

The operations of South Tipperary IRA, 1916-1921

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The high public profile of men like Seán Treacy, Dinny Lacey and Dan Breen in the years following the War of Independence have given the South Tipperary Brigade of the IRA the image of an extremely active and violent unit. The aim of this article is to examine the accuracy of this impression and to provide an outline of the key developments in South Tipperary between the 1916 Rising and the Truce of 1921.

In order to do this, I first trace the reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers after the Rising, and enumerate the operations this brigade was involved in. I then explore the changing nature of these activities and the role of its main officers. Finally, I briefly compare the record of the South Tipperary Brigade with those of units elsewhere and propose some possible explanations for its comparatively violent nature.

Without a well organised structure no successful military campaign can be sustained; so how was this established? Like all other counties, Tipperary had one brigade prior to the Easter Rising. After the founding of the Irish National Volunteers in 1913, Ireland had been divided into 32 brigades to coincide with the 32 counties. This situation survived the split between radical and moderate Volunteers in 1914 and lasted until 1916. However, after the Rising many men who had featured prominently in the radical Irish Volunteers faction of the movement before the Rising were arrested. Combined with the loss of morale that followed the failed rebellion, this resulted in a nationwide collapse of the movement.

In the following confusion, reorganisation was heavily dependent on local initiative and only isolated units could initially be revived. After the release of most interned Volunteers at the end of 1916 this was often done under the guise of setting up a branch of the Gaelic League. The first such units in South Tipperary were centred around Tipperary town under Seán Treacy, in Ballagh under Eamon O'Dwyer, in Dualla under Pierce McCan and in Clonmel under Frank Drohan. Early in 1917 more activity by known republicans was observed and links between the various Tipperary Volunteers were established as well as with their counterparts in neighbouring counties. The latter often sprang from acquaintances made during internment. From June 1917 onwards Sinn Féin clubs were openly reorganised; more Volunteers units were established and some began drilling.¹

The leaders of the original units, particularly Seán Treacy and Eamon O'Dwyer, pressed others to set up branches in their areas. Another important Volunteer involved in this was Seamus Robinson, who came to Tipperary at the beginning of 1917. Robinson was born in Belfast, had moved to Glasgow at a young age and had come over to Dublin with some others to join in the Rising.

He greatly impressed O'Dwyer with his dedication during their shared internment, and O'Dwyer invited him to come to Tipperary as soon as they were released to aid in reorganising its Volunteers. His participation in the fighting in Dublin had earned him the respect of many aspiring revolutionaries in Tipperary. As a disguise Eamon O'Dwyer offered him work on the farm he had bought in Kilshenane with the intention of making it a centre of Volunteer operations.²

Among the first men they approached were Edward McGrath and Thomas Ryan in the Cahir district. The recollections of Ryan provide us with a picture of how this was done. Ryan had always been involved in organising all kinds of activity and was a natural leader in his community. In 1914 he had been the captain of the local Irish National Volunteers company, but he left the organisation after the Split because there was nobody around willing to join the more radical Irish Volunteers. As a result, he was not involved in the movement in 1916. However, being related to Seán Treacy by marriage made him an obvious choice when Treacy needed a despatch rider in his area during the abortive rising. He was again approached when Treacy was looking for a local contact to set up the Volunteers in his district in 1917:

Some time about April 1917 Seán Treacy made a few trips to the locality and suggested the organising of a Volunteer unit there. On his second visit to us, he gave us an outline of the organisation and generally encouraged us, pointing out what should be done and how to do it. Treacy came to Ned McGrath of Cahir, who afterwards became Battalion Commandant of the 6th Battalion, and he spent two days between McGrath's place and mine trying to organise that battalion.

As a result of Treacy's visit, the Battalion was formed with Ned McGrath as the Battalion Commandant. I was Vice-Commandant; ... This was really the beginning of my career in the Volunteer Movement.

Following Treacy's instructions, we set to work from then on to organise Companies in the surrounding parishes, to appoint officers for these and to direct their training.³

Other veterans recall the first attempts by these local organisers to set up companies by calling together the few known republican activists in their areas. The experience of Patrick Ryan from Fethard may be indicative of this:

On a night in the early summer of 1917 I attended a meeting which was held in a place called Downey's Barn at Cramps Castle, Fethard. This meeting was called for the purpose of organising an Irish Volunteer company in Fethard and district, and, if I mistake not, the late Paddy Hogan of Cashel, afterwards Commandant of the 2nd Battalion, was one of those principally concerned in arranging the meeting. He was certainly present that night and was, as far as I can now remember, the principal speaker. The meeting itself was a small one, as for obvious reasons only a selected number of men were invited to attend. I should say, however, that there were about 20 men present, all of whom agreed to become members of the Volunteer organisation. In the election of officers which followed I was elected as Captain of the company.⁴

Despite the increased sympathy for the Irish Volunteers, these men found it extremely difficult to start companies as most people still supported the Government. Opposition to the Volunteers was particularly strong in the towns and larger villages of South Tipperary, which depended economically on the presence of the military. However, organising in villages proved equally difficult. In places where in the days of the Irish National Volunteers Thomas Ryan had been able to form companies of 100 to 150 men, he could now only find five to ten men. Even at the end of 1918 the entire Cahir Battalion comprised not more than approximately 100 Volunteers, the standard size of a single company.⁵

Nevertheless, these scattered units soon merged into loosely organised battalions. The first were established in the areas around Tipperary town, Dundrum and Cashel in 1918, followed by the Clonmel, Cahir and Drangan districts. In 1919 Carrick-on-Suir became the centre of the seventh, while an eighth battalion was formed in Rosegreen when the brigade headquarters was moved there in July 1920. At the time of the Truce, the South Tipperary Brigade thus comprised eight battalions with 56 companies.⁶

The institution of the brigade came about under pressure by GHQ (Volunteers General Headquarters), and due to the need for coordination which became apparent during the conscription crisis in April 1918. In October 1918 the existing battalions were thus merged into one brigade. At a meeting in the house of the local IRB Centre in Tipperary Town presided over by Richard Mulcahy, the (then only nominally existent) Tipperary Brigade was broken up and the South Tipperary Brigade was formed, roughly coinciding with the area of the South Riding of County Tipperary.⁷

The rest of the county was divided into two, between the North Tipperary Brigade with a centre in Nenagh, and the Mid Tipperary Brigade with its centre in Thurles. At the same meeting a brigade staff was elected. Although many officers preferred Seán Treacy, he recommended the imprisoned Seamus Robinson who was duly elected brigadier. Robinson now officially replaced his fellow inmate Pierce McCan, who was up to then still officially commander of the county-based Tipperary Brigade. Confirming the dominance of the men from the western end of the county, Treacy became Brigade Vice-Commander, Maurice Crowe Adjutant, Dan Breen Quartermaster and Matt Barlow Engineer.⁸

For a first indication of the level of Volunteer activity in South Tipperary, we look at the number of indictable offences recorded by the police in the South Riding between 1916 and 1921.⁹ This gives only a general picture of Volunteer operations, as it includes all types of cases – political as well as non-political, violent as well as non-violent. A steady level of about 75 offences was recorded for several years prior to 1918. It can therefore be safely assumed that the increases after 1917 were directly or indirectly caused by the activities of the republican movement. In 1918, 91 offences were registered, with 102 in the following year. Extremely strong growth followed in 1920 and 1921. Although the exact figures for March and April 1920 are lost, the other ten months accumulated no less than 309 offences.

RIC Records

The real number was probably even greater, because some people voluntarily co-operated with the Volunteers while others were too afraid to report them to the police. The Inspector General of the RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) acknowledged this situation in August 1920: "Nor can the figures from the Southern and Western provinces be relied upon, as wide areas are now without police, and many persons prefer to suffer in silence rather than incur the additional hostility of Sinn Féin by making a complaint." The level of lawlessness in South Tipperary continued to grow in 1921, with 377 offences recorded prior to the July Truce, indicating an almost ninefold increase from 1917 levels.¹⁰

What did these offences consist of, and how can this strong growth of Volunteer activity following the debacle of the Rising be explained? Despite the initial feelings of despair, most of the interned Volunteers had returned home in fighting spirit. Their time spent in camps, in the company of many other radical nationalists, had had a galvanising effect. The first public sign of their return was the increased number of Gaelic League classes and GAA football matches held at the end of 1916, organised by "men known to be connected with Sinn Féin."¹¹

Although these events attracted large audiences, indicating growing support for republicanism in South Tipperary, the Irish classes were not always attended solely for patriotic purposes. In February 1918 the RIC reported: "It appears that the dance that generally takes place afterwards is a greater attraction than the learning of the Irish language."¹² The next step was the organisation of Sinn Féin. From June 1917 onwards many clubs were established, numbering 39 by the end of the year. Its growing presence was witnessed by an upsurge in the

number of protest meetings and concerts, where many openly seditious speeches were delivered and radical pamphlets distributed. To support the movement financially street collections were organised for Sinn Féin, the National Aid Association and the Gaelic League.¹³

Initially the offences the republican activists engaged in consisted of a small number of relatively insignificant acts of defiance, such as shouting seditious slogans in the street or hoisting the tricolour. The latter started during the first anniversary of the Rising and for a while became a popular and safe way to express one's sympathies and embarrass the police. As the RIC reported in April 1917: "In various places Republican flags put up in inaccessible places, all taken down by police not without personal risk and difficulty." Although most people were too afraid to declare their sympathies openly, the police reported that in some districts anti-British feelings were particularly high: "In some communities, ... the name even of a soldier is not to be mentioned." On occasions where large crowds gathered an extremely aggressive stance was sometimes taken towards the police.¹⁴

Slowly the Volunteers also became publicly more prominent. The most visible expression of their newly organised companies was drilling. This started in the summer of 1917 and was initially done more or less in secret, but after the death of Thomas Ashe on hunger strike in September 1917 the Volunteer leadership sanctioned open drilling.¹⁵ A nationwide week of public drill-displays was ordered for December 1917, which soon became a regular feature of life, particularly in the southwestern counties. In South Tipperary drilling was concentrated around Tipperary town, which also saw some parties of young women engaging in such exercises. These drills were reported to the battalion officers in the following format:

HQ C-company 1st Battalion Tipperary Brigade¹⁶

To O/C 1st Battalion

1. In accordance with instructions received C company mobilised at 8 p.m. at Solohead on Thursday night
2. One officer, 3 section commanders and 21 men paraded
3. I put the company through half an hour close-order drill and half an hour field work in extended order
4. At 9 p.m. the company started on a route march of 2 miles [...]
5. We reached Solohead at 9.40 where I dismissed the men
6. Two peelers were with us from fall in to dismiss

Although for the moment the use of violence was not envisaged, arms were the first requisite for those Volunteers who wanted to resume the fight. A police assessment made in February 1917 estimated that the Volunteers in South Tipperary possessed 78 rifles and twelve revolvers. This meant that only about one in four of the 367 Volunteers known to the RIC could be armed at that time.¹⁷ To cater for the remainder, a small number of larcenies of arms were made, mostly of shotguns but also of some highly coveted rifles. The latter were difficult to obtain, but some were taken from soldiers on furlough, either with or without their cooperation. Some of them were persuaded by financial incentives.

Although many arms raids were not reported to the police, the first case was recorded by them in December 1916; three followed in 1917 and eight in 1918, mostly in the early part of the year. In January 1918 the opportunity to force rifles from soldiers on furlough was passed up when the Government forbade all military personnel to take their rifles home. Up to then five rifles were reported to have been lost by soldiers on leave in South Tipperary. Nevertheless another four rifles, a sporting gun and a revolver were stolen from various military barracks in South Tipperary during the remainder of 1918, possibly aided by soldiers themselves.

Particularly during the conscription crisis, when active resistance was contemplated, an increasing urgency was put into the collection of shotguns from farmers. The raiding which then ensued can, however, not be enumerated because people refused or were too scared to report it. This fear was reinforced by the use of intimidatory tactics. As early as February 1918 one farmer's hay was burned after he objected to the taking of his shotgun.¹⁸

Although reports of offences by Volunteers remain few, we can detect a general sense of unrest developing in South Tipperary during 1917. The RIC was somewhat uncertain what to do to stop the defiant approach of the population. They could not imprison all drilling parties; but some of the men leading these exercises, particularly when uniformed, were arrested. As a result, dedicated activists like Seán Treacy, Seamus Robinson and Eamon O'Dwyer were jailed several times, often shortly after being released after going on hunger strike. At this point in time imprisonment was regarded as a badge of honour for republicans and some therefore almost invited arrest.

The growing activity of local Volunteers presented the movement with a dilemma. Was it going to pursue political or military methods? This was one of the main issues in the first general conventions of the new Sinn Féin and the Volunteers in October 1917. Although this dilemma was never conclusively settled, a mainly political strategy was instituted for the moment which involved obstruction of British rule and establishing an alternative republican government. The Volunteers were regarded as a tool for exerting political pressure rather than as a military force. They were only to act if the British Government tried to disarm them or introduce conscription in Ireland. Despite this emphasis on peaceful methods, the threat of violence continued to be an integral part of republican tactics.

However, not all local leaders agreed with this approach. Some had reorganised the Volunteers with a new confrontation in mind. The general view among them was that the executed leaders of the 1916 Rising should not have died in vain. Furthermore, the failure of many Volunteers units even to take part in it gave them the feeling they had let their comrades down, and they were now looking for a second chance. In South Tipperary this feeling was exacerbated by British soldiers who teased the local Volunteers with their version of the Soldiers' Song: "Soldiers are we, who nearly fought for Ireland."¹⁹

The more aggressive attitude of many local Volunteers can be illustrated by one of their more restrained spokesmen in Tipperary. When Eamon O'Dwyer was conditionally released from prison in November 1917, the police recorded his moderate but threatening speech to the 200 people who met him at the railway station. In line with official policy he stated that their object was to make English rule in Ireland impossible, and that he believed they would achieve their ends without firing a shot. However, he added that if necessary they would adopt the policy of active resistance.²⁰ A few weeks later he was more forthright about the use of violence in a speech to about ninety supporters, again recorded by the police. After an introduction in Irish, O'Dwyer stated:

That their policy today was the same as that for which the Manchester Martyrs died – complete separation from England – that the young men should train and make themselves efficient and be ready to act their part when the time came – as surely it would come, as the men of Easter week did. That no one should be afraid to die as there was nothing about it to be afraid of. That it was far easier to die on the battlefield than on the scaffold or in prison. That at the present time there was a great movement on foot to secure the independence of Ireland by "passive resistance" which was all very well in its way, but that it was necessary that this movement should have the support of rifles and machine-guns. That they had them already and were still getting them. That at the present time the only enemy they had was England ... That they should take no notice of the laws i.e. the laws of

a political character dealing with drilling and such like, and not mind the police as no one was afraid of the police now ... That they should ignore the law courts and set up their own arbitration tribunals ... That their present policy should be to make all laws impossible. That they (the prisoners) were only out at present under the Cat and Mouse Act²¹ owing to hunger strike, but if the government attempted to arrest them again they would hunger strike again and by this means reduce them to impotence. That the Police if they were sensible men should now throw in their lot with their fellow countrymen in their struggle for freedom and not be on the side of the enemies of their country as heretofore.²²

During the conscription crisis of April 1918 the prospect of military action became suddenly more likely when resistance seemed necessary to stop compulsory enlistment. Open drilling was suspended by GHQ to protect Volunteer officers from arrest and bail was to be taken by those already in prison for minor offences. Although the proposal to introduce conscription was soon withdrawn, the GHQ ban was not lifted and the police began to take stronger action against the movement. Many republican leaders were arrested in May on a doubtful charge of collaboration with Germany, and a proclamation was issued which warned that unless drilling in the southwestern counties ceased they would be declared "Special Military Areas". This would make all public grouping of civilians an offence, including the holding of markets and fairs.

In answer to this threat GHQ ordered the South Tipperary Brigade to make arrangements to protect the drilling parties and to cope with the military regime, but not to stop drilling.²³ Nevertheless, these developments heralded the end of the defiant attitude which had developed in 1917 as Volunteers became much more careful. As well as that, the Sinn Féin leadership forbade raiding for arms to prevent the development of ill-feeling among civilians.²⁴

The end of 1918 was therefore almost devoid of open Volunteer activity. The only outlet for their energy was provided by canvassing and money collection for the forthcoming general elections. These were set for December 1918, after it had become clear that the Great War was over. The political line thus again got the upper hand in the movement, and a manifesto outlining its policy to obtain independence without the use of violence was published. This included the withdrawal of all Irish representation from the British Parliament and the creation of their own rival assembly as the supreme national authority to speak and act in the name of the Irish people. Although a threat was concealed in the statement that the movement was free to use every means available to make it impossible for England to rule Ireland, most was expected from the appeal to the Peace Conference for recognition of the Irish Republic.²⁵

Although the prospect of military action had thus receded with the conscription issue out of the way and the elections looming, underneath the tranquil surface the more militarily inclined men soon became dissatisfied with the emphasis on political work. They had proponents in the highest circles of the movement. In October 1918 the Volunteers paper *An tÓglach* already intimated that stronger action was needed.

Solohead Ambush

Such thinking was particularly prominent in South Tipperary. Led by Treacy and Robinson, some of its Volunteers pressed ahead. Firearms were occasionally used for intimidation and in November 1918 they set fire to the military shooting range near Cahir. Despite the general air of quiet the RIC were well aware of the growing threat. In December 1918 they reported that it was anticipated that Sinn Féiners would become more aggressive shortly. This feeling

immediately proved to be right when a gelignite transport was ambushed at Solohead on 21 January 1919 in which two policemen were killed.²⁶

The RIC was so shocked by this event that it suddenly began to see threats all around: "Everywhere it is pervaded with young men who show hostility to any form of control. Imbued with Sinn Féin propaganda and possessed of arms and ammunition they are a danger to the community."²⁷ Indeed, a general antipathy towards the police became apparent after the subsequent proscribing of the South Riding as a special military area, which did much damage to the local economy. Feelings were further compounded when the again imprisoned Pierce McCan died of flu while on hunger strike in March 1919.

Nevertheless, little happened for a long time after Solohead as the main Tipperary activists were keeping a low profile while the police started extensive searches. The resulting arrest of Sean Hogan, who had participated in the Solohead ambush, led to the only other serious confrontation during 1919 in which some of the main Tipperary Volunteers were involved. In a successful attempt to liberate Hogan from police custody at Knocklong railway station, Co. Limerick on 13 May, two policemen were killed, while Dan Breen and Seán Treacy were seriously wounded.

Consequently the Big Four left the county to recuperate in safety.²⁸ They travelled throughout the southwest and ultimately ended in Dublin, where they remained until the beginning of 1920. During their absence some of the other officers kept the organisation going; but militarily nothing happened.²⁹ The police reported that the killings at Knocklong were kindly received by the population: "More particularly in parts of Tipperary and Cashel District peculiarly given to this form of showing hatred to constituted authority."³⁰ They kept up their vigilant approach for the remainder of the year and more Volunteers were arrested, including the brigade adjutant, Maurice Crowe.

The second half of 1919 was therefore particularly quiet despite a small but steady increase in minor offences. Activity was confined to nightly drill exercises in secluded places and some arms raiding, only nine of which were reported by the police in this year. Furthermore, some attempts at intimidation took place, most of it centred in the Tipperary and Cashel districts. In August proclamations calling for a police boycott were posted in the South Riding, which had some limited success mainly in northwestern parts. In November a shotgun was taken from Rev. Talbot when out hunting; in December a threatening letter was sent to a man in Hollyford who had continued to supply the police. In the same month burglaries in the Tipperary and Cashel districts were ascribed to the Sinn Féin movement. Selling bonds under the Dáil Loan scheme was the only other reported activity of republicans in this period.³¹

The police became steadily more confident in 1919. In July this was aided by the prohibition of Sinn Féin and the Volunteers, and the arrival of reinforcements for the police in South Tipperary. The tougher approach led to more respect for the RIC, and less hostility was shown by the people towards them. As a sign of its growing confidence, the Government released some prisoners, and in September the RIC reported that the county was now in a generally peaceable condition.³²

The low level of aggressive operations in 1919 was largely a result of official GHQ policy. Building on its successes in the general elections of December 1918, it made a concerted effort to get its claim to be an independent nation accepted by the Peace Conference in Paris. Eamon de Valéra as president of Sinn Féin, the Dáil and the Volunteers travelled to the USA to obtain support. During this public relations exercise the killing of policemen would not be helpful and the republican leadership made every effort to keep violence to a minimum. As witnessed in the Solohead ambush and the Knocklong rescue, the leading Volunteers in South Tipperary did

not agree with this approach. However, their intimate relationship with GHQ, built up during internment and extensive visits to Dublin, limited their freedom to act.

A clear exposition of their independent attitude can be found in the reaction of the brigade staff to the declaration of the South Riding as a special military area in February 1919. In response Robinson drafted a counter-proclamation declaring the riding a military area according to Volunteer rule. It described the police as "hirelings, assassins and traitorous spies", responsible for the deportation and sentencing of thousands of Irishmen. It warned that every policeman in the area, every person on England's payroll (magistrates, jurors, etc.) "who helps England to rule this county", and any civilian who gave information to the police or soldiery would be deemed to have forfeited his life.

It added that the more notorious police would be dealt with first. Robinson had this counter-proclamation displayed, despite GHQ's refusal to approve it. The line of thought professed in it would become increasingly prevalent in the movement, but at this time it was an extreme viewpoint not sanctioned by the republican leadership.³³

Although some members of GHQ secretly supported the approach taken by the Volunteers in Tipperary and elsewhere, most of them were extremely unhappy with these actions. GHQ saw the statement by the Tipperary brigade as an effective declaration of war at a time when it was still aiming at a peaceful settlement. One of its principal officers described the Tipperary proclamation as a "claim almost to an authority equal to that of Dáil Éireann."³⁴ To clarify its stand in an increasingly tense situation, GHQ reiterated its policy regarding the police. Emphasising its attempt to replace British rule peacefully, they called for a general boycott of the RIC, but no sanction for the use of violence was given: "Police should be treated as persons, who having been adjudged guilty of treason to their country, are regarded as unworthy to enjoy any of the privileges or comforts which arise from cordial relations with the public."³⁵

However, the slow growth of military operations in other counties, notably Cork and Dublin,³⁶ and the failure to get the Irish Republic recognised at the Peace Conference in Versailles, forced GHQ to reassess its political strategy. In January 1920 it decided to allow the use of violence against Crown forces. This coincided with the return of the Big Four to the South Riding and the release of Thomas Donovan. Like many other Volunteers who had been imprisoned after the conscription crisis, Donovan was bored with prison life and decided to fight rather than invite further arrests.

Under his leadership the northeastern side of the South Riding around his home in Killenaule became a hotbed of republican activity in 1920. Although he was rearrested in February 1920 when the RIC found him in possession of a lot of arms, he was released again after the hunger strikes of April 1920. He then became so feared by the police that when he was killed on 31 October 1920 the RIC reported: "The notorious Thos Donovan was shot at Killenaule. It is hoped that the disappearance of this young ruffian from the countryside will have a salutary effect."³⁷

As elsewhere, military operations became commonplace in South Tipperary in 1920. An ambush of a police patrol and the first two attacks on barracks in which Volunteers from the South Tipperary Brigade were involved took place in January. A slow but general slide towards violent conflict began. Initially the operations consisted mainly of arms raids, of which eight were reported in January and two in February.

Police reports for March, April and May 1920 are missing; but in June the general state of the South Riding had completely changed. Between April and July eleven serious attempts to take police barracks were staged, culminating in the capture of Drangan Barracks on 3 June. In the same period eight ambushes of police patrols took place, but besides two robberies and an

arson attack few other offences were recorded. All this led to the first serious casualties since the Knocklong rescue also fell, with 19 members of the Crown Forces and three Volunteers killed or wounded in the first six months of 1920.³⁸

The RIC found itself in a difficult situation. To protect the often vulnerable barracks, many of the smaller posts were abandoned, and the police were concentrated in the bigger, better defensible barracks in the larger towns and villages. This loss of presence in the countryside meant that the the IRA could operate more freely and that the rural population could reject British rule more easily. In August, the RIC County Inspector voiced his concern over the new policies: "I do not believe in this policy of abandoning such barracks." The strong garrisons of Crown Forces in the towns provided better control over the population, and the boycott of the police by urban traders gradually petered out in 1920. However, this did not mean that the Crown Forces became more widely supported.

Although the violence was mainly initiated by the IRA, the Crown forces rarely had an opportunity to strike back and often vented their frustrations on the civilian population, many of whom became increasingly alienated from them. The tendency of the Crown forces to beat up suspected sympathisers of Sinn Féin and burn their houses after an IRA ambush epitomised this. Initially, this was a spontaneous reaction; but in 1921 a system of official reprisals was instituted under which a set number of houses close to an ambush site was blown up. The RIC's reaction to the refusal of many railway personnel to carry armed men, which started in the summer of 1920, created another example of this. The deliberate policy of the police to hold up all passenger trains brought most rail traffic to a standstill, and further contributed to the strong antipathy towards the police.³⁹

Robinson v. O'Dwyer

However, not all republicans were happy with the growing predominance of violence. Some of them voiced their doubts about the new tactics and their consequences for ordinary citizens. This included some of the initial activists, like Eamon O'Dwyer and Frank Drohan. In 1919, Drohan then Commander of the Clonmel Battalion, had apparently sent a letter to GHQ complaining about the unauthorised activities of the Big Four "creating disturbances" in Tipperary. In the summer of 1920, reports about O'Dwyer's disquiet reached GHQ, which approached Seamus Robinson on the subject. In a reply to GHQ Robinson dealt with the allegations of O'Dwyer, who had criticised the brigade for disorganisation and inefficiency, and its inability to deal with the enemy forces who attack non-combatants.

Robinson refuted these allegations, stating there had never been any organised burning, looting, reprisals or organised attacks on civilians in his area besides one occasion in July 1920 when the military sacked Tipperary town after an ambush in which two soldiers were killed. In a conciliatory tone he added: "Eamon O'Dwyer is Acting Brigade QM [Quartermaster] and is the best man for the job that we know. He is a man who can form opinions of his own and who will speak them where he thinks they will receive attention. I would ask GHQ to take his integrity and sincerity for granted and to ask him for a full statement of whatever case he has."⁴⁰

In October 1920 this episode entered the public domain after a letter from O'Dwyer was found on the body of Seán Treacy. This contained a detailed *exposé* of his objections, and the press subsequently reported that Eamon O'Dwyer felt there was too much fighting. Five days later two brothers named O'Dwyer were killed in Bansha under mysterious circumstances.⁴¹ One was a namesake of Eamon and the papers now alleged that it was he who had been killed

by the IRA because of his weakening allegiance to the national movement. As this was not true, Eamon O'Dwyer wrote to the *Irish Independent* to explain his position:

The statement contained in that letter ... alluded to my opposition to certain methods of warfare (notably ambushes) and I wish to make it clear that the only people whom I am in danger from are the agents of the British Government; who have already made one attempt to kill me, and failing in that mission burned my home to ashes.

In a letter of mine which appeared in the Press I made the statement that I consider ambushes an unfair method of fighting. Since then the agents of the English Government have perpetrated several atrocities too fresh in the public mind to need particularising. It is nearly impossible to talk of fair play in fighting such an enemy; yet in spite of the feelings of revenge that all those deeds engender, I feel that it is best that we should remain calm but determined in the face of this provocation, and conserve our strength so that we could continue our great movement till it ends in complete victory. The English militarists hope that we will lose our heads and give them an opportunity of destroying the entire country and crushing all hopes of Irish freedom for this generation, but it will not be so.⁴²

This kind of restrained reflection was tolerated but not taken seriously by the more militarily inclined Volunteers. Robinson reacted generously to O'Dwyer's criticism, but Frank Drohan and almost the entire staff of the Clonmel Battalion had been dismissed at an early stage because they "had become more like pacifist Sinn Féiners than Volunteers."

Clonmel had been very radical following the Rising, but had indeed become steadily less involved. During the Rising it had been the only town in South Riding where "no citizen, shopkeeper or otherwise stirred hand or feet towards assisting the military and police." The largest contingent of arrested men after the Rising came from Clonmel, and its Volunteers had accumulated the largest quantity of arms early in 1917. In December 1918, a crowd in Clonmel assaulted a local sergeant, and the police reported that: "Even in Clonmel the same [as in Cashel and Tipperary districts] principles of hostility and enmity towards the police are rampant and the possession of arms and ammunition is secretly boasted of."

However, a change in attitude of the local population became apparent in 1921. In January the departing Royal Irish Regiment was accompanied by a local band and by a large and cheering crowd. In April the lack of spirit of even the local Sinn Féin branch came to the fore during one of their meetings, when two members proposed that "more vigorous methods" be adopted in Clonmel. This proposition met a hostile reaction from the other members who threatened to eject the two men from the meeting. In May the area around the town had become so peaceful that the police reported that it was the only district in south Tipperary in which no permits from the authorities were needed to use a bicycle.⁴³

By this time such a restrained approach bore little fruit in the movement. When Frank Drohan tried to be selected as a candidate for the general election in May 1921, GHQ organiser Ernie O'Malley pointed to his inadequate record:

Our point of view is that of the IRA. As an officer you are unsuitable. You had not the necessary drive and initiative for guerrilla warfare. Your area though possessing good material, was the slackest from the point of view of organisation and offensive action. I did not nor do doubt your intentions. You are fit for civic honour but as a fighting man I do not respect you. I think that active members of the IRA are the most suitable men at present for the TD position, men whom the youth can look to their fighting record.⁴⁴

Regardless of some objections, fighting thus escalated in the Spring and Summer of 1920. As a result, not only the Big Four who were involved in most serious attacks, but many other

Volunteers now had to stay away from home to avoid arrest. This happened first in the more active Tipperary and Cashel districts. Moreover, the necessity of concealing their identity lapsed. In April 1920, one of the local newspapers reported its surprise when a raiding party went undisguised.⁴⁵ During the Summer these men drifted together and formed embryonic flying columns. In the Autumn GHQ became involved in this and regularised the column structure and gave it specific tasks.

Consequently, the first official Flying Column was set up on 1 October, 1920 by the main activists from the 3rd and 4th Battalions, who elected Dinny Lacey as their commander. However, after their first ambush a disagreement developed between the Volunteers from the two battalions. Jim O'Gorman, the leader of the 3rd Battalion men, was accused of cowardice after failing to take the pin out of his grenade. As a result of this charge, all Volunteers from the 3rd Battalion went home. The 4th Battalion men were then supplemented by activists from other areas, mainly the Cashel and Carrick-on-Suir battalions, but also with three men from the Galtee Battalion in Limerick. Probably in January 1921, a smaller second column was set up by men from the Cahir and Clonmel battalion under Sean Hogan and Maurice McGrath. They also took in a few men from the Carrick-on-Suir Battalion.⁴⁶

Immediately after the official introduction of the first column a clear increase in the number of ambushes is recorded in South Tipperary. Another target of the columns was a general assault on lines of communication, such as telegraph wires and the mails. As ambushes were hard to plan successfully and capturing barracks had become more and more difficult due to the defensive measures by the Crown forces, the column men increasingly occupied themselves with sniping at barracks. This was sometimes done to keep the RIC men inside during other Volunteer operations, but it was also a form of fairly safe amusement for the column men and a way to keep the policemen inside in a state of anxiety.⁴⁷

The authorities again found it difficult to respond to the new developments. Although better means of transport were delivered to the police in November 1920 and a system of raids and searches was instituted when martial law was introduced in the southwestern counties in December, the Crown forces could not contain the conflict and casualties on both sides increased rapidly. In the final three months of 1920, 32 members of the Crown forces and 16 Volunteers were killed or wounded in Tipperary, mainly in the South Riding. These totals were up from 13 and three respectively in the previous three months. The deaths included important activists such as Thomas Donovan and Seán Treacy, who was killed in Dublin.⁴⁸

Now that most activists had left their homes and joined the columns, Robinson attempted to involve the remaining local Volunteers as much as possible. The presence of the columns triggered off some more activity by local companies, but his demands generally found little response. Most of the Volunteers who still lived at home were not particularly willing to take any risks. To obtain results Robinson had to leave the columns to their own devices and concentrate almost entirely on local organisation.

His untiring efforts are recorded in the numerous circulars and communications to local officers which were issued in this period. One of the first serious bids to involve the companies in the fighting came in December 1920, when an order went out to all units to trench the main roads. This was partly a reaction to the traffic restrictions which were introduced under martial law, but was also meant to force the Crown forces on to the smaller roads where they could be ambushed more easily. It was added that all military parties mending these roads were to be attacked.⁴⁹

Many of Robinson's attempts to involve the local units were a direct result of GHQ directives. GHQ was now fully committed to the military struggle and tried to professionalise

the Volunteers, but in doing so sometimes made unrealistic demands which the local battalions and companies were unable and unwilling to meet. This included financial contributions and the building of dug-outs by all companies, and local officers were also required to draw up detailed surveys of their areas and submit plans for capturing barracks, laying ambushes, obtaining information, catering for columns and providing them with escape routes. Local units rarely responded to these demands, even to simple requests such as holding staff meetings and submitting reports on their activities. Robinson voiced many complaints about the lack of observance of his orders, which were repeated again and again.⁵⁰

Eclipse of Robinson

As the main link between unwilling local units, increasingly battle-hardened Flying Columns and an ever more demanding GHQ, the brigade staff found themselves in an unenviable position. With his brigade vice-commander and adjutant participating in the columns, Seamus Robinson bore the brunt of this. As a result of his time-consuming attempts to involve the local units in the struggle, the fighting men gradually lost their respect for him as he now rarely did any fighting himself. The local men considered him a thorn in their side with his relentless requests and his criticism of their lack of action, while GHQ was rarely satisfied with his work.

The column men as a rule had very little respect for those who were not involved in the fighting. A clear example of this attitude was their disregard for the property of less active Volunteers. This became particularly prominent when the first column was set up in October 1920. Robinson felt compelled to issue an official order to all battalion commanders to deal with this attitude:

Volunteers (at least a few of them) seem to think that it is quite a good idea to "Commandeer" (steal would be the correct word) arms, ammunition or equipment from other Volunteers. This shows a wrong spirit and a mocked out-look. A Volunteer who withholds anything not belonging to himself or over which he has no legitimate control is guilty of a disgraceful, mean, cowardly act and he should not be allowed to mix with the Volunteers. Volunteers ought to be allowed to trust one another. It requires sufficient of an effort to watch the enemy without having also to be constantly on the alert to prevent "friends" stealing ones arms and equipment. There is no excuse for pilfering. Each Volunteer will return at once all stuffs over which he has no legitimate control. ... Every Volunteer is bound in honour to expose all abuses.⁵¹

However, in January 1921 the columns' constant need for arms and the growing fear among local Volunteers led to a reappraisal of this policy: "Every reliable rifle and gun is to be in the hands of a Volunteer constantly ... it is to be understood that no rifles or guns are to be idle – buried possibly – while the country is putting forth all its strength to resist the last effort of the enemy to stampede us back into slavery."⁵²

The columns did not always follow up on his high-spirited approach. In its entire existence the second column under Sean Hogan never managed to lay one successful ambush. Its involvement in the fighting was confined to attempts to evade pursuing Crown forces.⁵³ In the spring of 1921, the latter had begun to come to terms with the tactics employed by the IRA columns when they instituted their own system of military columns. These were later combined with some large-scale drives to smoke out the IRA activists.

Although this indeed made it extremely difficult for the IRA columns to operate, they were not captured. In June 1921 the RIC recorded its frustration: "the rebel intelligence system is exceedingly good and makes it very hard to get within striking distance of their

commanders."⁵⁴ Nevertheless the increasing danger involved in operating a column during the long Summer days and the lack of success forced the IRA to reconsider its use.

In April 1921 the freshly appointed divisional commandant who supervised South Tipperary reported to GHQ on their role in the fighting. He informed GHQ that the existence of three columns in South Tipperary was exhausting Volunteer resources, while obtaining few results.⁵⁵ The men of the flying columns and the population in the areas where they operated were fed up. There were not enough mines to attack successfully and intelligence was poor. He suggested to disband at least two of them, possibly keeping the somewhat more successful column under Dinny Lacey intact as a training unit. The Chief of Staff agreed with this assessment and disbanded all columns. Its members were then placed in charge of battalions and companies, which turned out to be a safer way to prolong the fight, witnessed by a strong growth in minor incidents and a fall off in IRA casualties.⁵⁶

Between January 1920 and the Truce the level of violence was high. Nevertheless cases of open fighting remained few. Including their involvement in a small number of ambushes and attacks on barracks in North Tipperary and Limerick, the South Tipperary IRA seriously attacked 12 barracks and sniped at 39. In total, 28 patrols were ambushed while 12 policemen were sniped at or shot in the street. For the entire period County Tipperary saw 114 members of the Crown forces and 51 Volunteers killed or wounded. This compares with eight Crown forces and no IRA casualties in Tipperary in the 1917-1919 period.⁵⁷

A clear development can be observed over the later period. All serious barracks attacks took place between April and July 1920, while practically all sniping attacks were confined to 1921 after the start of the flying columns. Ambushing police and military patrols began in the summer of 1920 and remained a permanent feature until the Truce, with about two per month and a small peak in the final three months of the conflict. The late peak coincided with a growing number of assassinations. This resulted in a sharp drop in casualties on the IRA side after the disbanding of the flying columns, while Crown forces casualties actually grew.⁵⁸

A drift towards the use of more violence also becomes evident in the minor incidents. In the beginning of 1920 these consisted mainly of raids for arms, some threats and the burning of goods for intimidation purposes. This included burning a car in Carrick-on-Suir which belonged to a man who had continued to drive the police, fining a man £10 for selling barbed wire to the RIC, and cutting the hair of girls who went out with policemen or soldiers.

In the Summer months attempts to intimidate multiplied. Threatening letters were sent to landlords with an English background, police lodgings and jurors, some robberies took place and particularly the mails were targeted as part of the concerted attack on all forms of communication. This also included cutting telegraph and telephone wires and holding up trains to take the mails. Incidents of malicious injury, robberies, larcenies and house-breaking soared in the last two months of 1920.⁵⁹

The beginning of 1921 was fairly quiet, but in March minor operations again became prevalent with extensive trenching of roads and wire-cutting taking place. In May the IRA started an extensive campaign to destroy motor cars and seize bicycles after a permit system was introduced by the police. On the instigation of the new divisional commander it also started to blow up bridges after trenching roads became less effective. The police made itself even more unpopular when it decided to destroy the remaining parts of the bridges, which the IRA had kept standing to allow carts but not cars to pass.

The most militant feature of IRA operations started in January 1921, when some alleged informers were shot, generally with little evidence against them. An analysis of the background of these victims shows that they were largely men on the fringes of the community, such as

Protestants and ex-soldiers. The former were victimised for the first time in April 1921, when two local landowners were shot. In June another Protestant and an ex-soldier were killed and three Big Houses were burned.

As a result of this new IRA policy the willingness of the population to speak openly to the police almost ceased – “undoubtedly attributed to the brutal murders of civilians all over the country.” In 1921 military goods and products from Belfast firms became another target of the Volunteers. This was a reaction to the violent expulsion of Catholic workers from their workplace and homes in the North, which was again a consequence of the fighting in the South. Goods from the firms involved were burned.⁶⁰

Although the Volunteers made efforts to avoid antagonising the population, civilians became more and more affected by the conflict in 1921. Permission was given by the IRA to use civilians in the digging of trenches. The presence of “men and boys roaming aimlessly through the country” in areas where dug-outs were made or near ambush sites endangered and irritated the Volunteers. Occasionally Volunteers lost their tempers and maltreated those who did not readily cooperate. Farmers were forced to pay a levy on their livestock in support of the IRA; if they refused, their cattle were seized and sold.

In the final months of the struggle reports of Volunteers in active areas abusing their position of power to steal for their own benefit reached GHQ. One of its own orders had unintentionally given rise to these robberies. The order to collect ten shillings per company each week issued in January 1921 contained the phrase: “Money may be got by collections, dances etc. I would suggest that the money be got if possible by means other than collections.” Some Volunteers took this as a license to levy it from civilians associated with the British regime, and did not hesitate to extend this practice. This began in the Mid Tipperary Brigade and one case was reported from the 3rd Battalion of the South Tipperary Brigade in July.⁶¹

All activities combined provide an image of a particularly disturbed county in 1921. In June a summing up of incidents included: raids for arms, burnings, holding up trains, seizure of mails, destruction of military and Belfast goods, raids on excise and customs offices, blocking of roads, cutting telephone and telegraph wires, destroying bridges, destruction of motorcars, seizure of cycles, arson and intimidation. Despite the escalating violence a kind of stalemate had set in with the IRA in control of the countryside and the Crown forces of the towns and larger villages. The RIC acknowledged this situation: “Our forces hold the towns and some of the villages, the IRA practically holds all the country districts. It is certainly most unsafe for military or police to leave the towns except in strong force.”⁶²

How did this level of conflict compare to other counties? The best means available to assess this is the number of people who were killed or wounded as a result of the use of arms and explosives.⁶³ Here we find that Tipperary ranked among the highest in the country after Cork. In the period between the sanction of offensive action by GHQ in January 1920 and the Truce, almost one third of all 1,545 casualties among the Crown forces fell in Cork. Other violent spots were Dublin and the other Munster counties except Waterford, each with between 84 and 163 casualties.

In Tipperary 114 casualties were recorded among the Crown forces in this period. Most Connacht counties follow with around 40 losses each, and the Ulster counties noted around 15 casualties. Besides Dublin, the Leinster counties recorded the lowest level of violence, with between two and 14 losses among the Crown forces.

To assess the relative level of violence the number of casualties in each county, including those among the Crown forces, the IRA and civilians, is related to the number of inhabitants. This somewhat alters the above picture. Although Cork still stands out, its lead is less

pronounced. It witnessed 26 casualties (killed or wounded) per 10,000 citizens. Tipperary and Clare follow with 16, Dublin City and Kerry with 15, and Limerick and Belfast City with 14 each.

Other comparatively violent counties were Longford, Roscommon and Westmeath in the Midwest with 13, 10 and seven casualties per 10,000 inhabitants, and Monaghan and Derry in the North with eight and seven. Particularly unaffected counties were located in Ulster and the southeast. The figures for Derry and Belfast are distorted by the sectarian riots which took place there in 1920. Although these were sparked off by the hostilities in the South, they did not directly involve the IRA.

Tipperary was thus one of the most violent of all areas involved in the War of Independence. Without exploring the reason for this too deeply some characteristics made Tipperary and the southwest different. In a forthcoming article Peter Hart has shown that violence is extremely difficult to explain. However, he found a strong correlation between the use of violence and the teaching of Irish and a lesser one with the effectiveness of the local police and court system.⁶⁴ The Irish language movement was strong in the violent southwest in the beginning of the century. Combined with a large number of Irish Volunteers prior to the Rising, this indicates the presence of a strong core of radical activists ready to seize the opportunities provided by the Rising and the Great War.

This idea is reinforced by the relatively high number of weapons in possession of the Munster Volunteers in 1917 when compared to any other province. The size of the Volunteer organisation in the 1916-1921 period seems to have less relevance. Although the exact number of Volunteers is difficult to ascertain, it is certain there were many more Volunteers in the relatively peaceful counties of Connacht.⁶⁵

Although a low level of police efficiency should thus result in more violence, South Tipperary stands out for the relatively high number of policemen and military. Taking the lowest estimate of RIC men in 1920, there was one policeman to every 441 civilians. This compared to one to 534 in Mayo, one to 548 in Derry and one to 598 in Wexford. The number of RIC men in South Tipperary grew more rapidly than elsewhere after this estimate, from 203 to as many as 369 in 1921, accounting for one policeman to every 243 civilians. In addition there were about 2,000 soldiers in the South Riding.

As the number of casualties in these counties was therefore inversely related to the number of policemen, this indicates that violence was a result of opposition rather than being deterred by the presence of a large number of Crown forces.⁶⁶ Recent comparative research has indicated that the high level of violence in South Tipperary can be attributed to two factors – first, the loss of control over the countryside by the local RIC, and secondly the release of many Volunteers from the constraining influences of home and community when they went on the run in 1920. How this related to the teaching of Irish and the efficiency of the police force has yet to be explored.⁶⁷

FOOTNOTES

1. Events since the Rising: CI (County Inspector) South Tipperary MR's (Monthly Reports) 1916-1917. PRO (Public Record Office), CO904. Publicly known in 1916 were the following Volunteers: about 50 in Dualla headed by Pierce McCan, some in Ballagh under Eamon O'Dwyer, a few in Tipperary town, Clonmel and Fethard: Rev. Michael Maher, "Annals 1910-1926", St. Patrick's College, Thurles.
2. Men like Seamus Robinson who fought in the Rising were often unable to find work after their release, and were almost forced to renew their involvement in the movement. Robinson came to

- Tipperary probably in February 1917: "Conversation with Lt. Col. Tom Ryan, 7th August 1963", UCD (University College, Dublin) AD (Archives Department), P7D1080; Seamus Robinson, "Statement", NLI (National Library of Ireland). MS.21,265; Eamon O'Dwyer, 'Statement'. Portion of this statement was published in the *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1991.
3. Tommy Ryan, "Statement". An edited version of this statement was published in the *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1991, 1992 and 1993.
 4. Patrick Ryan, "Statement", Killenaule Community Project – Team Work (local history). The methods used for setting up new branches were confirmed by a close associate of Seán Treacy, Paul Merrigan (interview).
 5. Thomas Ryan, "Statement".
 6. Initially the battalions were numbered: 1) Tipperary 2) Dundrum, 3) Cashel, 4) Clonmel, 5) Cahir, 6) Drangan. However in the summer of 1920, this numbering, which was used in correspondence, was discovered by the RIC, and when the Rosegreen battalion was formed the numbering was changed to 1) Rosegreen, 2) Cashel, 3) Dundrum, 4) Tipperary Town, 5) Clonmel, 6) Cahir, 7) Drangan, 8) Carrick-on-Suir: First battalions in south Tipperary, UCD AD, P7b179; Sean Fitzpatrick, *Recollections of the Fight for Irish Freedom and of the part played therein by the 3rd (South) Tipperary brigade Irish Volunteers, more colloquially "I.R.A." as from the Spring/Summer of 1920* (n.d.), 7: Formation of Cashel Battalion, Paul Mulcahy, "Statement", in possession of Sean Hassett, Cashel.
 7. The boundaries of the brigade were somewhat transient. A small section in the western side of the riding, comprising Lattin, Emly, Cullen, were assigned to the East Limerick Brigade in 1918, joining Cappawhite which was already part of the Limerick Brigade. Shortly before the Truce, Lattin again became part of the South Tipperary Brigade. The area around Mullinahone in the eastern side was transferred back and forth between the Kilkenny and the South Tipperary Brigade, while parts of the counties Waterford and Kilkenny around Carrick-on-Suir belonged to the Carrick-on-Suir Battalion, UCD AD, P7b187(16) & P7A18/127-8; NLI, P914 A0251; Jack Gardiner, Interview.
 8. Forming brigade and election of officers, Sean Fitzpatrick (n.d.), 9; Seamus Robinson, "Statement"; D. Ryan, *Seán Treacy and the Third Tipperary Brigade, I.R.A.* (Tralee 1945), 48. Eamon O'Dwyer was nominated for brigade quartermaster, but his nomination was rejected by Mulcahy as he was about to be deported to England, Seamus Robinson, "Statement". The men actually acting as officers changed over time depending on arrests and casualties. In 1921, the brigade staff consisted of: O/C Seamus Robinson; Vice-Commandant Dinny Lacey; Adjutant Sean Fitzpatrick; Acting Adjutant Sean O'Floinn; Quartermaster Mick Sheehan; Intelligence Officer J. (Tom) Carew; Engineer Seamus Robinson.
 9. Although the area covered by the South Tipperary Brigade did not exactly coincide with the South Riding (see note 7), the details provided by the police can generally give us an accurate picture of the extent of violence used by the local IRA. Indictable offences in the South Riding of Tipperary, CI South Tipperary MR's 1916-1921.
 10. Quote: IG (Inspector General) MR August 1920.
 11. Quote: CI South Tipperary MR December 1916.
 12. CI South Tipperary MR February 1918.
 13. Various activities engaged in by republicans or associated organisations, CI South Tipperary MR's September 1916-December 1917. See also Eamon O'Dwyer, "Statement".
 14. Quotes: CI South Tipperary MR April 1917. For a colourful description of the hosting of a tricolour, Ned Prendergast, Interview. Attacks on the police: in Killenaule by Mullinahone men after a football match in July 1917, and in Clonmel in December 1918, CI South Tipperary MRs July 1917 and December 1918.
 15. Thomas Ashe was one of the heroes of the 1916 Rising, and at the time of his death was President of the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.
 16. Quote: NLI, MS. 8.413. More parade reports are found in this manuscript, and others are recorded by the police in PRO, CO904/122/2. In November 1917 334 cases of illegal drilling were noted in Ireland; 81% of these took place in Munster. This dominance of Munster diminished afterwards. In March 1918 its share had declined to 58%, while Connaught saw the largest increase, IG MRs 1917-1918.

17. "Arms and Ammunition; Return of Arms in possession of Irish, National and Ulster Volunteers, 1917", PRO, CO904 Box 29/2.
18. For reported arms raids and larcenies, CI South Tipperary MR's 1916-1918. For a vibrant example of such a raid on the home of a soldier on furlough, Ned O'Reilly, O'MN (O'Malley Notebook), UCD AD, P17b109.
19. Seamus Robinson, "Statement".
20. PRO, CO904/122.
21. Officially termed the Temporary Discharges Act. Under this Act people who were physically weakened as a result of hunger strike could be temporarily released until they were strong enough to complete their sentences. This was introduced to prevent more Volunteers from dying in prison, generally resulting in increased support for them.
22. PRO, CO904/122/2.
23. GHQ order, UCD AD, P7b172(27).
24. Meeting of Sinn Féin Standing Committee of 21 February 1918, NLI, P3269. The resulting Volunteer order dates from 25 February 1918; this is mentioned in a reminder of this order dated 19 January 1920, NLI, MS. 11,410(11).
25. A copy of this manifesto: Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic: A Documented Chronicle* (London 1937, and London 1968), 842-43.
26. CI South Tipperary MR, December 1918.
27. CI South Tipperary MR, January 1919.
28. This was the nickname for the four men who initiated much of the military operations in the South Riding and who left their homes at an early stage. They were: Seamus Robinson, Seán Treacy, Dan Breen and Sean Hogan, a young active Volunteer with no official rank at this stage, who later became the commander of the second Flying Column.
29. Various men functioned as brigade officers between 1919 and 1921. Con Moloney and Mick Sheehan replaced Seamus Robinson and Seán Treacy on a number of occasions. Con Moloney also replaced Adjutant Maurice Crowe until he was appointed officer of the new Second Southern Division in April 1921. Sean Fitzpatrick then became brigade adjutant. Mick Sheehan became Intelligence Officer in April 1920 but was arrested soon afterwards. Dan Breen was replaced as quartermaster by Eamon O'Dwyer for most of 1920.
30. Quote: CI South Tipperary MR May 1919. At the same time District Inspector Hunt of the RIC in Thurles was assassinated by the IRA in broad daylight: CI North Tipperary MR June 1919; Rev. M. Maher, Diary 1919.
31. CI South Tipperary MRs, 1919.
32. Official sources put the strength of the RIC in 1920 at: 6 Head Constables, 51 Sergeants and 146 Constables, making a total of 203, PRO, HO184/61. According to Thom's Directory 1920 there were: 1 County Inspector, 5 District Inspectors, 6 Head Constables and 315 lower ranked officers, making a total of 327. In July 1921 the IRA reported the presence of 42 Sergeants and 327 constables in 21 barracks within the brigade area: UCD AD, P7a8.
33. The South Riding of Tipperary was declared a Special Military Area from January to 14 June 1919. Counter-proclamation by the IRA dated February 1919: Seamus Robinson, "Statement".
34. Quote: UCD AD, P7b187(14). See also, "Conversation with Lt. Gen. P. McMahon", UCD AD, P7D3. Similarly the Chief of Staff complained when the Quartermaster General informed him that Seamus Robinson was planning a "stunt" during one of his stays in Dublin: "I gave him no authorization to do anything; this type of actions has cost us very heavily," UCD AD, P7A19, 99-100.
35. Orders on police boycott from August 1919, David Fitzpatrick; *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin, 1977), 10.
36. The Big Four were involved in a number of operations in Dublin, including the ambush of the Lord Lieutenant, Lord French, in December 1919 at Ashtown, Co. Dublin.
37. CI South Tipperary MR, October 1920.
38. Operations in 1920, CI South Tipperary MRs, 1920. For providing me with figures for casualties as a result of the use of arms or explosives I am indebted to Peter Hart.

39. Quote: CI South Tipperary MR August 1920. Developments in 1920 and on reprisals: CI South Tipperary MR's 1920-1921. In January 1921 seven houses were burned in South Tipperary under official reprisals, in February another 15 and in May six more.
40. Drohan's complaint: Seamus Robinson, "Statement"; Attitude of Robinson towards O'Dwyer: NLI, MSS P919, A0909.
41. It later became clear that the Crown forces had been responsible for these killings.
42. Letter to the editor headed, "The Bansha Tragedies", signed Eamon O Duibhir, *Irish Independent*, 6 November 1920.
43. CI South Tipperary MRs, 1916-1921.
44. O'Malley to Drohan, Military Archives, Dublin, Lot 1, Notebook 1921.
45. *The Tipperary People*, April 20 1920.
46. On disagreement, Ned O'Reilly, O'MN, P17b126. Michael Fitzpatrick states that he had seen Gorman use the grenade, but he was in hospital afterwards and could not give evidence, O'MN, P17b126 and P17b114. Although numbers fluctuated, with men coming and going, the 1st column was supposed to have about 60 members and the 2nd about 40: Colm Ó Labhra, *Trodairí na Treas Briogáide* (An Chéad Chló, 1955); Sean Fitzpatrick, op. cit.; Setting up the first column: Ned Glendon, O'MN, P17b103; Michael Fitzpatrick, O'MN, P17b114; For the second column: Thomas Ryan, "Statement".
47. Increase in ambushes: CI South Tipperary MR October-December, 1920.
48. Counteractions by the authorities: CI South Tipperary MR November-December 1920. The frequent visits to Dublin of Dan Breen and Sean Treacy were partly meant to find arms, but also due to the presence of certain attractive females.
49. Instructions to various Volunteers units; O'MN, P17b127.
50. Communications, O'MN, P17b127; extremely detailed instructions to various officers at all levels: UCD AD, P9/3.
51. O'MN, P17b127.
52. Order dated 16/1/21, O'MN, P17b127.
53. See Thomas Ryan, "Statement".
54. Quote: CI South Tipperary MR, June 1921; counter measures by Crown Forces, CI South Tipperary MRs, April-June 1921.
55. The third column discovered by the Divisional Commandant was probably the active service unit of the 3rd battalion, who had continued alone after their disagreement with the 4th battalion men in the first Flying Column.
56. Report by the Divisional Commandant and reply from GHQ: UCD AD, P7A17/231-3.
57. These figures are primarily based on the police reports, supplemented and cross-checked by miscellaneous testimonies and IRA records, in particular regarding the months for which no RIC reports are available.
58. Casualties among the Crown forces numbered 21 in the first quarter of 1921 and 29 in the second. IRA casualties reached an all-time high in the first quarter at 22, but sharply dropped off to 7 in the final quarter of the struggle.
59. Operations: CI South Tipperary MR 1920-1921; Incidents of girls' hair being cut are reported in *The Tipperary People*, 16 April 1920, 7 May 1920 and 30 July 1921, and in *The Tipperary Star*, 22 January 1921.
60. CI South Tipperary MR 1921, quote from April 1921.
61. Quote: part of an order to stop people from hunting, ferreting etc. unless they obtained a written permit from the battalion commandant dated 8 December 1920, O'MN, P17b127. Civilians forced to dig trenches, Bryan Ryan, *A Full Private Remembers the Troubled Times* (Hollyford, 1969), 40; UCD AD, P7A19/95-7; Order on "commandeered labour" dated 5 December 1920; O'MN, P17b127; levy on farmers: Paul Merrigan, interview; UCD AD, P7A21/144-145, and P7A23/22-3; levy on other well-to-do people, P.C. Power, *Carrick-on-Suir and its People* (Dun Laoghaire 1976), 150; Eamon O'Dwyer, "Statement". The commandant of the brigade remembers asking GHQ to order such a levy, which became General Order No. 15: Seamus Robinson, "Statement". Only at the end of the

- struggle were serious measures, including executions, contemplated against looting by Volunteers: UCD AD, P7A21/10-11 & 168, and P7A22/14. Quote from order introducing a levy on Volunteers companies dated 11 January 1921, O'MN, P17b127. Examples of mistreatment of civilians, Bryan Ryan (1969), 40.
62. Quote and litany of offences, CI South Tipperary MR June 1921. Recognition of the stalemate by the IRA, NLI, MS.17,880(1).
 63. Again I have to thank Peter Hart, who made these figures available.
 64. Peter Hart: *The Geography of Revolution in Ireland, 1916-1923* (forthcoming).
 65. In June 1921 the RIC estimated that there were 958 Volunteers in the South Riding, CI South Tipperary MR June 1921. In retrospect Tipperary Volunteers stated there were 3,146 Volunteers with 350 on active service, "Lecture by Sean Fitzpatrick", UCD AD, P7D109; Colm Ó Labhra (1955), 270. However, in July 1921 its own intelligence reports recorded the presence of only 1,117 Volunteers willing to parade, UCD AD, P7A23/215.
 66. Police strength in different counties, PRO, HO 184/61; J. D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: An Oral History* (Belfast, 1990), p. 7.
 67. For the results of a comparative analysis, see thesis by Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Radicalisation of the Irish Republican Army – a comparative analysis, 1916-1921* (Amsterdam, 1994), forthcoming from Irish Academic Press, 1996.