PRONI: HA/32/1/430); Tim Wilson, "'The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast": the McMahan murders in context', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 145 (May 2010), p. 101; McDermott, *Northern divisions*, pp. 22–4.

43 OC 3rd Northern Division to CS, 27 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77).

44 BMH WS 395 (Thomas Fitzpatrick).

45 BMH WS 389 (Roger MacCorley).

much to the disgust of all and sundry.<sup>46</sup> Like most defiance offered by the Catholic clergy, this informing seems to have gone unpunished; neither does it appear in statements to the BMH or the O'Malley notebooks.

The absence of any real claim to a majority hold on the Catholic population severely disrupted IRA 'civil' operations in the city. Edicts were, at best, difficult to enforce. On arriving in Glasgow, for instance, Roger MacCorley was surprised to see a crowd of Belfast 'refugees': 'We had issued an order that no able-bodied man was to leave the Brigade area even for a day.'<sup>47</sup> Republican courts were only carried on in 'a small way' in the city and no IRA levy was struck.<sup>48</sup> Joe McKelvey, then OC of the 3rd Northern Division, informed Richard Mulcahy that it was 'always with difficulty we were able to raise sufficient funds to keep the work of the Army going in this area.' McKelvey intended to raise a levy after the Truce but the lack of support for any such project, even in Catholic areas, is evidenced by his candid admission that 'its enforcement will be difficult'.<sup>49</sup> McKelvey's prediction was prescient, as a letter advertising a sweepstake in aid of the arms fund in March 1922 makes clear: 'It is impossible to raise collections here, so we ask you to assist us by disposing of a few tickets to enable us to buy some war material.'<sup>50</sup> This reluctance to offer full support to the republican campaign is not surprising in the context of the potentially devastating economic effects of inter-communal violence in Belfast.

Shipyards expulsions created issues for Belfast Catholics not faced by their co-religionists in the south. When a signed renunciation of Sinn Féin was proposed as a condition for the reinstatement of Catholic shipyard employees, workers were placed in what Alan Parkinson has described as a 'Catch 22'. Very few signed and this should not necessarily be seen either as a declaration of allegiance to republicanism or defiance of the Crown but rather the result of communal pressure; many Catholics 'would have been deterred ... by the inevitable ostracism which it would produce within their own community when some men returned to work and others did not'.<sup>51</sup> Careers and livelihoods were directly and devastatingly impacted by the violence and a communal perception among Catholics that they were victims of a sectarian 'pogrom' created a dynamic unique to Belfast. The city's Catholic civilian population were also exceptionally regular perpetrators of

46 Patrick McCarragher application (MAI: 34/REF/7576).

47 Roger MacCorley (UCDA: P17b/98).

48 BMH WS 429 (Thomas Flynn).

49 OC 3rd Northern Division to CS, 16 Aug. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/23).

50 OC B Company, 3rd Battalion, No. 1 Brigade, 7 Mar. 1922 (PRONI: HA/5/859).

51 Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war*, p. 40. One 'Expelled English Roman Catholic' had no such qualms and wrote to the Belfast Telegraph to request a 'form of declaration': *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 Aug. 1920.

violence. Belfast's Catholics displayed a 'genuine communal solidarity' in defending their communities but one that was formed 'at the neighbourhood level under siege conditions'.<sup>52</sup> In an atmosphere of oppression, revenge, and reprisal, the traditional republican focus on separation from Britain was often lost. 'There was a lot of defending areas, organising the I.R.A. to save the Catholic positions, but there was really no Nationalist fight.'<sup>53</sup> On 12 July, Joe McKelvey reported that amidst rioting sparked by the killing of three Auxiliaries, a 'Catholic mob', infuriated by the burning of their homes, had set fire to a large business in the city and were 'almost beyond control'. The crowd beat a passing Volunteer when he attempted to intervene.<sup>54</sup>

Here, perhaps, lies the key to understanding the nature of IRA interaction with the Catholic population in Belfast. Wilson has written that, contrary to a historiography that tends to emphasise the weak nature of Catholic support for the IRA campaign against 'England', it can be seen that where the IRA was effective in acting as a defender against the Protestant majority active support was frequently forthcoming; sustenance and safe houses were provided, guns were smuggled, escapes facilitated, and bin lids drummed to warn of approaching Crown forces.<sup>55</sup> Belfast Catholics were pragmatic enough to protect their own interests and a deputation of merchants informed a meeting in the Colonial Office that 'the Catholic business men in Belfast excluding republicans and the professional men, would be ready to recognise the Northern Government, but for the rest of the Catholic population the idea of religious persecution dominated their political preferences'.<sup>56</sup> It was only after the onset of the Truce in July 1921 that the Catholic community could accept republicans as defenders of their interests. Once the Truce had inculcated belief in a republican 'victory', support for the IRA among the Catholic population very quickly reached its peak. Seamus Woods reported that the IRA had only enjoyed the support of a quarter of the population before 11 July 1921 but 'with the signing of the Truce the Catholic population, believing for the moment that we had been victorious and Specials beaten, practically flocked to our standard'.<sup>57</sup> Roger MacCorley recalled that a spate of looting by Hibernians at this time 'was due to pique that our people were now accepted by the British as the official representatives of the Irish people'.<sup>58</sup> Even the city's police commissioner

52 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 23.

53 Tom McNally statement (UCDA: P17b/99).

54 OC 3rd Northern Division to CS, 12 Jul. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/22).

55 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp. 149–50.

56 Report of meeting at the Colonial Office, 2 Jun. 1922 (TNA: CO 906/25).

57 'Report on Situation in No. 1 (Belfast) Brigade', attachment to OC 3rd Northern Division to CS, 20 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77).

58 BMH WS 389 (Roger MacCorley).

conceded that its new public profile and ability to drill openly in Catholic areas had allowed the IRA to ‘dominate the Devlinites’.<sup>59</sup>

Woods accepted that the IRA’s newfound support base had been won:

not so much out of sympathy with our National aspirations, and our fight for National freedom, but more on account of the part the Army had played in defending the minority against organised attacks by non-uniformed Crown forces.<sup>60</sup>

By mid-1922, he still believed that ‘the I.R.A. have the support of the whole people – of every Catholic in Belfast’ but the tide had already begun to turn.<sup>61</sup> Unlike the rest of the country, Belfast did not enjoy an immediate (if temporary) return to peace in the months following the Truce and instead witnessed more rioting, looting, and tit-for-tat killing. Robert Lynch has, tellingly, pointed out that over three-quarters of Catholic fatalities inflicted by the loyalist community followed shortly after an IRA operation.<sup>62</sup> From 1920, young militants like Woods and MacCorley had protested vigorously against the cautious policy adopted by ‘weak souls’ in their Brigade aimed at preventing reprisals on the Catholic population but the young revolutionaries’ limited offensive activity in 1922 was followed by often brutal retaliation.<sup>63</sup> Having faced two years of regular violence, terror, and disruption, and disillusioned by the continuing violence inflicted upon them, the Catholic community withdrew its support completely.

The testimony of IRA veterans generally fails to acknowledge the potentially provocative nature of their own actions.<sup>64</sup> But at the height of the most intense period of violence in early 1922, Woods and McGovern, who remained loyal to GHQ after the Treaty was passed, had blamed the element within the Belfast IRA who supported the IRA ‘Executive’ in the Four Courts in Dublin:

The operations of the Executive forces have been the cause of trouble to our troops since their formation. They have been ill-timed and carried out in places which afforded the least danger. The men who were responsible have shown no consideration whatever for the civil

59 Commissioner J. F. Gelston quoted in Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p. 220.

60 ‘Report on Situation in No. 1 (Belfast) Brigade’, 20 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77).

61 Quoted in Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 149 n. 157.

62 Lynch, “‘Belfast Pogroms’, 1920–22’, p. 378.

63 BMH WS 389 (Roger MacCorley); BMH WS 395 (Thomas Fitzpatrick).

64 See, for example, the testimony of Roger MacCorley, perhaps the most active republican gunman: BMH WS 389 (Roger MacCorley); Roger Edmund MacCorley application (MAI: W24/SP/12076).

population, they have destroyed their morale, and have turned them against the I.R.A. in general.

The civil population, apparently unable to distinguish between pro- and anti-Treaty elements, looked upon 'all as the I.R.A. and condemn all accordingly'.<sup>65</sup> Particular scorn was reserved for the killing of two Specials in May, which had resulted in a violent attack on a Catholic area 'that was the hardest blow the civil population had got, and it almost broke their morale'.

The community responded by cooperating with the police in the hope of putting a stop to republican activity. Reports to GHQ in Dublin from July 1922 describe how a Special Constabulary ploy of occupying commandeered buildings in the Catholic Falls Road area 'with a view to fraternising with the Catholic population' had met with success. Seamus Woods noted that some were 'taking advantage of the situation' to give 'all available scraps of information to the enemy'.<sup>66</sup> Seamus McGovern, the divisional adjutant, similarly recorded that civilians were 'only too anxious to acquiesce, and I'm very much afraid are at present giving information', further suggesting that the arrest of a number of useful Volunteers was the result of information gleaned from within the Catholic community. The argument was not, however, that IRA operations should cease to save the Catholic population from reprisal attacks but that it was the isolated, ineffectual actions of the 'Executive' forces that were problematic. It was suggested that the systematic campaign of 'burnings' that had been carried out on 'loyal' homes and businesses in the city in early 1922 had meant 'the sympathy and support of the people was slowly coming back to us' and a return to that policy was advocated. It was also considered that in the event of a wide-scale IRA offensive in Belfast and across the six counties they 'would be compelled to mete out Capital Punishment amongst the Catholic civilian population'.<sup>67</sup>

By the final quarter of 1922, with the collapse of the 'joint-IRA offensive' and attention increasingly drawn towards civil war in the south, the northern IRA's campaign had ended in defeat.<sup>68</sup> In Belfast, the police saw a clear explanation for republican failure. The RUC commissioner reported 'a strong move on the part of the Catholics not to continue the trouble as far as they could to prevent any further trouble from their areas'.<sup>69</sup> Neighbours had passed information on the perpetrators of two shootings to the police, a

65 Adjutant, 3rd Northern Division to CS, 7 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77).

66 'Report on Situation in No. 1 (Belfast) Brigade', attachment to OC 3rd Northern Division to CS, 20 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/77).

67 Adjutant, 3rd Northern Division to CS, 7 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77).

68 Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp. 95–175.

69 Gelston to IG, 25 Sep. 1922 (PRONI: HA/32/1/182).

greater willingness to 'co-operate with the R.U.C. and Special Constabulary' was noticed, and 'every effort is being made by the Catholic population to control the gunmen'.<sup>70</sup> A final insult to republicans was seen in the tearing down by parishioners of a number of posters displayed on church gates urging them to avoid all contact with the RUC and Specials, 'apparently much to the satisfaction of those leaving the Church'.<sup>71</sup> Communities had effectively decided to frustrate the work of any armed Catholic, republican or otherwise, and, according to the police, the 'excellent relations between inhabitants and the police' was 'galling to, amongst others, the Republican gunmen'.<sup>72</sup>

The total collapse of Catholic support can also be explained in the context of the demobilisation of the RIC. While the RIC in the twenty-six counties was being disbanded, the constabulary in the north-east were kept on until a new police force could be constituted for the northern state. Uncertainty about their futures and an acute awareness of the fate suffered by many of their southern colleagues led to a distinct loss of morale and increased indiscipline within the ranks of the Belfast RIC. As Tim Wilson has astutely argued, it is in these conditions that 'hard-line loyalist elements' within the demoralised RIC, who had largely refrained from retributive violence, may have 'decided to demonstrate in particularly spectacular fashion that they were still willing and able to lash out at their perceived enemies'.<sup>73</sup> Given the high profile of the McMahan killings in March 1922, alongside the growing belligerence of the Special Constabularies, who had been filling the security vacuum in Belfast, it should not be surprising that Catholics fearing similar acts would have been reticent about openly supporting the IRA.<sup>74</sup> Seamus Woods, for instance, reported in July 1922 that an increase in effective Crown force raiding, Special Powers legislation, and the fear of 'floggings' had made civilians 'very loath to keep "wanted men" or arms'.<sup>75</sup> The Belfast Criminal Investigation Department claimed its operations had effectively limited violence in the city by September 1922 and the increased risk of violent reprisals – from which the IRA could offer

70 Gelston to IG, 25 Sep. 1922 (PRONI: HA/32/1/182); 'Report on the State of City of Belfast', 26 Sep. 1922 (/290).

71 Report to Commissioner, Crime Special Branch, Belfast, 25 Sep. 1922; DI to Commissioner, City of Belfast, 25 Sep. 1922 (/5/1032).

72 DI to Commissioner, City of Belfast, 25 Sep. 1922 (/5/1032).

73 Wilson, 'McMahan murders in context', p. 97.

74 In the early hours of 24 March 1922, five men dressed in police uniforms entered the home of Catholic publican Owen McMahan and shot him dead along with three of his sons and a barman named Edward McKinney. A fourth McMahan son later died of wounds and a fifth survived his injuries.

75 'Report on Situation in No. 1 (Belfast) Brigade', 20 Jul. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77).

limited protection – encouraged Catholic civilians to avoid, and if possible prevent, trouble.<sup>76</sup>

In September 1922, the RUC commissioner for Belfast, J. F. Gelston, remarked sensibly that ‘It is only from the political society to which offender belongs that useful information can be obtained, that emanating from a hostile or opposing faction can scarcely be relied on ... and useful information rarely finds a leakage through hostile channels.’<sup>77</sup> To the IRA, then, the Catholic community was a potentially far more damaging source of informers than its loyalist enemies. A resident of the majority Catholic Forest Road, for instance, secretly supplied the Northern Ireland government with a list of names and addresses of Belfast IRA and Fianna Éireann members in 1922.<sup>78</sup>

Tom McNally remarked to Ernie O’Malley that in 1921 there ‘was not much doing except the shooting of lads who were giving evidence against some of our lads’ but the Belfast IRA do not seem to have shot a single alleged ‘spy’ in Belfast by December 1921.<sup>79</sup> As seen in Table 5.1, the IRA can be said certainly to have shot two civilians (both Protestants) and probably another seven (all but one of whom was Protestant). If the IRA shot these, or others, as suspected informers, it is unusual that they did not advertise the killings or label the bodies as was done elsewhere. The difficulty of operating in the city may go some way towards explaining either the absence of executed spies or the failure to claim killings publicly. Communal boundaries and state protection, for instance, made higher-profile targets difficult to reach. In July 1922, a magistrate received a notice from the IRA accusing him of being ‘a bad Catholic’ and warning that he would be shot. He believed the warning was ‘not to be disregarded’ and requested protection, which was provided, but did not want ‘a man walking with him on the streets of Belfast, as he generally keeps to the centre of the City’.<sup>80</sup> All five Catholics certainly shot by the IRA were members of the RIC, guilty by membership of that force. Commenting on fatalities across the ‘six counties’ between

76 ‘Statistics of results of CID raids in Belfast and Northern Ireland’ (PRONI: HA/32/1/267).

77 ‘Report on the state of the City of Belfast’, 26 Sep. 1922 (/1/290).

78 File on letter from James J. Orr, Forest Street, 1922 (/1/261). Forest Street was home to 111 Roman Catholics and twelve non-Catholics in 1911: 1911 census returns (census.nationalarchives.ie) (24 June 2015).

79 Tom McNally statement (UCDA: P17b/99); O’Halpin and Ó Corráin’s research for *The dead of the Irish revolution* (forthcoming) has not found evidence of an executed ‘spy’ in Belfast. Kieran Glennon makes reference to one Catholic shot as a ‘police spy’ but does not provide any additional information or a citation: Glennon, *From pogrom to civil war*, p. 270.

80 Watt to Solly-Flood, 7 Jul. 1922 (MAI: BMH CD/310/9). Dougal lived outside the city in ‘a fairly safe place’ but travelled in to Belfast by car.



**Table 5.1 Victims of lethal violence in Belfast by IRA, probable IRA, and riot or unknown shooter, 1919–1921**

	IRA	Probable IRA	Riot/ unknown shooter
Victim			
Auxiliary Division Royal Irish Constabulary	2	0	0
Civilian	2	7	95
Harbour Police	1	0	1
Military	0	0	3
Royal Irish Constabulary	11	0	1
Ulster Special Constabulary	1	0	0
Religion			
Catholic	5	1	46
Protestant	9	6	50
Unknown	3	0	4

*Source:* Eunan O’Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin (eds.), *The dead of the Irish revolution* (forthcoming).

December 1921 and May 1922, the assistant secretary to the cabinet reported to the Irish Office that among 80 Roman Catholic civilians killed and 138 wounded, ‘many of these were loyal Catholics shot by I.R.A.’<sup>81</sup> While applying for a pension in the 1930s, Joseph Billings described a night where ‘we were shooting into the Catholic crowd. I had a Stains rifle and fired towards where the shooting was coming from. We were always at that kind of work.’<sup>82</sup> Billings made no reference to casualties but some Catholic fatalities may have been the result of such dispersing fire. Others may have resulted from accidents or ‘friendly fire’, though geographer Niall Cunningham has concluded that this ‘may be adequate to explain a small minority of fatalities, but is probably not satisfactory to stand as a general characterisation’.<sup>83</sup> Some of the killings for whom the perpetrator or motive remains unknown (included in Table 5.1) may have been Catholics shot as a punishment or a warning but it seems that, more often than not, serious defiance within the Catholic community went unpunished.

81 Blackmore to Hemming, 30 May 1922 (PAL: LG/F/20/1/21).

82 Joseph Patrick Billings application (MAI: 34/REF/1089).

83 Cunningham, ‘Space, religion and the Belfast Troubles’, p. 54.

### The IRA and the Protestant community

Between 1919 and 1921, the IRA killed at least 36 members of the regular RIC and Auxiliary Division, as seen in Table 5.1. Memoirs and testimony give detailed descriptions of the killing of Crown forces and defensive operations against loyalist paramilitaries, snipers, and rioters but are more reticent about attacks on Protestant civilians. So what of the IRA's offensive action against Protestants and the Protestant community? As Table 5.1 shows, the IRA certainly killed nine Protestants, and probably a further six. Six of the nine fatalities definitively attributable to the IRA were policemen but all six probable killings were civilian. Again, however, these civilian casualties were not deliberately claimed by republicans. Even among this small sample of nine civilian killings, it seems clear that the IRA were more likely to shoot Protestants than Catholics, even if Catholics were more likely to have useful intelligence. Robert Lynch has suggested that the IRA killed a substantial number of Protestant civilians and a 'conservative estimate would put the figure at thirty, although it is probably as high as fifty'. If this was the case, it would be significant, indicating that the IRA killed significantly more Protestant civilians than it did police or military and would be a remarkable figure overall, given the small number of active republican gunmen in the city.<sup>84</sup> Allowing for killings in unknown or dubious circumstances (as many as 100 in Table 5.1), and the potential for IRA members to have been involved in some killing during riots, Lynch's estimate would point to a significant, and perhaps unrealistic, escalation in killing after January 1922.

Finding and mapping the extent and nature of non-lethal violence by the IRA against Protestants is more difficult again. It is often impossible to distinguish republican violence from that carried out by other Catholic individuals or groups but the Belfast IRA or its members were certainly implicated in some of the low-level terror inflicted on Protestants, including robbery, beatings, the burning of Orange halls, and the expulsion of Protestants families from mixed and border areas of the city.<sup>85</sup> Attempts to purge Protestants from areas with a Catholic majority met with some success and, although there is nothing to suggest a systematic campaign, something in the region of 1,000 Protestants were forced from their homes in nationalist-controlled areas.<sup>86</sup> Over 20 per cent of the total expulsions in Belfast were Protestants expelled by Catholics; in September 1920, the *Impartial Reporter* described Protestants 'cleared out by the hundred'

84 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 248.

85 Lynch, "'Belfast Pogroms', 1920–22", p. 386.

86 Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 250.

including a Labour leader who had ‘held aloof from party strife’ removed ‘simply because he had been a Protestant’.<sup>87</sup> Though significantly smaller in numbers, the Protestants expelled from their homes were less likely to remain in Belfast and the city’s Catholic population had actually grown, if marginally, by 1926.<sup>88</sup> Some of the IRA’s lethal violence against Protestants was indiscriminate and decidedly sectarian in nature, including victims who may or may not have had any implication in the violence against Catholics. This is most viscerally seen in bomb attacks on trams carrying Protestant workers from their jobs. Trams were targeted specifically as their destination made clear that they could be carrying Protestant passengers.<sup>89</sup> The Unionist MP William Twaddle, shot by the IRA a short distance from his business in May 1922, was a rare Protestant victim of high social or political standing.<sup>90</sup> This may have been at least partially the result of a sense of frustration at an inability to identify or punish those actually involved in attacks on the Catholic community or to target high-profile Unionists.

In October 1921, a Presbyterian ex-serviceman named Arthur Hunt was kidnapped, beaten, and was allegedly due to be shot when the ‘prison’ in which he was held was raided by police and his release secured. Hunt appeared as a Crown witness leading to the arrest and imprisonment of ‘Twelve leading Gunmen’.<sup>91</sup> Despite the authorities’ very genuine concern for Hunt’s safety – ‘He cannot remain in the City ... he will certainly be murdered’; ‘the house is watched day and night by S.F.’; ‘his life is not worth a moment’s purchase outside his own house’ – the absence of any opposition as he attempted to emigrate is evidence of the limited opportunities available for precisely targeted reprisals against the Protestant community.<sup>92</sup> Thomas Fitzpatrick recalled that the IRA did not have much success dealing with members of a shadowy ‘Protestant organisation’ aimed at shooting ‘Catholics in their homes and in workshops’, though ‘Simon Timoney got a couple of them one day.’<sup>93</sup>

Alan Parkinson has found that intimidation was most likely to occur where there was a majority of one denomination or on streets flanking exclusively Protestants areas.<sup>94</sup> IRA incursion into loyalist-dominated areas,

87 *Impartial Reporter*, 9 Sep. 1920.

88 Hart, *The I.R.A. at War*, p. 256.

89 Lynch, ‘“Belfast Pogroms”, 1920–22’, p. 386.

90 Parkinson, *Belfast’s unholy war*, p. 220.

91 Mrs Hunt to Prime Minister, Belfast, 1 Dec. 1921 (PRONI: HA/32/1/140A). Hunt was living in the Protestant Shankill area in 1911: 1911 census returns, Arthur Hunt (census.nationalarchives.ie) (29 June 2015).

92 See file on Arthur Hunt (PRONI: HA/32/1/140A). Hunt eventually settled in Australia.

93 BMH WS 395 (Thomas Fitzpatrick).

94 Parkinson, *Belfast’s unholy war*, p. 40.

then, was limited. There were, of course, significant additional risks attached to mounting attacks in majority Protestant communities. The likelihood of encountering a large, hostile, and well-armed crowd was high, and escape potentially difficult. The IRA's most intense period of activity against the Protestant/loyalist population came shortly before its collapse in 1922. Roger MacCorley stated that the IRA had to divide its operations into two strands: 'defensive operations' to protect the Catholic community and 'offensive operations' against the Protestant/loyalist majority.<sup>95</sup> While MacCorley and his fellow republicans were able to inflict proportionally large casualties, contribute to the expulsion of hundreds of Protestants from Catholic areas, and cause significant damage to property (all while suffering relatively few casualties), they ultimately failed on both counts. The Catholic community continued to suffer disproportionate and often horrific violence during two years of conflict and any successful offensive operations were undermined by brutal reprisal attacks by state forces and loyalist gangs. By the end of 1922, the Northern government and the Protestant/loyalist majority remained firmly in place while the republican movement in the city emerged as emphatic losers.

### Conclusion

Robert Lynch's work on the Belfast IRA has highlighted 'questions about the IRA's ability, and also perhaps its desire, to defend Catholic areas' and suggested that it is as an 'avenger, as the righter of wrongs, against the perceived authors of the "pogrom" that we may find the defining aspect of its relationship with the Catholic minority'.<sup>96</sup> It was, certainly, a more complex relationship than some of the testimony would allow and the enemy within was, in many ways, the most difficult to define. Catholic Hibernians, ex-servicemen, policemen, and the upper bourgeoisie were all viewed by the IRA as potential enemies but did not always suit easy definition. Initially aloof of 'fratricidal strife' and wary of anything that might distract energy from the war against 'England', the Belfast IRA never developed a fully homogenous relationship with the Catholic community it claimed to protect.<sup>97</sup> In its broader aims it was ineffective, and it lost its war, but the Belfast IRA still managed to inflict damage – both in terms of fatalities and destruction of property – in marked contrast to its small numbers. Ultimately, though, an inability to develop and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with

95 BMS WS 389 (Roger MacCorley).

96 Lynch, "Belfast Pogroms", 1920–22, p. 385.

97 BMH WS 1016 (Seamus McKenna).

its community and a failure to bring the Catholic population willingly under a republican banner contributed to its defeat.

Belfast was, indeed, unique in the context of revolutionary Ireland but personal interest and human decency could, on occasion, transcend the sectarian divide. As seen elsewhere in the country, personal safety was one of the key, overriding considerations among non-combatants to which Belfast were not immune. At a time when both sides were expelling the 'disloyal' element from their communities, some Catholics and Protestants ignored communal divides to ensure mutual safety. As early as July 1920, the police divisional commissioner noted that there had been 'wholesale cases of persons of contrary views – religious and political – changing residences' in the city.<sup>98</sup> Reporting on the Belfast expulsions, the *Impartial Reporter* noted that 'Between the two sections there have been numerous exchanges of houses by mutual consent, and where arrangements of this kind have been entered into there has not been any interference with the dispossessed parties during the period of transfer.'<sup>99</sup> The RIC commissioner might have complained that this was done 'without consulting landlord or Agents', but house-swapping was mutually beneficial, as experienced by John Boyd's grandparents:

I was told that the Boyds had heard of a Catholic family who were scared of being chased out of their house which was in a Protestant area, and they wanted to get out before this happened. When grandpa and grandma heard of this they met the Catholics and agreed to switch houses because Beechfield Street was adjoining the small Catholic area of Ballymacarrett. This would be doing the Catholic family a good turn and doing themselves a good turn too.<sup>100</sup>

There is also evidence, despite hardened communal boundaries, of civilians showing a sense of fair play towards neighbours and expressing revulsion towards violence and intimidation in any form.<sup>101</sup> Even UVF gun runner Colonel Frederick Hugh Crawford could write, if self-indulgently, that after a minor public assault by two nationalist brothers (one of whom was an ex-soldier) he was met in a 'Sinn Fein district' by locals who apologised to him and lamented he had not shot the young men involved: 'you are an honourable, inoffensive gentleman and willing to oblige anyone,

98 MCRs, Belfast, Jul. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112).

99 *Impartial Reporter*, 9 Sep. 1920.

100 MCRs, Belfast, Jul. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112); John Boyd quoted in Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 61.

101 Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 61.

etc.<sup>102</sup> But, as Tim Wilson has pointed out, cumulatively these individual acts and displays of preference were nothing like enough to prevent repeated outbreaks of serious violence.<sup>103</sup>

102 Diary of Colonel Frederick Hugh Crawford, 23–24 Jul. 1920 (PRONI: D640/11/1).

103 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 161.

## Old Enemies? July 1921–June 1922

The Truce that came into effect on 11 July 1921 officially ended what is now most often referred to as the War of Independence and came as the culmination of the most violent six months of the war.<sup>1</sup> Relieved civilians celebrated the arrival of peace and Volunteers returned home to bask in newfound freedom, safety, and adulation.<sup>2</sup> Violence did not come to a complete stop at 12 p.m. on 11 July but the weeks following the ceasefire are notable for the relative absence of political violence. Total attacks against the RIC, their families and suppliers, for instance, remained in single figures for the remainder of June with no attacks at all reported in August.<sup>3</sup> RIC county inspectors reflected positively on conditions in their counties and the British administration remained confident that both IRA and Crown forces would obey the terms of the Truce; early breaches were considered unimportant and unreflective.<sup>4</sup> Over time patience wore thin as non-violent breaches became the norm and the RIC were increasingly frustrated by restrictions imposed by the Truce and their inability to interfere effectively. The liaison system, whereby liaison officials were appointed on both sides to enquire into breaches of the Truce, only seemed to generate further irritation. Conflicting evidence, denials, and counter-accusations made it difficult for either side to settle complaints

- 1 For a recent account of the political developments surrounding the Truce, see Ronan Fanning, *Fatal path: British government and Irish revolution, 1919–1922* (London, 2013), pp. 247–76.
- 2 Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, pp. 17–19; Dan Breen, *My fight for Irish freedom* (Dublin, 1981; 1st edn. Tralee, 1964), p. 166.
- 3 RIC, Weekly summaries (TNA: CO 904/150). In truth, the statistics for this activity are low from as early as May 1921 as lethal violence increased and it became more difficult and less effective to intimidate policemen. Intimidation of this kind may also have been under-reported in some areas as violence increased.
- 4 MCRs, IG and CIs, Jul.–Aug. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/116).

adequately.<sup>5</sup> Dan Breen insisted that ‘as time went on the Black and Tans were guilty of many breaches’ while police reports in August began to suggest that it was the IRA who were not, or had never been, obeying Truce terms.<sup>6</sup> Any settlement, they believed, would come at the behest of the gunmen.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter will explore the twelve months between the Truce and the Civil War under three headings. The first section will treat non-lethal IRA breaches of Truce regulations. The second will focus on the labelling of civilians as suspicious by local IRA intelligence. Primarily using a substantial collection of intelligence notes, it will profile the ‘suspects’, explore what brought them to the attention of the IRA, and suggest some patterns in the ways in which the IRA’s defined civilians as enemies. The third section will take a broader approach to civilian defiance and IRA punishment by dealing with two specific groups that did not naturally fit into the accepted nationalist or republican standard: first, Protestants and loyalists and, secondly, the disbanded members of the RIC and their families.

### The IRA and breaches of the Truce

IRA officers believed a renewal of war was likely and throughout the Truce period preparations were made for training and reorganisation in advance of a return to violence.<sup>8</sup> Republicans were also conscious of the future of their counter-state and wished to ensure its survival by carrying out its activities and enforcing its decrees. As David Fitzpatrick has noted, ‘The immediate effect of the Truce upon the Republican courts was to increase, revive and strengthen them’.<sup>9</sup> The IRA continued to coerce unwilling litigants, jurors, and witnesses, and punish perceived defiance. IRA units in Sligo, Mayo, and Cork took their lead from a September 1921 Dáil home affairs memorandum and issued warnings that those taking any part in proceedings of an ‘enemy Court’ would be deemed guilty of assisting the enemy and

5 Charles Townshend, *The republic: the fight for Irish independence* (London, 2013), pp. 311–14; Liaison and Evacuation Papers (MAI: LE/4–11).

6 See, for example, MCRs, CI, Galway E.R., Aug. 1921; MCRs, CI, Westmeath, Aug. 1921(TNA: CO 904/116).

7 See, for example, MCRs, CIs Cavan and Kerry, Sep. 1921 (/116).

8 Ernie O’Malley, *The singing flame* (Dublin, 1992; 1st edn. 1978), p. 15; BMH WS 1763 (Daniel Breen).

9 Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 152; Kotsonouris, *Retreat from revolution*, pp. 51–60. For a description of the working of these courts at a local level following the Truce, see Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, pp. 157–69.



‘dealt with accordingly’.<sup>10</sup> In November, Sir Hamar Greenwood described the kidnapping of prospective participants in British courts as ‘the most serious menace to the truce’.<sup>11</sup> The IRA and its weaker auxiliary, the Irish Republican Police, similarly endeavoured to outdo the RIC in dealing with minor offences and petty crime. Crowds in Dundalk, County Louth goaded police with taunts of ‘you are no longer functioning’ and ‘the I.R.A. police are doing duty now’.<sup>12</sup>

Offenders were most commonly detained for a period at an ‘unknown destination’ and frequently fined but occasionally subjected to public punishment, a spectacle that simultaneously acted as a reminder of the control and reach of the IRA. For example, three men tied to a church railing before early mass in Kilsaran, County Louth were branded with a sign that proclaimed ‘Robbers and spies of Kilsaran Parish Beware I.R.A.’<sup>13</sup> In a bid to enforce a moral as well as a legal code, illicit *poitín* distilling was suppressed and new licensing laws enforced.<sup>14</sup> This prohibition generated hostility among previously supportive or indifferent distillers and publicans. A local RIC sergeant in Queen’s County speculated that a half-day holiday notice served on publicans would ‘go a long way to split up Sinn Fein. 95% of the publicans are Sinn Feiners so long as it did not financially affect them, but now when their income is tampered with it’s a different matter’.<sup>15</sup>

The enforcement of law and order in local communities became more complex when members of the IRA were among the perpetrators of crime. Seán Moylan later reflected that the Truce period allowed young men with guns to pose as ‘war hardened soldiers. In public houses, at dance halls, on the road in “commandeered” motor cars, they pushed the ordinary decent civilian aside and earned for the I.R.A. a reputation for bullying, insobriety and dishonesty that sapped public confidence’.<sup>16</sup> For those concerned with both the political situation and the reputation of the IRA, this was of grave concern. When six Volunteers and ‘would-be Republicans’ were accused of ‘carrying on with a local woman, a noted loose-character’, the OC of the 5th Northern Division, Dan Hogan, reported that ‘it was necessary that

10 Memorandum on the organisation of the courts, Sep. 1921 (NAI: DECC/11/106); Breaches of the Truce, Sligo, Cork (TNA: CO 904/154).

11 Weekly survey of the state of Ireland, week ending 17 Nov. 1921 (TNA: CAB/24/129).

12 ‘Extract from Weekly Intelligence Report, Dundalk’, December 1921 (PAL: LG/F/20/1/6).

13 Breaches of the Truce, King’s County (TNA: CO 904/153).

14 Copy of instructions from ‘Dail Eireann, Police Hdqrs’, 20 October 1921 (MAI: LE/4/15); MCRs, CI, Armagh, Oct. 1921 (TNA: CO 904/116); Breaches of the Truce, Donegal, King’s County, Queen’s County, Mayo and Sligo (CO 904/151–5); McGarry, *Eoin O’Duff*, p. 52.

15 Breaches of the Truce, Queen’s County (TNA: CO 904/155).

16 BMH WS 838 (Seán Moylan).

strong action be taken by us or else it would be believed that we allowed such occurrences at our functions'.<sup>17</sup> Ordinary crime was rampant but it was offences committed by Volunteers that caused the most anxiety. A complainant from County Kerry insisted that 'poaching is a small matter, but that Volunteers should poach is not a small matter, as the example it sets to neer-do-wells existent in every country is bad'.<sup>18</sup>

Most breaches of the Truce were non-violent and, individually, unimportant to all except their victims. Cumulatively they define the interaction between civilians and the IRA after the Truce. The commandeering of bicycles and motor cars, for example, generated significant grumbling and disquiet. Todd Andrews admitted in his memoir that when 'a motor car was required for any purpose, there was no scruple in requisitioning the nearest at hand. In general we treated the population with little consideration'.<sup>19</sup> Self-proclaimed southern Irish loyalists later sought compensation for stolen cars, bicycles, and traps and defined the theft as punishment for their loyalty.<sup>20</sup> But others professing nationalist sympathies felt similarly aggrieved by the commandeering of their property. In Cork, Jeremiah O'Sullivan protested that 'Every body else got their Bicycles back alright so there must be some thing else behind the scenes. I have supported the national cause and endeavoured to do the best I could along with having to rear a young family with very little help. I didn't expect this knock from the Source it came'.<sup>21</sup> Dominick Foran insisted that he was 'always willing to oblige and contribute to the cause when demanded' but felt he had been unjustly treated by the IRA men who took his bicycle as 'I needed my bicycle urgently on several occasions'.<sup>22</sup> The behaviour of those who took part in the commandeering caused additional resentment. The owner of a commandeered bicycle in Kerry asked if it was 'a chivalrous act on the part of any man to put a revolver up to an old woman (my mother) & frighten her out of her wits?' while another who wrote on behalf of several neighbours noted, with more than a hint of sarcasm, that 'If it is the Roscommon Brigade rules or Dail Éireann laws to come at midnight and take away by force a bicycle ... and hold them over for their own use in Peace days We as Irishmen fully comply'.<sup>23</sup>

17 Report on activities, 5th Northern Division, Aug. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/24).

18 Arthur Vincent to CS, 30 Aug. 1921 (/23).

19 C. S. Andrews, *Dublin made me: an autobiography* (Dublin, 2001; 1st edn. 1979), pp. 236–7.

20 See, for example, Elizabeth Johnson claim (TNA: CO 762/183/4); Vincent O'Riordan claim (/66/1).

21 Jeremiah O'Sullivan to Fintan Murphy, 28 Nov. 1921 (MAI: LE/4/2).

22 Dominick Foran to Fintan Murphy, n.d., late 1921 (BMH CD/227/21/B21).

23 Donal O Maoilmicil to Daniel Mulvihill, 30 Nov. 1921 (UCDA: P64/5(26)); T. J. O'Dowd to Fintan Murphy, 25 Aug. 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/227//21/L6).

Unfulfilled promises that bicycles or motor cars would be returned within a few days, the belief that cars had been used simply for ‘joy-riding’, and unsatisfactory explanations about IRA policy resulted in accusations of unfair treatment or partiality from civilians.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, the collection of levies generated dissent between civilians and the local IRA. The Crown forces reported that collections had ‘raised such a lot of ill-feeling amongst all classes in Co. Clare (Sinn Feiners included), that they discontinued the practice’ and Richard Mulcahy recognised that local collections were ‘simply irritating people’.<sup>25</sup> Irritation manifested itself in a deluge of refusals to pay and complaints to senior republican officials and the IRA hierarchy.<sup>26</sup> Under the terms of the Truce, only voluntary collections were permitted but it seems that a choice was rarely given. The OC of the Cork No. 1 Brigade, for instance, reported that he had given authority ‘for levying by force where a refusal met collectors’.<sup>27</sup> Refusal was also met by increased fines, the commandeering of livestock, or in more extreme cases the burning of property.<sup>28</sup> Those in charge of collections usually had little sympathy for those it was believed could afford what was being asked. Frank Barrett, OC of the Mid-Clare Brigade, argued that a levy demanded ‘in a proper manner ... from every householder in accordance with his or her means’ was necessary as ‘people with the most means who paid £20 to this levy would only give on average 5/- if we left them to themselves. The people in the towns did absolutely nil in the war and it is only right that they be asked to do their bit’.<sup>29</sup> Dáil official Diarmuid O’Hegarty agreed that there was ‘no doubt a lot of truth in what the O.C. says regarding people who want a Republic but are not prepared to give anything for it’, while Liam Lynch, commander of the 1st Southern Division, wrote of ‘a peace at any price group of shoneens ... who put a few pounds before the Nation’s honour and Freedom’.<sup>30</sup>

24 See complaints received and copies of replies in Fintan Murphy Collection (MAI: BMH CD/227). See also, complains about commandeered bicycles and replies in Daniel Mulvihill Papers (UCDA: P64/5). For complaint of ‘joy-riding’ by Free State forces, see Joseph Arthur Benison claim (TNA: CO 762/14/3).

25 Extract from captured enemy document, Clare and Limerick, c.Aug. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/23); Chief of Staff to OC 1st Eastern Division, 21 Sep. 1921 (/35).

26 For examples of complaints, see Con Maloney to OC Kilkenny Brigade, 20 Sep. 1921 (UCDA: P9/53(4)); OC 2nd Southern Division to OC Kilkenny Brigade, 30 Sep. 1921 (P9/55).

27 OC Cork No. 1 to Adjutant, 1st Southern Division, 27 Nov. 1921 (P7/27).

28 Notice of fine issued in Clonmel, County Tipperary (TNA: CO 904/155); Cow taken in lieu of levy from Peter Sullivan, Edgeworthstown (MAI: LE/6); Burning of Jeremiah O’Mahoney’s home (TNA: CO 904/155). For similar incidents against loyalists, see IGC (TNA: CO 762/3–212 and SILRA (PRONI: D989/B/3/9–13).

29 OC Mid-Clare to Diarmuid O’Hegarty, 17 Sep. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/24).

30 O’Hegarty to MD, 20 Sep. 1921 (/24); OC 1st Southern Division to CS, 27 Nov. 1921 (/29).

A battalion commandant in Waterford instructed one of his company captains that 'There are certain people who can afford [to pay] ... Don't let those people off', but also acknowledged those less able to contribute: 'If you think that the people are not able to bear any more taxes don't go over the poorer areas'.<sup>31</sup>

Fundraising, as Charles Townshend has recognised, 'came under sharper public scrutiny and criticism' during the Truce.<sup>32</sup> GHQ was anxious that 'collections must be collections pure and simple, and neither loans nor extortions' and some prominent loyalists who complained were instructed by Mulcahy, or minister for defence, Cathal Brugha, not to pay.<sup>33</sup> In October, 'Weekly Memorandum No. 16' was distributed forbidding compulsory collections and calling on supervision to be exercised to ensure that 'no attempt is made to force by threats or otherwise people to subscribe to our funds'.<sup>34</sup> The order was less effective than anticipated and within three weeks a 'Special Memorandum' was issued again to 'make it clear that levies in whatever form must be stopped absolutely'.<sup>35</sup> The reminder only added to the confusion. Liam Lynch immediately complained to Mulcahy that 'some Brigades have already received requests to return collections' and prompted a discussion in the ministry about the status of money collected before the Truce.<sup>36</sup> By February 1922, liaison official Éamonn Duggan had been 'inundated with requests from people of South Tipperary regarding a levy, which is being forced upon them by the local Bde'.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, GHQ, divisional commandants, and brigade commanders remained unable to exercise full control over their subordinates. The Waterford Brigade's publicity officer was immediately suspended for publishing a memo confirming that funds would be raised by levy but a letter was received on Christmas Eve warning a local that 'You have not so far, subscribed anything in connection with the Levy which has been gathered from friendly and hostile alike. The amount which we think you ought to pay is £10.0.0'.<sup>38</sup> The decision to use force to

31 OC 3rd Battalion, Waterford Brigade, to OC D Company, 11 May 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/274/1).

32 Townshend, *The republic*, p. 321.

33 Lord Desart to Chandull, 4 Apr. 1922 (TCD: MS 11269/2); Jasper Travers Wolfe to MD, c. Nov. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/29).

34 'Weekly Memorandum No. 16', 7 Oct. 1921, (P17a/2). See also, Mulcahy to Collins, 14 Oct. 1921; Collins to Mulcahy, 15 Oct. 1921 (MAI: A/0604).

35 'Special Memorandum', 25 Oct. 1921, (A/0604).

36 OC 1st Southern Division to CS, 27 Nov. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/29); Townshend, *The republic*, pp. 322–3.

37 Chief Liaison Officer to CS, 16 Feb. 1922 (MAI: LE/4/6). Mulcahy's department replied that 'I have no doubt you are inundated with such requests. Almost 100 of these have come to this Department': CS's office to Chief Liaison Officer, 21 Feb. 1922 (/4/6).

38 Townshend, *The republic*, p. 319; statement by Tomas O Maoiligh, 5 Nov. 1921 (NLI:

collect levies was largely based by this time on how local Volunteers believed the public would respond based on their record during the war. In Clare, where the RIC had already reported a turning of the population against forced collections, the deputy chief of staff recommended that a collection be taken up ‘but that no force was to be resorted to in making the collection’. In south-west Galway, the absence of force presented a problem: ‘The finance of the Brigade is anything but satisfactory. There has been no levy in the Brigade during the War. Money was raised by appeal or Voluntary subscription. The Brigade is at present making a collection ... but it is more in the nature of an appeal than a levy.’<sup>39</sup>

In many ways, the problems surrounding the levy are indicative of the unusual atmosphere of the Truce. The IRA hierarchy were caught between the need to maintain the outward appearance of the army in light of the ongoing political situation and the need to raise much needed funds. The priority of local commanders was often firmly on the latter. At the same time, civilians continued to refuse to pay levies for a variety of reasons. Sara Malcolmson told Volunteers collecting for the arms fund that ‘it was against my conscience to give them money for any such purpose’; a Mrs Keane in Athlone, County Westmeath, ‘would not subscribe to murderers’.<sup>40</sup> Edmund Griffin, discussed in Chapter 3, refused to pay a £4 levy because he felt the amount asked was unfair.<sup>41</sup> Sydney Jackson, a self-confessed loyalist, enquired if a levy on him was legitimate: ‘if it is, of course I will pay ... I now intend to do all in my power to make our new Government a success, to ensure the property of our Country.’<sup>42</sup>

### **Suspicious behaviour: identifying civilian spies after the Truce**

In *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, Peter Hart recreated a picture of revolutionary Cork where the IRA, on the run and in fear of its safety and survival, sought out and found its enemies based on suspicion, prejudice, paranoia, and personal jealousy. Hart argued that the Cork IRA inflicted lethal violence on perceived civilian deviants because of who they were – Protestants, tramps,

MS 31,207(1); notice received by Mrs Ellen Noonan, Lismore, 24 Dec. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/36).

39 Report on 1st Western Divisional Conference and five brigades, 25 Oct. 1921 (MAI: A/0674).

40 Sara Mary Malcolmson to ‘Dail Eireann Cabinet’, 4 Oct. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/24); note by Fintan Murphy, 27 Aug. 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/227/21/A33).

41 Patrick Brennan, S.C., to Mulcahy, 12 Dec. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/35).

42 Sidney Jackson, to [Mulcahy?], 9 Dec. 1921 (/34).

sexual deviants, and other social outcasts – rather than what they did.<sup>43</sup> While Hart’s conclusions about motivation for the execution of civilians remains most relevant to Cork, and victimisation was often more nuanced than some of his more dramatic sound-bites would allow, there is much of value in Hart’s depiction of the process by which civilians could fall under suspicion. Attempting to understand this process adds much to the difficult task of recreating the atmosphere in which the IRA and its communities interacted in the messy year that preceded civil war. Rather than focusing on the victims of IRA retribution, this section will re-examine the process by which civilians suspected of disloyalty were defined and labelled within local communities.

When it came to the execution of civilian ‘spies and informers’, GHQ (and the propaganda war) required reports, enquiries, and incontrovertible evidence of guilt.<sup>44</sup> But this demand was often at the odds with the nature of local intelligence wars. One Limerick brigade commandant acknowledged that it was ‘exceedingly difficult to get any definite proof’ on civilians associating with the enemy.<sup>45</sup> A desire to cut out potential leaks of information did not encourage patience as the risks of having an informer, or potential informer, in the locality created anxiety. Anxiety in turn fuelled rumour, hearsay, and gossip and Clare commander Michael Brennan neatly reflected the state of much of the IRA’s local intelligence when he reported some ‘notoriously bad cases of men associating with the enemy’ but admitted that ‘We have no proof of their giving information – *only suspicion*’.<sup>46</sup> In this environment, previously normal behaviour became questionable and a range of formerly innocuous activities could bring one under the glare of an eager intelligence officer.

Preparing for the expected resumption of hostilities in January 1922, local battalions in Cork, Kerry, West Limerick, and Waterford were requested to submit information to 1st Southern Division headquarters on ‘all persons guilty of offences against the Nation and the Army during hostilities and to date, and of all persons suspected of having assisted the enemy during the same period’.<sup>47</sup> The surviving forms provide personal information, a summary of alleged ‘offences’, and available evidence.<sup>48</sup> Though they are incomplete (files do not survive for all battalions) and prospective

43 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp. 300–15.

44 General Orders (New Series), 1920, No. 20 ‘Spies’ (UCDA: P7/A/45).

45 OC Mid-Limerick to CS, 3 Mar. 1921 (/17).

46 Brennan to CS, c. Apr. 1921 (/17).

47 Quoted in Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 297.

48 I.R.A. Intelligence Reports, 1st Southern Division, 1922 (MAI: A/0879). For Hart’s analysis of the records for Cork, see *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 304. For a more recent use of the Cork files, see Andy Bielenberg, John Boronovo, and James S. Donnelly Jr., “‘Something in the nature of a massacre’: the Bandon Valley killings revisited”, *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. 49 (2014), pp. 7–59.

**Table 6.1 IRA suspects, 1st Southern Division, 1922**

	Cork	Kerry	West Limerick	Waterford	Totals
<b>Gender</b>					
<i>Samples</i>	146	153	13	28	340
Male	74%	66%	69%	86%	71%
Female	23%	33%	31%	14%	27%
Family/unknown	3%	<1%	0	0	<4%
<b>Selected occupations</b>					
<i>Samples</i>	138	145	13	28	324
Ex-police	0	12 (8%)	0	1 (4%)	13 (4%)
Ex-serviceman	18 (13%)	14 (10%)	1 (8%)	11 (39%)	44 (14%)
Crown forces family	4 (3%)	10 (7%)	0	0	14 (4%)
Government	21 (15%)	5 (3%)	3 (23%)	1 (4%)	30 (9%)
Hoteliers/ publicans/ merchants	23 (17%)	40 (27%)	0	2 (7%)	65 (20%)
<b>Religion</b>					
<i>Samples</i>	69	75	6	7	157
Roman Catholic	43 (62%)	65 (87%)	5 (83%)	4 (57%)	117 (74.5%)
Protestant	25 (36%)	10 (13%)	1 (17%)	3 (43%)	39 (24.8%)
Other	1 (<1%)	0	0	0	1 (<1%)

*Sources:* Intelligence Files (MAI: A/0987); 1911 census returns (census.nationalarchives.ie). A small number of the ex-servicemen's current occupations are given and fit into other categories. In these cases they have been enumerated once as an ex-serviceman.

punishments are not made clear, as a whole, the remarkable collection offers revealing insights into the process of labelling civilian deviants.

Occupations have been established for 324 of the 340 suspects. Table 6.1 gives figures for five categories of occupation featured among the suspects and likely to lead to interaction with Crown forces. A direct personal or family connection to Crown service, either as ex-police, ex-servicemen, or their families is found in 71 files; 30 worked in government administration in areas directly significant to the guerrilla campaign: justice and communication, including the postal system, justice system, and military administration; a further 65 were hoteliers, publicans, or merchants who may

have had regular business interaction with police or military prior to and during the war. The RIC boycott is evidence of the seriousness with which republicans viewed trading with the police and they were equally aware of the tendency of policemen and soldiers to socialise in bars and hotels: an IRA threatening letter in Tralee warned the recipient that, 'You frequent the hotels and enjoy the company of the murderous auxiliaries'.<sup>49</sup> Over half of the civilian suspects, then, potentially came to be perceived as dangerous or hostile for behaviour that might have been considered normal outside of a revolutionary context. Shared backgrounds and camaraderie naturally encouraged ex-policemen, ex-servicemen, and their families to socialise with serving members of the Crown forces. The police and military were also a consistent and profitable source of income for merchants, publicans, and hoteliers. Former or familial links necessitated visits to stations and barracks to collect pensions or see relatives. In Kerry, Norah Griffin, whose husband was an ex-soldier, was charged with visiting the local barracks and, despite arguing that she merely wanted to get a government grant to emigrate to Canada, was listed as a suspect.<sup>50</sup> This is further emphasised in the 'offences' assigned to the suspects. Just under half (162, or 48 per cent) of the suspects were described as in some way friendly with Crown forces and for 78 of the suspects this was their only offence; having a police or military relative is an 'offence' on the files of six of the Kerry suspects.

To the IRA, any interaction with the Crown was unacceptable, and being 'friendly' enough to breed mistrust. The suspect files therefore rely heavily on hearsay and personal opinion: 'we have no direct evidence in this case, except the evidence of suspicion'; 'I have no actual evidence of her giving information but I am sure from what I personally know of the girl that she would have done so'; 'The only evidence is very strong suspicion of this man'.<sup>51</sup> One hundred and forty-two of those listed in the files were *suspected* of giving information to the Crown forces based on local information or misgivings about their behaviour, with 83 having this accusation listed as their sole offence. In total, 260 (76 per cent) were categorised as friendly with Crown forces, suspected of giving information, or both.<sup>52</sup> Battalion intelligence personnel were directly asked for information on 'persons suspected' as well as those 'guilty', but the flimsy nature of much of the evidence highlights the seemingly innocuous behaviour that could bring trouble. Many of those listed may well have been informers or potentially dangerous to the guerrilla campaign, but little hard evidence is presented. In the case of the Graham siblings in Kerry,

49 Threatening letter from 'Headquarters, I.R.A., Tralee', 1921 (MAI: BMH CD/280/3/3).

50 Intelligence Reports, Norah Griffin.

51 Intelligence Reports, Chrissie O'Halloran, Baby O'Shea, Edward O'Halloran.

52 Forty-four were accused on both counts.



for instance, their offences were described as ‘None’, or ‘None as far as we know’. Miss Graham had decided to marry an RIC district inspector.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, the number of what could be seen as serious offences is relatively small. Only ten were described explicitly as spies or had what the intelligence officer considered definite evidence of informing against them; two more were seen corresponding with or carrying despatches for the Crown forces; four had identified Volunteers in court or prison; four had shot at or assaulted Volunteers (two of these were during arms raids on the suspects’ homes); and a larger group of twelve were considered ‘outspoken’ against or ‘openly hostile’ to the IRA. Ten of the Cork suspects were implicated in the killing of republicans and six of the ten were linked to the deaths of the Coffey brothers, IRA Volunteers killed in February 1921, including two who fell under suspicion for leaving the area shortly afterwards.<sup>54</sup>

Of the 157 for whom religious denomination can be satisfactorily established using the 1901 and 1911 census returns, 117 (74.5 per cent) are Roman Catholic and 39 (24.8 per cent) Protestant; Cork suspect William Wood Wolfe is returned as Agnostic on his 1911 census form.<sup>55</sup> But Table 6.1 also shows a clear regional variation. In Cork, Protestants make up 36 per cent of the available sample and in Waterford the proportion rises to 43 per cent while 17 per cent of the West Limerick and 13 per cent of the Kerry samples are Protestant. Protestants are, therefore, significantly over-represented in Cork where the non-Catholic population was only 9 per cent in 1911, and even more so in Waterford where the 1911 non-Catholic population was less than 6 per cent. Protestants are also over-represented in Kerry (3 per cent non-Catholic in 1911) and West Limerick (5 per cent non-Catholic in 1911) but the difference is far less pronounced. Again, regional variations can be seen. An additional notebook listing the names of ‘suspects’ in Tralee, County Kerry, contains 25 names and at least 15 can either be identified as Protestant or have surnames recognisable among the Tralee Protestant community.<sup>56</sup> This is perhaps best explained by an increased wariness of Protestants based on an understanding of their traditional orientation towards loyalism and the Crown. The 39 Protestant suspects, though, are no more likely than their Roman Catholic counterparts to have had ordinary

53 Intelligence Reports, Graham.

54 For the killing of the Coffey brothers, James and Timothy, see Military enquiry in lieu of inquest (TNA: WO 35/147A/84); *Irish Independent*, 15 Feb. 1921.

55 Intelligence Reports (MAI: Collins Papers, A/0897); 1911 census returns (census.nationalarchives.ie) (Apr. 2015). Protestant suspects are made up of Church of Ireland, Church of England, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan.

56 IRA Intelligence Notebook (KCL: P34/1/3.5). I am grateful to Professor Eunan O’Halpin and Dr Eve Morrison for alerting me to this source and to Dr Morrison for sharing her analysis of the names contained in the notebook.

links to the Crown forces. There are only marginal differences in the number of traders, publicans, and hoteliers (21 per cent), government or military employees (13 per cent), and ex-policemen (5 per cent) and only 2 per cent of Protestants were identified as ex-soldiers. Statistically, then, Protestants were more likely than their Catholic neighbours to fall under suspicion. This does not necessarily mean that they were singled out for exceptional treatment, or the victims of a deliberately sectarian agenda, but that religion remains firmly among a number of potential contributing factors.

An official in the Dáil Ministry for Agriculture, reflecting in November 1921 on housing settlements for ex-soldiers, remarked that 'a sharp line must be drawn between what may be termed good and bad ones':

Several men joined the British Army some 6 or 7 years ago on the advice of their then National Leaders in a supposed fight for Irish Freedom. Later they came to know they were misled and since they left the Army many of them have done splendid work for our Government on the Civil and Military side. Those may be termed good. But there are others who are so much out of sympathy with the desires and aspirations of the majority of our people that their settlement ... in parts of the country would be a menace that under no circumstances should be tolerated. Local Judgement must be the best judge of the category in which Ex-soldiers should be placed.<sup>57</sup>

In the 1st Southern Division at least, ex-servicemen were disproportionately likely to fall under suspicion in 1922. Ex-soldiers make up 14 per cent (44) of the total for whom an occupation can be established and a higher proportion of the total number of male suspects (18 per cent). The majority had been engaged in some form of unusual, erratic, or dangerous activity, often in the company of Crown forces. Though all were described as ex-soldiers or servicemen, only three had service in the British army listed as an 'offence'. Five were said to have certainly passed on or gathered information and four more had been named by an executed 'spy' before their death. A further seven were suspected of informing or had discussed the Volunteers in public. In one case, an ex-soldier named Farrelly had 'spent a few days at an IRA training camp' and though there was no evidence to 'show he was guilty in spying only that he was giving instructions in machine gun', Crown forces frequented his draper's shop, and his wife was 'friendlier with them than there was occasion for'.<sup>58</sup> As Jane Leonard pointed out in a 1997 essay, 'Socializing with serving soldiers and policemen in post-War Ireland, even

<sup>57</sup> Art O Conaibair to MD, 9 Nov. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/30).

<sup>58</sup> Intelligence Files, Farrelly.

if only to reminisce about the Western Front, was risky.’ One ex-soldier deliberately avoided local British troops to avoid suspicion: ‘That time, if you talked to them, they’d say you were giving information or something like that. So I kept away from them.’<sup>59</sup>

The geographical spread of the suspected ex-servicemen is again enlightening. Table 6.1 illustrates that in Cork, Kerry, and West Limerick, ex-soldiers make up less than a fifth of the total number of male suspects in each county. But in Waterford, where there was a strong and sustained Redmondite tradition, 11 ex-servicemen made up almost 40 per cent of the total male suspects but only 13.5 per cent of the population in Waterford city by 1924.<sup>60</sup> Former service in the British army was not enough on its own to bring suspicion but was one of a number of potentially influential factors. Intelligence files make clear that certain behaviour brought ex-soldiers under suspicion but, significantly, unlike the Protestants in the files, their status as ex-servicemen was recognised, noted, and they were described as such.

The IRA’s collection of intelligence after the Truce was just as likely to be influenced by petty jealousies and local rivalries as the status of the individual concerned. Hart suggested that the ‘typical informer was not someone with a cause but rather someone with a grudge, grievance, or with property to protect. Others saw an opportunity for gain or to settle old scores’.<sup>61</sup> In June 1922, the *Church of Ireland Gazette* suggested that ‘a “bad national record” could become ‘a satisfactory cloak to cover sheer covetousness and personal dislike’.<sup>62</sup> Civilians were both accusers and accused. IRA veterans in Cork remembered false accusations against civilians based on ‘local spite’.<sup>63</sup> Dublin postal superintendent Peter Behan was served an order to leave the country and denied any wrongdoing, suggesting instead that ‘someone of the 300 men under him may have sent in to I.R.A. false reports about him, for some personal reasons’.<sup>64</sup> In Kildare, a woman’s house was burned and a Dublin Castle official coyly suggested that she was ‘not quite as good as she ought to be, and that the attack on her house was really an effort on the part of the locals to vindicate public morality and rid the neighbourhood of her presence’.<sup>65</sup>

59 Jane Leonard, ‘Facing “the finger of scorn”: veterans’ memories of Ireland after the Great War’, in Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (eds.), *War and memory in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 1997), p. 63.

60 Taylor, *Heroes or traitors*, p. 12.

61 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 306.

62 Quoted in Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 144.

63 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 299.

64 Correspondence regarding P. P. Behan (MAI: A/0604). According to an IRA intelligence officer, there was no doubt about Behan’s ‘treason to his Country’: he was guilty of handling seditious material captured by Crown forces.

65 W. Doolin to Captain A. C. McAllister, 27 Mar. 1922 (LE/4/14).

Some of the recorded suspects had been seen with large amounts of money and no discernible means of having earned it, inviting an assumption they had been paid for spying. David Lyne was seen in the company of the military and spent his days 'knocking around Killarney has heaps of cash though no visible means of getting it'.<sup>66</sup> Ex-soldier Ernie Davis was accused of bringing Crown forces to Liam de Róiste's house but a row with his brother at a card game was also noted: 'Both were betting very heavily. Ernie had a belt of money altho' not working'.<sup>67</sup> Excessive drinking brought similar conclusions. Alexander Moynahan had 'a regular salary ... but such salary was not sufficient to pay for his every day bout of drink. He was probably receiving money from some other source'.<sup>68</sup> There was some basis for such assumptions. Thomas Relihan had two sons in the Volunteers and potential access to useful information, which he offered to Dublin Castle for payment via an intercepted letter. He was 'not considered too well off as he is a spendthrift and drinks a good deal so that he might well be in difficulties for money'.<sup>69</sup>

In many ways, the IRA's intelligence war was a product of the communities in which it was conducted. Observed behaviour, intercepted documents, and detective work were important aspects of the process, but the kind of personal knowledge generated in a community setting also played its own part. In many of the suspect files personal traits or labels that would have been well known in an everyday context were produced as evidence of suspicion. Protestants and ex-soldiers would have been known as such outside of war and were known as such afterwards. Those who were eccentric, flashed their money, or drank too much were similarly recognisable and the likely subjects of hushed and disapproving gossip in any setting. In a revolutionary context, and in a period of political and social instability, this took on a new and more menacing form. Vague accusations of being 'friendly with', 'associating with', or 'entertaining' Crown forces appear far more commonly than any outright accusations of informing. In a search to root out dangerous civilian enemies, rumour and gossip were easier to come by than hard evidence.

66 Intelligence Reports, David Lyne.

67 Intelligence Reports, Ernie Davis.

68 Intelligence Reports, Alexander Moynahan.

69 Intelligence Reports, Thomas Relihan.

## Loyalists, Protestants, and ex-policemen

### Loyalists and Protestants

The defining and labelling of civilian ‘suspects’ raises broader questions about the extent to which specific minority groups were targeted by the IRA after the Truce, and the nature of the violence they suffered. In *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, Peter Hart argued that ‘The Truce may have put an end to the war but local vendettas lived on’.<sup>70</sup> Much of the persecution and punishment endured by civilians at the hands of the IRA was related to perceived offences that had taken place before the Truce, while boycotts and low-level social ostracism initiated in 1920 or 1921 could carry into the Civil War and beyond. In pursuing vendettas and enacting revenge for previously unpunished defiance the IRA were no different from other bands of irregular fighters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>71</sup>

Despite general positivity about the situation in Ireland in the immediate aftermath of the Truce, there were some concerns for the ‘loyal’ population, notably in Munster. In Clare and Limerick, it was reported that:

The loyalist views with horror the present terms, and has decided, in the event of these being accepted, to clear out of the country. They realise they will only live on the sufferance of the I.R.A. and will be bled by collectors for various funds weekly. They will only be allowed to live in the country as long as it pays the local inhabitants to keep them.<sup>72</sup>

The county inspector for Cork West Riding believed that loyalists who could afford to emigrate would do so, regardless of the result of negotiations, and official plans were made to form ‘refugee centres’.<sup>73</sup> The IRA continued deliberately to demand food and accommodation from local loyalists and the 6th Division of the British army considered ‘the present conditions as being in some ways worse than before the truce; in those days rebels were afraid to stay in a house for more than a few hours, whereas now they stay for a week or more, (usually insisting on being given the best bed rooms).’<sup>74</sup>

How did Protestants view their own status as victims? The increasing

70 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 111.

71 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 58–61.

72 Extract from captured enemy document, Clare and Limerick, c.Aug. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/23).

73 MCRs, CI, Cork W.R. (TNA: CO 904/116); Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 111.

74 General Commanding 6th Division to General Headquarters, Ireland, 22 Aug. 1921 (IWM: P363); ‘6th Division Intelligence, Review of rebel activities for week ending December 3rd 1921’ (UCDA: P17a/9).

lawlessness of 1921–22 certainly generated fear surrounding a potential campaign against Protestants, compounded by news of violence against Catholics in Belfast. Lord Desart, for instance, heard of ‘a general threat against Protestants by way of reprisals for happenings in Belfast’.<sup>75</sup> Peter Hart noted that from 1919, ‘Cork Protestants watched with growing apprehension as many of their nationalist neighbours turned away from or against them’, and by 1922, ‘Hundreds were forced to seek refuge in Dublin, Belfast, or England’.<sup>76</sup> Often, though, perception was more powerful than reality. MP William H. Davison wrote to Winston Churchill on behalf of some constituents to ‘express their anxiety as to the safety of the occupants’ of two Protestant orphanages ‘as a number of the Protestants in the neighbourhood have been compelled to fly from their homes at short notice’. It was decided that the orphans could only be transported out of Galway by the navy if ‘there is real reason to believe their lives are actually in danger’.<sup>77</sup>

Post-Truce compensation applicants to the IGC were asked, ‘Do you claim that the loss or injury described was occasioned in respect or on account of your allegiance to the Government of the United Kingdom? If so, give particulars on which you base this claim’ (part 5). While the injury must have occurred after 11 July 1921, it did not matter if the evidence of loyalty was pre- or post-Truce.<sup>78</sup> Answers offer revealing insights into applicants’ sense of their own loyalism, and as religious denomination is not mentioned on the form any mentions of religion are significant. Among a sample of 65 non-Catholic Cavan applicants only nine mentioned their denomination. In contrast, the 13 West Cork Methodists who applied to the IGC, studied by David Fitzpatrick, were more willing to equate Protestantism with loyalty or revolutionary animosity; over half (6) used the terms ‘Protestant’ and ‘loyalist’.<sup>79</sup> Gemma Clark, whose study of Civil War violence examines Tipperary, Limerick, and Waterford, noted that IGC claimants there ‘did not necessarily mention their religion on the compensation forms’ but she deliberately avoids tabulating claimants by denomination.<sup>80</sup>

IGC claims suggest that in districts where the non-Catholic loyalist presence was strong, but not strong enough to protect against republican incursion, loyalists who applied for compensation were less likely to associate their loss with their religion. Michael Farry’s study of Protestant IGC

75 Lord Desart to Chandull, 4 Apr. 1922 (TCD: MS 11269/2).

76 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp. 312–14.

77 William H. Davison to Churchill, 9 Jun. 1922; Churchill to Davison, 15 Jun. 1922 (TNA: CO 739/114).

78 Brennan, ‘A political minefield’, p. 417.

79 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p. 212 and n. 106.

80 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 48. Clark makes clear that her book ‘examines violence by type ... and not according to the victim’s denomination’: p. 39.

applicants in Sligo led him to conclude that while a ‘campaign of loyalist extermination’ was mentioned at least three times in claims, religion was not often noted in response to part 5 of the claim form. Over half of the Sligo applicants were Protestant (Sligo only had a non-Catholic population of 8.75 per cent in 1911) but tended to come from the east half of the county where ‘the non-Catholic population was significant’ while rural parts of the west, where Protestants were ‘thinly scattered’, generated no applications.<sup>81</sup> When they did apply, Protestants living in isolated areas or as part of tiny minorities are most likely to describe their persecution as anti-Protestant. Sligo Presbyterian Jesse Hunter, living in a townland with only one neighbour in a largely Roman Catholic DED, wrote that ‘I was a well known Protestant loyalist living in a very disaffected area and because I was alone, unprotected and a supporter of British rule in Ireland these persistent outrages were committed on me’.<sup>82</sup> Isabel O’Connor did not fit in with the majority of her neighbours on two counts: ‘I was told that because I was English & a Protestant & consequently loyal to England I was one of the lot they wished to drive out.’<sup>83</sup>

Methodists in West Cork, as distinct from their Church of Ireland neighbours, were a ‘tiny minority twice over’ and this may explain the high proportion of Methodist IGC applicants from the area who attributed their victimisation to their denomination, even if they invoked Protestantism rather than Methodism.<sup>84</sup> Clark has argued that in small ‘Protestant enclaves’ it was possible ‘to easily identify and root out virtually the entire minority population’.<sup>85</sup> Even if this was not, in fact, what was attempted, victims may have perceived it that way or later chosen to frame it in those terms. Claimants surrounded by a significant number of co-religionists instead tended to refer to their politics rather than their religion. Richard Kingston noted that he lived in a ‘strong Protestant locality, and so did not suffer as much as other loyalists’ in Cork; ‘I believe that all these losses were due to the fact that I was known to be loyal to the British connection’.<sup>86</sup>

Communities remained acutely aware of religion as an important part of daily life, even if they did not assign it as a single motivator for revolutionary violence. In Arva, County Cavan, for instance, boycotting was repeatedly described in religious terms. Mary Anne Curtis, a Church of

81 Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, p. 193. Farry does not tabulate this but does write that the religion of an applicant was only ‘sometimes given’: p. 247 n. 60.

82 Jessie Hunter claim (TNA: CO 762/51/13); Jessie Hunter census return (census.nation-alarchives.ie) (23 Feb. 2015).

83 Isabel O’Connor claim (TNA: CO 762/170/22).

84 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, pp. 181, 212.

85 Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 48.

86 Richard Kingston claim (CO 762/183/4).

Ireland Protestant, was clear that she had specifically lost all her Catholic customers.<sup>87</sup> Simon Henry Hewitt, a shopkeeper, auctioneer, and member of the Church of Ireland, was similarly sure that 50 per cent of his customers had been Catholic prior to the imposition of a boycott against him and that 'since July 1921 not a single Roman Catholic has patronised me, many of them having informed me that they were sorry to have to leave me, but that they had been threatened with dire penalties if they transacted business with me'.<sup>88</sup> Painter Johnston Hewitt, his nephew and co-religionist, made an identical claim.<sup>89</sup> Bernard Matthews' wife insisted that 'the I.R.A. boycotted him and all his Roman Catholic customers withdrew their trade and never returned'.<sup>90</sup> The boycott was not considered rigidly sectarian but it was easy later on to define it in religious terms.

#### Loyalists and the IRA in Northern Ireland

Unlike their southern counterparts, by 1922 northern loyalists were part of a state whose government and security forces, including the Special Constabularies drawn from their own communities, made a priority of their protection. Large swathes of the six counties, the areas with strong Protestant minorities such as North Armagh, North Down, and parts of Antrim, remained virtually free of violence throughout the Truce and Civil War.<sup>91</sup> But in areas where they formed isolated minorities, loyalists in the six counties were open to violence and intimidation and the dynamics of conflict had more in common with communities in the twenty-six counties. Melbourne Unionist Alexander Leeper assured Northern Ireland's prime minister, Sir James Craig, that he was taking steps to make the public there aware of the need to provide funds for 'the relief of victims of Sinn Fein savagery in Ulster' and 'the dependents of those who suffered for their loyalty to the Crown'.<sup>92</sup> Craig agreed that 'there is a great deal of distress among the loyalists in the North owing to barbarities of republican and other ill-disposed persons'. Along with loyalist 'refugees' from the south, 'in parts of our own area where the loyalist population is very scattered, some of our Protestant inhabitants have been forced to leave ... a large number of our population were murdered or kidnapped and a large number of houses burnt for no reason other than that the owners were loyal to their King and Country'.<sup>93</sup> In November 1922, the Loyalist Relief Fund claimed it was providing aid to 700 'dependants of

87 Mary Anne Curtis claim (/170/4).

88 Simon Hewitt claim (/196/13).

89 Johnston Hewitt claim (/168/11).

90 Bernard Matthews claim (/23/1).

91 Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp. 41–2.

92 Alexander Leeper to James Craig, 22 Jan. 1924 (PRONI: PM/6/2).

93 Craig to Leeper, 1 Mar. 1924 (/6/2).



those of our brethren who have been done to death or otherwise deprived of sustenance by the malignity of the I.R.A.’<sup>94</sup>

Loyalists close to the border with the Irish Free State were most vulnerable as the IRA, operating in hostile territory in the six counties, could, as a civil servant put it, ‘slip across the border to make themselves safe from punishment’.<sup>95</sup> Large-scale offensives and smaller, isolated acts of violence against the Protestant/loyalist community in the six counties, most notably during the May offensive and the so-called ‘joint-IRA offensive’ in 1922, were usually counter-productive. But the most vicious, and notorious, IRA attack on the loyalist population occurred at Altnaveigh and Lisdrumliska, South Armagh, when on 17 June 1922 six members of the small Presbyterian community were killed and over a dozen houses burned out or bombed.<sup>96</sup> The violence in Altnaveigh was exceptional in its savagery but was more representative of northern violence than southern in its crude sectarian basis. In terms of cause and effect, some parallels can be seen with the killings in Dunmanway and the Bandon Valley in April 1922. The victims of both ‘massacres’ were Protestant but exact motives have been difficult to pin down and remain subject to ‘personal vendettas, complex emotional responses, and long standing antagonisms’.<sup>97</sup> The immediate effect in both cases was towards fear and flight among neighbouring Protestants: ‘Since the massacre at Altnaveigh, South Armagh there has been a distinct strain of tension in Newry and many residents in that area temporarily left their homes for the Free State’.<sup>98</sup> The Altnaveigh killings ‘did much to reignite deeply held Protestant fears’, but also had an effect on the area as a whole. Volunteer James McElhaw recalled that fear ‘was not confined to any one party or section of the community. All were afraid of what was to come next’.<sup>99</sup>

A less violent but similarly significant series of IRA raids in February 1922 resulted in the kidnapping of some 40 prominent loyalists from border communities in Fermanagh and Tyrone.<sup>100</sup> The kidnappings also proved unsettling for nearby Protestant communities. The RUC reported that a ‘feeling of unrest pervades the Loyalists in South Down’ and in

94 Notice of Loyalist Relief Fund Bazaar, Stormont Castle, Nov. 1922 (DI132/9/5).

95 ‘File on John Baird and Albert York, Clady, kidnapped’, 1922 (HA/5/163). See also, ‘File on cross-border raids by IRA into Northern Ireland’ (/5/189).

96 Robert Lynch, ‘Explaining the Altnaveigh massacre’, *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. 45 (2010), p. 184; Lewis, *Frank Aiken’s war*, pp. 151–63.

97 Lewis, *Frank Aiken’s war*, p. 157.

98 RUC Bi-Monthly Report, 17 Jun. 1922 (PRONI: HA/5/152).

99 Lewis, *Frank Aiken’s war*, p. 194; BMH WS 634 (James McElhaw).

100 Correspondence on kidnapped loyalists, February 1922 (PAL: LG/10/2/45–50); Capt. V. P. Shiels to Emmet Dalton, 8 Feb. 1922 (MAI: LE/6); Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp. 100–5.

Armagh the kidnappings 'caused grave uneasiness amongst the Loyalist population'.<sup>101</sup> Further kidnapping raids followed in May.<sup>102</sup> Many of the kidnapped loyalists were full or part-time paramilitaries in the Ulster Special Constabulary.<sup>103</sup> With no equivalent organisation in the South, the USC helped to define the IRA's military campaign in the six counties and offered an obvious and legitimate target for IRA aggression; the IRA killed 34 Specials in 1922.<sup>104</sup> Specials were overwhelmingly Protestant but were also, crucially, armed and uniformed belligerents. For republicans grappling with the ambiguities created between sectarian conflict and the traditional war against the British, the Specials were a clear and easily defined enemy. Shortly before the Truce, the OC of the 1st Northern Division suggested that warnings be sent to all B and C (or part-time) Specials to resign and, after a specified date, 'all men known to be still connected to these classes will be liable to be executed as spys'.<sup>105</sup> It was possible to argue, or assume, that most loyalist civilians in the six counties were potential combatants. John McCoy, an IRA officer in Armagh, told the BMH, 'We knew that the Unionists were all armed, some of them as members of the "B" Specials and others possibly having some of the Ulster Volunteer guns'; McCoy's colleague in the Armagh IRA, John McGrath, had hoped his column would 'make the Unionist civilians (if Unionists could then be classed as civilians) realize that even in their own district they were not immune from punishment for the misdeeds of their relatives serving in the "B" Specials'.<sup>106</sup>

The events at Altnaveigh, the border kidnappings, and the targeting of Specials are useful, if extreme, examples of the IRA's tit-for-tat war against the northern state and the Protestant/loyalist majority. They also illustrate an added dimension to the conflict in Northern Ireland. The deliberate targeting of Protestants was more accepted and acceptable to republicans in the six counties. Altnaveigh could have 'crude sectarian motives' and its victims, at the same time, could be killed not because they were Protestant but because they were 'perceived (correctly or incorrectly) as northern unionists'.<sup>107</sup> Though the crimes of northern loyalists may have been, in the eyes of the IRA, national rather than theological, religion remained the most obvious and durable means of identifying and separating alleged deviants.

101 RUC Bi-Monthly Report, 15 Feb. 1922 (PRONI: HA/5/152).

102 Lynch, *Northern IRA*, p. 146.

103 Return of persons kidnapped from Northern Ireland, Jul. 1922 (TNA: CO 904/739/16).

104 Lynch, *Northern IRA*, p. 67.

105 OC, 1st Northern Division, 28 Jun. 1921 (UCDA: P7/A/21).

106 BMH WS 658 (John Grant); BMH WS 492 (John McCoy). See also, BMH WS 647 (Edward Boyle); BMH WS 829 (Charles McGleenan).

107 Lynch, 'Altnaveigh', p. 187; Lewis, *Frank Aiken's war*, p. 157.

Though their victims were Protestant, and often singled out for that very reason, it was preferable to define them by non-religious identities.<sup>108</sup>

Where the IRA was weak or non-existent, Protestants remained untouched by the conflict, but where Catholics were the majority, the IRA could impose its will on Protestant civilians. At the Meade property in Rathfriland, County Down, where ‘everyone of the tenants is a Sinn Feiner’, the estate’s agent reported that ‘the county is becoming terrorised and the sympathy of the uneducated R.C’s is with the Shinnners’; ‘I have no Protestants about me now save the clerk’.<sup>109</sup> When republicans ordered that shops be shuttered for a passing funeral, he recorded, local Protestants who ‘demurred and consulted the R.I.C.’ were told that ‘of course they were not bound to obey the order unless they liked but at the same time they suggested that it might be expedient for them to do so, otherwise they might suffer later, so it had to be done!’<sup>110</sup> Similarly, in the Maghera district of County Londonderry, Protestants who had previously cut turf in a Catholic district had decided by June 1922 to purchase coal ‘rather than risk their lives’.<sup>111</sup> In Strabane, County Tyrone a cinema proprietor boycotted for ‘using entertainment stamps issued by the Northern government’ found himself in a ‘dilemma’ between breaking the law and losing his business: ‘He is a good loyalist and does not want to give in to S.F. but he is a poor man, and cannot carry on’.<sup>112</sup> While the Protestants in Maghera and the cinema owner in Strabane preferred to avoid trouble, some individuals responded differently and violence could breed obduracy as well as obedience. After Protestant Charles Part was killed and his teenage son seriously wounded in Keady, South Armagh, Part’s wife refused to leave the area and was prepared to ignore police advice that her son’s return would mean ‘certain death’.<sup>113</sup>

Despite its more pronounced sectarian divide, the conflict in Northern Ireland remained relatively restrained. The numbers killed in single incidents (which the exception of rioting in Belfast), though rightly shocking to locals, were small in the context of other ethnic conflicts. Rape and mutilation were rare. The exactions made by republicans on Protestants in Beleek and Pettigo, two disputed border towns some twelve miles apart and the scene of a major week-long confrontation with British forces, were, for instance, slight in comparison with the behaviour of Polish insurgents

108 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 136.

109 George Young to Mrs Meade, Suffolk, Oct. 1921 (PRONI: MIC/259/1).

110 Young to Mrs Meade, 1921 (/259/1).

111 ‘Activity Report’, 2nd Northern Division, 26 Jun. 1922 (UCDA: P7/B/77).

112 E. C. Herdman to Dawson Bates, 14 Dec. 1921 (PRONI: HA/5/115).

113 ‘File on the murder of Charles Part and attempted murder of Charles Part Jnr’, 1922 (PRONI: HA/32/1297); 1911 census return, Charles Part (census.nationalarchives.ie) (15 Jul. 2015).

in Upper Silesia.<sup>114</sup> Though much of the revolution in the six counties was unique in an all-island context, areas in which the IRA was a dominant or substantial actor had far more in common with areas south of their border than nearer neighbours where loyalists dominated.

### The disbanded RIC

The disbanding of the RIC called for by the Anglo-Irish Treaty took most of the first eight months of 1922. The release was staggered and men were initially transferred from their stations to larger centres around the country to await discharge. It was August before the last members left Dublin Castle.<sup>115</sup> The dissolution of 2,000 RIC serving in the new northern state was officially delayed until 1 June.<sup>116</sup> As the disbanded men gradually filtered out of their camps, Ireland was 'confronted with the problem of the release into civil life of some 13,000 men', many without suitable qualifications, unable to support themselves or their families indefinitely and with few prospects. This problem was exacerbated by a general economic depression and by what the RIC Tribunal described as the 'political situation in Ireland'.<sup>117</sup> Chief Secretary Sir Hamar Greenwood, Chief of Police Henry Hugh Tudor and RIC Deputy Inspector General C. A. Walsh all expressed their concerns about the safety of disbanded men in the twenty-six counties.<sup>118</sup> The *Church of Ireland Gazette* recognised the immediate plight but was more optimistic about their reception in the longer term:

We know that the majority of the Irish people at present is prejudiced against the police; more is the pity. But that will pass. The Irishman has many faults, but he knows a brave man when he sees one, and there is not an Irishman alive who does not recognise the astonishing valour of the R.I.C. ... Will Ireland refuse to receive them into her fold? We cannot believe that she will be so foolish, for finer Irishmen do not exist than the members of the Royal Irish Constabulary.<sup>119</sup>

114 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 146. For the Belleek–Pettigo clash, see Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp. 154–7

115 O'Sullivan, *The Irish constabularies*, p. 369.

116 Chris Ryder, *The RUC 1922–2000: a force under fire* (London, 2000; 1st edn. 1989), p. 47.

117 'Brief summary of the work of the Royal Irish Constabulary Tribunal', Apr. 1928 (TNA: HO 45/13029).

118 Alfred Cope to Michael Collins, 28 Mar. 1922 (NAI: FIN 1/506); Henry Tudor to Hamar Greenwood, 5 Apr. 1922 (TNA: HO 351/95); Walsh to Assistant Under Secretary and Secretary, RIC Tribunal, 22 Apr. 1922 (/98). See also Cabinet report on the future of the RIC, Dec. 1921 (PA: LG/F/20/1/8); Correspondence relating to disbanding of RIC, 1922 (TNA: CAB 24/134).

119 *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 24 Feb. 1922.

A letter writer to the final issue of the *Constabulary Gazette* hoped for favourable treatment from the ‘Imperial Parliament’ and ‘the Irish people’ but seemed unconvinced: ‘Things of daily occurrence paint a picture none too pleasant of the future of the old R.I.C. ... There should be no delusions about our future, as all may take it for certain that, however small our pensions be, there will be no chance of other employment in this country for ex-R.I.C. men.’<sup>120</sup>

In April 1922, a ‘large number’ of disbanded men sent an open petition to Winston Churchill, then secretary of state for the colonies, for the use of empty barracks and military protection until they could board a steamboat out of Ireland:

At present we have to go out unarmed, and we are set upon and searched, our money is taken ... The wanted R.I.C., when found, having been already court-martialled by the I.R.A., are dragged off and murdered at once, and many of them have also suffered unmentionable outrages ... We have all been warned out of Ireland. Every county in Munster, Leinster and Connaught is placarded that all the R.I.C. are to be shot at sight if they return. Our wives and families, likewise, are being ordered to leave ... A great deal of luggage has been burned and many of our comrades have already been murdered.<sup>121</sup>

Between December 1921 and June 1922, 15 police and eight ex-police were killed, 24 police and four ex-police wounded in southern Ireland and 22 police (including Specials) killed and 45 wounded in the six counties.<sup>122</sup> By the end of 1922, 15 ex-RIC had been killed in southern Ireland that year.<sup>123</sup> A pamphlet produced by the Representative Bodies of the RIC listed incidents resulting in the deaths of ten serving policemen, a policeman’s wife, and a retired policeman and the wounding of six others while also recording 74 non-fatal attacks on police and their families.<sup>124</sup> For men who had been subject to months and years of violence and ostracism but lasted the course, a threatening letter could have added potency in 1922 without the sense of safety afforded by colleagues and barracks. One ex-constable reflected ruefully that ‘there was no protection for the likes of me’ and another

120 *Constabulary Gazette*, 28 Jan. 1922.

121 *Impartial Reporter*, 27 Apr. 1922.

122 ‘Murders and attempted murders since the Treaty’, Jun. 1922 (TNA: CO 739/14).

123 Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland*, pp. 293–5. Fourteen more were killed while still serving: pp. 275–91.

124 ‘Outrages committed against the R.I.C. since the Truce, July 1921’, 1922 (TNA: TS 18/237).

recalled that in Monaghan ‘the regular RIC was gone, the army was gone and you had no protection’.<sup>125</sup>

The experiences of disbanded policemen emphasise that the likelihood of experiencing violence depended on the locality to which they returned. Over half of the ex-RIC men killed in 1922 were shot in Cork, Clare, and Kerry while most counties saw no lethal violence against former policemen.<sup>126</sup> The varied and inconsistent nature of non-lethal violence further suggests community-driven persecution, no official policy, and little or no instruction from above. Individuals were targeted through a mixture of written or verbal threats, armed raids, and physical violence.<sup>127</sup> Social ostracism could be more subtle and restrained, but equally as effective. Before he received any explicit threat or injury, Cavan native Benjamin Stafford could ‘see from the demeanour of the people in the locality that they wished to avoid him and wished to have no conversation with him ... with the exception of a few of his friends’.<sup>128</sup> Former policemen found themselves at the mercy of local suppliers and could be refused or overcharged for goods and services. Francis Ronan told the RIC Tribunal, founded to administer allowances and grants to disbanded policemen, that ‘We pay the highest price for everything, and pay ready money or starve’ while another despairing compensation claimant pointed out that ‘the feeling of the people is such that compensation granted is of little avail’.<sup>129</sup> For those who made the decision to leave their community, the trauma of uprooting a family was compounded by difficulty securing the means of transporting their goods, with neighbours either unwilling or afraid to help. Ex-constable Patrick Durkan recalled that ‘if it was even suspected that you were an ex-policeman no person would risk his life at all to drive you’.<sup>130</sup> Property could be stolen or destroyed while in transit and one disbanded policeman went as far as painting over the standard RIC bottle green boxes holding his property in the hope that they would be left alone.<sup>131</sup> Public auctions were boycotted or

125 Timothy Murphy claim (TNA: CO 762/7/3); John D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: an oral history* (Belfast, 1990), p. 118.

126 Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp. 293–5.

127 Attacks and threats against disbanded policemen in Liaison and Evacuation Papers (MAI: LE/4–11). For examples of physical violence, see Cope to Secretary, Provisional Government, 22 Jun. 1922 (NAI: S 1842); Patrick Healy claim (TNA: CO 762/89/12); James McElwaine to RIC Tribunal (HO 351/98).

128 Benjamin Stafford claim (NAI: FIN/COMP/381/153(2)). Later, a threatening notice and damaged property convinced Stafford to leave and not return.

129 Francis Ronan to RIC Tribunal, 20 Jul. 1922; Hugh Carty to RIC Tribunal, 9 Jun. 1922 (TNA: HO 351/98).

130 Patrick Durkan claim (CO 762/54/16).

131 Martin McLaughlin claim (/23/2); Martin McLaughlin to Lord Dunedin, 10 Nov. 1925; Martin McLaughlin to Lord Eustace Percy, 1 Dec. 1925 (TNA: CO 905/17).

prevented from taking place and land and property often had to be sold at a fraction of its value.<sup>132</sup>

An unidentified number of ex-policemen who feared for their safety or economic prospects quickly crossed the border into Northern Ireland. By December 1923, the RIC Tribunal reported that ‘a large number’ of the ‘men of longer service’ had ‘bought farms in Ireland, chiefly in Ulster’.<sup>133</sup> It was only in the last six months of 1923 that ‘considerable numbers’, who had been waiting for ‘the pacification of the country’, applied for commutation of their pensions to purchase land in the Irish Free State.<sup>134</sup> The 1,347 RIC veterans who joined the RUC up to February 1923 (including 505 Catholics) found secure employment in line with their training and experience.<sup>135</sup> In March 1922, Sir Hamar Greenwood felt that ‘some of the members of the R.I.C. may be in danger, after disbandment, if they proceed to their homes *in parts* of Northern Ireland’ [emphasis added].<sup>136</sup> The experiences of those who had served in the south and returned north or those stationed in the six counties who wished to settle into civilian life in Northern Ireland was, again, dictated by the community they hoped to re-enter.

Patrick Clarke moved to the Waterside area of Derry city and informed the RIC Tribunal he would have trouble closing his affairs in Longford ‘owing to the disturbed state of the country and especially the places I would have to pass through viz. Leitrim Sligo & Mayo’.<sup>137</sup> Another ex-policeman in County Londonderry noticed ‘a conspiracy against ex-members of the RIC’ and hoped ‘to procure a home in a loyal and safe locality as my pension is too small to enable me to live in the city’.<sup>138</sup> Even a very short distance could make a difference. Patrick Corr was also living on the Waterside and had secured employment in nearby Drumahoe but ‘had to give it up in a few days owing to threats received by the firm’. He had intended to move to his native Tyrone but wrote that ‘owing to the unsettled state of that part I consider it unwise to move for the present’.<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, Tyrone was preferable to Belfast as a destination for Matthew Hyland who reluctantly left the city for Dungannon ‘owing to the extreme terror prevailing in the locality through

132 Memorandum circulated to the Cabinet by Major A. Reid Jamieson, 1927 (TNA: CO 762/1/16).

133 Unsigned [L. N. B. Odgers?] to Sir John Anderson, 20 Dec. 1923 (TNA: HO/351/102).

134 A. F. Hemming to Sir Edward Troup, 13 Dec. 1923 (/351/102).

135 Kent Fedorowich, ‘The problems of disbandment: the Royal Irish Constabulary and imperial migration, 1919–1929’, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 117 (May, 1996), p. 97. See also, Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 117–27.

136 A. F. Hemming to Prime Minister, Northern Ireland, 25 Mar. 1922 (PRONI: CAB/6/33).

137 Patrick Begley to RIC Tribunal, 15 Jul. 1922 (TNA: HO/351/98).

138 M. Cloran to RIC Tribunal, 31 Jul. 1922 (/98).

139 Patrick Corr to RIC Tribunal, 10 Jul. 1922 (/98).

bomb throwing into houses and shooting and looting and burning'.<sup>140</sup> Francis Duignan wrote from Ardglass, County Down that his furniture was 'in storage in Belfast which is in a hostile locality' while Francis Lenden made arrangements to move from Downpatrick, County Down to Belfast but on arriving there similarly found it 'a very dangerous place to be'.<sup>141</sup> As late as December 1926, ex-RIC constable William Kennedy, then a clerk of markets in Ballycastle, County Antrim, received a threatening letter proclaiming: 'we don't want police pensioners'.<sup>142</sup> While the six counties could be a safe haven for disbanded policemen, it was only so in the right areas.

But for every man threatened, beaten, or shunned, there were more who experienced little or no hostility in their own communities. Patrick Shea, son of a policeman stationed in Clones on disbandment, for example, was blind to any antagonism against former members: 'The disbanded members of the Royal Irish Constabulary were not made to feel unwanted in the Irish Free State. I think we could have gone to live anywhere in the country without fear of molestation'. His family left for Newry in Northern Ireland (his mother's birthplace) but only, Shea insisted, as they had no family ties in Clones and limited employment opportunities.<sup>143</sup> Many found themselves employed by the new state, including 160 who joined the Garda Síochána in 1922.<sup>144</sup> A willingness to keep one's head down and accept the new order aided integration but usually went undocumented. Neither was all the violence directed at ex-policemen in 1922 necessarily related to their former service with the Crown and ex-policemen who wished to make a quiet life for themselves could become victims of agrarian violence or embroiled in local land disputes. Ex-Sergeant John Minihan's house was attacked in March 1922 with windows broken and doors smashed. The local IRA confirmed that 'Minihan's record during the war was not bad – in fact is was more otherwise' and Minihan himself believed that the violence did not result from his association with the Crown and 'the real object is to get him to vacate his house'.<sup>145</sup>

The attitude of the republican hierarchy, who neither sanctioned nor condoned the persecution of ex-policemen, is probably made clear by comments in a letter from Austin Stack to a man seeking permission to return to his wife and family in Tralee, County Kerry:

140 Matthew Hyland to RIC Tribunal, 28 Jul. 1922 (/98).

141 Francis Duignan to RIC Tribunal, 17 Jul. 1922; Francis Lenden to RIC Tribunal, 24 Jul. 1922 (/98).

142 Letter received by William Kennedy, 4 Dec. 1926 (PRONI: D2676/7).

143 Shea, *Voices and the sound of drums*, p. 91.

144 Taylor, *Heroes or traitors*, p. 88.

145 Seán Kavanagh to Emmet Dalton, 8 Mar. 1922 (MAI: LE/4/14).



I cannot see that I have anything to do with matters of the kind referred to. The case is one of thousands on which no general policy, so far as I know, has been settled. The people in various parts of country, very naturally, look upon men who served in the British force up to the last moment as having been our enemies during the war.<sup>146</sup>

When advice was given, it was based on local conditions. The department of defence was able to arrange that a number of disbanded policemen in Kells, County Meath would not be interfered with but when a Dublin Castle official enquired about two men attempting to find new accommodation in Cork, where ex-policemen had been shot and killed, he was informed by the chief liaison officer that ‘under the circumstance it would be by no means wise to ask either of these men to remain in Cork. I am sure I would be glad to help you in this respect, but I could not guarantee the safety of the Constables and their families if they choose to remain behind in Cork’.<sup>147</sup>

The record of a policeman during the conflict could determine his treatment after disbandment but this was applied somewhat arbitrarily. When Denis Harrington and Florence Donnelly, both of whom had been stationed in Patrickswell, County Limerick, moved into the Kerry No. 2 Brigade area, enquiries were made about their record. The director of intelligence reported:

Harrington was one of the old peelers who were sticking on. Patrickswell was a very quiet area and it is quite possible that he might not be so quiet, if the area were more vigorous ... I would, however, recommend that he be allowed reside in Ireland ... The same remarks D. Harrington would apply to Florence Donnelly.<sup>148</sup>

For others simply having been a member of the force and refusing to resign was enough. An RIC sergeant’s wife suffered a raid during which she was informed they had come to shoot him ‘because he was a servant of the Crown’.<sup>149</sup>

In some localities, disbanded policemen became easy targets and offered redemption to previously inactive IRA units. A raid on the home of a policeman in Galway prompted an IRA officer to lament that:

146 Michael Daly claim (TNA: CO 762/126/1).

147 Department of Defence to Officer i/c Evacuation, 6 Jun. 1922 (MAI: LE/4/15); M. Loughnane to Chief Liaison Officer, 1 Apr. 1922; Chief Liaison Officer to Loughnane, 1 Apr. 1922 (LE/11/6).

148 IO Kerry No. 2 to IO 1st Southern Division, 12 May 1922; DI to IO 1st Southern Division, 6 Jun. 1922 (NLI: MS 31,212).

149 M. Loughnane, Dublin Castle to Chief Liaison Officer, 30 Mar. 1922 (MAI: LE/4/15).

Attacks upon police and families of police pensioners are very widespread in the County Galway. I feel certain that if those activities were so prevalent during the period of hostilities as they are now much better results would have been obtained. I imagine that the policy in Galway now is that 'it is never too late to learn'.<sup>150</sup>

Across Sligo, where there had been a quiet war, Michael Farry has described a 'campaign of intimidation against ex-members of the RIC'.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, in Cavan, where there were only nine recorded homicides up to December 1921,<sup>152</sup> the county town's IRA were equally energetic. On one night in May 1922, threatening raids were made on the homes of the county inspector, district inspector, and two sergeants.<sup>153</sup> The same month it was reported that five ex-policemen in Belturbet fled the town following threats; ex-RIC and 'Black and Tans' in Killeshandra and elsewhere were given a few days to leave.<sup>154</sup> The treatment of disbanded policemen in communities like those in Cavan reflected previous patterns of non-lethal victimisation. The Cavan IRA did relatively little shooting but was more aggressive in targeting police relatives with intimidation and boycotting between 1919 and 1921.<sup>155</sup>

The disbandment of the RIC left their families open to victimisation. Along with the families of married men, the terms of disbandment provided for the removal from Ireland of dependants of single men.<sup>156</sup> A separation allowance was granted for men who felt they had to flee without their families, but when a policeman made a hasty and disorganised departure, his family bore the brunt of any raids on the family home. It also fell to wives left behind to sell up property and settle affairs, and some were threatened after their husbands had left.<sup>157</sup> The night James Moore left Ireland a group of armed men came to the house looking for him. Finding he was not there, his wife and children were 'threatened and ill-treated and forced to remain out in a field for several nights'. The experience resulted in a breakdown of his wife's health from which she was considered unlikely to

150 Officer i/c Evacuation to Brennan, 12 Apr. 1922 (MAI: LE/4/10).

151 Farry, *The aftermath of revolution*, p. 165.

152 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 328.

153 M. Loughnane to Officer i/c Evacuation, 18 May 1922 (MAI: LE/4/16); *Anglo-Celt*, 6 May 1922.

154 *Anglo-Celt*, 20 May 1922.

155 For incidents of intimidation against RIC members and their relatives in Cavan, see: *Anglo-Celt*, 28 Feb. 1919, 3 Apr. 1920; MCRs, CI, Cavan, Aug. 1920 (TNA: CO 904/112); BMH WS 1387 (Hugh Maguire); BMH WS 1266 (Hugh Brady).

156 'Removal Expenses and Maintenance of Police families compelled through intimidation to leave their residences' (TNA: T 192/2); 'Note on the work of the R.I.C. Tribunal', n.d. (TNA: HO 351/97).

157 See, for example, Timothy Doona claim (CO 762/60/20).

recover.<sup>158</sup> The trauma of shootings, raids, and threats led to complaints of prolonged ill-health and ‘neurasthenia’ from police wives.<sup>159</sup> The wife of one ex-policeman later died in a mental institution.<sup>160</sup>

In June 1922, Andy Cope described a ‘concerted movement for a wholesale expulsion’ of ex-policemen and their families from the country and pleaded for something to be done.<sup>161</sup> Cope could draw on several examples of the harsh treatment of policemen, but victimisation remained localised and, while significant in its own right, did not match any of the more pessimistic predictions. When it finished its work in 1924, the RIC Tribunal had issued 1,263 replacement grants for property lost, stolen, or destroyed and 727 ‘other grants’ for ‘hardship’ (almost exclusively for widely defined ‘removal expenses’). Any man who ‘owing to fear or molestation was obliged to move his home either to another place in Ireland, or to any place outside Ireland’ was entitled to a disturbance allowance, granted as an advance subject to a liability to account for it later; the Tribunal dealt with 6,941 of these cases.

Most of the movement was internal. The Tribunal received 1,686 applications for the purpose of emigration and approved 1,568. This offers a reasonable estimate for emigration up to 1924 but must also take account of substantial (but unrecorded) overlap with 886 separation allowances awarded to married men who left home, leaving their families in Ireland.<sup>162</sup> Kent Fedorowich suggested that the total number of ex-police emigrants may have reached 2,000 by the end of the 1920s.<sup>163</sup> Though a significant number in its own right, maximum emigration of ex-RIC (even including those who had returned by 1927)<sup>164</sup> remained only a small percentage of the 13,502 men who were disbanded.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, it was the non-Irish recruits who had joined from 1920 and had little reason to remain in Ireland at the

158 James F. Moore claim (/65/24).

159 John George Donaghy claim (/55/9); Mary Butler claim (/106/11).

160 James Tarsony claim (/164/9). Tarsony claimed he had ignored warnings to leave his home until one night he was brought outside by armed men and shots fired over his head. He was forced to leave without his wife who became ill soon after.

161 Alfred Cope to Secretary, Provisional Government, 22 Jun. 1922 (NAI: S 1842).

162 Report of the RIC Tribunal to Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 24 Feb. 1924 (TNA: CO 762/1); L. N. B. Odgers to A. Reid Jamieson, 11 Apr. 1927 (TNA: HO 45/13580); IGC Report, Nov. 1930 (CO 762/212).

163 Report of the RIC Tribunal to Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 24 Feb. 1924 (TNA: CO 762/1); Fedorowich, ‘The problems of disbandment’, pp. 88–108. See also Kent Fedorowich, ‘Reconstruction and resettlement: the politicization of Irish migration to Australia and Canada, 1919–1929’, *English Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 459 (Nov., 1999), pp. 1143–78.

164 Memorandum to Cabinet by Major A. Reid Jamieson, 1927 (TNA: CO 762/1/16).

165 Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 295.

termination of their employment that were most likely to leave. Exact figures went unrecorded, but the RIC Tribunal found that the 'large majority of the emigrants were British enlistments, i.e. ex-soldiers' and while a 'considerable number' of the older, Irish members had also emigrated, 'The bulk of the Irish members of the Royal Irish Constabulary never left Ireland'.<sup>166</sup> While there were complaints of victimisation with regards to employment, ex-policemen also fell afoul of the same economic conditions suffered by unskilled men in 1920s Ireland and the RIC Tribunal's report acknowledged that the men who had taken up farming 'suffered through the severe agricultural depression in Ireland and the consequent fall in land values'.<sup>167</sup> This was emigration not simply motivated by revolutionary terror, but by a range of personal, political, and economic factors.

### Emigration

The departure of others considered disloyal by the republican movement, and most notably the significant Protestant decline up to 1926, has drawn much recent interest. David Fitzpatrick's forensic statistical analysis of Methodist demographics in West Cork has shown that the main source of decline was a failure to enrol new members, excess mortality, low fertility, and low nuptiality. The effects of any violence directed at the Protestants of West Cork were 'fairly minor'.<sup>168</sup> Similar work by Andy Bielenberg reinforces Fitzpatrick's suggestion that 'the inexorable decline of southern Protestantism was mainly self-inflicted'.<sup>169</sup> Fitzpatrick and Bielenberg's work follows earlier investigation into the extent of revolutionary depopulation by R. E. Kennedy, Kurt Bowen, Peter Hart, and Enda Delaney.<sup>170</sup> By Bielenberg's calculations, out of a total decline of 106,000 Protestants between 1911 and 1926, economic and voluntary emigration accounted for between 45,000 and 59,000, the British withdrawal for 30,000, Great War dead for 5,000, and natural increase for a negative of 10,000 leaving a residual of between 2,000 and 16,000 who could have left between 1919 and 1923 owing to revolutionary terror.<sup>171</sup>

The experiences of a Protestant community in County Cavan mirror these findings. Rural dean's reports for the Church of Ireland community in

166 A. F. Hemming to Sir Edward Troup, 13 Dec. 1923 (TNA: HO 351/102).

167 Brief summary of the work of the RIC Tribunal, Mar. 1928 (TNA: HO 45/13029).

168 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, pp. 159–80.

169 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p. 180.

170 Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish: emigration, marriage, and fertility* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1973); Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic state: Ireland's privileged minority* (Montreal, 1983); Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*; Enda Delaney, *Demography, state and society: Irish migration to Britain, 1921–1971* (Liverpool, 2000).

171 Andy Bielenberg, 'Exodus: the emigration of southern Irish Protestants during the Irish war of independence and the civil war', *Past and Present*, 218 (2013), pp. 199–233.

Arva record a drop from 119 families in 1920 to 84 in 1921, a drastic decline that seems odd in light of a significant increase in attendance at Sunday services and the relatively stable enrolment and average attendance at the two Church of Ireland schools in the district.<sup>172</sup> The 1922 report recorded 80 families and a reduced average congregation of 150 each Sunday, while school enrolment saw only a marginal fall. That year incumbents were requested, in the case of a noticeable drop in Church numbers, to speculate on its cause and rector W. A. MacDougall wrote ‘Migration’.<sup>173</sup> In fact, the Church of Ireland community in Arva (which was the most likely to apply for compensation) was more resistant to emigration than other non-Catholic denominations. The much smaller Methodist and Presbyterian populations in the area had been reduced by over half between 1911 and 1926, while ‘Other’ denominations (4 Brethren in 1911) had been reduced by 75 per cent. The size of the community, therefore, can be seen as a significant dictator of its survival. The Church of Ireland decline in Arva was far less pronounced than in the county as a whole, while the drop in Presbyterian and Methodist numbers was significantly greater.<sup>174</sup>

The figures hint at an exodus as revolutionary violence intensified in Ireland but only a small percentage of that migration can be said with any certainty to have resulted from revolutionary terror or intimidation. A small sample of Protestant migration into Fermanagh includes 145 Protestant persons or families who left Cavan between 1920 and 1925.<sup>175</sup> Among the eleven who left from Arva there is no record of an application for compensation with either the Compensation (Ireland) Commission, the IGC, or under the Damage to Property Acts.<sup>176</sup> While individuals may have refrained from seeking redress for revolutionary suffering, it would be reasonable to

172 Rural dean’s reports, Arva, 1919–1921 (RCB: D3/1/27, 28A, 28). In 1919, enrolment and average attendance was, respectively, 57 and 30 for the school in Arva and 36 and 20 in Bruse; 36 and 29 in Arva and 24 and 21 in Bruse in 1920; and 45 and 30 in Arva and 24 and 19 in Bruse in 1921.

173 Rural Dean’s report, Arva, 1922 (/1/29).

174 1911 census returns (census.nationalarchives.ie); *Saorstát Éireann: Census of population, 1926*, Vol. 3, Table 9, ‘Counties 1861–1926. Number of persons of each religion in each county and county borough in Saorstát Éireann on 18th April, 1926’; *Saorstát Éireann: Census of population, 1926*, Vol. 3, Table 12, ‘District Electoral Division. Number of persons of each religion in each district electoral division in Saorstát Éireann on 18th April, 1926’.

175 Terence Dooley, ‘Protestant migration from the Free State to Northern Ireland, 1920–25: a private census for Co. Fermanagh’, *Clogher Record*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1996), pp. 88–132.

176 Department of Finance compensation claims, Shaw Commission (NAI: FIN/COMP/SHAW 381/1–460); Department of Finance compensation claims, post-Truce (NAI: FIN/COMP/A381/1(2)–412(2)); IGC claims (CO 762/3–212); Register of Claimants, Cavan (TNA: CO 905/1).

assume that if violence and persecution had been a primary cause of the migration, then there would be some record among the compensation files.<sup>177</sup> Only six of 86 Cavan applicants to the IGC had left the county by the time they applied for compensation in the late 1920s.<sup>178</sup>

The under-sheriff for Cavan, Travers Robert Blackley, and his wife Lucy Ida (who submitted a separate claim) had moved to London; Blackley had inflicted casualties on armed raiders at his home in April 1922 and was 'informed by the Free State Military Authorities that it would be dangerous for him to remain in the country'.<sup>179</sup> Joseph Benison applied from Devon, England, for destruction of property and seizure of a vacant house and farm and though he complained of mistreatment by Free State troops, did not mention being forced to leave Ireland.<sup>180</sup> John Scott emigrated to Australia but alleged it was the destruction of his business by boycott rather than threats or physical violence that prompted his departure.<sup>181</sup> Two had crossed the border into Northern Ireland. James Heaslip claimed he was 'chased out' of Cavan in July 1921 and Arthur McClean signed away his land 'under duress' in April 1922 having received death threats and gave an address in Belfast in 1928.<sup>182</sup> All the remainder alleged persecution and loss but felt neither compulsion nor desire to leave. The core group of loyalist applicants in Arva, for instance, remained stable. Five had been removed or lost access to land between 1921 and 1922 but all bar one had been restored by 1924; the IGC concluded that James Johnston, who remained in the district, 'does not appear to have made a bad deal'.<sup>183</sup> It is possible to trace a notable Protestant decline in Arva in 1921 and 1922 but, while war and civil war are part of the broader context of that migration, the direct link to revolutionary victimhood is less obvious.

177 Only two families recorded on the list did make applications to the IGC: Creagmile claims (CO 762/103/17–19); Robert Smith claim (/103/20).

178 See Chapter 3, n. 98. See the note accompanying Table 3.1.

179 Travers Robert Blackley claim (TNA: CO 762/37/6); Lucy Ida Blackley claim (/46/3). His claim suggested that he had killed three of the attackers and wounded three others, while the *Irish Times* (12 Apr. 1922) reported that three attackers had been 'seriously wounded' and one was believed dead. Those responsible do not seem to have been republicans, as the newspaper report described a 'guard of I.R.A.' stationed outside the house after the raid. During hearings for compensation at Cavan Quarter Sessions it was again suggested that three men had been killed by Blackley and his son: *Irish Times*, 9 Feb. 1924, 16 Apr. 1924.

180 Joseph Arthur Benison claim (/14/3).

181 John Scott claim (/181/6).

182 Arthur McClean claim (/183/2).

183 James Johnston claim (/41/4). Johnston's brother had originally been allowed to buy the land for a 'nominal' fee and James had subsequently secured the land for the same fee.

## Conclusion

There are caveats, unrepresentative extremes, and exceptions, but, overall, the evidence suggests that civilians were targeted on neither social nor religious status exclusively, nor for purely military reasons. The reality lies somewhere in between and was subject to local conditions. Even in Ulster and the north-east, where communal boundaries were generally more firmly drawn along religious lines, there remained some fluidity. Between July 1921 and June 1922, local populations were intimidated, coerced, or defined as ‘enemy’ largely based on what they did rather than who they were, though who they were was never entirely irrelevant. The nuance between the two extremes comes with an examination of the actions that led to the definition of ‘enemy’. Contact with the Crown forces, however social and inconsequential, was the behaviour most likely to draw suspicion. It was those for whom contact with the Crown had already been a regular and natural feature of ordinary life who often remained least inclined to avoid such behaviour. Everyday actions of defiance far outnumbered military acts of defiance and these everyday acts were often motivated by factors loosely linked or unrelated to political preference. Refusing to obey Dáil edicts, to pay levies or rates, or to adhere to a boycott brought labelling, victimisation, and punishment. The Truce and slow withdrawal of the Crown forces brought opportunities to enact revenge for unpunished defiance or to settle local scores. By July 1922, it had become increasingly difficult to distinguish between military, agrarian, and opportunist crime as the country increasingly descended into chaos. In 1923, Arthur McClean, a self-proclaimed Orangeman, loyalist, and covenanter who lived on a disputed farm received a threatening letter signed ‘I.R.A. and F.S. United For one cause to free the Country from Land Grabbers’.<sup>184</sup> Any attempts to create order and place behaviour into neatly defined boxes will therefore remain unsatisfying. Instead, as this chapter has tried to do, attempts must be made to understand, as far as the documents will allow, the grey areas and the middle ground.

Away from the violence and fear most Irish citizens lived lives free of antagonism.<sup>185</sup> Even among the alleged ‘enemies’ of the republic were those who carried on a relatively quiet existence during and after the revolution. A majority of the disbanded RIC settled quietly and happily in communities around Ireland while most southern loyalists were successfully, if sometimes grudgingly, assimilated into life in the Irish Free State.<sup>186</sup> Economic or voluntary migration accounted for most of the non-Catholic population

184 Arthur McClean claim (/183/2).

185 McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, p. 136.

186 Leigh-Ann Coffey, ‘Loyalism in transition: southern Irish loyalists and the Irish Free

decline between 1911 and 1926.<sup>187</sup> In his own community in Malahide, County Dublin, Brian Inglis described how:

the members of the old Protestant Ascendancy were so firmly established there, they could live their lives almost as they had before the Treaty of 1921 ... the Treaty had been signed; there was no going back on it. So, like passengers on a ship seized by mutineers, the members of old Ascendancy families continued to behave in the way they had always behaved – as if determined to give an example to the lascars who had come up from the bilges to take over the ship, and who might otherwise disgrace themselves by panic or excess. After a few years of life in the new Irish Free State, the Unionists in Malahide found that nothing sinister was going to happen to them – that there was no need for heroics. Their social world remained stable; like a prawn in aspic it gradually began to go stale, but it did not disintegrate. All around them ‘that other Ireland’ as George Russell (A.E.) had called it, was coming into force; but they remained almost unaware of its existence.<sup>188</sup>

In 1927, William Carleton, a farmer from Arva, County Cavan, signed a letter to the IGC as ‘A Southern Loyalist’.<sup>189</sup> Just a few years earlier he had signed correspondence relating to his Damage to Property claims as ‘a Humble Citizen of the F.S.’<sup>190</sup> This may simply have been an attempt to play up to the bodies to which he was applying, but is also indicative of a willingness to accept the new order and suggests some success in reconciling what would appear to be conflicting identities. Carleton’s neighbour George Cartwright represented a process that many went through after independence: Lord Farnham testified that Cartwright had been ‘a most loyal and fearless supporter of British interests in this country’ before independence while a 1924 Garda report described how ‘Mr. Cartwright has been a Unionist, but since the Treaty became a supporter of the Free State.’<sup>191</sup> Amidst the turbulence of war and revolution, it is the unaffected, the indifferent, and the apathetic, those who did not suffer, complain, or seek redress, who remain the most difficult to account for.

State’, in James W. McAuley and Graham Spencer, *Ulster loyalism after the Good Friday Agreement: history, identity and change* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 27–35.

187 Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, pp. 167–240; Andy Bielenberg, ‘Exodus’, pp. 199–233.

188 Brian Inglis, *West Briton* (London, 1962), pp. 12–13.

189 William Carleton claim (TNA: CO 762/78/6).

190 William Carleton claim (NAI: FIN/COMP/A381/336(2)).

191 George Cartwright claim (/A381/30(2)).



## Conclusion

Examining the local, the everyday, and the ‘minor’ acts of revolutionary violence in Ireland brings a more common experience to the fore. It is not necessarily *the* common experience, but one closest to that felt by most on the island. It also brings into question the dominance of the spectacular and the seedy among studies of the Irish Revolution and suggests that the culmination of many small threats or harmful acts, repeated over a period of time, more suitably defines the period of conflict between 1917 and 1922. Similarly important are the small, repeated acts of loyalty, defiance, or betrayal. It is here that the substantial and fluid middle-ground between total collaboration and total resistance can be found, where one can see the ‘neutrality’ and ‘hedging’ so common in irregular conflict.<sup>1</sup> On the grander scale, the enemy in the Irish struggle for independence was the British government in Ireland and its armed forces. On a smaller scale – the scale with which this study is most concerned – the enemy lived nearby, had a face, and had a name. It may have worn a uniform, but often it did not. Control could not be achieved without the minor acts of everyday terror that have been described throughout the preceding chapters; they were, to a great extent, a necessary corollary of this kind of war. In that context, it is the local and the perpetual which counts; the daily interaction between neighbours, friends, and enemies.

Examining low-level, recurring acts of terror raises important questions about the way we should view loyalty and defiance during the Irish Revolution. Immediately it is clear how unsuitable any attempt to place the general public into one of two neat camps – nationalist/separatist or loyalist/unionist – will remain. Further, it raises questions about any comfortable assumptions we may make about the nature of public support for the republican or British campaign. That the IRA relied on the support of the general population in its guerrilla campaign, whether that support was active or passive, is clearly true in many ways, but in many others it becomes an oversimplification, missing

1 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 104.

many of the complexities and nuances inherent in individual and communal behaviour. These are not complexities unique to the Irish Revolution and focusing on the intricacies of community conflict allows the Irish case to be placed in a broader theoretical (or, indeed, comparative) framework of irregular conflict, as seen in the work of Tim Wilson and Gemma Clark.<sup>2</sup>

Defiance is a key theme that runs throughout this study and is a behaviour strongly linked to human nature. A traditional nationalist reading of the independence struggle insists that it was only a small minority of pro-British loyalists who actively defied the IRA. This minority were given a range of labels, all of which emphasised their difference, their separateness to the rest of the community. It was they who threatened the IRA's campaign and who were, consequently, punished while the vast majority of sympathetic locals supported the aims of the separatists. If they did not take up arms, smuggle them, or store them, or gather and ferry intelligence, they at least provided a mandate, food, and shelter where required, and did not get in the way. In this narrative, punishment of the minority was invariably necessary and justified and nowhere is this more obvious than in contemporary and modern debates on the fate of 'spies and informers', discussed in Chapter 4. Drawing attention to cases where there is evidence to suggest the victim had done what the IRA said they had done, of which there are plenty, does not fully dispel awkward questions about the way individuals were treated.

Informing is the act of defiance that has drawn the bulk of the attention of historians and commentators whose primary concern has been to ascertain the guilt of the IRA's victims, often with the conflicting aims of celebration or denigration in mind. Aside from the many problems faced when attempting to assign motivation or guilt – not least contradictory, self-serving, or incomplete evidence – civilian 'spies' only accounted for 8 per cent of the total casualties between January 1919 and December 1921 and 65 per cent of the civilians killed by the IRA.<sup>3</sup> Peter Hart and Jane Leonard, among others, have argued that IRA suspicion about the 'anti-Irish' tendencies and motivations of certain minority groups of civilians – 'loyalists', Orangemen, Freemasons, ex-servicemen, and Protestants, as well as tramps, tinkers, and sexual deviants – motivated much of the disproportionate violence inflicted against them.<sup>4</sup> Though the extent to which religion or social status acted as a single motivator for republican violence has been rightly questioned,

2 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*; Tim Wilson, 'Ghost provinces, mislaid minorities: the experience of southern Ireland and Prussian Poland compared, 1918–23', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 13 (2002), pp. 61–86; Clark, *Everyday violence*.

3 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', pp. 328–9.

4 Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp. 308–15; Jane Leonard, 'Getting them at last: The I.R.A. and ex-servicemen', in Fitzpatrick, *Revolution?* See also, O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 322–3.

neither should it be discounted entirely. As the discussions of loyalism in Arva, County Cavan in Chapter 3 and IRA labelling and targeting of civilian suspects in Chapter 6 have shown, religion, class, and status were not irrelevancies in community life. Manifestations of loyalty to the Crown, be they religious, political, family, or otherwise, were known, recognised, and articulated during the independence struggle. They influenced defiant behaviour among civilians but equally motivated undue or exaggerated suspicion from local Volunteers and their supporters. Even if a 'minority' status was invoked only as a cover for more base personal emotions – rivalry, jealousy, greed, or desire for revenge – or as propaganda, it is part of the experience and remains inextricable from the broader narrative.

Defiance also came in a wide range of acts independent of informing: denouncing the IRA, refusal to pay a levy, refusal to pay rates to a republican collector, failure to obey a boycott, attending British institutions, and so forth. Importantly, these acts of non-cooperation were not always related to, or compatible with, either anti-republican or pro-British sentiment. Throughout the Revolution, the general public were forced to make decisions about how they would behave. One of the simpler decisions was whether or not to take an active part in the conflict. As is often the case in irregular war, the majority chose not to participate in armed activity or intelligence gathering. There were also more complicated, and often contradictory, decisions and dilemmas.<sup>5</sup> An individual might decide to obey the Belfast boycott but not pay a levy to the IRA arms fund, or vice versa. Neither decision was necessarily related to political preferences. Responses to individual dilemmas were made based on self-interest or self-preservation, or both. Self-interest can be found in withholding poor rates from a republican collector, in adhering to a boycott, or in attending a British court. Self-preservation is evident when IRA sanctions convinced an individual to behave in a particular way or change their behaviour because they were afraid of the consequences. To have an effect, a sanction could be applied (or threatened) directly against the perceived deviant. It could also be carried out (or threatened) on a neighbour who had perpetrated a similar act; whole communities were threatened with sanction by warning notices or proclamations. Self-interest and survival instinct convinced the bulk of the population to avoid trouble, but also to take previously unavailable opportunities for personal gain.

This kind of behaviour is prominent in Stathis Kalyvas's *The logic of violence in civil war*, in Michael Fellman's study of the American Civil War in Missouri, or in James Scott's work on everyday peasant resistance,

5 In the introduction to his study of the American Civil War in Missouri, Michael Fellman vividly lays out many of the questions faced by civilians in times of conflict: Fellman, *Inside war*, p. xv.

*Weapons of the weak*.<sup>6</sup> Fellman's work is particularly relevant here as it shows how a narrative of violence can be recreated using the accounts written by civilians, whether in the form of letters, diaries, memoirs, or compensation claims.<sup>7</sup> Examples of what Kalyvas referred to as 'fence-sitting', or 'passive neutrality', and what Fellman termed 'survival lies' can be seen throughout this book. In contested areas, uncertainty and rumour make it difficult for individuals to align with one 'political actor' as they fear that their behaviour can be punished by either side, leading to a preference for neutrality. In American Civil War Missouri, 'Loyalty was not the safest and most common presentation of self during this guerrilla war; prevarication was.' Avoiding frankness or directness became part of a survival strategy.<sup>8</sup> Without a focus on the local and the everyday, this behaviour – and an important aspect of the civilian experience of war – remains hidden. Grand narratives of oppression or liberation have little time for indifference, indecision, or cynicism but nevertheless those emotions remain.

There is plenty of evidence in the Irish case of conversion, of wavering, or of apathy. As Kalyvas has made clear, 'Popular loyalty, disloyalty, and support cannot be assumed as exogenous and fixed'.<sup>9</sup> Any understanding of loyalty must also take account of those who were loyal or defiant in a different sense of the term. Those who, as Anne Dolan has put it, 'doggedly adhered to their side, refused to take a side, or won or lost small wars against local tyrannies'. It must recognise the 'indifferent and the unaffected'.<sup>10</sup> It must identify those caught up in a conflict from which they would have preferred to remain aloof, but on whom violence or intimidation had its impact. Kalyvas describes how cooperation with a political actor in a time of conflict can result from 'varying combinations of persuasion and coercion' and the 'coexistence of sympathy and sanctions reflects the mix of persuasion and coercion that political actors typically settle upon once they achieve an acceptable level of control'.<sup>11</sup> He points out that many accounts of how people collaborate with armed actors are consistent with James Scott's analysis of peasant resistance and 'point to qualified, cautious and ambivalent

6 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*; Fellman, *Inside war*; Scott, *Weapons of the weak*.

7 See Fellman, *Inside war*, pp. 309–13.

8 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 226–9; Fellman, *Inside war*, pp. 44–52.

9 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 389.

10 Dolan, 'Terror and revolutionary Ireland', p. 33.

11 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 101–2. Scott, for example, described how a peasant farmer might become a member of the government party but still pay dues to the opposition party and tells of one farmer who supported the opposition party but dined with a local landowner, a supporter of the government, to ensure that he will retain his employment; a combination of 'routine compliance and routine resistance': Scott, *Weapons of the weak*, pp. 277–81.

collaboration along the two poles of sympathy and fear'.<sup>12</sup> Although this study has been restricted to one political actor, the IRA, and excludes the rival actor, the Crown forces, it can be seen throughout that many acts of compliance or defiance were carried out in the interests of the two key motivators that Kalyvas identified: 'Economic considerations and survival'.<sup>13</sup> Scott's argument that any assumptions about behaviour where civilian interaction is defined by either pole of compliance miss the '*massive* middle ground, in which conformity is often a self-conscious strategy and resistance is a carefully hedged affair that avoids all-or-nothing confrontations', is particularly relevant.<sup>14</sup> Acts of support for or defiance of the IRA (of all kinds) were not simply motivated by political preference but by a wide range of shifting circumstances and attitudes. In his comparative work on Ulster and Upper Silesia, Tim Wilson referred to the 'analysis gap' where 'between the influence of high-level politics (from above) and personal hatred (from below) lies a wide range of local motivations and behaviours that rarely receive sustained academic attention'.<sup>15</sup>

Conceptualising support based on attitude, preference, or allegiance is challenging, and the gap between preference and behaviour or action can only widen in times of conflict. Revealed or 'observed' behaviour is a similarly problematic means by which to define loyalty. Kalyvas deliberately made 'no assumptions about the underlying preferences of the vast majority of the population and only minimal assumptions about behavioural support, in which complex, ambiguous and shifting behaviour is assumed, along with strong commitment by a small minority'.<sup>16</sup> Using compensation claims to observe the nature and form of revolutionary violence makes clear the difficulties in finding absolutes of loyalty or disloyalty in the actions and inactions of individuals. The IGC, for instance, demanded that its applicants had suffered monetary loss on account of their allegiance to the Crown and applicants often found it difficult to prove satisfactorily that they had been loyal or engaged in loyal behaviour for purely patriotic reasons. Sometimes the committee rejected a case as it was established that the applicant had invented injuries or losses. More often (only one claim in Arva, County Cavan, for example, was considered 'Not Genuine'),<sup>17</sup> claims were exaggerated, embellished, or it was questioned whether the evidence of loyalty offered by the applicant matched the definition of loyalty required by the terms of reference. Applicants for redress effectively labelled themselves

12 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 101–2.

13 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 104.

14 Scott, *Weapons of the weak*, p. 285, emphasis in original.

15 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 161.

16 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 87, 92–104.

17 Maggie Masterson claim (TNA: CO 762/175/16).

as victims of some wrong or other. In the case of IGC applicants, they were simultaneously labelling themselves as loyalists but with the ultimate aim of securing a monetary grant. Michael Fellman has written about how the process of seeking redress could be part of a belief that the world would right itself, and that justice would eventually be done.<sup>18</sup> It could also be a chance decision, taken because the opportunity was there. For these reasons alone, one must question the nature of loyalty as expressed in compensation claim files.

Similar problems occur when dealing with the testimony of IRA veterans, such as those given to the BMH, where the testimony often conforms to an idea that there were two very distinct groups operating among the civilian population: those who were for the IRA and those who were against.<sup>19</sup> Defiance is equated with disloyalty, and minor acts of defiance, such as those discussed throughout this book, feature relatively rarely. The descriptions of revolutionary activity found in the statements rarely match the concerns, preoccupations, and actions contained in many of the available contemporary documents. The testimonies are, of course, subject to all the failings (as well as the possibilities) of any oral or written testimony, including failing memory, subjectivity, subsequently acquired knowledge, political bias, and appeals to posterity.<sup>20</sup> This is not always necessarily the fault of those who gave testimony (the questioning of the interviewers, among other factors, played its own part) but is, in some respects at least, reflective of a clear preference in how they wished to remember the past or in how they wished it to be remembered. Both the IGC and BMH, however, can tell us much about revolutionary Ireland. If their value as a basis for establishing facts about what happened in a particular time or place can be questioned, their worth in establishing the attitudes and perceptions of the perpetrators and victims of violence and intimidation is far greater. Much can be gleaned from what is left out, as well as what is included.

Exclusive compliance with IRA demands was neither guaranteed nor always forthcoming. Sanctions were necessary and applied to punish offenders and warn others of the consequences of transgression. Kalyvas restricts his study of civil war violence to 'coercive violence', violence which 'performs a communicative function with a clear deterrent dimension'.<sup>21</sup> In the sense that it has been applied here, 'coercive violence' does not always

18 Fellman, *Inside war*, p. 41.

19 For a major study that makes significant use of the BMH statements, highlighting some of the major interpretive issues, as well as the benefits, see Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising. Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010).

20 Fearghal McGarry, 'Violence and the Easter rising', in Fitzpatrick, *Terror in Ireland*, pp. 43–4.

21 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 26.

mean lethal violence. Lethal violence was, as Chapter 4 makes clear, used with a deterrent dimension in mind but far less often than arson, damage to property, boycotting, raids, and threatening letters. Lethal violence has dominated histories of the Irish Revolution, but was not the only means by which cooperation could be secured. In Cavan, for example, three civilians had been shot by the IRA by December 1921 and revolutionary violence would claim nine lives in three years.<sup>22</sup> By many measurements, including those of the Volunteer who complained that the 'fair name of Cavan' had been 'besmirched', the Cavan IRA was inactive.<sup>23</sup> But Cavan was not unique in its restrained levels of violence; much of rest of the country was 'quiet' at different times, or remained consistently so, and extremes of violent behaviour are relatively rare and isolated. The volume of complaints regarding commandeered bicycles after the Truce is an illustration of just how timid the Irish conflict could be.<sup>24</sup> Comparisons with other cases of irregular conflict in inter-war Europe further emphasise this point.<sup>25</sup> This may have been of little comfort to the victims of violence in Ireland and, in many ways, the extent of violence and its effects are relative, but it offers a reminder of the small scales on which historians of Irish violence are working.

Coercion and coercive violence should not be underestimated in terms of their influence on public support. Political scientist and historian Charles Tilly insisted that 'coercion works; those who apply substantial force to their fellows get compliance'.<sup>26</sup> Stathis Kalyvas similarly argues that, once conflict begins, 'individuals collaborate less with the political actors they prefer and more with the political actors they fear'. The ability to create fear was crucial when, as is the case in any conflict where the civil population are embroiled, most civilians will not take an active part and instead attempt to remain neutral until they can be sure which side will emerge the victor (even if that is not always possible). Allegiance and compliance are not entirely based on pre-war conditions but are largely endogenous to the course of the conflict.<sup>27</sup> The IRA, therefore, needed to practise violence and intimidation to ensure popular support even among those who voted for Sinn Féin in local, national, and by-elections after 1917.

The scale and scope of this study has led to some limitations in what could be adequately covered. The most obvious is in the decision to focus

22 O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 328.

23 Typescript article on the death of Edward P. Boylan, Cavan IRA, 25 Jul. 1922 (NLI: MS 24,480).

24 Fintan Murphy Collection (MAI: BMH CD/227); Daniel Mulvihill Papers (UCDA: P64/5).

25 Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*; Wilson, 'Ghost provinces, mislaid minorities', pp. 61–86.

26 Quoted in Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 124.

27 Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 114, 148–209.

solely on IRA intimidation and coercion. This excludes the impact of Crown forces, in their various guises, on local communities and the conflict for loyalties and allegiances that played out with the separatists. Wilfred Ewart, a visitor to Ireland in 1921, noticed how 'the unfortunate populace fell between two stools, if not three'.<sup>28</sup> When Major Geoffrey Ibberson, badly wounded during an ambush in Tourmakeady, County Mayo, found great difficulty convincing an elderly couple to bring him to get assistance (it did not help that he was too weak to raise his revolver), he was sympathetic to the position in which he had placed the couple: 'These old folk were in a difficult position. To help me was likely to be unpopular with Sinn Fein and for me to die on their hands would be equally unpopular with the Military.'<sup>29</sup> As another observer of the conflict put it, 'both parties in the struggle had great belief in the weapon of intimidation, and there was taking place one long competition in intimidation between the Crown Forces and the Republican Volunteers'.<sup>30</sup> It is hard to blame civilians if they refused to commit, changed their minds, and looked out for themselves.

28 Ewart, Wilfrid, *A Journey in Ireland 1921* [Paul Bew and Patrick Maume (eds.)] (Dublin, 2008; 1st edn. London, 1922), p. 30.

29 Major Geoffrey Ibberson to J. R. W. Goulden, 2 Sep. 1955 (TCD: MS 7382a/6); 'Account in some detail of the experiences of Geoffrey Ibberson, The Border Regiment on 3 May 1921, written at the request of Mr J. R. W. Goulden of Dublin in 1955' (MS 7382a/9).

30 Nankivell and Loch, *Ireland in travail*, p. 146.



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