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AC102

SENIOR THESIS
THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY

A Critical Analysis of Revolutionary Guerilla
Organization in Theory and Practice

Mark Alexander Milley

THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY
A Critical Analysis of Revolutionary Guerilla
Organization in Theory and Practice

by

MARK ALEXANDER MILLEY '80

A senior thesis
submitted to the Department of Politics
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Bachelor of Arts
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

April 28, 1980

MAY 28 1980

DECLARATION

To My
Mother and Father

I pledge upon my honor that this paper represents
my own work in accordance with Princeton University
regulations.

Mark Alexander Milley '80

Mark A. Milley '80

28 April 1980

Irish Ancestors

and to all the People of Ireland

That you may like Emerald Isle may live
in peace and unity so that your spiritual
struggle for freedom may not have been in
vain.

DEDICATION

To My
Mother and Father

for all your love and guidance over
the years gone by and those to come.

I owe you everything.

To My
Irish Ancestors
and to all the People of Ireland

that one day the Emerald Isle may live
in peace and unity so that your agonizing
struggle for freedom may not have been in
vain.

IN MEMORY OF

ARTHUR JEROME HORTON '42

June 12, 1920-April 17, 1980

While this thesis was being written, Princeton University, and especially its Undergraduate community, suffered a tremendous loss with the death of Jerry Horton '42. On behalf of my roommates and all those who had the privilege, no the honor, of enjoying Jerry's friendship, I pay tribute to his memory.

No one could say it better than a young alumnus who recently wrote: "I was fortunate to have been exposed to the Horton-Princeton Experience. Jerry offers to students what he has: friendship, advice, a big shoulder, an even bigger heart, and all the time in the world."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRELIMINARIES

Pledge	Page	i
Dedication		ii
Memorial		iii
Contents		iv
Preface		v
Acknowledgments		vi
Illustrations: Maps, Tables		vii
IRA Ballad		viii

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

1. Introduction	1
2. History	10

PART II: REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION

3. Theory	30
4. Organization Case 1: IRA, 1858-1916	51
5. Organization Case 2: IRA, 1916-1921	76
6. Organization Case 3: IRA, 1969-1979	124
7. Conclusions	165
Bibliography	168

PREFACE

It is the belief of this author that no work on the issues of Irish independence can remain unbiased. I freely admit I support the cause of Irish independence. Nevertheless, I abhor the vicious and often indiscriminate violence in Northern Ireland, often conducted by that organization fighting for Irish independence, the I.R.A. Although I abhor their violent tactics, I understand and sympathize with their motives. Despite my bias I have tried not to take sides in presenting evidence, and I hope this work is in the best traditions of value free scholarship. For those times it falls short of that ideal, I sincerely apologize.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not be finished without the help of my friends. Emily Bennett: I cannot thank her enough. She is the most professional secretary I have ever met or expect to meet. She takes personal pride in all her work and provided me with expert advice on style and grammar. In the clutch E.B. was nothing short of brilliant. She was a player, coach and general manager of a championship team of typists. E.B. and Cliff Lawrick '80 started the game and netted the winning goals. But Cindy Schuyler '79, one of the finest persons Princeton has ever graduated, came off the bench to score and unforgettably assist. Joe Fero '80, Scott Sillcox '81 and Bruce Cohen '80, as proofreaders, were the goalies who refused to let any misspelled words slip by their grasp.

Also, I would like to extend my most gracious thanks to Dave Rahr '60, Director of the Alumni Council and all the wonderful people who occupy the offices at MacLean House. Dave was more than generous to let me use MacLean House for my research and writing. They were all greatly supportive of me in times of stress, especially Al Campbell. Also, I am in debt to Steve Tappis for unselfishly giving his time to direct my often misguided research. Jack Armstrong, my adviser, deserves thanks for reading an extremely rough draft and offering helpful criticism. I will never forget his comment: "Mark, what you have here is a good cake mix, but no cake." All cakes need time to bake and I am very grateful to Dean Richard G. Williams for granting me multiple extensions. Great appreciation goes to Dave McCarthy '81 for doing an exceptional job drawing the two organizational charts. He is obviously a fine artist. Bob Bradley '80, Lasse Brautaset '80, Marc Lovecchio '80, Mark Mulert '80 and Andy Harding '80 are all acknowledged for their warm friendship: they are my best unofficial roommates.

Finally, special thanks must go to Joseph D. Lundie '80 my longtime friend and roommate. Only ten days before his deadline, he started and finished an outstanding eighty-eight page thesis. He did the impossible because he has a tremendous reserve of academic discipline and diligence. His example provided me with the inspiration that no matter how desperate, all is never lost.

Without the tremendous aid of each of these people, the completion of this manuscript would be in doubt. Their help has been totally constructive and any remaining errors are entirely me own.

M.A.M.
Princeton, N.J.
28 April 1980

ILLUSTRATIONS

I.R.B. Organizational Chart	Page 55
I.R.A. Organizational Chart	141

MAPS

Ireland	14
West Cork Brigade Area	98
Belfast	144

TABLES

I.R.A. Arms Holdings, County Clare 1921	89
Numerical Strength and Staff of the Third Cork Brigade	100
Numerical Strength of British Garrison in 3rd Cork Brigade Area	113

IRA BALLAD

The Patriot Game

Come all you young rebels and list while I sing,
For love of one's land is a terrible thing.
It banishes fear with the speed of a flame
And makes us all part of the patriot game.

My name is O'Hanlon, I'm just gone sixteen,
My home is Monaghan, there I was weaned.
I was taught all my life cruel England to blame
And so I'm part of the patriot game.

'Tis barely two years since I wandered away
With the local battalion of the bold IRA.
I read of our heroes and wanted the same
To play my own part in the patriot game.

They told me how Connolly was shot in a chair,
His wounds from the battle all bleeding and bare,
His fine body twisted, all battered and lame;
They soon made him part of the patriot game.

I joined a battalion from dear Bally Bay,
And gave up my boyhood so happy and gay.
For now as a soldier I'd drill and I'd train
To play my full part in the patriot game.

This Ireland of mine has for long been half free.
Six counties are under John Bull's tyranny.
And still De Valera is greatly to blame
For shirking his part in the patriot game.

I don't mind a bit if I shoot down police;
They're lackeys for war, never guardians of peace;
But as yet as deserters I'm never let aim
Those rebels who sold out, the patriot game.

And now as I lie here with my body all holes
I think of those traitors who bargained and sold;
I'm sorry my rifle has not done the same
For the Quisling who sold out the patriot game.

* Quoted from Charles Carlton, Bigotry and Blood.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Guerilla warfare and revolutionary theory have merged into an ideal instrument for the realization of social-political-economic aspirations for under-privileged people, the "wretched of the earth" to borrow, as a popular phrase, the title of a book by Frantz Fanon. Oppressed peoples have taken the theory, largely developed by Mao Tse-Tung along Marxist-Leninist lines, and waged bloody struggles throughout the world. As a theory it has been widely practiced, but rarely proved, since the end of World War II.

One of the most important aspects of the theory concerns the revolutionary organization: who should control it and how should it be structured. The present study examines the theory of revolutionary guerilla organization and provides a detailed critique through a case study of three specific periods in the history of the Irish Republican Army.

Chapter 2 begins the analysis with a brief overview of Irish history since the beginning of Irish resistance to British colonialism. Chapter 3 outlines the theory of Revolutionary Guerilla organization by examining the models of Lenin, Mao, Ché Guevara, and Carlos Marighella. Chapter 4 is a detailed look at the IRA parent organization, the Irish Republican Brotherhood from 1858-1916. This Chapter also examines both the IRB's unique command structure and its relationship with

the political movement. Chapter 5 focuses on the IRA during the Irish War for Independence 1916-1921. Many of the problems experienced during the 1858-1916 period reappeared in the 1919-1921 guerilla war. Nevertheless, the former failed and the latter did not. Chapter 6 is the third and final case study and analyzes the organization of the modern Provisional IRA. Although little is actually known about the Provo IRA inner structure, there is enough evidence publicly available to piece together a credible analysis.

Why Ireland and the IRA for an analysis of revolutionary organization? Ireland provides the researcher with several advantages. First, however sad, Ireland's struggle has been very long and fortunately, well documented. Many studies on guerilla organization and political violence in general ignore the value of history and instead concentrate on one time period which may or may not be relevant. Some scholars take a single frame out of context and thereby often distort the total picture.

Second, the revolutionary organization primarily responsible for the violent side of the Republican struggle, i.e. the IRA, has never been wiped out since its inception. Although often very deep underground, the IRA has never been completely buried. Periodically the organization surfaces to assume a commanding role in the Irish national struggle. Furthermore, the ideals of the IRA have remained consistent for almost two centuries. Similarly, regardless of one's opinion on their

tactics, the dogged persistence of the IRA is nothing short of remarkable.

Third, Ireland is particularly noteworthy because in a real sense the guerilla war from 1916-1921 was the twentieth century's first war of National Liberation. The success of Ireland's War for Independence after WWI was but a mere foreshadow of the multiple anti-colonial wars of Independence in the post WWII period. Finally, it must be noted that Ireland was Britain's first colony and the six counties of Ulster remain its last. When Ulster is freed from British rule then the colonial era will finally come to an end.

What, specifically, can a study of the Irish Republican Army, as the major guerilla force in the world's oldest guerilla-revolutionary struggle, tell us about the theory of guerilla revolution? First, one must define a theory.

A theory is a closely reasoned set of propositions derived from and supported by established evidence and intended to serve as an explanation for a group of phenomena.¹ For a theory to be valid, it must provide a satisfactory explanation for and be fully supported by any and all phenomena within the given bounds of the theory. If a phenomenon within those bounds contradicts the theoretical propositions, then the theory is not valid. Thus, guerilla-revolutionary theory encompasses all those political conflicts that can be defined as guerilla revolutions. A comprehensive analysis of the IRA as a guerilla-revolutionary movement, therefore, can support,

support in part, contradict or contradict in part the theory of guerilla-revolution. This assertion assumes several things which cannot readily be assumed, and therefore five key questions must be answered.

What is conflict? Most writers on the subject would agree that a conflict refers to some form of incompatibility between the courses of action open to two or more parties.* Two consumers may want the same goods or two auto drivers may want the same parking space.

What is political conflict? A political conflict is a conflict in which the means and/or the ends of the conflict are fundamentally political in nature. Two governments may want the same piece of territory or two electoral parties may be seeking the same position of power or their candidates a particular seat. Such a definition of conflict has the virtue of being objective. One only has to determine the nature of the goals of any two parties, and estimate the extent to which the realization of one party's goals frustrates the other in order to determine whether or not there is a conflict.²

What is a guerilla-revolution? Guerilla warfare was first recorded as a method of violence in a major military campaign in 512 B.C. when Scythian guerillas forced Darius,

*See: Schelling Thomas C. The Strategy of Conflict, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977; Rapoport, Anatol, Fights, Games and Debates, University of Michigan Press, 1974; Elliot, R.S.P. and Hickie, John, Ulster, A Case Study in Conflict Theory, London: Longman, Ltd. 1971.

the Persian warrior-king, to abandon a blood thirsty campaign of conquest through what is today's Bulgaria.³ In the 2492 intervening years guerillas have fought in nearly every conflict. However, there is a significant difference between guerilla warfare and guerilla-revolution. Although the methods, tactics and organization are very similar the key difference is the objectives of each.

T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) in Seven Pillars of Wisdom classically defined guerilla operations and objectives. Lawrence employed "protracted attrition" and "evasive tactics" to raise the "price of occupation beyond the capacity of the Turks to continue to pay." Through the "... techniques of hit and run" the guerilla "... will erode the will of the stronger - a victory to be won in Turkish hearts or Turkish judgement, not over Turkish troops." The guerilla war "is intangible without front or back, drifting about like gas."⁴

The key difference between guerilla warfare and guerilla revolution can be found in Lawrence's definition. The Arabs, (the guerillas Lawrence refers to) are using guerilla techniques to defend their homeland against an invading force, i.e. the Turks. They are resisting the imposition of an alien order and their objective, basically, is to restore order to the way it was before the conquest. Most guerilla movements are, in fact, of this nature. "They are forces of defensive conservatism, motivated primarily by traditional aspirations"⁵ for

the restoration of previously existing order.

Guerilla-revolutionaries may also be, and often are, fighting an alien order* but their fundamental objective is not a restoration of the old order but the birth of a new, radically different, system. It is a conscious effort to overthrow the existing order through the medium of guerilla-strategy. The guerilla revolution does not restore or accomodate an old order by simply extracting too high a price from an alien imperialist (if there is one) and the domestic regime, but rather seeks to replace both with a whole new political (and perhaps social and economic) system. Thus, according to J. Bowyer Bell "... it is not possible to distinguish guerilla-revolution by the presence or absence of guerillas..."⁶ but rather by their ultimate aim.

Is a guerilla revolution a political conflict? Obviously it is. A regime, alien or domestic, holds power and possesses all the institutionalized weapons of an existing state. Opposing the regime are the dissident guerilla revolutionaries, with ^{people} as their primary source of power, who desire to destroy the regime and replace it with a new system. The goals of the guerilla revolutionary are clearly incompatible with the wishes of the regime. Hence, guerilla-revolution is a political

*For example: Mao's Red Army fought the Japanese invaders and the Vietminh and Viet Cong fought the 'alien' systems of the French and Americans respectively. Likewise the revolutions in continental Africa largely fought and are fighting imposed alien regimes.

conflict because political power is the pie which the dissident desires and the regime defends, and the one's gain is the others loss.

Is the political conflict in Northern Ireland a guerilla-revolution? Northern Ireland's political conflict is extremely complex and can be analyzed from different angles. However, since the focus of this analysis is the IRA, it is accurate to say that the conflict in which the IRA defines itself is a guerilla-revolution. The stated objective of the IRA is the abolition of the existing regimes in both the Irish Free State (Southern, twenty-six counties) and the British rule over Ulster (Northern, six counties). The IRA wants to replace these two existing orders with a "United, thrity-two county, socialist democratic Worker's and Small Farmer's Republic."⁷ The IRA openly admits that objective can only be realized through violence, and their choice of strategy is that of the guerilla. IRA aims are definitely incompatible with those of the Westminster, Stormont* and Dublin regimes. All three wish to preserve a peaceful status quo. Thus, the political conflict in Northern Ireland is a guerilla-revolution with respect to the aspirations of the IRA and those of the opposing regimes.

*Stormont is the name commonly used to refer to the seat of power in Ulster. It falls, of course, within the ultimate jurisdiction of Westminster whose responsibility it is to govern all of Great Britain. Stormont was abolished in 1972 and Direct Rule was imposed from Westminster.

It would be scholarly suicide to write anything on Ireland without beginning with a brief and admittedly incomplete history of the English domination of the Irish people and outline the geneology of the Irish Republican Movement. This overview is absolutely essential because both the IRA and the Irish people, more so than other organizations and races, literally thrive on their history. Their history has been their lifeblood, sustaining them through difficult times. Furthermore, the Irish are known as a race that rarely forgives and never forgets. More importantly, the conclusions of this essay cannot be proved sufficiently if discussed in an historical vacuum.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 1

- ¹ Funk and Wagnells Standard College Dictionary, (New York: Funk and Wagnells, 1968.)
- ² R.S.P. Elliot and John Hickie. Ulster, A Case Study in Conflict Theory. (London: Langman Ltd., 1971), p.7.
- ³ Robert B. Asprey. War in the Shadows: The Guerilla in History. Vol. I. (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1975), p.3.
- ⁴ Bowyer J. Bell, Myth of the Guerilla. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1971), p.7. Paraphrase of T.E. Lawrence's description of Guerilla Warfare.
- ⁵ Ibid., p.28.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Bowyer J. Bell, The Secret Army, the IRA 1916-1973. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970, revised 1973), p.361. Bell quotes the Republican Newspaper United Irishmen, May 1969.

CHAPTER 2

History

There is no present or future--only the past
happening over and over again--now.

Eugene O'Neill

The single most important factor for the continuing IRA violence in Ulster is the presence of British soldiers. Ignorant of the historical complexities governing Northern Ireland, most people think British troops arrived in 1969. Regarding the specifics of the present conflict, this observation is accurate. However, in the greater context of history, the British Army's presence in Northern Ireland from 1969 to the present day can be viewed as a mere rearrival. Ironically, it was precisely 800 years prior, on a May Day in 1169, when English soldiers first landed in Ireland, initiating English domination over the Irish.

Under orders from King Henry II, a Norman earl, Robert Fitz Stephen landed in Wexford with a force of some 600 soldiers.¹ After adequately being reinforced, Fitz Stephen completed the first phase of consolidation in 1172. The Norman barons set about the country in accordance with their military ideals, and they were considered to be both rigid disciplinarians and militarily efficient.² Although they would stand for no nonsense from the natives, there was a fair amount of resistance from the various Celtic tribes. The fighting forced Henry II to land near

Waterford with an excellent fighting force of 4000 knights and about 10,000 other ranks.³ Henry's force was so formidable that many Irish tribes simply submitted with little fighting.

Henry rewarded his conquering soldiers with grants of large tracts of land, confiscating the property of the native Celts, who operated in a close-knit and ordered society. Charles Duff a noted Irish historian writes: "This not only meant economic disaster for those people, but it scrambled their whole way of life."⁴ The soldiers set up garrison towns on these tracts, much like the old American West, and from these forts they looted and plundered the countryside. The Irish were virtually helpless according to Duff, and the conquerors treated "the natives just as they saw fit, always without mercy and with complete disregard of their feelings."⁵ Northern Ireland was left relatively peaceful until 1177, when twenty men from a garrison raided the Kingdom of Ulldrich and established an Englishman, John de Courcey, as the Earl of Ulster.

Slowly, however, the natives managed to obtain or make weapons for themselves and fought the British soldiers with classic guerilla tactics.⁶ All over Ireland isolated tribes skirmished with the invaders, and although disorganized and poorly armed, resistance never entirely ceased for over a century. Duff notes that the British "were finding themselves with some considerable difficulties in regard to that first English colony."⁷ Thus began what has become known for eight hundred years as "England's Irish problem."

Outside of the major cities, such as Dublin, which became the center of English rule, and the smaller garrison towns, Ireland was relatively unconquered. The rural areas remained in native control and the English ventured to the countryside only when traveling in force. Richard II of England, reigning from 1377-99, decided that something must be done to enforce submission of the Irish. Richard has been described as a man whose ideas had "few shades between black and white."⁸ In Ireland, Richard faced a dilemma, "either enforce peace or abandon Ireland altogether. Richard favored the use of force."⁹

During the last year of his reign, Richard assembled an army of 34,000 men and set out to quiet the troubled isle. Waiting for him was the Celtic King Art of MacMurrough and a group of hand picked warriors numbering about 3000.¹⁰ Again using guerilla tactics, the Celts defeated Richard in the countryside and forced him to withdraw to the English stronghold in Dublin.

Richard returned to England, marking the last major effort of the British to maintain order in the countryside of Ireland until Tudor times. The English and Norman settlers who elected to remain became assimilated into the Irish mainstream and it has been said that they have become more Irish than the Irish. For over 60 years Ireland became almost peaceful, partly because England was engulfed in the War of the Roses.

When the war ended in 1485, King Henry VII decided to spend more time on Irish affairs, well aware that Ireland had not been successfully colonized. He decided to administer English rule

and law through a shire system where a local sheriff or constable governed in the name of a resident noble. However, it was under his successor Queen Mary Tudor that Henry VII's ideas were tried. Mary initiated a process of "planting" settlers in Ireland with the express purpose of gaining total control over the whole of Ireland and destroying the Irish social, political, cultural and economic systems.

During the Reformation in 1541, England's King Henry VIII was also proclaimed King of Ireland. He carried Queen Mary's initiative even further and attempted to convert the native population to an Irish version of the new English Protestant Church.¹¹ Scottish and English settlers were encouraged to establish plantations and a more full colonial situation was introduced. The attempt to convert the Catholic-majority population to Protestantism failed, and the only result was a deep native Catholic hatred of the settling Protestant ascendancy.

Violent resistance continued throughout the seventeenth century. Several unorganized and isolated uprisings occurred in 1602, the most famous being the O'Neill clan rebellion throughout the provinces of Munster and Leinster.* Queen Elizabeth I,

* Ireland is divided into four provinces and thirty-two counties. The provinces are Leinster in the East, twelve counties; Munster in the South, six counties; Connaught in the West, five counties; and Ulster in the North, nine counties. What is today commonly called Northern Ireland consists of six of the nine counties of Ulster. Nevertheless, Northern Ireland is often called Ulster and the two terms have become synonymous.

Henry VIII's successor, thought the reason for Henry's failure and the cause of the uprisings was an insufficient application of force. Elizabeth sent Lord Mountjoy to expand the plantings and crush the rebels.¹²

Mountjoy was a ruthless but capable military commander, and he had little difficulty defeating the forces of O'Neill. After subduing the native army, Mountjoy became vicious and this fact has never been forgotten in the Irish national consciousness.* He implemented a scorched earth policy whereby "homesteads, crops and cattle were wantonly destroyed."¹³ He also made a conscious effort to create a famine by destroying everything that could prevent starvation among the people.¹⁴ Mountjoy openly admitted and took pride in his brutality when he wrote to the Queen describing his adventures:

We have seen no one man in all Tyrone of late but dead carcasses merely hunger starved, of which we found many as we passed. Between Tullaghogue and Toom (17 miles) lay 1,000 unburied dead, and since our first drawing this year...there were about 3,000 starved in Tyrone... Tomorrow, by the grace of God, I am going into the field, as near I can to utterly waste the county Tyrone.¹⁵

Sadly, Mountjoy is typical of the way that Ireland was tilled for full Protestant planting.

Elizabeth's successor, James I, continued her policies, passing the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. Simply stated, they were an early version of Apartheid. The native farmers were

* It is interesting to note that Mountjoy Prison in Dublin, where many IRA men were held captive, was named in honor of the conqueror.

run off their lands in counties Derry, Tyrone, Armagh, Fermanagh, Cavan and Donegal, a half-million acres of the most fertile land in Ireland. The very best acres went to the English and the next best to the Scottish. Furthermore, a prerequisite for getting a plot was loyal service to the Crown.¹⁶ Most of the successful plantations were in the northern half of Ireland, what is now Ulster. In 1641 a large scale peasant insurrection took place against the plantation owners in the North. Oliver Cromwell, the English general who had overthrown the royalist monarchy of King Charles I, decided to permanently extinguish Irish revolt once and for all. A series of atrocities accompanied Cromwell's arrival in Ireland, the most infamous being the five day massacre of the 3000 inhabitants of Drogheda. Systematic brutal suppression forced the Irish clans to surrender and a harsh peace settlement was effected called the Parliament of England Act. Also known as the Cromwellian Act of Settlement, it stated, among other things, that all Catholics were to lose one-third of all their land. All those Catholics whose land was worth more than £10 were banished to the wastelands of County Connaught in the West of Ireland. Cromwell's 30,000 soldiers were awarded all the confiscated land in lieu of cash payment for their services. Out of the 20,000,000 acres of land in Ireland, a staggering 11,000,000 acres were given to these soldiers.¹⁷ Duff writes:

Elizabeth's wars had all but finally destroyed the whole old Gaelic culture and civilization of Ireland. The Cromwellian Settlement all but destroyed the vestiges of these which remained. It made Ireland an English colony in a

fuller sense than any previous plantation before them, including that of Ulster. But the greatest of all English 'plantations' in that country was the unremitting plantation of grievances in the hearts of the Irish. For these, the Irish never permitted either themselves or anybody else to forget.¹⁸

The final serious Irish-Catholic challenge to English Protestant rule came in 1689 when the English King James II, a Catholic, attempted to restore native Catholic domination. The English Protestants resisted the move and James was forced off the throne. He fled to Ireland to raise an army and fight Protestant William of Orange who had supplanted him in England. Ulster's Protestants withstood a 90-day siege in Londonderry, then rebounded with a crushing defeat of James' Catholic allies at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690*. Further confiscation of Catholic land followed the subsequent treaty signing in 1691. More important, a series of anti-Catholic laws, known as the Penal Code, was passed to keep the native population in a condition of permanent inferiority and ended any hope of Catholic equality for over a century.¹⁹ A sampling of a few of the laws of the Penal Code is sufficient to impart a flavor of their severity:

- No Catholic permitted to vote...
- No Catholic permitted to stand for Parliament...
- No Catholic permitted to hold a commission in the army or navy...
- No Catholic permitted to be a member of a learned profession...
- No Catholic permitted to open or administer a school...
- No Catholic permitted to teach...²⁰

*William's victory at the Battle of the Boyne is celebrated by Ulster's Protestants with marches, speeches, etc. on every 12th of July. These celebrations directly led to much of the communal rioting from 1969 to the present.

Duff observes that the English used the puppet Protestant colonials to implement the Penal Laws and reduce the native Irish Catholic majority to a "serf-like status, without resources in the form of wealth or property...and with no political power or elementary rights."²¹ Not surprisingly, the Penal Laws had profound effects, establishing a clear precedent for placing Irish Catholics in a permanent state of servility. Simply stated, the Penal Laws "...left scars on Ireland's people which have not yet entirely healed."²²

For over a century the native Irish were reduced to a condition of utter despair. Nearly every Catholic family was forced to live in total poverty. Slowly, however, some Irish Protestant intellectuals became enlightened to the plight of their fellow countrymen. In the 1770's a group of Trinity College students, led by a young Protestant, Theobald Wolfe Tone, formed the Societies of United Irishmen, which the IRA and the general Republican movement cite as their first direct ancestor. Wolfe Tone, inspired by the separatist writings of Jonathan Swift, published a controversial pamphlet entitled, An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,²³ and together with his fellow United Irishmen, swore:

...never to desist in our efforts until we have subverted the authority of England over our country and asserted our independence by forming a brotherhood of affection, a communion of rites and union of power among Irishmen of every religious persuasion, and thereby to obtain a complete reform of the legislature founded on the principle of political and religious liberty.²⁴

The United Irishmen, however, were split between two factions: the one, led by Henry Gattou, advocated gaining a United Independent Ireland by constitutional means; the other, led by Wolfe Tone, argued that the only way to freedom was violence. This split between the men of politics and the men of force manifested itself throughout the Republican movement's history and continues to plague the IRA even today. Inspired by the American and French Revolutions, the Wolfe Tone faction of the United Irishmen began a rebellion in 1794 to:

...unite the whole people of Ireland, ...abolish the memory of all past dissensions and to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denomination of protestant, catholic, and dissenter.²⁵

A reactionary movement of Protestants formed the "Orange Order". By 1798, the "Orangemen" closely allied with and subordinate to the British, annihilated the organization of the United Irishmen...but not the memory of them. Through songs and poems the martyr-death of their leader, Wolfe Tone, guaranteed their ideals would be infinitely preserved in the unforgetting Irish memory.

The subsequent Act of Union in 1800 permanently linked by law the ruling Protestant colonialists with their English allies, confirming that their domination totally depended upon British power. Throughout the 19th century, Irish nationalists followed the republican ideals and rebellious advice of Wolfe Tone, with a series of unsuccessful attempts to break the Act of Union. Robert Emmett led an insurrection in 1803, as did the Young

Irelanders in 1848 and the Fenians in 1867. Eventually the IRA broke the Act of Union for 26 of the 32 counties with the successful rebellion ending in 1921.

Historically, paralleling these militants were the moderate constitutionalists who aimed at specific reforms. Catholic emancipation was promised after the Act of Union but never carried through until the "...greatest popular leader Catholic Ireland had ever produced,"²⁶ Daniel O'Connell, succeeded in gaining religious freedom for Catholics in 1829. The Catholic Emancipation had many qualifications, but it revived a glimmer of hope not felt in over 130 years. Moreover, it released "...much Catholic energy and talent for other agitations."²⁷

The Great Famine of 1846-8 created tremendous hardship throughout Ireland. Over one million poor Irish peasants starved to death and still more emigrated to the United States. The population was reduced from about eight million people to slightly over four million.²⁸ The Irish, right or wrong, blamed the catastrophe on the English system of landlordism. Furthermore, English landlords treated the remaining Irish tenant farmers with particular harshness during this period of economic depression. The landlord:

...could watch a tenant working hard to improve his bit of leasehold, choose the moment which suited him best, and evict the tenant any day he wished; and then relet the improved land to another at increased rent, and continue to do the same thing with all new tenants.²⁹

Charles Stewart Parnell, another great Irish politician, formed the "Land League" in an attempt to reform the system of landlordism. Parnell also spearheaded the constitutional drive

for Home Rule. Aided by the violent Fenians, Parnell's movement resulted in the Irish Land War of 1867-82 with hopes of gaining the three "F" reforms: Fixity of Tenure, Fair Rents, and the Rights of Free Sale."³⁰ *

Parnell's great political success came with the passage of the Land Act of 1881. Initially limited, the Act was expanded after many amendments until 1903 when most of the grievances of the Irish tenant farmer were redressed.

Therefore it took the Irish people over eight decades to achieve the two basic factors of the greatest importance in the political struggle; Catholic emancipation and a reasonable control of rights in the confiscated lands. Duff comments that "the two added together meant more than a great improvement in the condition of life for most of the small farmers."³¹

However, the issue of Home Rule remained unsettled. The advocates of Home Rule were split over the issue of the means of achieving the mutually desired end. Parnell represented the constitutional approach while the Fenians represented the militant approach. The majority of Catholics stood somewhere between the two. They admired the Fenians' courage, but disapproved of their violent tactics, particularly when it became apparent that Parnell's group was making headway. Parnell introduced several bills into

* An excellent account of the causes, conduct and consequences may be found in Samuel Clark's Social Origins of the Irish Land War. It is particularly interesting because it analyzes the war through a critique of many of the modern theories of revolution.

Parliament which offered the prospect of Home Rule for the Irish. The British Prime Minister, Gladstone, saw the potential in a united movement and he proposed reforms to undercut popular support for the violent faction and appease the moderates. Also, in all fairness to Gladstone, it must be said that he honestly believed that Home Rule was the best rule for Ireland, and therefore worked very hard for passage of several Home Rule bills in Parliament.

Due to the Constitutionalists' success, the Fenian movement lost much of its following. The remaining Fenians formed a small, clandestine and militant organization called the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The IRA is the direct offspring of the IRB. These organizations will be discussed further in later chapters of this paper. The IRB conducted some minor bombings and raids in support of the drive for independence but were definitely in a subordinate role to the constitutional movement. T. W. Moody in his history of the Irish Republicans noted that the ... "revolutionary movement worked through an Irish party in Parliament, and the support that Fenianism had received... transferred to Parnell and his party."³²

Complicated by the firm links between Ulster Protestants and the British Crown, the Home Rule bills proposed by Parnell and endorsed by Gladstone were defeated. But the debate had at least been opened. Home Rule as an issue made its rounds in Parliament from the time of its introduction by Gladstone to the successful guerilla revolution of the 1920's. A Home Rule bill was proposed in 1912 by Prime Minister Asquith, and the House of Commons

rejected it.³³ However, under British law, passage twice more by Commons would make it a law no matter what action the House of Lords took. The bill was finally passed when Commons approved it in May and again in September of 1914. The bill became law, but was amended not to become effective until after World War I, which had broken out the previous month.

Finally, it is important to note that from about 1890 on, a spiritual renaissance was quietly taking place among Ireland's Catholics. It was largely an intellectual revival of Gaelic language and literature which looked to the old Gaelic way of life for inspiration. In 1878, a Society for the Preservation of Irish was formed, but little progress was made until the Gaelic League was established in 1893 ... "by a few single minded and devoted men with the avowed purpose of not only preserving everything that remained of Irish, but also of making it again the spoken language throughout the country."³⁴ In 1884, with a less intellectual following, several young athletes formed the Gaelic Athletic Association and sponsored competition in the traditional Irish sports such as hurling and an Irish brand of rugby. The GAA was immensely popular throughout the whole of Ireland, Protestant and Catholic, since its competitions were largely non-sectarian and prize money was awarded to the victors.

The constitutional debate in Parliament kept alive the hope of Home Rule. This debate, together with the land reforms acted to satisfy for the time being the greater mass of Irish Catholics.

Ireland thus became peaceful until Easter Monday 1916, when a hodge-podge group of rebels violently revolted in Dublin. The 1916 uprising failed, but the guerilla revolution it sparked did not. Twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties were liberated when the action finally ended in 1921. The struggle to unite the remaining six counties continues.

CONCLUSIONS

Irish revolutionary history up to the twentieth century reveals a pattern concerning the dynamics of a guerilla revolutionary movement over a long period of time. The masses, although essentially neutral, are open to the influences of the movement and the regime. It can be seen through Parnell's Home Rule drive and the Gaelic revival that "awakening" the masses by various forms of political agitation will influence their attitude to a degree. Most likely it will gain support for reforms such as Catholic Emancipation, Land Rights, and Home Rule, which was the biggest of all proposed reforms.

Successful reforms, however, are not revolutions. Clearly a movement's strategy of ballot or bullet will likewise have an effect on gaining mass support. The Republican revolutionary movement's attempts at violence often alienated the majority of the population if the regime responded with legitimate reforms. Furthermore, a split movement is likely to develop over the ballot-bullet debate and the politicians never gained total (or even

partial) control over the militarists. Also, this split will affect the support of the masses in that it creates three groups competing for the allegiance of a constant number of people.

The violent faction, whose members become the actual guerilla-revolutionaries, consistently, over a period of time, gain the least amount of mass support. However, their sacrifices provide the population with a symbol of pride to rally around in moments of intense repression when the government forces the moderates to ally with the militants, and the militants assume a leading role.

The efforts of the rebel, no matter how great, can only influence the masses to a certain degree, and this effort by itself is not enough to create resistance. The most important point evident from this overview of Irish history is that the crucial deciding element is the response of the regime. The regime can satisfy the masses or it can totally alienate them. It is possible for a government to maintain mass allegiance through a delicate synthesis of surgically applied force and judicious compromise. The key here is not whether the regime thinks the use of violence is surgically applied or the reforms just, but rather if the people do. If the regime misinterprets the feelings of the people and overreacts with extreme cruelty or their reforms do not go far enough, then the regime, by its action or lack of action, will create support for the revolutionary. Sadly, it is only too clear that throughout Irish history the various British regimes always opted for oppressive force and rarely ever consid-

ered the feelings of the Irish majority. Therefore, British government's brutal behavior has been the overwhelming reason for armed resistance throughout Ireland's history.

A general historical overview can suggest trends and propose reasons why the masses act in a certain way. But it must not be forgotten, as it often is, that the masses are a collection of individuals who are exposed to different stimuli, each having some influence over an individual's actions. Marxist revolutionary theorists widely believe that one of the most important stimuli which influences the masses to act a certain way, i.e. rebel or support a rebellion, is the unity, strength, and structure of the revolutionary organization.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 2

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- 2 Charles Duff, Six Days to Shake an Empire (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1966), p. 8.
- 3 Ibid., p. 16.
- 4 Ibid.
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- 7 Ibid., p. 17.
- 8 Ibid., p. 23.
- 9 Ibid., p. 24.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Northern Ireland: Half a Century of Partition, ed. Richard W. Mansback, (New York: Facts on File Publication, 1973), p. 1.
- 12 Duff, p. 31.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid., p. 34.
- 17 Ibid., p. 42.
- 18 Ibid., p. 43.
- 19 R. S. P. Elliot and John Hickie, Ulster, A Case Study in Conflict Theory (London: Langman, Ltd., 1971), p. 30.
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- 21 Ibid., p. 51.

Footnotes: Chapter 2, continued

- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Timothy Patrick Coogan, The I.R.A. (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), p. 3.
- 24 Ibid., p. 3.
- 25 T. W. Moody, The Ulster Question, 1603-1973 (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1974), p. 11, quoting Theobald Wolfe Tone, The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone...written by himself (Washington, D.C., n.p. 1826), pp. 51-2.
- 26 Ibid., p. 14.
- 27 Duff, p. 61.
- 28 Samuel Clark, Social Origins of the Irish Land War (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 107.
- 29 Duff, p. 65.
- 30 Coogan, p. 5.
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- 32 Moody, pp. 21-2.
- 33 Facts on File, ed. Mansback, p. 3.
- 34 Duff, p. 68.

CHAPTER 3

Theory

Diffuse organizational form is necessary.

- Lenin

What should be the structure of a revolutionary organization? The two most important organizational questions which

PART II

confront all revolutionary guerrilla struggles, regardless of time

or place, center **REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION** the relationship

between the political and the military branches of the movement

and (2) a centralized or diffused command structure. Should the

"politicians" control the "militants" or vice versa? Should the

initiative be dispersed to local revolutionaries or should there

be a centralized control guiding and coordinating all revolutionary

activity? This chapter examines how four major revolutionary

guerrilla theorists answer these questions. In order of discussion,

they are: Lenin, Mao, Guevara and Mariátegui. All four are

Marxists who believed that the revolutionary organization is one

of the most important factors in the success or failure of a revolution.

Furthermore, they all believe that if the organization

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These men were cited not only because they believed in the

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CHAPTER 3

Theory

Definite organization form is necessary.

- Lenin

What should be the structure of a revolutionary organization? The two most important organizational questions which confront all revolutionary guerilla struggles, regardless of time or place, center around the debates over 1) the relationship between the political and the military branches of the movement and 2) a centralized or diffused command structure. Should the "politicos" control the "militants" or vice versa? Should the initiative be dispersed to local revolutionaries or should there be a centralized control guiding and coordinating all revolutionary action? This chapter examines how four major revolutionary guerilla theorists answer these questions. In order of discussion, they are: Lenin, Mao, Guevera and Marighella. All four are Marxists who believed that the revolutionary organization is one of the most important factors in the success or failure of a revolution. Furthermore, they all believe that if the organization is properly set up, it would be a most positive influence on gaining the allegiance of the masses.

These men were picked not only because they believed in the primacy of the organization but also because each of them was a famous practitioner who actually established and led an organization

employing their theories. Therefore, because each theorist also had practical experience, their comments are significantly more insightful and relevant.

In addition to their similarities, these theorists were chosen also because of their differences. Each suggests alternative forms of revolutionary organization. More important, each is representative of the various schools of thought within Marxism on the organizational issue.*

Finally, if nothing succeeds like success, then it must be noted that two of these theorists succeeded and two failed. On the one hand, Lenin and Mao led the two greatest revolutions in the twentieth century, perhaps in all of history. On the other hand, Guevara lost miserably in Bolivia and Marighella failed to bring down the regime in Brazil.

Although each theorist goes into great detail about revolutionary organization, it is their overriding principles that are emphasized. The fundamental principles are most important because they can be applied to various countries. The details, however, must remain flexible in order to adapt to the different historical, cultural, political and military situations of an individual revolutionary guerilla struggle.

* For an excellent survey of the various strains in Marxist thought, see David McLellan's Marxism After Marx, (New York: Harper and Row 1979)

First, however, a few comments are due on the thought, or lack of thought, of Karl Marx regarding organization, because he is the common ideological ancestor for all of our theorists. Although Marx intended to devote an entire book on this subject, unfortunately he never did. Despite his voluminous writings in economics, sociology, and philosophy there is a large "gap in Marx's writings in politics,"¹ wrote David McLellan, one of the world's leading scholars on Marx. McLellan goes on to say, "Marx left no coherent theory of the state...and this was the only part of his theoretical legacy that, according to him, only he could satisfactorily complete."² On the practical level, Marx never dealt with the relationship between leadership party and the masses. In fact, the only organizations he played an active role in were the Communist League and the First International.³ The Communist League was a propaganda group of only several hundred strong. The First International was a loose "federation of sects and trade unions."⁴ Thus, there is a lack of direction from Marx regarding revolutionary organization, and the deficiency is a prime reason for the variety of leftist thought on this subject. McLellan writes that on the topic of revolutionary organization "anyone from a Leninist...to a Libertarian socialist could claim, without fear of refutation, that they were in the true Marxist tradition."⁵

Lenin was the first of the successful theorist/practitioners to address questions of revolutionary organization. First,

Lenin firmly believed that the political faction should take precedence over the military. Second, he proposed that a small elite group of professional revolutionaries should form a highly centralized vanguard party to lead the proletariat masses.

It is not difficult to prove that Lenin thought the political more important than the military. Nearly all of his writings on organization are concerned with the political aspect of the struggle. He consistently discussed the organizational makeup of the "party" and was never concerned with the structure of an irregular paramilitary force. This fact alone suggests that Lenin considered military activity subordinate to political activity.

Lenin was a political pragmatist who fully understood the importance of the organizational structure. Without a firm structure he believed the revolution would fail. He wrote, "Definite organizational form is necessary...and we must endeavor to give such form to all our work as far as possible." ⁶

On the issue of central control of the revolutionary organization Lenin wrote:

If we begin with the solid foundation of a strong organization of revolutionaries, we can ensure the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out our aims...if, however, we begin with a broad organization which is supposedly most accessible to the masses (but which is actually most accessible to the gendarmes) we shall achieve neither the one nor the other.⁷

Lenin maintained that a revolutionary struggle "must have a Committee of professional revolutionaries..."⁸ because "it is far more difficult to unearth a dozen wise men than a hundred fools."⁹

In What is to be Done?, Lenin's fundamental work on the Party,

he argues that the revolutionaries should be professional in two senses. First, they must fully devote themselves to party work, and second, they must be fully trained.¹⁰ Lenin was not, however, against mass organization, but he insisted the masses must be kept separate from the party elite:

We must have such circles, trade unions, and organisations everywhere in as large a number as possible and with the widest variety of functions; but it would be absurd and harmful to confound with the organisation of revolutionaries ...in order to serve the mass movement we must have people who will devote themselves exclusively to Social Democratic activities...and such people must train themselves patiently and steadfastly to be professional revolutionaries.¹¹

In addition to the composition of the Party organization, Lenin was equally explicit with regard to the need for overall centralized control. Lenin's pamphlet A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks, written in 1902, addresses this subject. Although the letter does not specifically discuss a Revolutionary Guerilla organization, the principles espoused are those which Lenin adhered to throughout his struggle and one well worth examining in detail. A comrade in St. Petersburg requested Lenin's critique of the St. Petersburg Social Democratic Party structure and the above "letter" is Lenin's response.

Lenin says there should be "two leading centres: a Central Organ (CO) and a Central Committee (CC).¹² The CO is charged by Lenin with the movement's ideological leadership while the CC is responsible for "direct and practical leadership."¹³ The Party newspaper Iskra is the central organ and from its pages emerge the "theoretical truths, tactical principles, general organiza-

tional ideas and general tasks of the whole party at any given moment."¹⁴ The Central Committee was to be made up of "all the best revolutionaries among the Russian Social Democrats,"¹⁵ and their duties were to "manage the general affairs of the Party...and be the practical leader of the movement."¹⁶

Lenin stressed the overwhelming need for secrecy, especially regarding the leadership.* In the interest of security, Lenin suggests that a full committee cannot meet because it is too large a group. Therefore, a select elite, called the executive group would meet frequently and direct and manage the day-to-day affairs of the Revolution. Lenin notes that the numbers of this group should be exceedingly small "say, five, or even fewer members."¹⁷ who are the most "homogeneous...professional revolutionaries with great practical experience."¹⁸ He strongly emphasizes that "Everything hinges on the observance of secrecy."¹⁹

Lenin's St. Petersburg comrade suggests that some control should be dispersed to district and factory circles. Lenin recognizes the importance of district groups but he limits their duties to "organize the distribution of literature properly,"²⁰ and act as couriers between the CC and factories. He writes that "the functions of the district groups should not be extended beyond the

* His stress of secrecy borders on paranoia, but it must be remembered that the letter was written at a time when the Tsar's secret police were particularly active and effective.

bounds of purely intermediary and transmission work."²¹ Lenin further says that conferences and discussions of Party issues can take place at the district level but "decisions on all general questions of the local movement should be made only by the Committee"²² thus retaining centralized control. Lenin does grant some tactical freedom to the local committee when he writes that the "district groups should be permitted to act independently only on questions concerning the technical aspects of transmission and distribution."²³ However, he re-emphasizes the concept of centralized control when he says the district group is merely a "branch of the committee, deriving its powers from the latter."²⁴ Lenin finally concludes that "decentralization...is absolutely impermissible to any wide degree and...altogether detrimental to revolutionary work carried on under an autocracy."²⁵

Although Lenin stresses centralization regarding revolutionary management, he stresses also that information to the center must come in from all over the periphery. He writes "the greatest possible decentralization is necessary with regard to keeping the Party centre (and therefore the movement as a whole) informed about the movement."²⁶ Lenin charges each member of the Party with the responsibility of informing the Central Committee about local activities so that the CC can make plans to coordinate and centralize the movement as a whole, remarking that "without information, centralization is impossible."²⁷ He concludes:

We must well remember that the centre will be powerless if we do not at the same time introduce the maximum of decentralization both with regard to responsibility to the centre and with regard to keeping it informed of all the cogs and

wheels of the Party machine...For the centre not only to advise, persuade, and argue but really conduct the orchestra, it is necessary to know exactly who is playing which fiddle; where and how instruction has been or is being received in playing each instrument; who is playing out of tune, and where and why; and who should be transferred...so that the discord may be remedied.²⁸

After the 1905 revolution, a massive number of people joined Lenin's Social Democrats and "the distinction between an elitist party and mass organization became less rigid."²⁹ Lenin never abandoned his idea of a small clandestine party, but under the changed condition he urged his followers "to extend your bases, rally all the workers around yourselves, and incorporate them in the ranks of the party organization by hundreds of thousands."³⁰ Lenin realized that the new influx would make the "nucleus of the ...party...much broader than were the old circles."³¹ He accepted the fact that the adjusted structure "will most likely have to be a less rigid, more free, more loose organization."³²

Lenin, in fact, even advocated some decentralization and power when he instituted the process of democratic centralism. According to McCellan, democratic centralism involved the introduction of the elective principle, the employment of referendums and even curtailing the powers of the Central Committee.³³ Most important, Lenin wrote that democratic centralism consisted of "working tirelessly to make the local organization the principal ...units of the party in fact, and not merely in name."³⁴ Despite the decentralizing tendencies following the 1905 revolution, Lenin, on balance, advocated a highly centralized organization led by a small revolutionary elite.

Mao Tse Tung, not surprisingly, addressed many of the same organizational problems as Lenin. Mao, however, is particularly relevant because he addressed these problems specifically within the context of a Revolutionary Guerilla war. Mao recognized that an important issue which presents itself as an organizational debate, turned strategic dilemma, to many movements is the relationship of war and politics. This issue, Mao correctly derived, reveals itself as a debate between two factions within a movement; on one hand are those advocating an escalation in the level of violent pressure exerted upon a target regime, and on the other hand are those that advocate a further mobilization of the base (i.e. the masses). The debate between the "politicos" and the "militarists" may lead to a full fledged split within a movement. In response to this question, Mao is firm and explicit: politics should take priority.

Mao indicated that he had read Clausewitz when he wrote: "In a word, war cannot for a single moment be separated from politics,"³⁵ echoing the Prussians' often quoted phrase, "war is the continuation of politics...by other means."³⁶ Recognizing this fact, Mao specifically addresses the issue in his essay On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party, written in December 1929. Mao maintained, failure to resolve the debate will lead to the inability to "...wage a concerted and determined struggle..." and consequently the Army will be unable to carry out..."tasks assigned to it in China's great revolutionary struggle."³⁷ A split can, in other words, lead to defeat.

A split, Mao advises, can be noticed when "comrades regard military affairs and politics as opposed to each other and refuse to recognize that military affairs are only one means of accomplishing political tasks."³⁸ Furthermore, these errant comrades do not understand the "Chinese Red Army is an armed body for carrying out the political tasks of revolution" and should not "confine itself to fighting."³⁹ According to Mao, the militarist faction becomes "conceited and unable to see beyond their limited environment in the Fourth Army, and these comrades believe that no other revolutionary forces exist."⁴⁰ Therefore, the deviants do not take "...pains to do minute and detailed work among the masses."⁴¹

Mao specifically discussed the issue of centralized vs. decentralized command for a revolutionary guerilla war in his essay The Relationship of Command. He notes there must be "some degree of centralized command,"⁴² but the "methods of command in guerilla warfare do not allow a high degree of centralization as in regular warfare."⁴³ He writes:

If any attempt is made to apply the methods of command in regular warfare to guerilla warfare, its great flexibility will inevitably be restricted and its vitality sapped. A highly centralized command is in direct contradiction to the great flexibility of guerilla warfare and must not and cannot be applied to it.⁴⁴

Although Mao recognizes dispersion as the overall characteristic of guerilla war, he also understands the importance of a unified strategic command to successfully coordinate the simultaneous activities of a regular war and a guerilla war. A central-

ized command should plan and direct the guerilla war as a whole, and in all matters of general strategy the lower level should report to the higher and follow its instructions.

However, Mao says "centralization...stops at this point."⁴⁵ The regional units are given the liberty to decide specific strategies for their combat zone. Possessing the knowledge of local conditions, subordinate commanders work out the details. Mao says:

Hence, as opposed both to absolute centralization and to absolute decentralization, the principle of command in guerilla war should be centralized strategic command and decentralized command in campaigns and battles...In a word it means guerilla warfare waged independently and with initiative within the framework of a unified strategy.⁴⁶

Thus, Mao agrees wholeheartedly with Lenin on the primacy of the political over the military. However, Mao's analysis of the command relationship in a guerilla war differs from Lenin's. Although Mao notes the importance of some centralization, he does not advocate total centralization in a small elite. In fact, Mao delegates tremendous responsibility to his subordinate commanders.

Ché Guevara diverges from both Lenin and Mao on the relationship of military and political. Where Lenin and Mao clearly subordinate the military to the political, Ché combines the two into one. Moreover, he asserts if there is a separation at all, then the militarists should assume the leading role. This concept took physical shape when Ché established his Foco in the mountains of Bolivia. Also, this theory is best articulated in

the writings of Régis Debray.* On the debate over the relationship of a guerilla force to a political party, Debray wrote: "to subordinate the guerilla group strategically and tactically to a party...or to treat it as one more remification of party activity brings in its wake a series of fatal errors."⁴⁷ McLellan noted that Ché felt subordination of the military to the political "symbolised by Mao's supremacy over Cheu Teh...Ho Chi Minh over Giap...Lenin over Trotsky...was inappropriate."⁴⁸ Debray asserted Latin American conditions prohibited the Communist parties to take root as they had in Russia and China and he concluded:

The political and the military are not separate, but form one organic whole consisting of the people's army, whose nucleus is the guerilla army. The vanguard party can exist in the form of the guerilla foco itself. The guerilla force is the party in embryo...the people's army will be the nucleus of the party not vice versa. The guerilla force is the political vanguard in nuce and from its development a real party can arise. That is why the guerilla force must be developed if the political vanguard is to be developed...the principal stress must be laid on the development of guerilla warfare and not on the strengthening of existing parties or the creation of new parties. That is why insurrectional activity...is the number one political activity.⁴⁹

He disagreed with the dispersal of guerilla forces and advocated a strong unity of command in all guerilla operations. Although Ché said: "Do not fix guerilla organization, tailor it to your needs"⁵⁰ he also emphasized, "Any guerilla revolutionary army

* Specifically see Debray's Revolution in the Revolution (London, 1970)

must have a structured, over-all leadership."⁵¹

Ché suggested the Foco consist of a small band of professional revolutionaries centered around a Commander-in-Chief, presumably Ché. So organized, a Foco could begin the popular revolution and guide the people to victory. He wrote: "A hard core of thirty to fifty men is ... enough to initiate armed revolution in any country."⁵² Ché believed these men could spark a revolution simply by forming a mobile column roaming through the peasant countryside.

Marxism's most romantic rebel failed gloriously in his Bolivian adventure. He became the Left's revolutionary martyr-hero. Credit for his downfall is usually given to the Bolivian Rangers, trained and coordinated by the CIA and a team of U.S. Army Special Forces advisors. Although significant, the more important reason for Ché's defeat was his Foco theory and its organizational structure. He took Lenin's suggestion of a small elite vanguard as the center and leader of a revolutionary movement and carried it to an extreme. The Foco was so elite and so small that it received no support from the Bolivian population. Unlike Lenin and Mao, Ché did not take time to lay a political foundation. His impatience drove him immediately to armed insurrection.

He made his major mistake because, again unlike both Mao and Lenin, Ché failed to conduct comprehensive, long term, objective analysis of the revolutionary situation in Bolivia. He refused

to acknowledge a Bolivian revolution cannot begin with an injection of a column of Cuban, Mexican and Peruvian revolutionaries. His vision was blurred: the Bolivian revolution must come from the Bolivians and the exportation of revolution simply cannot, and should not be done.

Carlos Marighella is the only theorist we examine specifically advocating urban guerilla warfare. However, he notes the urban guerilla should act in union with a rural guerilla movement. The IRA from 1969-79 is primarily an urban guerilla army and it is therefore worth examining Marighella's suggested organizational structure in some detail.

First, however, we must dismiss the assertion made by many that there can be no such thing as an urban guerilla. From the time of Clausewitz it has been generally agreed that guerilla warfare can only be carried on where insurgents can range widely over the countryside and use irregular, difficult terrain as a base area. In fact, most revolutionary guerilla theorists agree with Fidel Castro: "The city is a graveyard of revolutionaries and resources."⁵³

This view is not correct. Riots are the urban equivalent of "spontaneous peasant uprisings" and the city structure is nothing more than a cement jungle. The maze of alleys and streets throughout a city provides the urban guerilla with a terrain where all the classic rural guerilla tactics can be employed: hit and run, mobility, etc. With a little stretch of the imagination

FN. Robert Moss, 'Urban Guerilla Warfare', Revolutionary Guerilla Warfare, ed. Sam C. Sarkesian (OH: 1975: Precedent Publishing, 1975) p. 475

urban ghettos are analagous to a rural guerilla base area. The IRA actually set up "No Go" areas in the Catholic ghettos in Belfast and Londonderry. (See Chapter 5). Thus, it is possible to have urban guerillas in the real sense of the word.

Although Mao, Lenin and Ché all mention the need for professional revolutionaries, Marighella actually outlines the necessary individual qualities. His Minimanual for the Urban Guerilla* insists the urban guerilla be brave and possess a decisive nature: be both a good tactician and a good shot. He emphasizes the urban guerilla's clandestine lifestyle, even more so than of the rural guerilla, requires tremendous moral superiority. He says the individual urban guerilla must "possess initiative, mobility and flexibility and cannot let himself become confused or wait for orders."⁵⁴ He also stresses that the urban guerilla must "live among the people and must be careful not to appear strange and separated from ordinary city life."⁵⁵

Marighella is a total militarist and completely neglects the political aspect. Reading the Minimanual, one is surprised to find no mention of any form of political agitation other than actual combat. He never proposes militarists be subordinate to politicians.

On the contrary, Marighella stresses the overwhelming importance of the armed struggle. He is in the tradition of the 19th

* I was unable to obtain a full English translation of the Minimanual and I therefore resorted to an abridged version found in Revolutionary Guerilla Warfare, an anthology of writings on the subject edited by S. C. Sarkesian (Chicago: Precedent Publishers Inc. 1975).

century Russian anarchists, advocating the "Philosophy of the bomb" and "Propaganda of the Deed." Marighella wrote: "The urban guerilla's reason for existence, the basic condition in which he acts and survives, is to shoot."⁵⁶

Structurally, Marighella preached maximum decentralization. He suggested a very diffused organization of loosely connected cells. Each firing group, as the cells were termed, should contain four or five guerillas, and to gain more firepower, two firing groups can be combined into a small unit called the firing team. He emphasizes the two fire groups of the firing team should be separated and sealed off from other firing groups. The leadership of the firing group is the best shot among the four or five members and the leadership of the firing team is simply one or both of the fire group leaders.

The individual units are responsible for planning and executing all their own operations. Furthermore, they should detail and guard their own arms, and study and correct their own tactics. Marighella writes: "Any firing group can decide to assault a bank, to kidnap or to execute an agent of the dictatorship...without the need to consult the general command."⁵⁷ He notes the reasons for decentralization in an urban environment are "no vehicles, no fixed bases...and...supply lines are precarious and insufficient."⁵⁸ Due to city conditions he decides urban guerillas "are not an army but small armed groups intentionally fragmented."⁵⁹ In revolutionary combat, Marighella argues, the initiative must emanate from the firing groups, not from a central command. "No firing group", he

says can remain inactive, waiting for orders from above,"⁶⁰ and he concludes:

Any single urban guerilla who wants to establish a firing group and begin action can do so and thus become part of the organization...it is essential to avoid any rigidity in the organization in order to permit the greatest possible initiative on the part of the firing group. The old type hierarchy doesn't exist in our organization.⁶¹

CONCLUSION

The basic question for the revolutionary is how to overthrow the existing regime. Marxist revolutionary guerilla theorists place great emphasis on the importance of the revolutionary party and its organizational structure. However, there is a substantial difference of opinion on the form for the revolutionary guerilla organization. Lenin and Mao agree that the "politicos" should definitely control the "militarists", but they differ on the degree of centralization. Lenin advocates a strong centralized system led by a small elite; Mao a more dispersed organization, centralizing only strategic decisions. Nevertheless, both men won.

Both Ché and Marighella believe in the primacy of the military over the political. However, Ché was an extreme Leninist when it came to the issue of centralization, and Marighella an extreme Maoist. Ché centralized the entire revolutionary struggle in his Foco, and Marighella completely dispersed it to the Firing Groups. Both of these men lost.

It would seem subordination of the military to the political is the essential organizational factor for revolutionary victory. There can be some flexibility on the issue of centralized control but there must be at least a central strategic command. Failure to place the political over the military with some centralization will surely lead to defeat. This theory, however, is not absolute, as we consider the success of the Irish Republican Army.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 3

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- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 V.I. Lenin "Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks" Collected Works, Vol. 6 (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961) p. 251.
- 7 V. I. Lenin "What is to be done?", The Lenin Anthology, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton Co. 1975), p. 73.
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- 9 Ibid., p. 76.
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- 11 Lenin "What is to be done?" Collected Works, Volume 1, p. 228.
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CHAPTER 4

Organization Case 1:

IRA, 1858-1916

The Defenders of this Realm have worked in secret and in the open. They think they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have forseen everything, think they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools!

Pádraig Pearse

Historically, Irish resistance has been disorganized and isolated rather than coordinated and nationally united. It might well be assumed that if the organization were unified and efficient then success would be their's. It will be shown although a certain degree of organizational unity and efficiency was reached in the IRA during the first two decades of the 20th century, it was by no means perfect. The IRA never conformed to a structure espoused by the one revolutionary theory but rather unconsciously applied a synthesis of them all.

The Irish Republican Army's (IRA) parent organization, the Irish Republican Brotherhood was spawned from the Fenian movement of the 1850's and 1860's. Following the suppression of O'Donovan Rossa and his Phoenix Society,* James Stephens founded the IRB on St. Patrick's Day, 1858.¹ The American wing of the IRB

*More popularly known as the Dynamiters, the Phoenix Society conducted a bombing and assassination campaign in the second half of the 19th century.

became known as the Clan na Gael. Both wings were better known as Fenians, the slang term which grouped together all militant nationalists. This term is misleading, however, as the IRB was really a group within a group.

It was a small oath-bound organization that considered itself the elite vanguard of the national separatists movement. While it is true that all members of the IRB were Fenian nationalists, it is not true that all nationalists belonged to the IRB. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, in the traditions of Wolfe Tone, Emmett, the Young Irelanders, and Fenians of 1867, had the ... "uncompromising intention of overthrowing English government in Ireland by force of arms and establishing an Irish Republic."² The IRB was a hand-picked and well disciplined group of men dedicated to securing a Free Ireland through violence. Although the debate between the militarists and the politicians waged within the Republican movement as a whole, there was no dissension in the IRB. They would exploit any political movement, but the inevitable use of force to free Ireland was unquestionably accepted as the only means to accomplish it. Regarding the centralized-decentralized issue, the IRB was strongly centralized with a rigorous structure.

The rigidity of the IRB's organizational hierarchy changed little from the 1880's until the successful completion of the War of Independence in 1921. The Catholic parishes of Ireland provided a ready made social structure on which the IRB could super-

impose its revolutionary organization.* The main unit of organization was the "circle" which contained between 15 and 20 men.³ This formed the base of the IRB in each locality. The members of the circle elected a leader, "the centre".⁴ According to Tom Bowden in his authoritative work, The Irish Underground and the War of Independence, 1919-1921, each circle elected a sub-centre, a secretary and a treasurer. When an operation was to take place, the circle was divided into two sections, each section having no more than 10 men and led by an elected section leader.

Each of the thirty-two counties in Ireland was divided into two districts with the leaders of the circle in each district joining together to form a board responsible for the operation of their particular district. This board, much like a corporation, elected a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer. Not surprisingly, the chairman was known as the "district centre." The members of the board on the district level would periodically meet with the board members from the adjacent district in their

* This section describing the command structure of the IRB is unfortunately derived from only three sources. Nevertheless, I feel it is an accurate picture of the organization. The sources are: 1) Tim Coogan's: The IRA, 2) Tom Bowden's The Irish Underground and the War for Independence, 3) Jim Curran's The Decline and Fall of the IRB. The first is a book and the latter two are articles.

county. At these assemblies, the members voted to elect a county "centre", sub-centre, etc. Each district centre was responsible to his county centre for the efficiency and discipline of all the IRB units in his district.*

The next step in the organization ladder was the divisional level. There were eleven divisional areas of operations (AO) which, along with Ireland itself, included Southern England, Northern England and Scotland. The county centres gathered within their divisional areas and the process of "underground democracy"⁵ continued, with divisional centres, etc. being elected.

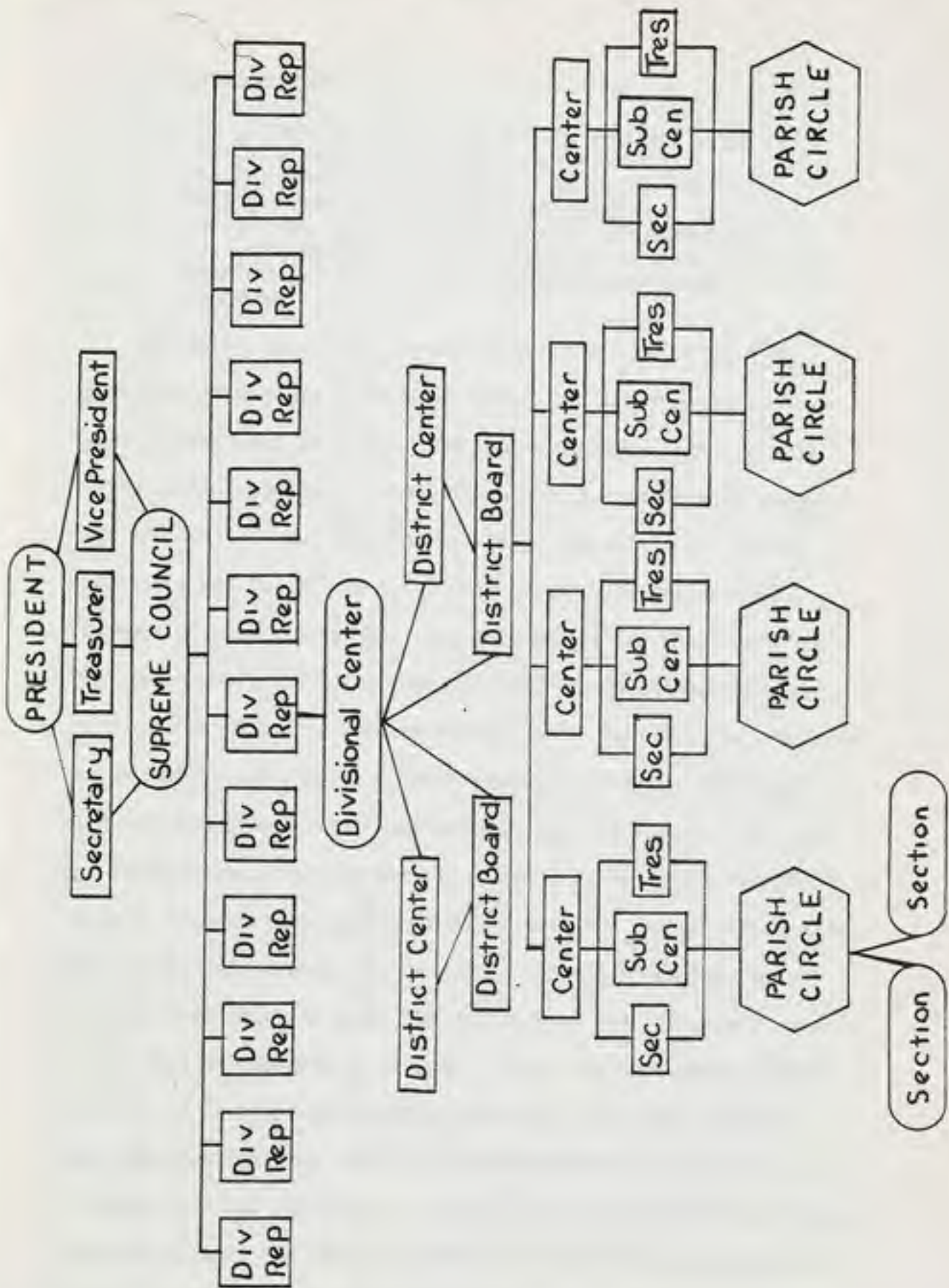
The governing body of this clandestine bureaucracy was the Supreme Council of the IRB. This comprised fifteen members; one representative from each of the divisional areas,** and four others. The four additional members were picked from the organization at large by the eleven divisional area representatives, and their names were known only to the Supreme Council.

The Council regarded itself as the only legitimate government of the Irish Republic with the power to levy taxes and carry out all the other functions of a state.⁶ Three key extracts from the

* According to Bowden, each city was considered a district.

** Usually these divisional representatives were also the divisional centre.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART of the I. R. B.



IRB constitution state that:

1. The Supreme Council of the IRB is declared to be the sole government of the Irish Republic.
2. The President of the IRB shall be in law and in fact the President of the Irish Republic.
3. The Supreme Council being the sole government of the Irish Republic retains the right to make treaties and declare war, and negotiate terms of peace.⁷

The above, of course, is the paper structure of the IRB.

In reality, not every individual parish had a circle and not every district was well organized. Some counties, most notably in the South, especially County Cork, were extremely well organized and active. But for the most part, the extent of the IRB operations was to call an occasional meeting, socialize over a few mugs of ale, discuss politics and romanticize about an Irish Republic. Until the actual uprising and subsequent guerilla war in the early 20's, the Supreme Council never levied taxes, declared war or negotiated a peace. Their finances, in fact, came from dues collected among their own members, who were usually very poor.

Furthermore, their membership up until early in the twentieth century remained very small. Although they did not maintain rolls, their numerical strength in the latter nineteenth century never exceeded more than 150 men. The IRB existed but was so far underground that it appeared to be dead. Their violence ceased after a series of ineffective dynamite bombings in the 1880's because they realized that the idea of an Irish Republic achieved through violence received little or no support from the population at large. Instead, most of the Irish had hopes for Home Rule and supported Parnell and later Redmond's Irish Party.

However, the American branch of the IRB remained active with considerable strength, supported mostly by Civil War veterans of Irish descent. This group was well financed and well armed. In fact, at one point they attempted an unsuccessful invasion of Canada and also aided the coal mining terrorist group, "The Molly Maguires."*

Thomas Clarke, an IRB member and one of the "Fenian Dynamiters" of the 1880's, was released from prison after serving fifteen years. Upon release, he gravitated to New York where he became an important member of the Clan na Gael.⁸ In 1907, Clarke returned to Ireland to revitalize the IRB by taking advantage of the Gaelic cultural renaissance.

To begin, all IRB men were ordered to join the Gaelic League, if they had not already done so, and most of the younger members also participated in the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). From the Gaelic League, the GAA, and other nationalist organizations, Clarke and what remained of the old IRB began recruiting slowly and carefully. Ulick O'Connor, an Irish historian whose great-grandfather had been a member of the Supreme Council in the 1860's, writes of the IRB's recruiting:

* "The Molly Maguires" were a small group of Irish American coal miners in eastern Pennsylvania who used violence, primarily bombings and assassinations, in an attempt to gain better working conditions. Some of the members were also in the Clan na Gael. The Mollys were infiltrated by a Pinkerton detective and eventually all members were identified and arrested.

It did not look for numbers but it did look for quality. There was no general and no careless recruiting. Nobody who kept bad company (i.e. frequented police or soldiers) and nobody of bad character was recruited, and no centre had the power to recruit anybody of his own volition.⁹

The potential recruit never knew he was being investigated. His name was first proposed at a meeting of the circle. If no negative reports about him at that level were forthcoming, his name was then submitted to the district level. Here his name was disseminated to all the centres in the district who subsequently discussed it with their own circles. If no objections to his membership had been raised, the recruit was then approached. If he declined, that ended the matter. However, if the recruit agreed to join, he was administered an oath and admitted to the Brotherhood.

Although actively recruiting, their membership intentionally was kept very small, with the highest estimates somewhere around 500 men. Nevertheless, the IRB's influence on the Irish Revolution should not be underestimated. It was the IRB's Supreme Council which decided upon and engineered the Easter uprising in 1916, and nearly every officer in the IRA of battalion level and above during the guerilla war from 1919-1921 was also a member of the Brotherhood. Charles Duff writes: "The Irish Republican Brotherhood was one of the most effective little political instruments ever forged by the Irish or possibly any other nation."¹⁰

The two biggest reasons for the IRB's pervasive influence was their organizational design and the quality of the dedication and discipline of the individual members.

The organization, although centrally structured with a strict chain of command, was highly compartmentalized for security reasons. Few people in the organization knew each other, no membership lists were kept, and nothing was put into print that could compromise the group. The men in the parish circle would, of course, all know each other and some members would know "Brothers" in an adjacent parish circle. Beyond that, information was limited to the leaders, and then only on a strict need-to-know basis. The centres on the District Board knew only those comrades on the Board and would not know, except by chance, nor would they ask, about the members of another centre's circle. This pattern continued up the chain of command and made systematic penetration of the IRB by the British Intelligence services very difficult. Occasionally, the British would infiltrate at one level but could go no further, making destruction of the whole organization nearly impossible. The effectiveness of the IRB's security measures is proved by the simple fact that never was any member of the IRA's General Headquarters Staff (GHQ), who were all members of the IRB, arrested during the war in the years 1919-21. This is an even more amazing fact when it is recognized that the GHQ operated unarmed in Dublin, the center of British colonialism in Ireland.

The quality of the individual "Brothers" was excellent, their dedication and discipline impressive, almost fanatical. It is no accident that W. B. Yeats, the great Irish poet, and

Eamon DeValera, President of the Irish Republic, were also members of the IRB, and typical of its members who lived aesthetic lives and were unpaid volunteers.

Discipline within the IRB was severe. Treason was always punished by death. Interestingly, a traitor was defined as someone who, under any circumstances, including torture, divulged the name of a fellow Brother. More importantly, treason was also considered any behavior disloyal to the objectives of the IRB-- not the Republic.¹¹ The death penalty, however, could only be carried out with the permission of the Supreme Council. Lesser penalties, such as banishment from Ireland or ejection from the Brotherhood, were employed for such crimes as dissension, disobedience or incompetence.

The IRB is Ireland's best example of Lenin's elite vanguard. Lenin believed the revolutionary organization must maintain a small and secret structure, composed of professional revolutionaries. The IRB was never large: 500 at most. Compartmentalization ensured security: secrecy was the IRB's byword. Recruitment procedures carefully screened potential candidates: IRB men were dedicated, disciplined and of general high quality, ready to give their lives for an Irish Republic.

Also, Lenin preached the paramount importance of a centralized revolutionary organization. All IRB men took orders through a rigid chain of command directly responsible to the Supreme Council. The district units of parish circles are

similar to Lenin's district Party organizations and the Supreme Council is the IRB's version of Lenin's Central Committee.

The IRB, however, was totally dedicated to the use of violence, deviating from Lenin's emphasis of the political over the military. On this crucial point, the IRB is more allied with Guevara and Marighella than with Lenin and Mao. Although there was a political movement of Irish nationalist parties, the IRB never came under their control. The relative importance of each for the success of Irish Independence is, however, open to debate.

The formation of the Nationalist separatist political party Sinn Féin (Ourselves Alone), and its military arm of Volunteers, formed an ideal front for the IRB. In 1900, Arthur Griffith, a respected journalist in both England and Ireland, founded and became chief editor of the newspaper United Irishmen. The newspaper was extremely popular and its quality was superb, having received contributions from such literary figures as William Butler Yeats and James Joyce.

The United Irishmen advocated a strict nationalist-separatist policy achieved through peaceful means. From the contributors and readers of the newspaper, Griffith formed the Sinn Féin party in 1905. A year later, Sinn Féin candidates ran in an election against Redmond's Nationalist Irish Party (Home Rule). They lost their first election, but gained in popularity and won several subsequent elections.

Members of the IRB noticed Griffith's party sought similar goals as the "Brotherhood" and decided to exploit the open legality of Sinn Féin. All "Brothers" were ordered to join and fully support the efforts of Sinn Féin and in 1910 a new weekly journal appeared entitled Irish Freedom. It was secretly supported and organized by the IRB but appeared under the auspices of Sinn Féin. Not surprisingly the Irish Freedom fully supported the Sinn Féin line, but advocated a more militant strategy. The Irish Freedom had a larger circulation but never achieved the quality of the United Irishmen. In a crude comparison: the former was to the latter as the Daily News is New York Times. Both journals have played an important role in agitating the Irish nationalist cause and served as a communication channel for the Sinn Féin.

In 1913 the Irish Protestant Ascendancy, especially in Ulster, the Protestant stronghold, decided to create a paramilitary force to actively resist Home Rule. Under the slogan "Home Rule - Rome Rule", the Ulster Volunteer Force, as they were called, gained a large following. At one point their membership exceeded 500,000 men.¹² Under the sympathetic eyes of British Customs Officials, large quantities of guns and ammunition were smuggled into Ulster and funneled to the UVF through Protestant hunting clubs.

In response to this, members of the IRB Supreme Council persuaded Eóin MacNeill, a professor of Irish History at

Trinity College Dublin, to set up an Irish Volunteer Army.¹³ MacNeill had prior military service in the British Army and had separatists feelings. More importantly, MacNeill wrote an article suggesting an armed force be established to ensure passage of Home Rule. Subsequently, MacNeill became widely known and highly respected among both Griffith's Sinn Féin and Redmond's Nationalist Party. MacNeill was not a member of the IRB and he was unaware that the men who suggested him as Commander in Chief were "Brothers".

Early in November 1913, an advertisement was placed in both the United Irishmen and Irish Freedom. It announced an organizational meeting to be held in a Dublin Concert hall on 25 November for the establishment of an Irish Volunteer Army. The ad said the Volunteers were organized:

... to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland. Their action was to be defensive and progressive, with neither aggression nor domination and no unfriendliness to the U.V.F. (14)

The ad also emphasized that the Volunteers were "... open to all religious denominations and all shades of nationalist opinion."¹⁵

The initial meeting was a tremendous success. The concert hall overflowed and by night's end 8000 men signed on as Volunteers. Membership rose rapidly and reached a peak in the summer of 1914 with 180,000 men.¹⁶

The Volunteers were an odd lot: there were Redmonites,

Sinn Féiners, and Socialists, along with Republicans from the IRB. James Connolly, a militant socialist labor leader, showed up with his small, but well trained Irish Citizen Army. Formed in 1913 for the purpose of defending striking workers, Connolly's Citizen Army, though well equipped, never numbered more than 250 men.¹⁷ A tiny group of free floating militant nationalists, the Hibernian Rifles, also enlisted in the Volunteers. The Rifles were disciplined and armed to the teeth, but they were only 50 strong: all ex-British soldiers. Yet the great bulk of the Volunteers came from the rank and file of Redmond's Home Rule Nationalist party and Griffith's Sinn Féin. Behind all of these groups however was the covert IRB which had manipulated itself to gain a commanding position in the Volunteer leadership.

Although the IRB secretly dominated the highest echelons of the Volunteer chain of command, there was little unity of control over the bulk of troops. Timothy P. Coogan in his book The IRA,* writes: "From the beginning the IRA Volunteers** suffered from conflicting motives behind their creation and

*Extremely well researched, Coogan's book is only rivaled in quality by J. Bowyer Bell's The Secret Army, The IRA 1916-1974. Bell's is the single best book on the IRA.

**They later adopted the term IRA. At their inception they were simply called Volunteers.

different views as to who should control them!¹⁸ Redmond
in fact insisted the:

Volunteers should be controlled, at least in part by
himself, not wishing an armed force to spring up in
Ireland, which if not controlled politically, would
jeopardize the prospect of Home Rule.(19)

Organizationally, the Volunteers were structured to mirror
the British Army, not surprisingly since many of its members
were ex-British soldiers. They were grouped into sections
(10 men), platoons (40-50), Companies (100-150), Battalions
(4 companies), Brigades (4 Battalions), and even an attempt
was made at forming a division. Theoretically they were
commanded by MacNeill, but in reality there was little central
control. Discipline was poor and, unlike the U.V.F., the
Volunteers had few weapons.* Although they could drill openly,
they had to use wooden sticks because the British outlawed
firearms in Ireland when they saw the Volunteers forming.**
For the most part their activities were jovial weekend affairs.
Their families sat around picnicing while the Volunteers
marched with their wooden rifles, totally ignoring any tactical
training.

*Highest figures, and these are high, estimate the Volunteers
had an odd assortment of pistols, rifles, and shotguns;
all together adding to no more than 30,000 weapons.

**This policy was very practical and not really meant to be
prejudice. With attention focused on the coming war in
Europe the last thing the British could afford was an armed
group of rebels at their back door waiting to be exploited
by the Germans. The British had ample evidence of German
agents funneling arms to the separatists.

Despite rising Irish militarism, the first decade of the twentieth century was a time when few nations cared about Home Rule in Ireland, and even less about the on again-off again struggle of Irish rebels for national independence. 1914's summer was ominous: sabers rattled and war clouds drifted over the great powers of Europe. After complicated treaties, an arms race, competing empires, and a Duke's assassination, Europe's delicate balancing act collapsed and its armies were mobilized. In August, 1914, war was declared.

It seemed, at the beginning, that WWI would not fair well for the Irish cause. British P.M. Asquith shelved the Home Rule bills after they had been approved on a second vote by Commons. Redmond agreed with Asquith and declared loyalty to the British crown for the duration of the War. He also promised that his Nationalist (Home Rule) party would send thousands of Irishmen to fight in British uniforms.

In September 1914, Redmond made a recruiting speech for the British Army at Woodenbridge in the South of Ireland. After that speech the Volunteers split: 170,000 Volunteers followed Redmond and enlisted in the British Army. A core of about ten to twelve thousand Sinn Féiners, who refused to serve the Crown, remained with MacNeill. Also remaining were Connolly's Citizen Army and the Hibernian Rifles.

Heeding the advice of Wolf Tone, "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity",²⁰ the IRB Supreme Council made the original decision to rise against the British at a meeting in

Dublin a few days after the war broke out in August.²¹ After the Redmond split, the Supreme Council immediately decided to plan an uprising before any more Volunteers deserted the cause. On 9 September 1914, in the rooms of the Dublin branch of the Gaelic League the formal decision to revolt at some point during the war was accepted.²²

In November, an Advisory Committee was established to assess the strategic possibilities and the political impact of an uprising; a smaller Military Council of three men was set up in the summer of 1915 to begin detailed planning.²³ MacNeill was never a member of the IRB because he did not accept the Brotherhood's conviction about the inevitability and absolute necessity of violence in Ireland's struggle. Therefore, all of this planning was conducted without MacNeill's knowledge. The Military Council consisted of Pádraig Pearse, Joe Plunkett, and Eamon Ceannt (Edward Kent), under the watchful supervision of the hardened old Fenian, Tom Clarke. Seán MacDiarmada, a Professor of English, was added in the fall of 1915. All of these men were members of the IRB's Supreme Council and intensely loyal to Clarke, the IRB President.

It was rumored Connolly's Citizen Army was going to revolt and the Supreme Council feared he might pre-empt IRB plans and spoil the rebellion. In January 1916 the militant labor leader was approached and co-opted onto the Supreme Council as one of the four additional members. Connolly was shown the

plan and supported it wholeheartedly. Finally, in April, just before the Rising, Tom MacDonagh, a County centre, was put on the planning committee.

During the uprising, a Proclamation was read on the steps of the General Post Office in Dublin. The document proclaimed the existence of an Irish Republic and named Tom Clarke the President of the Provisional Government. All of the above men signed the Proclamation which has since become the Irish equivalent of the American Declaration of Independence and all of these men perished in the uprising's bloody aftermath.

The forces that turned out for the Easter Rising were much different than what the IRB had planned. In the beginning of April, an announcement appeared in the newspaper for the Volunteers to hold maneuvers on Easter Weekend. MacNeill discovered this was a cover by the IRB for a proposed rebellion. MacNeill was determined a revolt should not take place. He issued orders through the Sinn Féin newspapers on April 8 that no drill training was to occur over Easter Weekend.²⁴

A week later the IRB told MacNeill they had a document purporting to show the British plans for a swoop on all nationalist centers in Dublin.²⁵ He was also told that an arms shipment from Germany was arriving which would supply all the volunteers with rifles. MacNeill was convinced by Friday, 21 April, that he had no choice but to support the uprising and he issued the appropriate orders.²⁶

However, late on Saturday morning, MacNeill learned the arms shipment aboard the German fishing vessel Aud and the submarine U-19 was intercepted by the British Navy.²⁷ MacNeill thought he was totally deceived by the IRB and believed an uprising without sufficient arms and ammunition was suicidal. Correct on both counts, MacNeill refused approval and ordered cancellation of the maneuver on Easter Sunday.

The Supreme Council decided to act in spite of MacNeill's announcement. They secretly issued orders on Sunday night for all IRB members, as Volunteer officers, to lead their units in revolt on the following day. The Brotherhood's oral communication system did not function rapidly enough to get the word out to members outside the Dublin district, and MacNeill's contradictory orders totally confused most of the other Volunteers. The result of all this activity was another Volunteer split which prevented rising under a unified command.

Estimates vary on how many Volunteers turned out for the uprising on Easter Monday. All figures fall somewhere between 700 and 1500 Volunteers, commanded by IRB officers. In addition 220* soldiers of Connolly's Citizen Army showed up in Dublin, as did the Hibernian Rifles.²⁸ Outside of Dublin there were a few isolated uprisings led by IRB officers who got the word,

*Connolly kept written records of who showed.

but these rebels had little or no ammunition and their actions were insignificant. Thomás MacCurtain, the IRB officer commanding the 2000 Volunteers in County Cork, never received the orders for rebellion. However, if he had received the orders and concentrated all of Cork's ammunition, it would have lasted only twenty minutes.²⁹

Supporting the Volunteer fighting units in Dublin were the non-combatant units of the Irish underground. The Cuman na M'Bar (League of Women), led by Countess Markievicz, acted as nurses, cooks, etc. Also, the Fianna na n'Eineann (Boys of Ireland) were employed as messengers, ammo runners, and general helpers of troops.³⁰ The former mainly consisted of the wives of the IRB men and the latter was primarily their sons who were too young to fight. The exact number of either group is not known.

All tolled the combined force of combatants and their support personnel never exceeded 2000. Facing the insurgents were about 10,000 members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC)* and thousands of British Army troops spread throughout the country. British troops in Dublin occupied four barracks and numbered only 3500 and of these only 500 were combat troops.³¹ After being initially caught by surprise the British had reinforced the Dublin garrison by the end of Monday, and at

*The RIC was almost 100% Protestant.

nightfall they outnumbered the Volunteers 4 to 1. When the week ended, the rebels were outnumbered 20 to 1.³²

Without going into the tactical details of the battle and its political consequences, at this point, suffice it to say that the Volunteers put up a good fight but were defeated within a week. The survivors were all imprisoned and the leaders executed.

CONCLUSION

Griffith's United Irishmen and the IRB's Irish Freedom were similar to Lenin's Iskra. Their functions were the same: to provide the movement with ideological leadership through propaganda, and act as a communications system through advertisements and notices. Thus, these two journals were the Central Organ of the Irish nationalist movement. Griffith's Sinn Féin emerged from people surrounding the United Irishmen.

In theory, some sort of Central Committee, led by Griffith or Redmond, should have directed the activities of both political parties and military organizations. According to Lenin and Mao, the IRB, or at least the Volunteers, should have been subordinate to the control of the political leaders. In fact the leadership of Sinn Féin should have been the elite revolutionary vanguard, not the IRB and its' Supreme Council. Furthermore, the Easter Uprising shows the politicians never gained even the slightest control over the militarists. Without consulting the political leaders, let alone take their orders, the IRB Supreme Council made the decision to rebel. In fact,

even the Volunteer Chief of Staff, MacNeill, could not control the clandestine efforts of the IRB.

The Volunteers were neither a homogeneous group of professional revolutionaries, nor a rigid, centrally controlled organization. The majority of Volunteers lacked both discipline and weapons; they were in effect weekend warriors, understanding very little on the art of war. Although the IRB dominated the Volunteer leadership they were loosely joined at the base level. The advent of WWI forced a major split when the great bulk of Volunteers followed Redmond in support of Britain's war effort.

Moreover, even those remaining were not centrally controlled. On the Eve of the Uprising, MacNeill tried to assert command but failed. Confusion reigned as orders and counter-orders were issued. Command and control were so disrupted that units outside Dublin did not even get the orders to revolt.

Thus the Irish rebels of Easter 1916 deviated from the theoretical principles of revolutionary organization. Excepting the IRB, they were not professional--deviating from all four theorists. The military was never subordinated to the political, disagreeing with Lenin and Mao, but in accord with Guevara and Marighella. Finally, the rebels unconsciously followed a Leninist line when the IRB tried to centralize control, but the attempt failed.

Marxist theorists have different organizational views, but all would agree the Easter Uprising failed because it

lacked some sort of coherent organization. They are wrong. Had the militants been subordinate to the political in a centralized structure, the Irish rebellion still would have failed. The reason: the rebels simply did not have the support of the Irish people. The majority of Irish citizens were content with the prospect of helping England against Germany for the promise of post-war Home Rule.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 4

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- 10 Charles Duff, Six Days to Shake an Empire (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1966), p.12.
- 11 Coogan, p.13.
- 12 O'Connor, p.71.
- 13 Ibid., p.43.
- 14 Duff, p.74.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 J. Bowyer Bell, The Secret Army: The IRA 1916-1974 (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1970; revised, MIT paperback edition, 1974) p.4.

- 17 Coogan, p.17.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Duff, p.77.
- 21 Bell, p.4.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid., p.6.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 O'Connor, p.73.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Duff, p.97.
- 29 Charles Townshend, "The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerilla Warfare, 1916-1921", English Historical Review (April 1979) p.321. quoting Kathleen Keyes McDonnell, There is a Bridge At Bandon (Cork: n.p. 1972) p.103.
- 30 Duff, p.80.
- 31 Ibid., p.97.
- 32 Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

Organization: Case 2

IRA, 1916-21

Arrayed against these military and civilian garrisons were three quarters of the people of Cork. This was a war between the British Army and the Irish people.

Tom Barry

The British, during and immediately after the Easter Uprising, destroyed the leadership structure of the Volunteers and the IRB. Although the countryside units still existed and popular support swelled there was no coherent organization to direct and channel the revolution. While in prison, however, the remaining members of the IRB appointed a new Supreme Council and reorganized the original structure. Upon release from prison the new leadership was welcomed as national heroes and took command of the disorganized but enthusiastic Volunteers.

From this point on, there has arisen a considerable myth about the organizational structure of the Republican movement after the 1916 Uprising through the truce in 1921. It is widely believed the Volunteers were merely the military branch of the Sinn Féin, and were controlled by and subordinate to its political leaders. Also, it is believed the Republican movement's leadership carefully orchestrated the War for Independence with a highly centralized command structure based in Dublin. Tom Bowden

illustrated this view when he wrote the Volunteers were "united, cohesive, and ready for action by the middle of 1919."¹ Moreover, these perceptions are widely held because the Irish revolutionary struggle was victorious; and it is commonly believed victory can only be achieved with a centralized military command subordinate to a national political movement.

Strong efforts were made to achieve these ends, but they were never entirely successful. Upon detailed examination it is evident the Irish politicians never gained substantial control, and the Volunteers were a diffused irregular organization. In fairness, it must be said great strides were made in both these areas when the truce was signed in 1921. Nevertheless, the divisions that remained were the fundamental reasons for the Irish Civil War from 1921-23.

The failure of the uprising, and execution or internment of the Volunteer leadership, temporarily destroyed any chance for a coherent Irish Underground.² J. Bowyer Bell writes that although the top echelon of the military command structure had been destroyed in the rising, there were "many county areas still organized, still with a minimal supply of arms but without any contact with a centre."³ Also a new spirit had been revived in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. "Everywhere", writes Edgar Holt, "there were signs of the resurgent Spirit of Sinn Féin."⁴

Cathal Burgha was released from prison in fall of 1916 because he had received serious wounds in the Uprising which

were not properly healing in captivity.⁵ A month later Michael Collins, elected President of the IRB Supreme Council while in prison, was also released. Although Brugha was a member of the IRB, he was more prominent in the Volunteers and was named the Volunteer Chief of Staff. Both men, Collins working through his IRB contacts and Brugha through the Volunteers began to reconstitute the Irish underground.

In December, 1916 about fifty men met at Fleming's Hotel in Dublin. Attending were two representatives from each of the county units and two from each of the major cities.⁶ Brugha was confirmed as the Chief of Staff of the Volunteers and Collins was named Director of Organization; other members of the new Executive were also elected. Bowden writes:

Within a year the underground forces, shattered in the aftermath of 1916, had been allowed to regroup as dedicated and committed men were released from prison and planned for the next time.⁷

The national Executive functioned in name down to 1920 but "real power over the army passed by March 1918 to the IRAGHN and then to the Ministry of Defense when Dáil Éireann, the republican government, was proclaimed in January 1919.⁸ Nevertheless, Collins and Mulcahy remained in command of the army throughout the war.

While the military arm of the movement was being reorganized, the political arm was gaining strength after an initial disorganization in the immediate post-uprising period. Griffith, never a physical force man, reorganized the Sinn Féin and kept its policy

of constitutional resistance. Nevertheless, the IRB had confidence in Griffith because "they recognized him as a political philosopher of the separatist tradition."⁹

Griffith was a very keen observer. He did not approve of an IRB elite within the Volunteers and he wanted to gain political control over the military. He recognized there was a serious lack of unity between the two groups but he realized he was not the man to bring the two together. He was on the lookout, in 1917-18, for a man who could: Griffith thought, with good reason, Eamon de Valera was the man.

De Valera was the last surviving Commandant of the 1916 Uprising. He was scheduled to be executed along with the rest of the leaders, but the U.S. State Department intervened when it was found de Valera was born in the U.S., which made him an American citizen. His execution sentence was commuted to a prison term.

De Valera had been a member of the IRB and he also showed a remarkable flair as a politician: he was a moving speaker and an awe traveled with him due to his leading role in the Uprising. DeValera possessed all the qualities for the classic soldier politician, and thus was believed to be the man to unite the politicians and the militarists.

Griffith also decided to run Count Plunkett, the father of the executed Uprising leader, in a local by-election in 1917 to test the electoral water. Plunkett, as did all the Sinn Féin candidates, ran on a strict abstentionist platform which meant

if elected to Parliament the candidate would not serve his term as a sign of protest. Plunkett won over the Redmonite Home Rule candidate by 3,022 votes to 1,708.¹⁰ Even with this victory, J. Bowyer Bell comments that Sinn Féin was still "...more an idea than an organization."¹¹

On October 25, 1917, 2,000 delegates met at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (Convention) in Dublin.¹² DeValera was elected President of Sinn Féin and decided to run candidates in three by-elections: South Armagh, Waterford and E. Tyrone.¹³ Sinn Féin lost all these and, although a growing political power, did not yet dominate Irish politics.

On May 11, 1918, Britain's Lord French landed in Ireland to begin instituting conscription, a British policy passed under the pressures from WWI. One week later he decided to arrest the leaders of Sinn Féin who had openly opposed the Bill. De Valera, Griffith, Plunkett, Brugha and seventy other Sinn Féin political leaders were rounded up and imprisoned. Interestingly, Michael Collins and the other IRB men evaded capture because they had prior knowledge of the raids.

In December 1918, the British General elections were held. Those members of Sinn Féin not arrested publicly ran on the abstentionist platform and those interned were entered on various ballots as write-in candidates. National heroes, the Sinn Féin destroyed Redmond's Home Rule party, and the delegates not in jail met in Dublin

on January 21, 1919 to set up the *Dáil*, an alternative Irish Parliament which was naturally declared illegal by the British.¹⁴ The delegates voted for a Constitution, Declaration of Independence and a program of Social and Democratic rights.¹⁵ DeValera, although still in prison was elected President of the Republic and Cathal Brugha was named Minister of Defence; Griffith, Minister of Home Affairs; Collins, Minister of Finance. Collins, however, became acting President of the Republic in DeValera's absence along with his other responsibilities as Director of Organization of the Volunteers and President of the IRB.

In April, 1918 Collins planned and personally supervised DeValera's escape from a British prison in Wales. Shortly thereafter, because of the public protest, Brugha and several of the members of Sinn Féin were also released. However, when DeValera and Brugha resumed their positions of leadership in the *Dáil*, they attempted to assert full political control over the Volunteers and the IRB. Brugha suggested that the Volunteers take an oath of Allegiance to the *Dáil*.¹⁶ Collins opposed the move vigorously and argued the Volunteers should complement, but remain independent, from the politicians. Brugha was ousted from the IRB, and although he retained his Chief of Staff position, he received little respect or obedience from the Brotherhood. Collins made Mulcahy, a talented and solid IRB man, his personal Minister of Defense. Charles Townsend writes:

The continued survival of the IRB as a sort of state within the state represented by the *Dáil* was at the

root of the dangerous tension within the IRB command. This fact is evidenced best when Cathal Brugha never managed to assert his authority over his nominal military subordinates, Collins and Mulcahy. (17)

Similarly, deValera lost IRB approval. Although an IRB member, deValera "saw no further use for the IRB"¹⁸ when it became apparent the political movement was gaining momentum. His feelings of course did not sit well with Collins "who felt that such an organization would have a vital role to play in the days ahead."¹⁹ Townshend writes;

By the end of 1918 as one famous Tipperary rebel put it, 'the Volunteers were in great danger of becoming merely a political adjunct to the Sinn Féin'. From the point of view of the IRB, the National Movement had got out of hand, and was passing into the control of non-IRB men like Griffith, deValera, and Brugha. (20)

Collins, however, prevailed: "The Volunteers and the Sinn Féin...pursued separate though complimentary courses of action."²¹ Townshend agrees when he writes: "The IRB tended to resist...all central control especially political control."²² Even deValera, as President of the Republic, admitted this situation existed. He said on April 10, 1919: "Minister of Defense (Brugha) is of course in close association with the Volunteer military forces which are the foundation of the National Army."²³ Note that deValera said "close association" and not "control", indicating even four months after Sinn Féin became a nationally elected political power, the military was not subordinate to the political. In fact, the physical force men acted independently and compelled:

...the moderates to move towards their extreme positions, and so regaining their grip upon the

independence movement as a whole.²⁴

Furthermore, it was not until the spring of 1921 when deValera announced the Dáil accepted public responsibility for IRA actions. His statement came after a joint meeting between the Volunteer and Sinn Féin leaderships. The timing of his statement, after two years of war and a corporate meeting, unquestionably confirms the Republican military never came under political control. Townshend agrees:

DeValera's announcement...can be seen as something of an admission of defeat by the "politicians" who had not achieved any real control over the...military forces.²⁵

Lenin and Mao would find the success of Ireland's guerilla revolutionary struggle between 1916 and 1921 difficult to comprehend. They would be forced to conclude an aberration exists in their theory of absolute political control of the military, as a prerequisite for victory. Despite a prevalent myth asserting the IRA was controlled by the Sinn Féin, was a mere arm of that body, there exists strong evidence to the contrary.

The leadership of both the political and military movements was destroyed in the aftermath of 1916. However, the nationalist Republican party was revitalized under the careful guidance of Griffith, and upon release from prison the military leaders, Collins and Brugha, reorganized the Volunteers. In accord with Lenin and Mao, Griffith attempted to unite the military and political and subordinate the former to the latter. He proposed deValera as the unifying force and the native American was elected President of the Irish Republic at the first Dáil Eireann.

Mao forecast a split when military and political comrades oppose each other and do not admit violence is only one means to a political end. In deValera's absence, Collins, the IRB President, assumed a dominating role when he personally held four top level posts in the Republican hierarchy. Thus, Lenin's elite vanguard was still active. When Brugha and deValera came out of prison, they tried to gain political control of the Volunteers. However, Collins and his "Defense Minister" Mulcahy did not release their grip. To Mao's surprise a full split did not develop. Although the Volunteers, for the duration of the war, remained separate from Sinn Fein, their actions were complementary. A split did occur, however, in 1921 over the issue of ballot or bullet and eventually Ireland became engulfed in Civil War. Although Lenin believed and Mao warned a failure to subordinate the military to the political would surely lead to defeat, the IRA guerilla revolutionary struggle from 1917 to 1921 was victorious.

The second myth surrounding the Irish Republican movements' independence struggle is that the Volunteers were centrally controlled and coordinated from IRAGHQ in Dublin. Although a Dublin based General Headquarters existed, its influence over the Countryside units was limited. An examination of the IRA's overall structure and a detailed study of one IRA Brigade reveals IRA command, control and military initiative were dispersed to the local leaders as Mao suggested it should.

When the 2,000 Sinn Fein delegates met at the Ocotber, 1917, Ard Fheis, 250 slipped away to the grounds of the Gaelic Athletic Association and set up a new command staff for the Volunteers. At this time, deValera and Brugha were not in conflict with the IRB and both men were confirmed in their positions, deValera as President of Sinn Féin and Brugha as Chief of Staff of Volunteers.²⁶ As the Sinn Féin delegates prepared for elections, the 'Brotherhood' returned to the countryside. Preparing for the next round of combat, the Brotherhood organized a command structure and centered it in Dublin. Bowden writes:

...contact between Dublin centre and localities was restored as a degree of organizational unity within and between the two underground structures was re-established so that when the internees were all finally released they could rejoin a still intact underground which reflected the fusion between the old structure and the new.... (27)

The organization which these returning volunteers could join was structured as before, on the British Army model. There were certain units (Flying Columns) which did not conform to the British Army model and we shall examine these very important units later. Nevertheless, the great bulk of Volunteers were grouped in Brigades of four battalions each. Eight companies made a battalion; four sections a company; 10-16 men in two equal squads made a section. Including all officers each local company should have consisted of about 90 men and each battalion a nominal strength of approximately 4,000 men.²⁸

Operational areas were planned so each Brigade was responsible for recruiting and fighting in only one county. Sometimes, as

in County Cork, there would be two or three Brigades in one county. Thus the "forces were given a territorial basis, which meant a great deal depended on local leadership."³⁰

In the last year of the war there was an attempt made by GHQ Dublin to group Brigades into divisions for greater centralized control, but the attempt was largely unsuccessful. Eleven paper divisions existed by the summer of 1921. They were superimposed on the old IRB divisional areas.* A GHQ memorandum said the Divisions were needed "for harmonizing the action and direction of operative activity."³¹ However, one critic wrote:

the divisions were a contentious matter from the start and...they were not much of an asset. They were just too big, too ambitious for their resources.³²

Another author concluded the divisions remained "more or less fictional."³³ Nevertheless, the Volunteers did have numerous smaller units. By March, 1921, GHQ was dealing with "100 units and 32 organizers as compared with 45 units and 4 organizers the previous summer."³⁴ J. Bowyer Bell writes the "IRA had men in practically every parish and township in Ireland outside the Protestant North East."³⁵

Resulting from this increase in units, the GHQ expanded its bureaucracy. Deviating from traditional IRB methods of not keeping records for security reasons, the GHQ decided the increase in numbers and the need for centralizing the control of all these units required paperwork. "Local reports" writes Townshend, "were required with increasing frequency and in multiple copies."³⁶ There

*There were three IRA southern divisions; one western; one midland; one eastern and five northern divisions.

was the strong conviction that "...regular administration at the top would create regularity below, or if not, at least make the IRA feel more like a proper army." 37

Although the trend toward centralizing control and regularity was very evident by the time the truce was signed it had never been effectively enacted. Townshend writes: "right up until the truce most IRA units were weakly organized, marginally effective, and....the overall structure of the army was marked by wild inconsistencies in strength, standards and control." 38

Volunteer assets prove the IRA was anything but a centralized coordinated army. The individual units, usually at Brigade level, financed themselves, obtained their own weapons, established their own training camps and locally recruited their own men. It is no surprise huge gaps existed between units and national standardization was never reached.

Financially the Brigades were supposed to be self sufficient.³⁹ GHQ could not be expected to finance the Brigades simply because GHQ had little or no financial resources of its own. The money GHQ did have went largely to propaganda and arms procurement abroad. GHQ actually "...expected payment for supplies such as field equipment and field manuals." 40 According to Townshend, "Nothing is more indicative of the spontaneity of local units than the fact that they were substantially financed by membership subscriptions." 41

For greater illustration it is helpful to quote at length from a report submitted to Mulcahy, Director of Training at the time, from the Officer in Charge (OC) of the 3rd Ulster Division IRA.

Seventy five percent of the divisions' personnel were unemployed and the OC writes:

As you (Mulcahy) can understand it was always with great difficulty that we were able to raise sufficient funds to keep the work of the Army going in this area. I intend after the Truce to strike a levy through the Division but I candidly believe that its enforcement will be difficult.

There are numerous cases in the Belfast Brigade of officers and men who would require financial assistance under ordinary circumstances or they would have to emigrate for work elsewhere. I have given this assistance sparingly, as best I could in some cases, but much more remains to be done. (42)

Arms and ammunition throughout the IRA varied greatly. Some units would have a lot of weapons while others hardly any. Also there was no uniformity of weapons but rather unit arsenals were a hodge podge collection of hunting rifles, shotguns, pistols, and some spare military rifles. Anything more powerful than small arms was virtually nonexistent. The problem of arms and ammunition was to plague the IRA throughout the war, and much of their strategy and tactics were governed by this fact.

Typical of most rural guerilla wars, the majority of IRA weapons came from ambushed British Army or Police patrols. The attackers would simply take the equipment off the dead and distribute it among the unit. Sometimes IRA arms came from small raids on British or Police outposts but these attacks usually failed because the IRA did not possess the tactical firepower to assault fortified positions.* Occasionally arms were bought abroad. If

*See Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland. He expresses dismay at the consistent failure of IRA manufactured mines and hand grenades.

successfully smuggled into Ireland, generally not the case, they were dispersed unequally among the Brigades. GHQ rewarded active Brigades with the most weapons as an incentive to other units to join the fight.

The amount of arms and ammunition, for the majority of units, determined levels of combat activity. Townshend writes, "in many units the securing of weapons was the be-all and the end-all of revolutionary activity."⁴³ Therefore, this policy tended to create a vicious circle, only increasing the irregularity between units. In addition to a variety of weapons strengths between Brigades, there also was a wild weapons inconsistency within the local units themselves. One company might have four rifles and

TABLE
IRA arms holdings in County Clare

	Quantity of weapons	Quantity of ammunition
<i>West Clare Brigade</i>		
Rifles: Short-Magazine Lee-Enfield .303 in	8	275
'Howth' Mauser (single shot) .9 mm	2	9
Mauser (magazine) .765 mm	2	140
miniature .22 in	2	100
Shot guns: double-barrelled	24	1500
single-barrelled	36	
Revolvers: .45 calibre	48	279
Automatics: ditto (Colt)	3	48
Parabellums (short)	2	11
<i>Mid Clare Brigade</i>		
Rifles: Short-Magazine Lee-Enfield .303 in	48	2000
Carbines: Martini-Henry .303 in	48	
Rifles: miniature .22 in	3	300
Shot guns: double-barrelled	80	100
single-barrelled	100	
Revolvers: .45 calibre	50	200
Grenades	43	—

Source: Reports from GHQ inspecting officers to Chief of Staff, 2 October 1921. Mulcahy papers A, II, 26.

Source. Charles Townshend, "Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerilla Warfare, 1916-1921." English Historical Review, 94, April 1979.

another thirty. Furthermore, the weapons would usually vary greatly in types and calibers.

Along with the acquisition of arms and ammunition, a major struggle for the IRA units was training. Without foreign sanctuaries it was a difficult problem in an island country where the terrain is not the most favorable for hiding guerilla training base. Without a large safe training base, the IRA was forced to localize all training, and each unit was charged with the responsibility of training itself. The GHQ did suggest the subject and provided (for a minimal cost) old British Army training manuals. Bowden comments that "Subjects for training were uniform throughout the army."⁴⁴ Drill training occupied much of the time, but other subjects were also taught: musketry, first aid, and even small unit tactics. Each section was supposed to have two men specially trained in engineering, scouting, dispatch riding, signalling, transport and supply, first aid and musketry.⁴⁵ Most of the training was conducted by de-mobilized WWI veterans. Sometimes, however, the training instructor was no more than a fellow Volunteer reading from a manual.

Although these subjects were supposed to be taught throughout the army, the quality of the training varied greatly. For example, if a unit had more weapons and especially ammunition, training in musketry would be greater than those units that did not. Similarly, if a unit had more WWI vets within its ranks then the chances were greater that it would

be better trained overall. It is important to note that these subjects are not easily mastered. It took many days, even weeks, of practice to become competent in any one of these skills. They cannot be learned from reading a book; they require physical practice under simulated conditions if the soldier is expected to be proficient. Most armies allot an average of six weeks for training in the most rudimentary military subjects and several more months are generally needed for advanced training in a specialty.

However, due to the conditions of their struggle, the IRA did not have the time for adequate training. Mobility is a key to the survival of guerillas, and constant British patrols prohibited permanent training bases. On the average training consisted of drill and classroom instruction. Rifle practice was limited because a lack of ammo and the noise from firing weapons would draw the attention of the British patrols. Therefore, most of the experience gained by the rebels was learned "on the job".

Although structured along British Army lines with specific numbers of personnel assigned to each unit, the IRA was rarely in accordance with the books. Units would vary greatly in strength. Bowden comments,

There was little or no uniformity of unit numbers. For example, companies could vary between 25 and 100, while a Battalion might be composed of three or ten companies, depending upon local conditions. (46)

Most often the "local condition" that determined the size

of a rebel unit was simply the number of weapons it possessed. In the Northeast, however, the limiting factor tended to be population. The Northeast was strictly Protestant, and strongly Unionist. Thus the large units witnessed in the Southern rural areas did not occur in the Northeast. There, the Republican units were clustered in the urban centers and designed as defensive forces for the protection of the Catholic ghettos.

It is clear the IRA was very irregular regarding finances, weapons, training, and numbers. The IRA remained organized around local units responding to the dictation of local conditions. Mao recognized these factors inhibited centralization of command of guerilla warfare and even warned: "A highly centralized command is in direct contradiction to... guerilla warfare and must not and cannot be applied to it."⁴⁷ The IRA did not have a Mao. GHQ, from its offices in Dublin, tried to centralize command and standardize units, but despite some success by 1921, the effort failed.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that because the IRA's GHQ in Dublin did not assert central control over the combat units, its functions were meaningless. Quite the contrary, GHQ played two very important roles in the organization. First, it was extremely efficient in gathering and disseminating accurate intelligence. Second, GHQ produced a large volume of very influential propaganda.

The Intelligence branch of the IRA was Michael Collins' own little empire and through his efforts he made Intelligence GHQ's strongest asset.* Mick, as Collins was more popularly known, organized the Intelligence branch not on the British Army model but on the existing structure of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Collin's network functioned on two distinct levels: military and civilian. On the military side Collins appointed a IRB man as Intelligence officer in every Battalion and most companies. These men were responsible directly to Collins, not the local commander, and he retained their total loyalty. It was required that these men submit a weekly summary report of all intelligence gathered which would then be personally interpreted by Collins.

Mick referred to his civilian network as the Q-Division and he had spies, usually relatives of his IRB men, in most communities throughout Ireland. Furthermore, Collins had men and women in post offices, railway stations, ferries, and not surprisingly in almost every prison both in Ireland and England. Beyond the shores of the United Kingdom, Collins men included dock workers in all parts of Europe and the USA. But the most important of Collins' agents was a group that operated within Scotland Yard's Special Branch, the British Intelligence Service. Operating from the heart of the British administration, these spies, number and identity still unknown, had access to restricted information codes etc., which proved very valuable for the security of IRA leaders. At one point Collins

*For a more detailed description of Mick Collins and his Intelligence service see: Eoin Neeson, The Life and Death of ...

was supplied with a list of fourteen top secret British Intelligence officers, imported from the British Army in Egypt, who were supposed to infiltrate the IRA and assassinate the GHQ staff. All fourteen were systematically executed on what has become known as "Bloody Sunday". Their executions struck fear into the British forces and ended any further Special Branch infiltration operations. Tom Barry, usually critical of GHQ, noted: "The one GHQ department which was of real value to the Brigades was that of Intelligence, for Collins passed on punctually and regularly every scrap of information his superb department collected to the unit concerned."⁴⁸

Propaganda, a weapon skillfully wielded by GHQ, was very valuable in the cause of Irish independence. "Since GHQ could never hope for absolute control it had to content itself with exhortation."⁴⁹ The Ant-Oglach (The Volunteer) became GHQ mouthpiece to the Brigades. The journal mixed practical advice, such as tactics and bomb making instructions, with "general spirit raising optimism."⁵⁰ The Ant-Oglach also reported the combat actions of various units: urging the inactive ones to fight and telling the active units they were not fighting alone. The issue was distributed every week to the Brigades.

Perhaps a more important GHQ propaganda organ was the Irish Bulletin, a newspaper established in 1918 and distributed daily, free of charge, to the foreign and domestic press (Michael Collins, (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968).

gathered in Dublin. It was also shipped to all the major European capitals and the USA. By April 27, 1921, for example, £4000 a year was being spent for "general routine work" ⁵¹ in just the London office. The Bulletin led the journalists to believe the British were facing a unified, well trained and armed guerilla army which was unbeatable. This view, obviously inaccurate, was reported and believed throughout Europe and the U.S. The propaganda had a special effect in England which had just emerged from a brutal war and did not want another. Townsend writes the GHQ, through the Ant-Oglach and the Bulletin, "was able to foster a sense of identity and purpose... and projected an image which had real political impact." ⁵²

Collins felt the same way about revolutionary security as did Lenin. He was fully aware the most dangerous enemy to the revolutionary was the regime's secret police and their spy network. The Irish leader set up an intelligence department which collected information from all over Ireland, Europe and the U.S. When they submitted their weekly reports to Collins in Dublin they were in effect following Lenin's advice of "the greatest possible decentralization with regard to keeping centre informed about the movement." ⁵³

Similarly the Irish rebels unknowingly followed Lenin's advice when they established Ant-Oglach and the Irish Bulletin as their "Central Organs." Both were effective in convincing the British they were facing a strong centrally controlled guerilla. However, their stories were propaganda and were

hardly accurate. Although Collins' intelligence network was highly efficient and the Republican journals effective, neither had the desired effect of unifying and standardizing rebel units. A close examination of the IRA units in County Cork proves beyond any doubt that the IRA was not centrally controlled or standardized.

The West Cork Brigade

Southern Ireland's County Cork was a Republican stronghold throughout the war, and the West Cork Brigade was the most famous and most efficient IRA unit. Its fame primarily stems from the actions of the Brigade Flying Column, commanded by Tom Barry, a twenty-seven year old WWI veteran. Barry, ex-British Army Sergeant, was an extremely competent and natural leader; his unit was very active against the British. In Irish Republican folklore, the exploits of Tom Barry's Flying Column and the West Cork Brigade have a touch of romance, even a bit of Robin Hood. Stories were (and are) told how the tough but chivalrous "Boys" helped the poor peasants kick out the bullying British. Barry has reached the level of living legend. Liam Deasy wrote a recent book on the West Cork Brigade and he commented: "as a guerilla fighter Barry's name became a household word throughout the country."⁵⁴ However, even in one of the IRA's best units, the problem of decentralization, dispersion and irregularity are amply illustrated.*

*See next page.

At the beginning of 1919 there was only one Brigade in County Cork. However, it had "become obvious... the Brigade area was geographically too extensive and difficult, and the Volunteers units too numerous to be effectively administered by one Brigade staff."⁵⁵ Without orders from GHQ in Dublin, Tomas McCurtain, Corks Officer in Charge (O.C.), took the initiative to divide the Brigade into three. The West Cork Brigade, also known as Cork No. 3, consisted of seven Battalions each organized around the indigenous companies of West Cork's major towns.** The Brigade area covered from Innishannon in the East to the Beara Peninsula in the West. Adjacent to the West Cork Brigade area was the AO's of Cork No. 1 and Cork No. 2 Brigades; the former was responsible for MidCork and Cork City, and the latter for North and Northeast Cork.

The numerical strength between West Cork's battalions and between companies within the same battalion was typical of the irregularity of the IRA as a whole. In the beginning of the struggle, strength between the Battalions varied by as much as two hundred men. When the war ended in 1921 the irregularities were even greater; the Brandon Battalion had

**The seven Battalions were respectively: 1st BN, Bandon; 2nd BN, Clonakilty; 3rd BN, Dunmanway; 4th BN, Skibbereen; 5th BN, Bantry; 6th BN, Castletownmere; 7th BN, Schull.

(Continued from previous page:)

*Liam Deasy was also one of Cork No. 3's guerilla leaders. His book combined with Barry's memoir, Guerilla Days in Ireland, provide the reader with an objective account of the guerilla war in Southern Ireland. Although pro-Republican these sources are largely free of the romance and myth surrounding the IRA - 1916-1921.

almost twice the men of the Schull Battalion. Although over two thousand men were on the rolls of the Brigade by 1 July 1919, only half of these were considered active.⁵⁶ A British Army Battalion's strength in 1919 was approximately 950 officers and men; authorized strength of a British Brigade was slightly more than 4000 officers and men including support personnel.⁵⁷ The West Cork Brigade with only one-thousand active personnel is better described as a single Battalion.

The same is true of the lower echelons. The Bandon Battalion had 13 companies in 1921: more than the combined number of companies of both the Bantry and Castletownmere Battalions.⁵⁸ Writes Tom Barry: "One Company might have a roll of fifty members, while another might include over one hundred."⁵⁶ Therefore, the efforts of GHQ Dublin to standardize the strengths of IRA units was unsuccessful in one the most active and efficient guerilla units. Moreover, the efforts of GHQ were recognized as unrealistic by the local commanders; Barry did not even try to implement the plan. He wrote in his memoirs:

The organisation was elastic, based on the factors of population and terrain, and no attempt was even made, on our part, to form units on an establishment basis as in regular armies. (60)

Military equipment for the rebels was a major problem and the central command in Dublin provided little help.*

*In all fairness GHQ Dublin arranged for several arms shipments but only a few made it due to the vigilance of the British Navy.

NUMERICAL STRENGTH AND STAFF
OF THE THIRD CORK BRIGADE

Numerical Strength of the Companies of the Third Cork Brigade
(July 1919)

First (Bandon) Battalion		Fourth (Skibbereen) Battalion	
Ballinadee	35	Skibbereen	30
Kilbrittain	45	Castlehaven	20
Timoleague	12	Myross	16
Barryroe	55	Leap	40
Clogagh	20	Bredagh	20
Bandon	12	Lisheen	25
Innishannon	22		
Crosspound	30		151
Kilpatrick	16	Fifth (Bantry) Battalion	
Mount Pleasant (Farnivane)	20	Bantry	50
Newcestown	35	Caheragh	20
	<hr/>	Drumsullivan	15
	302	Kealkil	15
Second (Clonakilty) Battalion		Coomhola	20
Clonakilty	25	Glengarriff	20
Ardfield	22		<hr/>
Bealad	15		140
Kilmeen	20	Sixth (Beara) Battalion	
Lyre	18	Castletownbere	24
Ahiohill	25	Bere Island	40
	<hr/>	Rossmacowen	30
	125	Adrigole	16
Third (Dunmanway) Battalion		Inches	40
Dunmanway	25	Ardgroom	45
Ballinacarriga	30	Ballycrovane	36
Shanavagh	30	Urhan	30
Ballineen	22		<hr/>
Kenneigh	30		261
Behagh	30		
Aultagh	40		
Togher	36		
	<hr/>		
	243		

Numerical Strength of the Battalions of the Third Cork Brigade
(11 July 1921)

Bandon	1023
Clonakilty	620
Dunmanway	742
Skibbereen	728
Bantry	950
Beara	644
Schull	563

Source: Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, Appendix A.

Although there were 10,000 enrolled volunteers in all of County Cork, divided into 23 Battalion areas, the number of riflemen throughout the war never exceeded 310. Tom Barry says this situation prevailed "... for the very excellent reason that this was the total of rifles held by the combined three Crok Brigades."⁶¹ In addition to the 310 rifles there were, in all of County Cork just before the truce, only five machine guns and approximately 550 pistols (automatics and revolvers). The average amount of ammunition did not exceed fifty rounds per rifle, ten rounds per pistol and a few drums for each machine gun.⁶² Moreover, artillery, explosives, engineering supplies, and signalling equipment, even at the end of the war were "... almost non-existent"⁶³ according to Barry. The explosives they did have went into constructing mines, but they rarely worked due to the IRA's lack of technical expertise in bomb making. The entire Brigade had no transport (except foot), no signalling equipment, neither engineering equipment nor qualified engineers, very little medical supplies and only one medical student who acted as the Brigade's doctor. Furthermore, the Brigade had no money, all being unpaid and mostly unemployed volunteers. They had no quarters except the outdoors and the barns of sympathetic civilians. Finally, all of the rifles, machine guns, explosives, most of the ammo and many of the pistols were concentrated in the County's three Flying Columns, making these units the only armed rebel force in the area.

Despite the equipment problems command at Brigade level was effective but command at any higher level proved to be impossible. At Brigade level and below there were regular meetings held. The meetings included all of the Brigade staff and all Battalion Commanders accompanied by one other member of the Battalion staff. Reports were submitted from the Battalions on their arms and ammunition, numerical strength, training intelligence etc. General policy, local strategy and tactics were also discussed at these meetings. Similarly, the Battalion staff held regular meetings with all the Company commanders and a member of the Company staff.⁶⁴ This process continued all the way down to the lowest echelons. This system made for solid communication up and down the chain of command and a firm central command at Brigade level. However, centralized command above brigade level was impossible due to the omnipresence of British troops and the lack of an effective and rapid communications system. Tom Barry notes how fragmented and diffused the IRA really was above Brigade level:

... the Headquarters of a guerilla army can give little active help to the fighting force. To an even greater extent than a divisional headquarters, it is handicapped by lack of an efficient and rapid communications system and this alone prevents contact with or effective control of Brigade units. (65)

It is not surprising therefore that Barry concluded:

Each Brigade stood alone, without hope of outside reinforcement should disaster threaten it. Within the whole National Movement the unit made its own war, gloried in its own victories and stood up to its own defeats. (66)

The attempt by GHQ to form the 1st Southern Division, which would include the West Cork Brigade, was unsuccessful. Ernest O'Malley, a staff captain from GHQ, was sent out from Dublin in 1921 to discuss the proposed 1st Southern Division with members of the West Cork Brigade. The meeting illustrates how little GHQ Dublin was in touch with its Brigades. As recalled by Barry, O'Malley read a long and involved GHQ document and then proceeded to expound on it.

His language... and his use of long military words and phrases left no doubt in the minds of his listeners that he had read a military book of some sort. Sean O'Hagerty (a local Brigade O.C.) started to shuffle and when in the next sentence O'Malley again used the words 'terrain and topography', O'Hagerty interrupted... O'Malley stopped... and Sean went into action... he asked why Collins, Mulcahy or some senior GHQ officer had not come along to the meeting instead of sending a messenger, why no GHQ officer had even visited the Southern fighting units during all the fighting... and why GHQ had done nothing towards extending the fight to the inactive areas and why GHQ had not yet imported arms and ammo as badly needed. Sean then criticized the GHQ communication in detail and after ten minutes of a telling and hard hitting talk sat down. (67)

All of the Southern officers were upset and expressed their dissent. They were not opposed to a division per se but they could not see its usefulness. They felt that they could better serve the national cause if they remained in command of their local units. Barry writes: "The Headquarters document was so divorced from the realities of the situation in the South that most of us were in an angry mood." ⁶⁸ Barry and the other Southern officers felt that the order "... might have been suitable for issue from Headquarters of an established

regular army... with reserves of men, munitions, equipment and money... but we were all at a loss to understand how its establishment on paper would help the Brigades at the most critical period of their existence."⁶⁹ Sean Moylan, another Southern officer, at a meeting said that the GHQ document was written "... so obviously without any idea whatever of the day to day struggle of the active Brigades striving to escape annihilation by vastly greater forces, could not by ornate language and meaningless military phrases alone be expected to be readily accepted by the Southern Officers."⁷⁰ Barry says that the GHQ orders for a division did not discuss the military realities of men, weapons, and ammunition and he concludes that "...I, amongst others, felt that in all the circumstances the setting up of a Division would not help."⁷¹

Barry gives a perceptive five page critique of why the formation of units above brigade level and its centralization of command are impractical in a guerilla war. He argues that the units should be loosely tied together in a GHQ but real command and control must be diffused to the local commanders. "The Divisional unit and the guerilla Army of the Irish Republic were, in time of war, a contradiction in terms."⁷²

A divisional staff duties would include supply of arms and ammo, replace incompetent officers, make new appointments, maneuver the fighting units, coordinate attacks and generally direct the fight.⁷³ Barry says, however, that "the very nature of the IRA guerillas was directly opposed to those functions."⁷⁴

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A divisional command over unpaid volunteers, with elected officers, badly armed, no rapid communications, transport, money or barracks simply could not work. The men disapproved, often violently, of the removal of their officers by any authority outside the Brigade. A divisional HQ could not supply Brigades with arms if it had none itself. The Active Service Units maneuver could not be pre-planned or coordinated because they were governed by the unpredictable movements of British patrols. Moreover, the Divisional AO covered three and a half counties and a division commander "... could not expect to ever contact any Brigade Flying Column in less than three days, because the IRA had neither wireless, telephonic or telegraphic means of communication."⁷⁵ All attacks etc. had to be based on the most relevant information and lack of rapid and efficient communication prevented all coordination.

The formation of the 1st Southern Division did take place on paper. Lian Lynch was appointed O.C., Barry was made second in command and a staff was formed. These men made a genuine effort to construct an efficient divisional unit but the limitations could not be overcome and the 1st Southern Division remained a blackboard organisation. Barry writes:

During its two months of existence up to the end of hostilities with the British, it did not and could not effect the replacement of even one of the several useless officers who encumbered many units, it did not and could not add a man, a rifle, a bomb, a round of ammunition or a shilling to the strength of any Brigade, nor did it organize any action or issue a single operation order to any unit." (76)

Thus it can be concluded that the 1st Southern Division did not have an effect on the military situation in the South. In addition "... the limitations of the Division were those inherent in the Irish Republican Army itself."⁷⁷

A month after the 1st Southern was formed, Barry was summoned to GHQ Dublin to report on the progress of the Division and the West Cork Brigade in particular. Mulcahy was the Chief of Staff at the time and it is obvious through his interview with Barry that he was very detached from the realities of the war. Only one month before the truce was signed the IRA's most senior officer was asking how many first, second and third class shots were in the division. Barry says "when I told him that no officer could answer that question, as there was never enough ammo to enable each rifleman to fire a musketry course..."⁷⁸ It seems Mulcahy did not previously realize the units lacked ammunition as "... he expressed surprise and asked how the Flying Columns could then be taken into action with any degree of confidence."⁷⁹ Barry had to explain to the Chief of Staff that "each man had fired three rounds at a target and that anyway, as the tactics were close quarter attacks, no rifleman, no matter how poor a marksman, could miss a human target at a fifteen yards range."⁸⁰ At the conclusion of Barry's meeting the senior IRA commander agreed that "... the Divisional Units could have little or no effect on the armed struggle, and that our largest effective military formation would continue to be the Brigade."⁸¹

Townsend agrees when he notes that "Beyond a certain point central operational of guerilla warfare is nonsensical."⁸²

The formation of Brigade Flying Columns, in contrast the Divisions, proved to be the most effective organization development in the IRA. The control of these forces however still rested with the Brigade O.C. and even more so with the Flying Column's immediate commander. In fact, the initiative for the Flying Columns originally came from below. Dick McKee, a Brigade commander in West Clare, thought up the idea early in the war. Other Brigades formed Flying Columns after McKee's and by the autumn of 1920 "Flying Columns had been organized in several of the most active Brigade areas."⁸³ Finally, after seeing the performance of these units, the GHQ, in December 1920, issued a formal order instructing all IRA Brigade to maintain an Active Service Unit (ASU) as they were called in official IRA language.

The original Flying Columns were the IRA men from the Brigade who were openly wanted by the British. They had been identified and would be arrested on sight if they did not go "on the run". The men of the Brigade would band together in the hills and eventually there were enough to be called a column. Michael Brennan, an ASU member in East Clare, remarked that the Flying Columns were a "purely spontaneous development which arose directly from prevailing conditions."⁸⁴ Townsend notes that the Flying Columns were a "response to difficult circumstances, because until mid-1920

nearly all IRA men remained in their normal occupations. After the Restoration of Order Act numbers of wanted men increased forcing them to join together for protection."⁸⁵ Daniel Fitzpatrick in his PH. D. Thesis on County Clare concluded that the "... paramount need for organizing Flying Columns was self-preservation."⁸⁶

The Flying Columns, however, took a more offensive posture when they gained sufficient strength to ambush and harass British patrols. Tom Barry was given command of the West Cork Brigades' Flying Column and after reaching a peak strength of 110 men, twice as many as the next strongest column, became the most active rebel unit in all of Ireland. Their most important function, however, was not assaulting British troops but training IRA officers. A GHQ memo dated April 1921, said they were "... not only a standing force of shock troops, they are also training units - and it is this that is their most important function."⁸⁷

All Active Service Unit personnel volunteered for the duty but it was understood that all officers were expected to do some time with a unit and those who didn't would no longer be officers. Townsend writes that the Flying Columns were very valuable for training the officers because "if an officer

Townsend suggests:
*For a more detailed analysis of the decisions to form Flying Column see Daniel P. Fitzpatrick's PH. D. Thesis Irish People and Politics. He studies County Clare during this period and Ch. 6 deals exclusively with the influence of the IRA. pp.328-32 deal specifically with the County Clare Brigade's Flying Column.

proved unequal to command of small units within the SAU then he could be reduced in rank. Thus the unit became a testing and teaching force where those fit for leadership get practice, and those unfit found out."⁸⁸

The West Cork Brigade had a unique scheme to combine the training and operational functions of the Flying Column. Tom Barry was designated head training officer in the Brigade and he decided to organize a series of one week training camps. There were too many companies within the Brigade to run each company through the camp as a whole unit. It would have taken a full year to train the entire Brigade if a camp was held for one company per week. Instead Barry decided to train all Brigade, Battalion and Company level officers who would then act as training officers to their own units. At the conclusion of the week long training camp the men would pack up their bags and form a flying column which would actively seek out the enemy. Thus a flying column was "... maintained for active operations and simultaneously the object of spreading military training throughout by giving all officers some experience of action."⁸⁹

After a few operations the majority of the Flying Column would be returned to their regular units to disseminate their knowledge. Therefore, a Brigade Flying Column would be continuously active while at the same time the entire Brigade would be undergoing training. Barry notes the:

advantage was that instead of having within the Brigade a small number of very highly trained and a large number of untrained officers and men, there would be a fairly large number of officers and men capable of bearing arms.⁹⁰

Command and control of the Flying Columns remained dispersed at Brigade level and GHQ's centralization efforts had no effect on these units. GHQ's attempt at combining the nine Southern Flying Columns into Divisional Fighting Forces (DFF) never materialized. The ASU's remained small and indigenous units, acting independent of each other and without orders from any higher command. Townsend writes that "The Flying Columns did become ruggedly professional forces but their professionalization did not imply centralization - if anything the reverse."⁹¹ Occasionally staff officers from GHQ were sent out to help organize and to some extent oversee the ASU. Their "... powers remained limited: persuasion and goodwill worked better than the direct exercise authority."⁹² Barry wrote down four rules regarding command and control of Cork No. 3's Flying Column:

1. Command of the Flying Column was the absolute responsibility of the Column commander and could not be interfered with by anyone. His decisions were personal, subject to no authority whatever*, within or outside the column.
2. Every Battalion and company in the Brigade and all their resources were to be at the disposal of the Flying Column Commander.
3. Only Volunteers, picked by the Column Commander, would be accepted for service in the Flying Column.

*Author's emphasis.

4. Column officers and Section leaders were appointed by the Column Commander irrespective of the ranks held previously. (93)

It is not surprising then to find that GHQ's powers of interference were very limited. In fact GHQ was rarely aware of the movements or intentions of the Columns outside the immediate Dublin district. Mostly they received accounts of ASU operations from the often inaccurate reports in the daily newspapers. Tim Coogan interviewed Barry in 1966 and the guerilla leader reflected on the command relationship between GHQ and the Brigades by simply stating, "If we pulled some action that worked they would sanction it."⁹⁴

The British forces facing the guerillas were far superior in conventional numbers, weapons, training etc. Only about 1000 British soldiers and a few hundred Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) were stationed in the immediate area of Cork No. 3. However, it is "... advisable to detail the strengths of all the British garrisons within the County of Cork, since those enemy units operated against any or all of the three Cork Brigades... and were not confined to the locality in which they were stationed."*⁹⁵

In County Cork the British had stationed no less than

*The IRA units were confined to their operational area and were supposed to be active only against those enemy units within their boundary. This restriction arose more out of a realistic view of the units limitations rather than an effort to limit their activities. Simply stated the IRA didn't have the men, money, weapons, or training to conduct long range operations.

eleven first-line Infantry Battalions seven weeks before the truce was signed in July 1921. Although the British Army authorized 950 officers and men per battalion they usually ran about 100-150 men short. It is more accurate, therefore, to say that the actual strength of one of these Battalions was somewhere around 800 personnel making combined strength of approximately 8800 British Infantry in County Cork.⁹⁶ Furthermore, there were 480 officers and men of the Royal Machine Gun Corps; 720 officers and men of the Royal Field Artillery; 240 of the Royal Garrison Artillery; 240 Royal Engineers; and 200 Support and Staff Personnel.*

Complimenting the British regular army troops were personnel of two elite units, the "Black and Tans"^{**} and the "Auxiliaries". These two units, much more than the British regular army, were very feared among the general Irish population because they were extremely brutal and generally indiscriminate in their victims. The Black and Tans were basically a para-military force recruited from the slums of British cities and commanded by ex-British police officers. The recruits were given the option of jail in England or service in Ireland. The Auxiliaries on the other hand were all volunteers

*For a more complete breakdown of British troops in County Cork see Barry's Guerilla Days, p.205-211. Barry draws his information from a captured British document signed by Major General Strickland, General Officer Commanding (GOC) the 6th Division and dated May 17, 1921.

**Black and Tans werw so-called simply because they wore black pants and tan shirts.

NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF ENEMY GARRISONS
IN THE THIRD CORK BRIGADE AREA
(July 1919)

First (Bandon) Battalion Area	
Bandon . . .	30 R.I.C.
	150 Military
Kilbriittain . . .	8 R.I.C.
	200 Military
Timoleague . . .	6 R.I.C.
Innishannon . . .	6 R.I.C.
Ballinspittle . . .	6 R.I.C.
Courtmacsherry . . .	6 R.I.C.
Mount Pleasant . . .	5 R.I.C.
Second (Clonakilty) Battalion Area	
Clonakilty . . .	16 R.I.C.
Castlefreke . . .	4 R.I.C.
Rosscarbery . . .	6 R.I.C.
Third (Dunmanway) Battalion Area	
Dunmanway . . .	9 R.I.C.
Ballineen . . .	9 R.I.C.
Fourth (Skibbereen) Battalion Area	
Skibbereen . . .	18 R.I.C.
	50 Military
Leap . . .	5 R.I.C.
Union Hall . . .	4 R.I.C.
Castletownsend . . .	5 R.I.C.
Baltimore . . .	5 R.I.C.
Ballydehob . . .	5 R.I.C.
Schull . . .	6 R.I.C.
Goleen . . .	5 R.I.C.
Drimoleague . . .	6 R.I.C.
Fifth (Bantry) Battalion Area	
Bantry . . .	15 R.I.C.
	200 Military
Kilcrohane . . .	8 R.I.C.
Glengarriff . . .	6 R.I.C.
Whiddy Island . . .	4 R.I.C.
	12 Military
Sixth (Beara) Battalion Area	
Castletownbere . . .	13 R.I.C.
	80 Military
Bere Island . . .	150 Military
Eyeries . . .	16 R.I.C.
	50 Military
Allihies . . .	6 R.I.C.

Source: Deasey, Toward Ireland Free, (Appendix A).

and all ex-British Army officers. Furthermore, a pre-requisite for enlistment was combat duty in WWI.* There were approximately 540 Auxiliaries and 1150 Black and Tans in County Cork. Therefore, excluding the RIC and British Naval Personnel, there were approximately 12,600 British Army troops, Black and Tans, and Auxiliaries occupying County Cork seven weeks before the Truce. Needless to say, each of these troops was well fed, equipped and trained. Also, they were all well armed and re-supply of ammunition was no problem.

If one considers all the IRA riflemen in the whole of County Cork compared with the British straight leg infantry than the British Army's infantry units alone outnumbered the rebels more than 30 to 1. However, in total armed men the IRA was outnumbered by at least 40 to 1 and still a far greater ratio in total firepower. In the middle of 1920 Cork No. 3 Brigade was outnumbered by almost 30 to 1 in infantry and 20 to 1 overall.

However, one IRA asset helped to offset the overwhelming British material superiority. The Volunteers, much more than British troops, exhibited consistently high morale. Barry says that although the IRA had no experience, was virtually untrained and unarmed, they possessed great desire and

*Of the two units the Auxiliaries were more vicious. It was the Auxiliaries who were primarily responsible for burning down half of Cork City on a drunken rampage. They were also notorious for torture, assassination and general acts of terrorism along with a reputation for not taking prisoners.

enthusiasm. He writes:

In summing up the strengths of the contending Irish and British forces the factor of morale must rank highest. There was no doubt whatsoever that the morale of the IRA stood far above that of the British. Greater experience, numbers and armaments of the British were indeed an important conclusion, but this was far excelled by the willingness of the Volunteers to sacrifice themselves for a cause they knew to be right." (97)

Barry was not just bragging when he wrote those lines for the IRA was highly respected by the British Army as well. British Army Lt. General Sir Henry Jackson wrote a report to the British Army's General Staff which stated:

The Volunteers appear to be... sincere and single-minded idealists, highly religious for the most part and often with an almost mystical sense of duty to their country. These men gave to the task... their best in mind and spirit. They fought against drunkenness and self-indulgence and it is no exaggeration to say they represented all that was best in the countryside. They were trained to discipline, ... they imbibed the military spirit, the sense of military honor and... they looked upon their army as one in a very real sense. (98)

Conclusion

Ireland's victory in the guerilla war for independence from 1916-1921 is generally credited to the IRA. Their success, however, is a direct contradiction to the theories of both Mao and Lenin, asserting military subordination to the political as an absolute prerequisite for victory. Although many believe the IRA was subordinate to the politicians in the Sinn Fein, it is clear that this is not true. The physical force men of the IRB and the Volunteers acted independently of any controlling

influence from Griffith, de Valera, or even the Volunteers' non-IRB Chief of Staff Brugha. The two worked closely together and it is unlikely the Irish Independence would have been achieved without some political agitation from Sinn Féin. The IRA and the Sinn Féin acted to complement each other but neither played a subordinate role.

The actual structure of the IRA also defies any one theory. A myth existed (and exists), that the IRA was centrally controlled and coordinated by GHQ in Dublin. If the myth was true, then Lenin would be vindicated. But the myth remains a myth. Centralized command was never achieved at anything higher than Brigade level. The initiation of a guerilla bureaucracy above, had little effect on regularity below. Also the Division concept was largely a failure in practice and remained on paper. An examination of the finances, weapons, training and personnel reveals just how irregular and decentralized the Volunteers really were. The analysis proves Mao correct when he suggested centralization of command in guerilla warfare is both impossible and impractical.

Despite GHQ's failure to coordinate and control the dispersed rural guerilla units, the headquarters proved very effective in propaganda and Intelligence. Both departments were centrally controlled at GHQ and both are in accord with Lenin's principles: the former for the security principle and the latter for the concept of a Central Organ.

The description of the West Cork Brigade reinforces all these points. Command and control was centered at Brigade level, and the attempt to form the 1st Southern Division failed. The Brigade remained dispersed from other Brigades and largely fought its own war. Furthermore, the assets of the West Cork Brigade is a microcosm of the irregularity and lack of standardization throughout the IRA.

Finally, Tom Barry's legendary Flying Column provides the reader with Ireland's best example of Ché's foco theory. The Flying Column, like the Foco, was highly mobile, consisted of a small number of the best rebels, and possessed the romance of Ché's Bolivian expedition. Also, the Flying Column, like the foco, centralized absolute command in the unit's leader. Despite the similarities, there are substantial differences which make for the unique success of the Flying Column. The most significant difference is of course the backgrounds of the men making up the unit. Ché's men were imported Cubans and Peruvians who, although dedicated, understood little or nothing of the special circumstances in Bolivia. Conversely, the men of the Flying Column were all indigenous to the area of operations. Chances were they lived in a local village of West Cork, and were wanted by the British for displaying Republican sympathies.

Despite overwhelming odds, the West Cork Brigade managed to play an important role in the War for Independence. Further-

more, the IRA managed to emerge victorious without employing any single theory of revolutionary organization. The validity of these theories is in question.

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4 Edgar Holt, Protest by Arms: The Irish Revolution 1916-1922 (New York, Coward & McCann 1967) p. 120.

5 Bell, p. 78.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Bell, p. 72.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*, p. 29 (See Bell's footnote #1).

17 Charles Townshend, "The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare, 1916-22" English Historical Review 86 (April 1972) p. 281.

18 Bell, p. 16.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Townshend, p. 320.

21 Timothy P. Coogan, The IRA (London: Pall Mall Press 1970), p. 14.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 5

- 1 Tom Bowden, "The Irish Underground and the War for Independence 1919-21", Journal of Contemporary History (April 1973), p. 16.
- 2 Ibid., p. 14.
- 3 J. Bowyer Bell, The Secret Army: The IRA 1916-1974 (Cambridge Mass., MIT Press, 1970; Revised, MIT Press, Paperback edition, 1974).
- 4 Edgar Holt, Protest in Arms: The Irish Troubles 1916-1923 (New York: Coward & McCann 1961) p. 136.
- 5 Bell, p. 16.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Bowden, p. 8.
- 8 Ibid., p. 15.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Bell, p. 17.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid., p. 39 (See Bell's footnote #1).
- 17 Charles Townshend, "The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerilla Warfare, 1916-21" English Historical Review 94, (April 1979) p. 341.
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- 25 Ibid., p. 341.
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- 27 Bowden, p. 15.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., p. 16.
- 30 Ibid., p. 15.
- 31 Townshend, p. 339.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., p. 321.
- 34 Ibid., p. 336.
- 35 Bell, p. 23.
- 36 Townshend, p. 336.
- 37 Ibid.
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- 39 Ibid., p. 322
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., p. 324.
- 44 Bowden, p. 16.
- 45 Ibid.
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- 48 Tom Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland (Dublin: Irish Press Limited 1949) p. 122.
- 49 Townshend, p. 336.
- 50 Ibid., p. 124.
- 51 Bowden, p. 18.
- 52 Townshend, p. 337.
- 53 V. I. Lenin, "Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks", Collected Works, Vol. 6 (Moscow Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961), p. 248.
- 54 Liam Deasy, Towards Ireland Free: The West Cork Brigade in the War for Independence 1917-21 (Dublin, Cork: The Mercier Press, 1973), p. 141.
- 55 Ibid., p. 57.
- 56 Ibid., p. 62.
- 57 Barry, p. 206.
- 58 Ibid., p. 9.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid., p. 207.
- 62 Ibid.
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- 64 Ibid., p. 18.
- 65 Ibid., p. 185.
- 66 Ibid., p. 9.
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- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid., p. 160.
- 71 Ibid.
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- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Ibid., p. 161.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid., p. 179.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid., p. 180.
- 82 Townshend, p. 329.
- 83 Bowden, p. 18.
- 84 Townshend, p. 330 (See Townshend's footnote #2).
- 85 Ibid., p. 329.
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(Ph.d. Dissertation, University of Cambridge, England 1974) n.p.
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- 88 Ibid., p. 336.
- 89 Barry, p. 19.
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95 Barry, p. 205.

96 Ibid., p. 206

97 Ibid., p. 10.

98 Ulick O'Connor, A Terrible Beauty is Born: The Irish Troubles 1912-1922 (Dondon: Hamish Hamilton Ltd. 1975) p. 128-9.

The Provisional IRA, the "Provos" as they are more commonly known, split from the "official" IRA in 1969 and since then have been responsible for most of the Revolutionary guerrilla warfare occurring in Northern Ireland. Information on the organization of the Provo IRA from 1969-75 is limited. Although a substantial volume of material has been written about the violence in Ulster, surprisingly very little has been written for public consumption on the organizational structure of the Provos. Nevertheless, enough evidence can be pieced together from various sources to suggest that again, the political super-armed control over the militants. Also, the evidence suggests the Provo IRA is a centrally command network of small cells dispersed throughout Ireland and England.

The Provo IRA has developed into that structure, but prior to 1969 the Provos did not even exist. There was only one IRA, but it was so small, disorganized and inefficient that they, they could almost be called non-existent. Following the 48th St. Independence, a civil war broke out in July 1921 and lasted until August 1922. The "Free State" dominated that period within the borders which supposedly achieved the split between the

CHAPTER 6

ORGANIZATION: CASE 3

I.R.A.-1969-79

The IRA was woken partly through covert help from the South, partly through civil rights furore, but mainly out of delayed Catholic reaction to a British occupying army.

- London Sunday Times Insight Team

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The Provo IRA has developed into that structure, but prior to 1969 the Provos did not even exist. There was only one IRA, but it was so small, disorganized and inefficient that they, too, could almost be called non-existent. Following the War for Independence, a civil war broke out in July 1921 and lasted until August 1923. The "Free Staters" represented that faction within the movement which temporarily accepted the split border in order

to gain peace. The hard-core republicans, mostly old IRB men,* thought the fight should go on until all thirty-two counties were united in an Irish Republic. The Republicans lost the civil war, and six counties, what is commonly called Northern Ireland, remained under British rule through the subordinate Ulster government at Stormont.

After the loss in the Civil War, the IRA went underground and has fought a sporadic guerilla war for the last six decades to unite the whole of Ireland. A bombing campaign in 1939 and collaboration with the Nazis stirred British fear but did little else.

The Border Campaign of 1956-62 was, according to the IRA, a serious threat to British rule. However, in the six year campaign, highlighted by daring raids and prison escapes, only eighteen people died. The British had excellent intelligence on the IRA and instituted internment in the North, and the Dublin government, under de Valera, initiated internment in the South. Only IRA leaders and some of the rank and file were imprisoned and large support for the IRA in both North and South failed to materialize. The militant organization again appeared to be dead.

While in prison, the leadership of the IRA underwent a revisionist transformation; the full scale split in 1969 evidenced

* It is interesting to note that Michael Collins sided with the Free States along with de Valera and Brugha. Collins was assassinated by the Republicans, Brugha died of natural causes during the war and de Valera went on to become President of "Eire", the Irish Free State and actually tried to destroy the IRA. He never succeeded.

its first cracks during those prison years.* Cathal Goulding and John Stephenson, both to become leaders in the Official IRA, were captured in a 1953 arms raid on Felsted Army Barracks. Neither man was released until 1960 and consequently were out of circulation for most of the Border Campaign. While in prison they read a tremendous amount of Marxist revolutionary literature and were in contact with the EOKA rebels from Cypress who were in the same prison. From their prison experiences, and because they could not personally be blamed for the Campaign's failure, Goulding and Stephenson wrote an analysis on why the Border Campaign failed. They argued, the reason was lack of Northern Irish Catholic support and nationalist unrest.¹ The Sunday Times Insight Team wrote in their perceptive book Ulster, the Northern Irish State "enjoyed at least the passive, tentative support of its Catholic minority...and Catholics were not then ready to support its overthrow by violence."² Goulding felt this nationalist unrest could be brought about by peaceful political agitation through newspapers, elections, etc. and the policy of the gun should be shelved until a wider base of support can be mobilized.

Other members, however, were more militant and disagreed with Goulding's analysis. They thought the Campaign failed to generate popular support because it was disorganized, lacked discipline, arms, ammunition and money. Basically, they thought it was unsuccessful as a military campaign and they felt a more successful military effort would have generated popular support

For a complete description of the Prison Years and their effects on the Provo leadership and subsequent split see: Insight Team, Ulster, pp. 15-26.

in its wake. The men who supported this view of bullet over ballot, were Billy McKee, Sean MacStiofáin, Dave O'Connell and Seamus Twomey; their names read like a roll call for the present Provo IRA leadership.

While in prison, Tomás MacCurtain, one of the main planners of the Border Campaign, was elected the leader of the IRA.³ He subscribed to Goulding's analysis and ordered that no escapes were to be attempted, so as not to provoke a confrontation with the guards. The IRA members were told to peacefully sit out their jail terms.

The Insight Team wrote the militants were "already disgusted by the swift and humiliating failure of the campaign, and MacCurtain's order was final proof of the official leadership's cowardice."⁴ Dave O'Connell, Rory O'Brady and some other young militants mutinied and disobeyed MacCurtain's orders not to escape. They organized and successfully carried through a dramatic escape in the winter of 1960.⁵

In 1963, violence erupted within the movement and several members were shot. In the aftermath, Cathal Goulding emerged as the leader when he was elected IRA Chief of Staff. Tomás MacGiolla, an ally of Goulding was elected President of Sinn Féin, and Roy Johnston, a Marxist professor and another Goulding ally, was elected Vice President of Sinn Féin.⁶ The feud was roughly along Northern-Southern lines and the new leadership was entirely made up of the more "political" minded Southerners.⁷ The new leadership

advocated agitating the masses by non-violent, non-sectarian means. The Sunday Times Insight Team noted "what it boiled down to was the 'physical force' party inside the IRA had lost."⁸

Throughout the early 1960's the IRA leadership moved steadily leftwards and away from the simple historic dedication to a thirty-two county republic achieved through violence. This new policy bewildered the older more traditional members, especially those in Belfast. The Northern units, most particularly the Belfast Brigade, were always unique in the structure of the IRA. Even in the War for Independence these Northern Units saw their primary mission as defending the Catholic ghettos in the North, and their secondary mission was the unification of Ireland and the establishment of an Irish Republic. They fully understood the ghettos could only be defended through use of arms, and that the struggle could never be divorced from sectarianism as the IRA leadership now advocated.

They had good reason for their beliefs. The Catholic ghettos of the Falls Road in Belfast are surrounded by Protestant working class neighborhoods and a similar situation exists in Londonderry. Both cities' Catholic ghettos are extremely vulnerable to Protestant attack as was the case when Protestant rioters tried to burn the ghettos and kill Catholics in 1922, 1938 and the last two years of the 1940's.^{FN} However, the Protestants had been relatively peaceful since then, and these oldtimers begrudgingly followed the Dublin leadership's new policy.

Gradually, the Belfast IRA eroded. In 1964, Billy McKee, the

^{FN}: Sunday Times Insight Team, Ulster (London: Deutsch Ltd., 1972) p. 25

Belfast Brigade Commander, was ordered to give his position over to a young Marxist Trinity College graduate who GHQ was sending up from the South.⁹ McKee obeyed, but after the incident most of the old hands in the Northern IRA simply drifted away from the organization and either actually resigned or became inactive and apathetic. In the same year, the circulation of the United Irishmen, still the newspaper of the Sinn Féin, went down from 100,000 readers in both North and South to a mere 14,000.¹⁰ The Sunday Times Insight Team noted the movement was in the doldrums when they wrote, "The IRA of legend--the trench-coats, the Thompson guns, the shots in the night--was virtually extinct."¹¹ Even Cathal Goulding admitted the movement was in trouble when he said:

In August 1967 we called a meeting of local leadership throughout the country to assess the strength of the movement. We discovered that we had no movement.¹²

As the IRA faded into obscurity, a non-violent civil rights organization was spontaneously generated out of the promised reforms of Ulster's Prime Minister Terrence O'Neill. A progressive minded Protestant Unionist, O'Neill became P.M. of Stormont in 1963. "O'Neill's aim was novel, even revolutionary,"¹³ writes Richard Rose, a respected political scientist specializing on Northern Ireland. He goes on to say that O'Neill "...sought nothing less than a fully legitimate regime supported by a consensus of Catholics as well as Protestants."¹⁴

O'Neill instituted a series of reforms aimed at integrating the minority Catholic community of the North into the mainstream of

Ulster politics and economic prosperity.* O'Neill believed the economic growth could provide the means for diverting Catholics from aspirations of Irish Unity. There was a Protestant backlash from the Ulster Loyalists who held considerable political power through the traditional supremacist organization of the Orange Order. "The reformers were labelled wholesale as Republicans and subversives."¹⁶ Consequently, the reforms were rescinded and "the two ends never met."¹⁷

A Catholic civil rights movement appeared shortly after O'Neill took power. Beginning very small, with only a doctor's wife, Mrs. Patricia McCluskey, forming a few friends and neighbors into the Homeless Citizens League (HCL) in Dungannon, County Tyrone."¹⁸ Mrs. McCluskey's HCL was very loosely formed with no defined structure. Simultaneously, her husband, Dr. McCluskey, in January 1964 initiated the Campaign for Social Justice to compliment the actions of the HCL. Dr. McCluskey's campaign was aimed at collecting and publicizing information of the injustices in Northern Ireland. Its main effort was nothing more than distributing mimeographed leaflets attacking discrimination against Catholics in both housing and jobs.

* The 1971 census found 65.3% of the Northern Irish population reporting membership in more than sixty different Protestant denominations; 34.7% described themselves as Roman Catholic. The proportions of Protestants and Catholics are calculated from the 90.6% stating their religion, 9.4% did not state their religion in the overall census.¹⁵

The McCluskeys' initiative, however humble, gained momentum when O'Neill's reforms were retracted. Directly inspired by the Black struggle for Civil Rights in the U.S., and the increasing Unionist conservatism, the movement mushroomed when middle class Catholics formed the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in 1967.¹⁹

During the first year of its existence, the NICRA concentrated on individual complaints in the same manner as the HCL. However, in June 1968 a Catholic family was evicted from a house to make room for a nineteen-year old unmarried Protestant girl, who happened to be the secretary for an influential Unionist politician.²⁰ The NICRA realized the case was very blatant and decided to stage a march in protest of the eviction. Announced for August 24, 1968, 4000 people, mostly middle class Catholics, showed up and although Protestant extremists threatened violence, nothing occurred.

The Civil Rights movement thus began mass marches for fundamental rights of the Catholic minority. The NICRA became a mass based Catholic movement and it contained men and women, students and professors, young and old, conservatives and communists. And, yes, the movement even contained Republicans. However, they by no means controlled, or even heavily influenced, the movement. The Insight Team noted that the "IRA was active in the CRA (Civil Rights Association) but not in control. This fact is beyond serious dispute."²¹ Lord Cameron, a British judge commissioned by Westminster to report on the violence in Northern Ireland agreed.

He wrote:

There was a hope...that something new was taking place in Northern Ireland, in that here was a non violent demonstration by people of many differing political antecedents...united on a common platform of reform.²²

Despite what the reactionary Protestants said at the time, it is absolutely clear that the NICRA was not a revolutionary guerilla movement. Their goal was peaceful institutional reform, not violent revolution.

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin in an attempt to agitate the masses, ran in several elections, campaigning hard for Catholic rights and the formation of a unified Ireland in a Socialist Republic. Not surprisingly in the intensely conservative Catholic Ireland, Sinn Féin lost miserably in all its elections. Most people in the South did not even realize the IRA still existed. Its membership in 1968 was extremely low, and in the North they were virtually non-existent except for the few dozen revisionist member in Belfast and Londonderry. Rose writes that the IRA had a "minute membership in Northern Ireland from the mid 1920's until the revival of the Troubles in 1969."²³

Although by 1968, 40% of Ulster's Catholics approved of the illegal Civil Rights marches, only 13% of that population approved of using any measures, including violence to achieve a united Ireland. Furthermore, conclusions from the same survey indicate that 33% of Ulster's Catholics supported the Stormont constitution primarily because of its material benefits and efficiency; 35% *

* THESE FIGURES come from a Survey Conducted by Richard Rose. For the complete Results See: Richard Rose, Northern Ireland Foreign Affairs Study No. 27 (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1976)

rejected it because they either preferred a united Ireland or felt that the constitution was unfair to Catholics; and 32% were "don't knows."²⁴ The Protestants, comprising two-thirds of the total Ulster population were invariably opposed to substantial reforms and unanimously opposed to a united Ireland.

Then came October 5, 1968, when peaceful civil rights marches were brutally beaten by Orange Order members, off duty B-Specials* and club wielding policemen of the predominantly Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The NICRA planned a march in demand of six specific reforms** that were anything but revolutionary. William Craig, the Northern Ireland Minister for Home Affairs said that the whole thing "was under the control of the IRA."²⁵

The route of the march was well publicized and the Orange Order, led by the Apprentice Boys of Derry*** decided to ambush the marchers at several locations. As the ambushes commenced, the RUC was called in to protect the marchers but did nothing of the kind. Since most of the RUC were also Orange Order members

*B-Specials were an auxiliary to the RUC. The only requirements for joining were that an applicant had to be Protestant and not have a criminal record. Other than that, if a recruit was in good physical condition, then he was accepted. After this, although not trained, he was given a gun which many brought home and kept as a personal firearm.

** The six reforms were 1) One man, one vote, 2) Removal of gerrymandered boundaries, 3) Laws against discrimination, 4) Allocation of public housing on a points system, 5) Repeal of the Special Powers Act, 6) Disband the B-Specials.

***The Apprentice Boys of Derry was an extreme militant group within the Orange Order. They were named after a group of young Apprentice Workers who helped hold off Catholic James' siege of Protestant Londonderry in 1689.

they had many friends among the attackers. Consequently, they, on the whole, did not intervene while some members actually helped the Orangemen beat the CRA marchers. Lord Cameron noted the complicity of the RUC in the attacks when he reported:

...the county inspector in charge ordered them to disperse the march...The police broke ranks and used their batons indiscriminately...It was hard for the crowd to disperse because another body of police stood in their way. There is a body of evidence which we accept that this other body of police also used their batons indiscriminately...The police also used water cannons at close range and the effects were terrifying.²⁶

After October 5 events ran at a dogged pace and the Civil Rights movement skyrocketed. Due to the growing strength of the Civil Rights movement, the IRAGHQ under Goulding decided to support it and accept the tactics of civil disobedience. IRA members were encouraged to participate in the marches. They were ordered to be both non-violent and unprovocative. Publicly, the IRA gave its full verbal support to the NICRA but in no way did the violent tradition of the IRA take over the NICRA. J. Bowyer Bell wrote, "It would be fair to say that the Civil Rights movements had far more influence on the IRA than the reverse."²⁷ The IRA thus became part of the Civil Rights movement and subordinate to the NICRA leadership. They encouraged Catholics of Ulster to claim their full rights as citizens of Ulster and by so doing recognized the partition of Ireland and the separate existence of Ulster as a state. As the situation became more violent in 1968 and 1969, the old members of the IRA drifted back into the ranks. They regarded

Goulding and the IRA's Dublin leadership as heretics because they recognized and accepted de facto the British rule in Northern Ireland.

Resentment between the Dublin GHQ and the Northern units grew and directly paralleled the intensification of violence. The older members became fed up with GHQ policy of non-violence and recognition of Stormont. Most important, however, the Northern units were extremely upset that GHQ was not taking the initiative in defending the Catholic ghettos. The Northerners clamored for arms to defend their communities, but GHQ was not forthcoming. In fact, to subsidize the fledgling Sinn Féin newspaper United Irishmen, GHQ sold all its arms in 1968 to the Free Wales Army.²⁸ In January 1969 the total arms holdings of the IRA's Belfast Brigade were only four pistols!²⁹

In June 1969, the GHQ staff had a meeting with a secret emissary of the Irish Republic's government, allegedly an Irish Army intelligence officer named Captain James Kelly. The mysterious Captain Kelly, ostensibly under the orders of top ministers in the Dublin government, offered the IRA a substantial sum of money--over £200,000 according to the Insight Team. In return, the GHQ was to set up a separate Northern Command and cease activities in the South, thereby extinguishing any IRA threat against the Republic's regime. GHQ decided to postpone a decision to accept the money and the Northerners were outraged. The Insight Team comments "The men in the North simply wanted arms. Yet Goulding and the

Dublin hierarchy were unwilling to do what was necessary to get them."³⁰

Captain Kelly then met directly with the Northern IRA men and they told him all they wanted was money, guns and ammunition to defend their ghettos. He reported back to Colonel Michael Heferon, head of Irish Army Intelligence, and noted that the IRA in the North was "undermanned, underequipped and totally without finances."³¹ The report went through the secret channels, but by August 1969, neither guns nor money had flowed North from either GHQ or the official Dublin government.*

In late August, after the Apprentice Boys' riots and the introduction of British troops, most senior IRA officers in the North met in West Belfast. They realized the situation was urgent and something must be done because the defense of Catholics could not be left in the hands of their historical oppressor, the British Army. Despite the reneged promise from the Southern government, the dissident IRA leaders decided at the meeting that a separate command of some kind must be set up. On September 22, sixteen hardline IRA men, led by Billy McKee, burst into a meeting of Goulding's Northern supporters and announced a separation from the official IRA.³² The interruption and announcement nearly led to a shooting, but the two IRA groups reached a compromise and agreed to discuss their different programs with the rank and file

*In 1970, three ministers of the Irish Republic and Captain Kelly were all arrested and indicted for illegal deals and arms smuggling with the IRA. The three ministers were dismissed from their posts and Captain Kelly was imprisoned. It became the equivalent of an Irish Watergate.

members of the North.

Sean MacStiofáin, head of IRA Intelligence and the only member of the GHQ staff in Dublin that was sympathetic to the plight of the Northern Units, tried to persuade the dissidents to come to the IRA's annual convention in December 1969. They refused to come and present their views, leaving MacStiofáin with a minority of delegates to defend the Northern interests.

Two crucial resolutions were brought before that convention. First was the establishment of a "National Liberation Front" with the NICRA and various smaller organizations of the "radical left."³³ The second resolution, by far the more important, proposed "that the Republican movement should end its policy of parliamentary abstention"³⁴ and officially recognize the existence of two Irish states and the rule of Westminster in the North. MacStiofáin wrote "we now had to choose between accepting the institutions of partition or upholding the basic Republican principle of Ireland's right to national unity."³⁵

The Gouldingite politicians outvoted the militant traditionalists 39-12 and the two resolutions became official IRA policy. This fact, combined with a lack of any IRA military initiative to protect the Ulster Catholic ghettos, were the immediate cause for a final split in the ranks of the IRA.

MacStiofáin stood up and declared that those who accepted the proposals "would forfeit the right to describe themselves as the Irish Republican Army."³⁶ He then announced the establishment of

Provisional Army Council, and followed by his supporters, walked out of the convention. The next day, Sinn Féin split along the same lines and soon thereafter the Provos made their first official announcement, stating:

We declare our allegiance to the thirty-two county Irish Republic proclaimed at Easter 1916, established by the first Dáil Eireann in 1919, overthrown by force of arms in 1922 and suppressed to this day.³⁷

Thus the Provisional Irish Republican Army was born, and once again the politicians failed to control the militants. The Provos, however, were born into poverty for they had no arms, no money and few men.

The Provo leadership was to have its headquarters in Belfast, the Northern capital. "This was regrettable but unavoidable"³⁸ according to MacStiofáin. During the weeks before Christmas the first tasks facing the Provos were winning the allegiance of existing IRA units and reorganizing the movement into an effective armed force. At the time of the split, the total IRA strength in Belfast was approximately 150 men, of whom about eighty could be considered activists. Of these eighty, about thirty initially joined the Provos. Within two weeks the Provos could claim the allegiance of nine out of eleven Company Commanders within the Belfast Battalion. More significant, however, ten of the eleven Company Quartermasters, those controlling the weapons dumps, stayed with the Officials.³⁹

While the lower ranking officers went about the rank and file

trying to drum up support, the leadership went about reorganizing itself as a secret army. A Provisional Executive of Twelve was elected, and these men then elected a Provisional Army Council of seven. The Council then appointed a Provisional GHQ Staff and named MacStiofáin as the Chief of Staff.⁴⁰ It is not certain who held exactly what position on this initial Provo GHQ staff, but prominent members included names from long ago like Billy Kelly, Francis Card, Bill McKee, Seamus Twomey and Dave O'Connell.⁴¹

Initially, outside Belfast, the Provo Battalions remained on paper. However, within two months units began declaring their allegiance to the Provos, realizing they were the last line of defense for the Catholic community. By the end of February, 1970 the Provos had nine companies in Belfast, five in Arragh, four in Down, three in Tyrone, two in Fermanagh, two in Derry, one in Derry City and one in Antrim. They had a total of twenty-seven companies, mostly unarmed, with strength varying between ten to forty volunteers per company.⁴² Highest estimates gauge the entire Provo strength at no more than 700 members during the early part of 1970. According to one author, the "common factor uniting all these men was simple traditionalism; the other was violence."⁴³

The major problem facing the Provos was not men but resources. According to the Chief of Staff, the Provos had in January 1970 a grand total of one hundred and five pounds in their treasury. Money began to slowly flow in from various sources. Southern businesses made small contributions and Irish-American clubs began

sending money through the Northern Ireland Aid Committee (NORAID). Theoretically, the money from America was supposed to assist victims of the rioting, but in reality it was funneled to the Provos for weapons purchases. Southern Volunteers who joined the Provos also contributed "well over two thousand pounds...by mid-January."⁴⁴

Initially, the weapons situation was in equally bad straights. The Provos first weapons procurement came when, ironically, they robbed common thieves who had robbed a gunshop. They netted fifteen rifles and one WWII German Luger pistol, along with a small supply of ammunition.⁴⁵ A few days later, in the first week of January 1970, units in three border counties declared allegiance to the Provos and sent all their arms to the North. Their dump consisted of thirty Thompson sub-machineguns, twenty-seven rifles and an assortment of pistols and ammunition.⁴⁶

After several months the supply situation improved and small quantities of arms, ammo and money could be kept in reserve. Nevertheless, during their first year the Provos were simply not strong enough to take on the defense of the Catholic ghettos. They would have to depend on a small armed elite of IRA Active Service Units, small community based cells of five to seven men. There could be no armed militia and there could be no armed uprising. Internment increased Provo membership considerably in 1972. The dispersed local cells mushroomed into a full urban guerilla army.

Although the leadership has been occasionally juggled, the Provo structure has remained very much the same since 1972.* A strict military chain of command was established which retained centralized strategic control and dispersed the tactical initiative to the local units on the street. Below the Provo Executive, the Army Council, and the GHQ staff, all established immediately after the split in 1970, the Provos organized four tactical commands, each having a number of individual combat units.

The Executive is mainly an honorary body which appoints and advises the Army Council, which in turn, dictates the overall strategy. The GHQ staff is responsible for implementing the strategy by generally supervising and coordinating the military operations and other activities of the four tactical commands. The GHQ also controls the flow of any imported arms, explosives, and money. Last, the GHQ is responsible for centralizing all intelligence, then disseminating it to the appropriate units.**

Each of the four "commands" were responsible for operations within their own "theater" of the war. The Northern Command was the first Provo command established and is numerically the strongest. Its theater is the six counties of Northern Ireland and is therefore the most important Provo Group, carrying out the greater part of Provo military activity.

* There have been some modifications in 1977-78 which will be discussed later in this paper.

**For the best single description of the current Provo IRA Command structure, see David Blundy "Inside the IRA" London Sunday Times (3 July 1977)

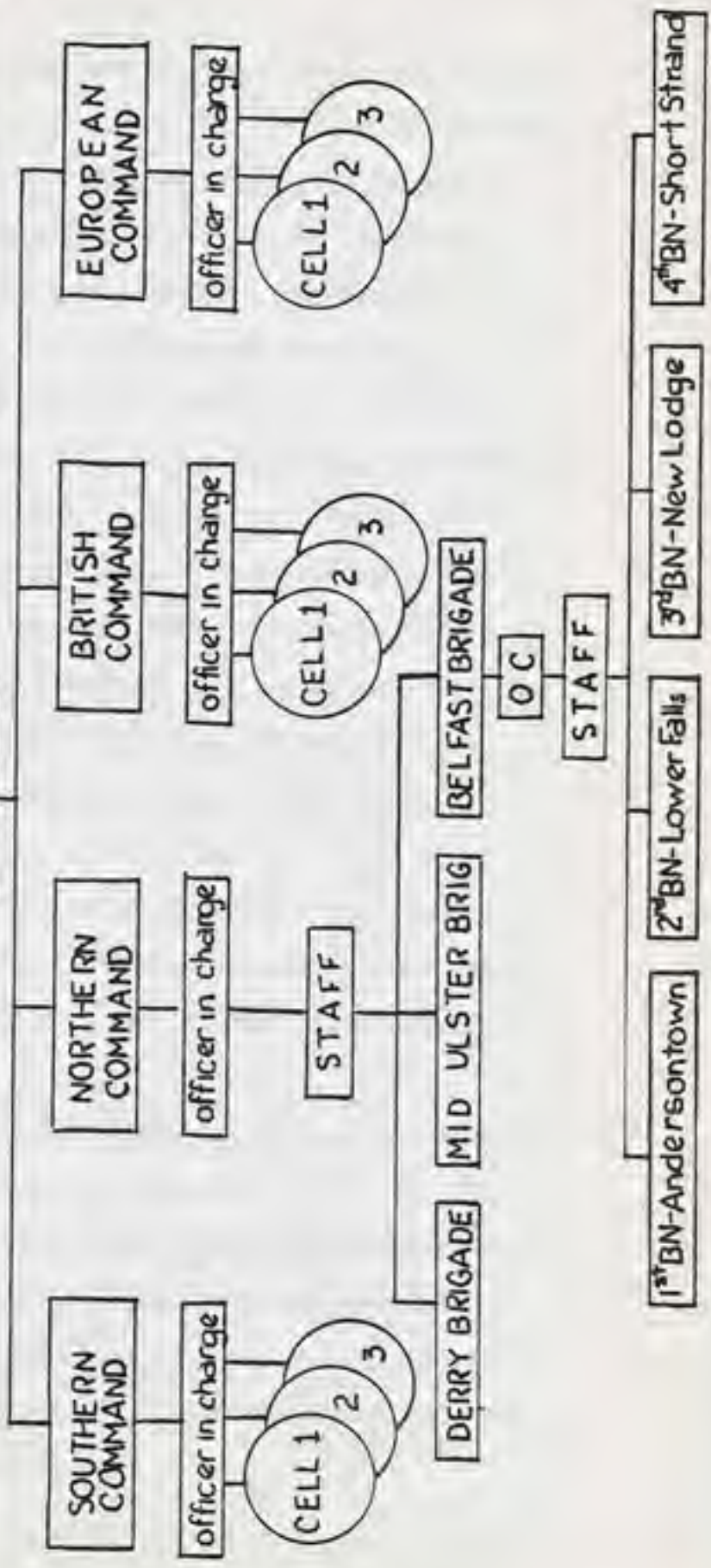
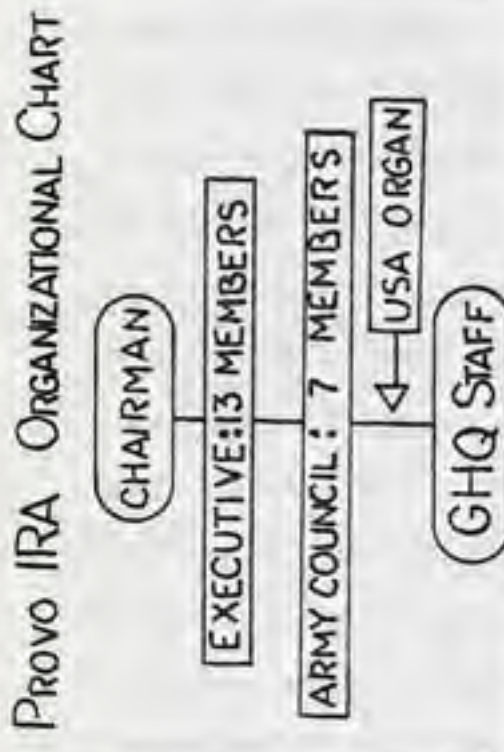
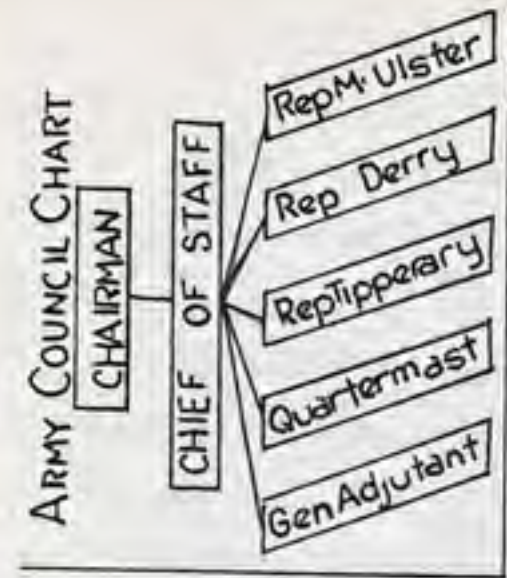
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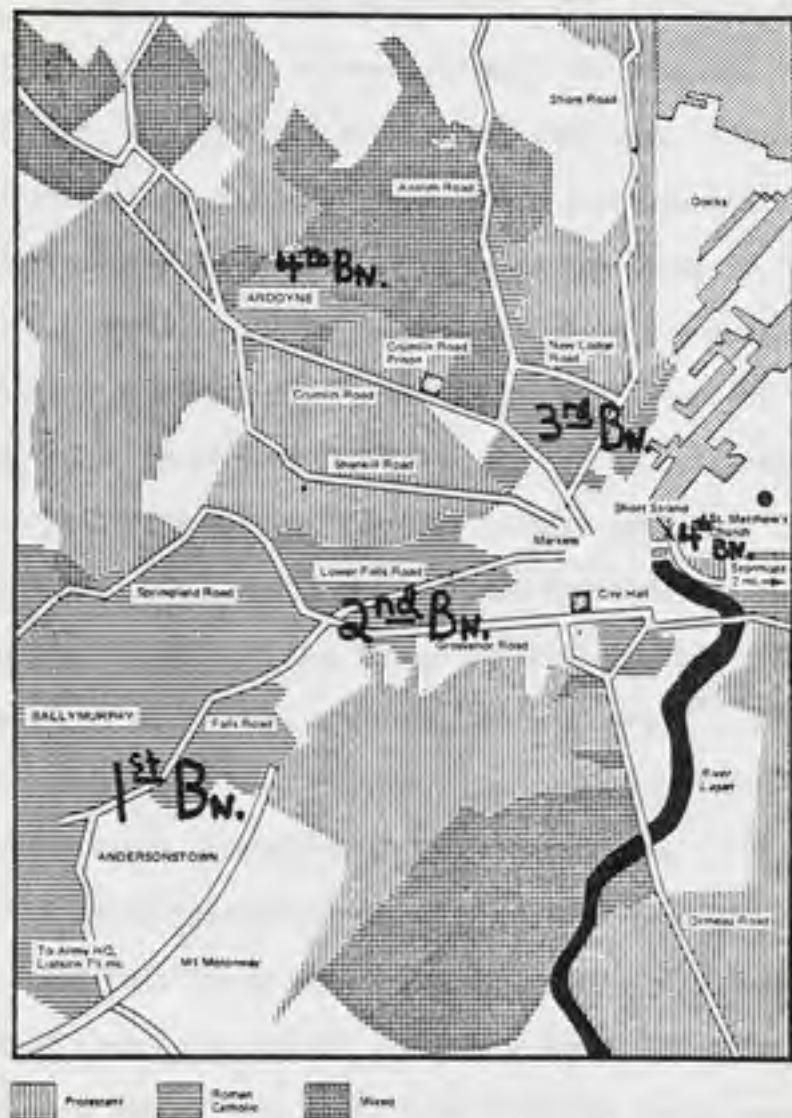


The Provo structure in Belfast was the first to evolve from combining the street units. J. Bowyer Bell wrote that the Provos in Belfast had, by late 1970, "expanded into a real Brigade for the first time in over a generation."⁴⁷ After the initiative in Belfast, it was decided that a full Northern Command should be established. Chief of Staff for the Command was a young, highly respected volunteer from Derry, Martin McGuinness. He assembled a headquarters group of seven men who supervised the organization's three Brigades. The first, most active of the Brigades was in Belfast, led by an old-time militant, Billy McKee. The Brigade was divided into three (later four) Battalions, each centered around inner-city Catholic strongholds in the ghettos. The 1st Battalion was in Upper Falls, Ballymurphy, and Andersontown; Lower Falls and Clonard became the 2nd Battalion's area; North Belfast to the Markets, along with East Belfast and New Lodge Road became the responsibility of the 3rd Battalion. The Short Strand and Ardoyne section of Belfast were originally independent units but were later assimilated into the Provo structure and became the 4th Battalion.

Following Internment, Provo strength in Belfast alone had grown to over 700 Active Service personnel by the end of 1971. A year after that the Belfast Brigade's membership numbered over 1000.⁴⁸ The men on the street level were organized into teams of three to five; all team members usually lived on the same street or on one immediately adjacent. Various teams were united into

FM: Bell, Secret Army p. 374

BELFAST



Source: J. Bowyer Bell, The Secret Army, The IRA 1916-1974 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1970, Revised MIT Press Paperback Edition, 1974)

Belfast

a company, which covered one or more neighborhoods and commanded by a Provo officer and his company staff. Several companies then formed the Battalion covering their section of the city.

The segregated housing patterns that produced the Catholic ghettos proved to be a great strength for the IRA. Bell wrote that with "well defined boundaries, they were closed communities of friends and neighbors and an alien presence was noted and reported at once."⁴⁸ Provo IRA strength had grown by 1972 to virtually control the Catholic ghettos. By the end of 1972, IRS strength in the ghettos had grown to such an extent that in effect they formed an alternative government. "No Go" areas were set up which prohibited entrance to the British army, and the Provos ran many local services; "Partly through intimidation but more through cooperation, the Provos established mail and taxi systems after frightening the orthodox services away."⁴⁹ They allocated public housing, rented houses, collected taxes and ran lucrative drinking clubs, according to the Insight Team.

Tactical initiative was dispersed to company level and lower. All Provo units were instructed to engage "targets of opportunity"⁵⁰ such as sniping at British patrols. Local assassinations and bombings were generally ordered from Battalion or Brigade level. Nationwide strategic bombing campaigns or specified high priority assassination targets were always under the control of GHQ or above.

A good example of the centralized strategic control that governs the IRA came during truce talks between the Provos and the

British in 1975. The British negotiators did not believe the Provo Army Council had control over the bombers in England. The Sunday Times Insight Team wrote the Provos "demonstrated long dist control" when they informed the British Foreign Service Officer that from midnight of January 27, 1975 there would be no more bombings in England, "though there would be plenty until then."⁵² The report goes on to note that until the deadline "there was a fusillade of explosions in London and Manchester...but then silence."⁵³ When James Allen, a leading British official in the negotiations, next met the Provos he said simply, "Point taken."⁵⁴

The second Provo IRA Brigade of the Northern Command was organized in the only other major urban center in Ulster, Londonderry, or Derry as it is known to the Catholics. The Derry Brigade had even more humble beginnings than its Belfast counterpart. Bell wrote that it was initially "created by two or three lads looking for guns."⁵⁵ Traditionally Republican, and the sight of some of the most intense civil rights demonstrations, Derry's Catholic enclaves proved fertile recruiting grounds for both the Provos and the Officials. The Provo Derry Brigade eventually reached a similar numerical strength as Belfast's and was organized in the same manner. One of the original "two or three lads looking for guns" was Martin McGuinness, who became the first O.C. of the Derry Brigade and also the first Chief of Staff of the Northern Command.

The Mid-Ulster Brigade was organized as the only rural unit

under the Northern Command. Most of the IRA units in the countryside remained with the Officials. Nevertheless, a hardcore of older rural guerillas under the leadership of J. B. O'Hagen and Keven Mallon eventually attracted the allegiance of enough men to form a full Brigade.

The Mid-Ulster Brigade was organized among the villages and hamlets in the Northern Irish counties of Fermanagh, Armagh and Tyrone. In all three counties, Catholics form a majority of the population. The area directly across the border in the Free State counties of Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal is also the responsibility of the Mid-Ulster Brigade.

Structurally, the Mid-Ulster Brigade is organized in the same manner as the other two but never reached the same numerical strength. Thus, the Provos were and have remained primarily an urban guerilla army concentrated in the Catholic ghetto of Belfast and Derry. Logically these two cities have been the main battle front in the Provos' war.

In an effort to expand the war and support the Northern units, three other commands were established, but in no case did they ever reach the strength or military activity of the Northern Command. The Southern Command, located in the twenty-six counties of the Irish Republic, mainly consists of a Headquarters Training Staff and Provos from the North taking a rest from the fighting. The main function of the Southern Command is to organize and run training camps for active service personnel. The training camps last only

a few days and recruits are taught how to smuggle weapons across the border and avoid British patrols. Also, the trainees are taught how to handle weapons, lay land mines, and gather intelligence. Finally they are taught the rudiments of rural and urban guerilla tactics—how to set ambushes or conduct a bombing.

Other major duties of the Southern Command are raising money, constructing bombs and distributing Provo propaganda. The major source of money from the South comes through bank and hotel robberies. These operations also double as training missions for recruits because they are less risky, for the inexperienced, than engaging front line British troops. One Provo training officer revealed he led recruits on nine bank and hotel robberies in the South, netting over \$500,000.⁵⁶

Most of the Provos explosives are stored in barns or garages of "Safe Houses" spread throughout the countryside. It is in these "factories" that specialists gather to construct the bombs shipped to the North. These bombmakers never go on actual bombing missions because their talent is considered too valuable to risk in a premature explosion, or capture, or killing by British troops.

The twenty-six counties are more free regarding Republican literature than in Ulster's six counties. Consequently, the Southern Command is also engaged with printing and distributing Provo propaganda. Any news releases or communiques from the Provo Command are usually made through the offices of the Provo

Sinn Féin in Dublin, which continues to be a legal organization in the South.

The Britain Command was established in 1974 when the Executive and the Army Council decided to launch a bombing campaign in England. Peter McMullen*, an ex-British paratrooper, was selected to organize the British Command and coordinate the campaign. According to McMullen in an interview with Boston Globe reporter Andrew Blake, the Command consisted of approximately forty cells, usually of three to five people each. The entire Command never

* McMullen became disillusioned with the IRA and grew tired of leading the life of a guerilla. He decided to resign from the IRA Active Service in 1979 and spend more time with his wife and children. He was sent to the United States on a "quiet" assignment to raise money and purchase weapons while the leadership deliberated his resignation request. While in Arizona, British Intelligence agents tried to assassinate him. He escaped the British agents, but later learned that he had earned the disfavor of the Provo leaders when he refused to kidnap a New York businessman for ransom. Subsequently, he was court martialed in his absence and sentenced to death. He was informed of the decision and, with two organizations trying to kill him, decided to turn himself in to the FBI and expose IRA arms smuggling in the U.S., in exchange for a promise of immunity and protection. However, before finalizing the deal with the FBI he was arrested for illegal weapons purchases by the Treasury Department's Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) bureau. McMullen's case is currently pending in the California courts. In a special six-part series in the Boston Globe last summer, McMullen, who held a variety of positions in the Provo IRA, disclosed the inner workings of its organization. The Globe reporter checked McMullen's story and it is considered an accurate exposé.

exceeded 150 members and most were recruited from England's Irish communities in London and Liverpool. Those Provos in the Britain command that came from Ireland were personally screened by McMullen. He says both men and women were selected and no previous active service was required. He mainly looked for educational background, general demeanor, the way they dressed and whether they seemed nervous when being questioned.⁵⁷ McMullen said:

If they were heavy drinkers or just couldn't hold a drink, I'd reject them. Also, if they looked scuffy or unruly. I wanted people who could blend in with the English, people who looked ordinary and would not be noticed.⁵⁸

After preliminary selection, the cell members were trained at the various Provo camps and then dispersed throughout the mainland under the direct control of McMullen who set up a command Headquarters in the dock section of Liverpool. The overall strategic guidelines were set by the Army Council when he was given the orders to "first bomb England when we say start and stop when we say finish."⁵⁹ It was McMullen's responsibility to pick the actual targets and generally supervise the campaign.

The newest Provo operational group is the European Command. After his success with the Northern Command, Martin McGuinness was appointed by the Army Council as Director of European Operations in February 1975.⁶⁰ The European Command was mainly to operate in West Germany against the British Army on the Rhine (BAOR) because they were supplying reinforcements and replacements for the troops in Northern Ireland. A secondary mission was, when specifically

ordered, to carry out assassinations of British officials in Europe. There is a body of evidence that suggests the Provos European Command is closely associated with a West German terrorist group, the Red Army Faction (RAF, a.k.a. Baden-Meinhoff Gang)*. Although the European Command has carried out at least two assassinations and a few bombings, their activities have been limited. This may be partly due to the fact that McGuinness was arrested in Dublin shortly after he was appointed. Because of his arrest, he never had the opportunity to fully organize the Command and coordinate a campaign. It is probable, therefore, that the IRA leadership on the continent is not very strong. Although this author is not positive of the organizational structure of the European Command, it is likely that it consists of very small cells similar to the Britain Command. It can also be assumed, despite insufficient knowledge, that the numerical strength and military capability of the European Command is extremely small, perhaps no more than fifteen or twenty members, judging from the extent of their operations.

Although no specific "Command" exists in the United States, there are a number of IRA agents and umbrella organizations operating within this country. J. Bowyer Bell wrote: "The response

* The Boston Globe, Associated Press and Der Spiegel (a West German magazine) all reported that the RAF helped plan the bomb assassination of Sir Richard Sykes, British Ambassador to the Hague, in March 1979. Also, it was reported the RAF helped the Provos plan the killings of Lord Mountbatten and 18 British soldiers last August. (See Boston Globe, Sept. 3, 1979)

from America was like nothing since the Troubles (1920's) as all the old Irish-American loyalties and fears surfaced..."⁶¹

The American contribution to the IRA is centered around Irish-American clubs such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians or the NORAID Committee (mentioned above). Under the leadership of Jack McCarthy, John McGowan and Michael Flannery the Irish Northern Aid Committee collected huge sums for Republican purposes.⁶²

These Irish American clubs and organizations are mostly located in the Irish working class neighborhoods of New York City, Chicago and Boston. Passing the hat in a local bar frequented by Irish Americans, ostensibly to help Northern Ireland refugees, is a common occurrence especially around St. Patrick's Day.⁶³

Provo emissaries in the U.S. are responsible directly to the Army Council and GHQ Staff and they do not conduct violent operations. Their mission in the U.S. is to solicit money and purchase weapons. In both areas they are highly successful judging from the numbers of IRA weapons captured by the British Army that can be traced to the United States. One well known failure, however, was the arrest of five Irish Americans in 1973 for illegally purchasing stolen weapons and attempting to smuggle them to the IRA. They were meted terms in a Fort Worth, Texas federal prison for refusing a grand jury's questions about arms shipments from New York City to Dublin.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the IRA men in America have the responsibility of establishing and supervising the trans-Atlantic smuggling routes. Despite recent accusations that the

IRA is a part of a giant international terrorist organization and received most of its support, financial and military, from anti-West, anti-British Arabs, the United States has, in fact, remained the single largest source of revenues and weapons for both the Provos and Officials.* A typical example is McMullen's solicitation of money and purchases of weapons while he worked as a bouncer at Wednesday's, a nightclub on 86th Street in Manhattan. He took in more than \$3000 a week and consistently bought M-16's and M-60's on the black market. The former is the standard U.S. Army assault rifle and the latter the U.S. Army's platoon level machine gun. He also illegally purchased grenades and claymore mines. Over the counter, McMullen legally bought dozens of semi-automatic rifles, shotguns and pistols through commercial gunshops. All these weapons were then smuggled to Ireland aboard trans-Atlantic ships with sympathetic Irish crews.

* Since 1976, when several IRA men were captured with AK-47's, the famous Soviet assault rifle, and RPG-7's, a Soviet anti-tank weapon, there has been much speculation that the Provos were being supplied by the PLO and Libya's Colonel Khadafy. McMullen, in fact, asserts that Khadafy's men have covertly arranged several shipments of arms and ammunition to the Provos. Also, McMullen alleges the Libyan strongman forwards annual loans which may run into the millions, in order to subsidize IRA operations. In addition, there are indications that the March 1979 assassination of Airey Neave, British M.P. and hard-liner on Northern Ireland, was a joint PLO-IRA operation. The suspected connection with West German terrorists is noted above. That there is some international aid for the Provos is certain, but the evidence concerning the amounts, other than from the U.S. remains suggestive and inconclusive.

The present Provisional IRA has been slightly modified since its zenith in the early seventies but it has retained the overall structure. During the summer of 1974 British Intelligence gained limited penetration into the Provos and gathered accurate information on the identity and whereabouts of the leaders.* They shared their knowledge with the Republic of Ireland, which had enough of IRA bank robberies, and was committed to limiting the organization.

Together, the security forces managed to arrest many of the key IRA leaders. Among others Jimmy Drumm, Chairman of the Provo Executive ; Sean MacStiofáin, GHQ Chief of Staff; Martin McGuinness; and four top commanders of the Belfast Brigade were captured.⁶⁵ After a few months, Drumm was released because of insufficient evidence; MacStiofáin was discredited in Provo circles because of a foiled hunger strike; and McGuinness escaped from prison to resume the leadership of the Northern Command.

However, between 1974 and 1977 a state of confusion existed in the Provo ranks due to the shuffling leadership. "Chaos

* A damaging security leak had occurred in the Provo structure and the Army Council suspected for a variety of reasons that the informer was Eamon Malloy, the Belfast Brigade Quartermaster. After the "most elaborate court martial the Provisionals ever staged"⁶⁶ which lasted five hours, Malloy was found guilty and sentenced to death. The next day he was executed with a single bullet through the head. It has since come to light that the Provos made a mistake and that, indeed, Malloy was not an informer.

reigned,"⁶⁷ according to Andrew Blake, the Globe's investigative reporter on the IRA. He goes on to say, "Units that formerly had to obtain permission from superiors to conduct operations took matters into their own hands, even at street corner level."⁶⁸ Due to arrests, confused leadership and the implementation of some of the civil rights demands, support for the IRA waned, highlighted by the drop in Provo membership. The Belfast Brigade, for example went from over 1000 men in 1972 down to slightly more than 200 by 1977. The overall membership of the Provos dwindled to about 700 active service personnel in 1977 and the numbers have remained at that level.⁶⁹ The new leadership was a synthesis of the older Provos from the IRA of the 1950's and '60's, and younger ones vetted in the battles since 1969.*

Two of the '50's men are Dave O'Connell, perhaps the best known Provo and survivor of the '56 Border Campaign; and Rory O'Brady, the leader (he was 21 at the time) of a famous raid on a British army barracks in 1953.^{70**} O'Connell is a member of the Executive and O'Brady is the Chairman, and doubles as the President of Sein Féin. The Executive also includes left-wing Republicans. Best known is Gary Adams, 31, a graduate of

* This section describing the current Provo leadership is derived entirely from David Bundy's articles in the London Sunday Times "Inside the IRA."

** For a full account of the raid, see Insight's Ulster, pp. 11-14.

Trinity College and a former bartender. Adams is also the Vice President of Sinn Féin. O'Connell, O'Brady and Adams are considered the intellectual leaders and main political spokesmen for the Provos.⁷¹ Interestingly, O'Connell and O'Brady are devout Catholics from the traditional radical Republican mold, while Adams is a self-avowed Marxist in the Socialist traditions of Connolly.

Filling out the lower ranks of the Provo leadership is a similar variety of political persuasions. Billy McKee, former commander of the Belfast Brigade, is Chairman of the Army Council. McKee joined the movement in 1938, and as Council Chairman, is primarily responsible for Provo strategy. David Blundy said of McKee: "He is indisputably the head of the Provisionals."⁷² McKee is considered a moderate, but immediately below him are three hard-line traditional Republicans who would "feel politically at home on the extreme right of the Tory party."⁷³ Seamus Twomey, a '50's man who escaped by helicopter from Mountjoy Prison, was elected to the Council and appointed GHQ Chief of Staff. J. B. O'Hagen, Twomey's best friend, and Joe Cahill, the Provos' "elder statesman"⁷⁴ are the other hard-liners. Eamon Doherty, 39, former British paratrooper; Kevin Mallon, the best known Provo rural guerilla; and the Provo sojourner, Martin Mc Guinness are considered the younger Marxist-oriented members of the Army Council and GHQ staff.⁷⁵

Under this leadership the Provos closed ranks and, in general, tightened up the organization. They kept the shell structure of Commands, Brigades, etc., but reverted to the original IRB tenets of strict control and harsh discipline. All recruits are rigorously investigated and those accepted are organized at the street level into very small, very tight cells. In addition, the cells are dispersed so that one cell has no knowledge of the members of another. Reportedly, the Provo morale, but not their numbers, has been raised and the organization is much less open to British infiltration. The Provo IRA has not changed since these recent modifications.

CONCLUSION

Two conclusions are readily drawn from this analysis of the IRA 1969-79. First, the IRA militarists refused to be subordinate to the politicians. Second, the Provo IRA has developed into highly centralized urban guerilla army of small local cells. Thus, once again the IRA has not employed any single theory of organization but rather meshed parts of all. And again, they have contradicted the fatal warning of both Lenin and Mao.

The Irish Civil War itself was caused by the split between IRA politicians and militants. The IRA never gave up its ideals until after the '56 Border Campaign. After reading Lenin and Mao, the leftist leadership decided to politically agitate the

masses through elections and other peaceful means. However, their new strategy of ballet over bullet did not drum up support. Organizationally they had been reduced to nothing. They attempted to mobilize the masses by doing Mao's "minute and detailed work" but the effort failed. A conservative Catholic Ireland only pointed out how little support a Marxist IRA really had.

Many Republicans were upset at the deviation from the traditional goals of achieving a 32-county Republic. The cracks in the organization appeared early but the situation did not come to a head until 1969. The delegates at the Annual Army Convention formally split over the abstentionist issue, and help for Northern ghettos besieged by Protestant reaction to a growing civil rights movement.

The Officials, in a conscious shift of strategy subordinated themselves to the NICRA. Despite accusations by Protestant hardliners, the IRA never heavily influenced nor in any way controlled the NICRA. Thus this revolutionary organization, supposedly ^a Leninist-style elite vanguard of the Irish national movement, subordinated themselves to a broad based political reform movement. In a sense MacStiofáin was correct. At that point the Officials ceased to be a revolutionary organization by definition once they accepted the existence of the State, and ceased in their violent attempts to destroy it.

The Provos, however, refused to accept the legitimacy of the State and vowed to continue in their efforts to unite Ireland.

Also, the Northern Units swore to pursue their historical role as defender of the Catholic ghettos. In other words, the Provos have remained in the traditional Irish revolutionary mold,

As Mao predicted, the debate between politicians and militants would lead to a split. And, indeed, it did. However, Mao predicted a split would lead to defeat. In the case of the IRA 1969-79, the split between the militarists and politicians had the opposite effect. Instead of losing support, the Provos, after a slow start, accelerated into a full-blown urban guerilla army. In fact, the Provos pursued little or no political activity. In the spirit of Guevara and Marighella, the Provos wrote their statements with a bullet.

Structurally, the Provos are unique. They evolved from combining dispersed locally organized street units into a strong but small urban guerilla force. Contrary to Marighella the urban guerillas were not fragmented but unified under a strict chain of command with specific areas of operation. Mao perhaps is most in accord with the Provo chain of command's concept of centralizing strategic control, but dispersing tactical initiatives.

The central theater of the war has remained the streets of Belfast and Londonderry. In the close-knit, clannish ghetto neighborhoods, the Provos could only exist if they were indigenous to that particular area. This point, however, was lost on Ché. He refused to believe that revolutions must come from the

people of a specific country and cannot be imported (or for that matter, exported.)

Some reforms and surgical repression in the mid '70's cut the strength of the Provos considerably but the rebels rebounded with a tight compartmentalized organization similar to Marighella's Firing Groups. However, they were still not fragmented, but rather came under more control from above. The present organization is not easy to join, unlike Marighella's urban guerillas. The Provos have more in common with their historical predecessor, the IRB, than they do with any theory of revolutionary organization.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 6

ORGANIZATION: CASE 3

IRA- 1969-79

- 1 Sunday Times Insight Team, Ulster (London: Deutsch Ltd., 1972), p. 21.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid., p. 22.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid., p. 23.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., p. 24.
- 9 Ibid., p. 25.
- 10 Ibid., p. 26.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Richard Rose, Northern Ireland, A Time of Choice, (Washington, D. C., American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Foreign Affairs Study 33, 1976) p. 21.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid., p. 12-13 and footnote, p. 14.
- 16 Insight Team, p. 40.
- 17 Rose, p. 22.
- 18 Richard W. Mansbach, ed. Northern Ireland: Half a Century of Partition (New York: Facts on File, Inc. 1973) p. 30.
- 19 Ibid.

- 20 Insight Team, p. 45.
- 21 Ibid., p. 47.
- 22 Ibid., p. 45-6.
- 23 Rose, p. 51.
- 24 Ibid., p. 50.
- 25 Insight Team, p. 46.
- 26 Ibid., p. 53.
- 27 J. Bowyer Bell, The Secret Army: IRA 1916-1974 (Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1970, revised edition 1974), p. 358.
- 28 Insight Team, p. 89.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p. 92.
- 31 Ibid., p. 93.
- 32 Ibid., p. 192.
- 33 Sean MacStiofain, Memoirs of a Revolutionary in Ireland, (Edinburgh, Scotland: R & R Clark, Ltd., 1975), p. 134.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., p. 136.
- 37 Insight Team, p. 194.
- 38 MacStiofain, p. 137.
- 39 Insight Team, p. 195.
- 40 MacStiofain, p. 138.
- 41 Insight Team, p. 194.
- 42 MacStiofain, p. 138.

- 43 Insight Team, p. 194.
- 44 MacStiofain, p. 148.
- 45 Insight Team, p. 195.
- 46 Ibid., p. 195.
- 47 Bell, p. 375.
- 48 Ibid., p. 394.
- 49 Insight Team, p. 256.
- 50 Andrew Blake, "Secrets of an IRA Terrorist", Boston Globe
(Five part series: Part 2; 3 Sept. '79), p. 2.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Bell, p. 374.
- 56 Blake, part 2, p. 1.
- 57 Ibid. (Part 4; 5 Sept. '79) p. 2.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid. (Part 3; 4 Sept. '79) p. 1.
- 61 Bell, p. 373.
- 62 Ibid., p. 392.
- 63 Blake (Part 3; 4 Sept. '79) p. 1.
- 64 Bell, p. 392.
- 65 David Blundy, "Inside the IRA", London Sunday Times, (3 July
1977) p. 17.
- 66 Ibid.

67 Blake (Part 1; 2 Sept. '79), p. 12.

68 Ibid.

69 Blundy, p. 17.

70 Insight Team, p. 12.

71 Blundy, p. 17.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

- Padraig Pearse

Only two possible conclusions exist from this analysis: First, Ireland's struggle and the IRA are so unique they fall outside the realm of revolutionary guerilla theory and therefore cannot be considered as a test case. Second, the IRA failure to conform to organizational theories, despite their success and persistence, is such a gross aberration that it calls into question the validity of each and all the theories.

Ireland's struggle for national independence is not unique. On the contrary, it is typical of the majority of struggles which define themselves as guerilla revolutions. Historically, Britain's relationship with Ireland has been one of conquerer and conquered. British soldiers did not just arrive in 1969, but have been the main enforcers of colonial rule for over 800 years. From 1169 a.d. to the present there has been the consistent use of British troops in some part of Ireland to support the existing regimes. Robert FitzStephen, King Richard, Lord Mountjoy, Cromwell, and the infamous atrocities at Drogheda and Tyrone are but the bloody highlights of the earlier age.

The less bloody but perhaps more effective means of British rule in Ireland has been the plantings of Protestant colonialists and conquering soldiers. Their purpose was specifically designed

to suppress the native Irish Catholics. The settler/conquerers literally stole the land of the native peasants and oppressed them to a level of total despair with such devices as the Acts of Supremacy, the Penal Code and the Cromwellian Act of Settlement.

Is this situation unique to Ireland? Of course not. Unfortunately, it is only too typical of the world's colonial era. The Protestant Ascendency is qualitatively no different than the French "Colons" in Algeria and Vietnam; the Whites in Rhodesia; the Afrikaners in South Africa or the Portugese in Angola, or any other imperial relationship. So, too, the British Army and its adjunct police forces are no different than any other colonial gendarmes supporting an illegitimate state solely through the use of force. In fact, the majority of guerilla revolutions since WWII have more in common with Ireland and the IRA than with Lenin and the Communist Party. Therefore, theories on guerilla revolution are applicable to the IRA.

In response to the long history of colonial rule in Ireland, it is not surprising to see a national resistance movement develop among the once free and proud Celtic tribes. Celtic King Art of MacMurrough and his guerilla warriors typified the early resistance fighters. Although unsuccessful, dispersed, and with few weapons, these early fighters established a tradition of persistent resistance to colonial rule. Uprisings flared with the birth of each new generation of Irish men.

Each successive rebellious organization departed from the

Celtic rebellions objective of a return to the old ways and took a revolutionary posture: The United Irishmen, Young Irelanders, Fenians, IRB, Volunteers, IRA, and finally the Provos. The Republican tradition has never been broken.

None of these organizations wholly conformed to any theory of revolutionary organization. At times they employed aspects of all the theories but at other times they were in direct contradiction. The IRA is an aberration in theories of revolutionary guerilla organization and its very existence disputes their validity.

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