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**Colonel Dan Bryan and the evolution of  
Irish Military Intelligence, 1919 -1945.**

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ASU</b>	<b>Active Service Unit</b>
<b>B1H</b>	<b>MI5's Irish Section</b>
<b>BOAC</b>	<b>British Overseas Air Corporation</b>
<b>BTNI</b>	<b>British Troops Northern Ireland</b>
<b>CID</b>	<b>Criminal Investigation Department</b>
<b>D/I</b>	<b>Director of Intelligence</b>
<b>G2</b>	<b>Irish Military Intelligence (post 1936)</b>
<b>IRA</b>	<b>Irish Republican Army</b>
<b>MI5</b>	<b>British Intelligence Concerned with State Security</b>
<b>MI6</b>	<b>British Intelligence Concerned with Espionage</b>
<b>MI9</b>	<b>British Intelligence Concerned with organising escape attempts.</b>
<b>NID</b>	<b>Naval Intelligence Division (British)</b>
<b>OSS</b>	<b>Office of Strategic Services (American)</b>
<b>SIS</b>	<b>Supplementary Intelligence Service (Irish)</b>
<b>SOE</b>	<b>Special Operations Executive(British)</b>

# INTRODUCTION

## Colonel Dan Bryan and the evolution of Irish Military Intelligence, 1919 -1945.

In the context of contemporary Irish History Colonel Dan Bryan has played a significant, but controversial role in a period which has been well documented but where he has largely gone unnoticed. The aim of this thesis is twofold; to examine the life and career of Colonel Dan Bryan and in the process to give the reader an accurate depiction of the Irish Military Intelligence organisation from its foundation up to 1945. The aims are compatible and lend themselves to each other. An in depth analysis of Dan Bryan's character and the role he played within the intelligence organisation serves to illuminate much about the organisation itself.

Dan Bryan was born on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1900 in Dunbell a small rural townland near Gowran in County Kilkenny. He lived there with his widowed Grandmother Bridget and his parents John and Margaret. Dan Bryan was the first born of a large family. He had fourteen younger brothers and sisters. These included Walter, Richard, James, John, Mary, Maggie, Thomas, Patrick, Ellen, Michael, Bridget, Paddy, Steven and Nelly. His father John inherited the large five hundred acre family farm which Dan worked on occasionally with his brothers and sisters. At the turn of the century the Bryan family were financially secure. Dan Bryan's grandfather, after whom he was named, died aged forty eight in 1879. This left the running of the farm to his wife Bridget which she did with great resolve.<sup>1</sup> By 1901 the Bryan's could afford to keep three farm hands and one

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<sup>1</sup> According to Dan Bryan's nephew Bartley Bryan, Bridget Bryan ran the farm with an Iron hand. Interview with author  
20-09-98, Dunbell Co. Kilkenny.

domestic servant. This changed significantly as Bridget left the running of the farm to her son John. From 1901 to 1911 the number of children in the family had increased from just Dan to seven more brothers and sisters. John was a strong believer in education and insisted that all his children should receive schooling. This created a large financial burden on the family income and meant that by 1911 the Bryans could only afford one farm hand but were putting four children through school.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the Bryan children were very bright. Dan although the oldest son, because of his intellect and the financial situation at home, was encouraged by his father to pursue a career in medicine. At the age of sixteen Dan Bryan matriculated from the local Christian Brother school in Kilkenny through the National University of Ireland. He entered U.C.D. in October 1916 to study medicine, although he wanted to study law.<sup>3</sup> He moved from the family home in Kilkenny to a series of rented rooms on the South Circular Road and eventually settled on the Rathmines Road in Dublin. While studying he was meticulous with his money and kept a daily cashbook of all his expenditure which included his return train fare to Kilkenny once a month.<sup>4</sup>

Bryan was a student in a Dublin with a changing atmosphere. Dublin was experiencing the aftermath of the Easter Rising and change of heart of the Dublin public following the executions of the rebel leaders.<sup>5</sup> Coupled with this, Universities were proving to be a hotbed for the seeds of new underground societies. New cultural revolution societies and some older militant societies such as the Gaelic League, the Irish

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<sup>2</sup> See 1901 and 1911 Census for County Kilkenny, Barony of Gowran, Dunbell. National Archives Dublin; henceforth referenced as N.A. Dublin.

<sup>3</sup> Dan wanted to study law rather than medicine according to his nephew Bartley Bryan. Interview with author 20-09-98.

<sup>4</sup> Student cashbook (UCD Archives, Bryan papers, P71/1, P71/2).

<sup>5</sup> According to the *Old Kilkenny Review* which published an obituary of Dan Bryan who had been one of their contributors, he was present in College in Dublin during Easter week which would suggest he studied and sat the matrik exams in Dublin before he entered UCD in October 1916.

Ellen Prendergast, "Obituary Colonel Daniel Bryan" in *Old Kilkenny Review*, v3, no.2 (second series 1985) p. 227.

Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.) and now the newly reorganised Irish Volunteers were enjoying new leases of life in student surroundings. Despite Bryan's middle class land owning and catholic background it was not surprising that during his student years in Dublin he was involved in the political and militant struggle for Irish independence. As a seventeen year old in 1917 he joined the Irish Volunteers. Although Dan Bryan did not come from a military family, like most of the leading intelligence staff he fought in the War of Independence (1919-21). It was during this period, whilst serving in the Dublin Brigade, that he was introduced to the world of espionage and intelligence gathering. His unit at one stage worked in collaboration with Michael Collins infamous "Squad". This thesis examines the birth of Irish Military Intelligence during the War of Independence, together with Bryan's own promotion through the ranks and his early involvement with the intelligence department.

After the signing of the treaty, Bryan enlisted as an officer in the new Free State Army. He played a significant role in the civil war years, leading to his promotion at the age of only twenty three, in February 1924, to the rank of Captain. As the civil war ensued he found himself working directly in military intelligence (The Second Bureau) which was one of many official intelligence agencies at the time. As the new Free State emerged from the civil war, psychologically scathed and resting on shaky foundations, Dan Bryan exerted a calming influence. He established a uniform defence policy for the state and helped prevent the destabilising affects of the Army Mutiny in 1924. Although the scaling down of the army and the dissatisfaction of army officers with the Army Council were the main causes of the affair, the mutineers were greatly encouraged by the support of a faction of the Cumann Na nGaedhael government. The Army Mutiny topic has been covered in detail before, however this thesis shall examine the intelligence war which took place between the mutineers and the intelligence department. Dan Bryan was deeply involved with monitoring the actions of the mutineers and was closely associated

with the members of the Army Council who resigned as a result of the affair. Despite his close affiliation Bryan managed to survive the Army Mutiny and went on to become a formidable driving force behind the Second Bureau Military Intelligence Department in its infancy.

Throughout the early 1920's Military Intelligence managed to establish itself as the premier agency for gathering information. Dan Bryan and the network of informers and agents he built up made it very difficult for the defeated republican IRA to survive. Military Intelligence due to its success during the Civil War period (1922-23) not only managed to maintain its jurisdiction over external foreign secret affairs but also internal civil affairs. This brought the organisation in contact with the republican IRA and placed it in direct competition with the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the secret civil police force at the time. This strenuous relationship lasted up until late 1925 when a decision was enacted that gave the newly established Garda Siochanna control over all political surveillance, which included taking possession of all political files, informers and agents held by Military Intelligence.<sup>6</sup>

During the period 1926 to 1938 Irish Military Intelligence now known as G2, was ordered to concentrate solely on foreign and defensive issues concerning Ireland. The years 1926 to 1938 have been described as marking a form of limbo for G2.<sup>7</sup> Despite this, Irish Military Intelligence commanders assumed a role which had many more functions and greater scope than their European counterparts. Its officers who were highly regarded within Irish Army circles were now the chief actors in determining strategic planning for the whole army. Dan Bryan in 1928 transferred to the Defence Plans Division which concentrated on forming an official defence policy. He was also involved

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<sup>6</sup> Over 30,000 files were handed over to the Garda in 1926. Record from the Bryan papers (UCD Archives, Bryan papers, P71/404).

<sup>7</sup> See Brian Martin, *The role of Irish Military Intelligence During World War Two*, M.A. Maynooth, 1994, p. 4.



in establishing a three way public air service between London, Dublin and Belfast.<sup>8</sup> In 1930 he accompanied the Irish delegation to the Imperial Conference in order to establish a unified coast watching service with Britain.<sup>9</sup> Between 1931 and 1934 Dan Bryan worked in the office of the Chief of Staff. In 1935 he transferred back to the G2 Intelligence department which he unofficially never lost contact with. In 1932 he was present when Fianna Fail came to power for the first time amid fears by the public of a revolt within the Army. Dan Bryan was involved mainly with these issues but he also involved himself in training and lecturing other officers on Intelligence Staff courses.

In 1936 the then Director of G2, Colonel Liam Archer had forecast a major war looming and had warned government officials but to little affect<sup>10</sup>. On the 3 September 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Ireland declared her intention of remaining neutral, something which had only in reality been feasible since the release of the treaty ports by the British in 1938. The ports of Cobh, Lough Swilly and Berehaven were to play a major role in Ireland's Emergency history. At different stages throughout the war Ireland's stance of neutrality brought veiled promises of a united Ireland from both British and German sides.<sup>11</sup> The British desire to reoccupy the treaty ports grew as the war progressed and fear of a British invasion was entertained as a realistic threat. 1939 saw the stepping up of the IRA's S-Plan bombing campaign of mainland Britain. This increased fears in British war cabinet circles of possible IRA collaboration with the Germans and the formation of a fifth column. On the other side the German secret service the Abwehr did make attempts to contact the IRA during the war. This made Ireland and especially Irish Military Intelligence G2 who were partly responsible for the country's

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<sup>8</sup> Development of Civil Aviation, 1930 (UCD Archives, Bryan papers, P71/7).

<sup>9</sup> Imperial Conference, 1930 (UCD Archives, Bryan papers, P71/8).

<sup>10</sup> Copy of Archer to Brennan, 2 Feb. 1936, with Brennan to minister for defence, 22 Sept. 1936 (UCD Archives, MacEntee papers, P67/191 [3]).

<sup>11</sup> See Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland During the Emergency 1939-45* (Dublin, 1972).

defence very wary of both Allies and Axis powers encroaching on the state's policy of neutrality.

With the outbreak of war, G2's role and staff increased immediately and the organisation obtained a similar powerful position to that which it held at the close of the Civil War. G2's role expanded, taking over or being included in much of the security operations of the State. Its principal responsibilities according to Bryan included the

*development of the air and marine intelligence organisation, foreign armies, air and marine movements, censorship and control of communications, signals detection and control, publicity and press relations and military and security problems with various countries.*<sup>12</sup>

The enlistment of Defence Forces personnel reached 40,000 at its height with 98,000 in the reserve.<sup>13</sup> G2's staff numbers like the rest of the defence forces expanded rapidly and by 1940 had formed a supplementary intelligence service (S.I.S) which operated in the southern half of the country.<sup>14</sup> Dan Bryan was second in command to Liam Archer, the Director of Military Intelligence up to 1941 when Bryan was promoted to head of G2, a position which he held until March 1952. Bryan oversaw the running of all G2 operations and is accredited with the success of the organisation during the Emergency. The success of its counter espionage department was impressive. It is thought that all German agents bar two were captured within a few days of arrival. G2 also managed to crack some German codes. The Combat Intelligence department of G2 planned and prepared well in case of invasion, although this hypothesis was never tested. G2 played a large part in the strict censorship of radio, newspapers, speeches, post and other information media that were available at the time. The then Minister for Co-

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<sup>12</sup> Taken from a lecture summary sheet given by Dan Bryan on "Military Intelligence 1939-1945", 16 Feb 1983. Quoted in Eunan O' Halpin, "Aspects of Intelligence" in *Irish Sword*, xix, no. 75&76 (The Emergency 1939-45, 1993), p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> See Patrick Keatinge, *A Place Among The Nations* (Dublin, 1978), p. 90.

<sup>14</sup> Eunan O' Halpin, "Aspects of Intelligence" in *Irish Sword*, xix, no. 75&76 (The Emergency 1939-45, 1993), p. 62.

ordination of Defensive Measures, Frank Aitken worked closely with G2 in applying their successful strict censorship scheme. Censorship played a vital role in the political juggling game President De Valera was playing with all the belligerents at the time. Invasion of Irish airspace and waters were made by both sides, but its extent was hidden from the general public. Similarly the Irish public was not informed of the atrocities Hitler was committing at the time on mainland Europe. Bryan's censorship department and other government censorship bodies managed successfully to isolate the country from outside political influences other than the approved propaganda.

On the other hand Bryan has been particularly criticised for favouring the allies cause, despite Ireland's neutral stance. His contacts with British MI5 and the American OSS during the Emergency have given credence to the description of Ireland's neutral policy as that of "friendly neutrality". The major role Bryan played in co-operating with British Intelligence has been further revealed with the recent release of MI5 files on the operations of their Irish Section during this period. The final chapters deal with Dan Bryan's controversial dealings with MI5 and British agents working in Ireland at the time. It also discusses the possibility of Irish envoys and foreign diplomats who were possibly used as spies for both the Irish and American governments at the time. Despite Bryan's co-operation, after the war both the British and Irish press bodies portrayed Ireland as taking a pro-nazi line.

With the conclusion of the war Bryan remained in charge of G2 and was involved in the scaling down of the organisation and fitting it for a peacetime role. With the outbreak of the Cold War he conducted studies on the U.S. and the then U.S.S.R and Ireland's position was examined in the event of another global conflict erupting. In 1951 he visited a series of U.S. bases in mainland Europe. The following year he stepped down as Director of Intelligence and was appointed the Commandant of the Military College.

He was involved in giving staff courses and training many intelligence officers as he had done in the 1930's. In 1956 he retired and was appointed to the reserve.

Bryan's career in military intelligence reflects the highs and lows of the department. His work on the periphery of the department in its infancy and his early enlistment as a junior officer in the department reflects the similar early development of Military Intelligence during the War of Independence(1919-1921). Bryan's movement to the fore of the organisation during the post Civil War years (1923-25) sees the department become a well organised professional body, distinguishing itself as the premier intelligence agency in the state. Similarly the demise of the department following the removal of its internal role against subversion sees Bryan move back into the shadows of the organisation while taking up another military position. His re-emergence in 1935 as Deputy Director and eventual promotion to Intelligence Director in 1941 mirrors the re-birth of the department in the lead up to the Second World War. His contribution as Director sees the department reclaim much of the power it had lost. Therefore Bryan's military career is a good benchmark from which to study the evolution of the military intelligence department and the fact that his career was filled with mutinies, plots and major state threatening situations is an indication that life in the department was far from dull.

Life after intelligence was far from dreary for Bryan. He himself was very interested in history and politics and got involved in many historical societies and conferences. He was involved in the Irish Historical Society and gave lectures at some of their meetings. He also campaigned for an Irish military history museum, something which has yet to be achieved and wrote extensively on Irish military matters for the Military History Society of Ireland which he founded in 1949. In later years Bryan became disillusioned with Irish politics. He wrote about its problems and gave his own

political views on Irish history.<sup>15</sup> Through this study of the topics mentioned above the reader will not only find an informative guide to the workings of Irish Military Intelligence but also gain an insight into the intriguing character that was Dan Bryan.

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<sup>15</sup>See Commandant Lang's introduction to the Bryan papers (UCD Archives, Bryan papers, P71).

## CHAPTER 1

### THE BIRTH OF IRISH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE 1917-21

Irish Military Intelligence was born in the face of British Intelligence mobilisation during 1919. The guerrilla nature of the war the IRA was fighting meant that if was to succeed, an effective intelligence system was of paramount importance. An intelligence and counter intelligence system had to be established to eliminate informants and spies and to determine what targets to hit. Before 1919 Irish Military Intelligence did not exist. There had been a pre 1916 Rising intelligence operation, put into effect by James Connolly and Thomas McDonagh. It operated around Beggars Bush Barracks and Dublin Castle, but this network ceased after the rising.<sup>1</sup> It was not until the political and military machinery of the Republican movement came under attack, that any constructive attempt was made to organise an Intelligence system. The Intelligence Department whose initial function was to protect the underground republican movement, was a product of the Republican Volunteer organisation.

The Irish Volunteers were founded in 1913, but split over John Redmond's decision to support the British in the First World War. By 1917, those who were left behind became the military wing of the republican movement, and at some undetermined point became known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The Volunteers came under the covert control of the IRB which used them as the basis for the 1916 rising. The force was suppressed by the authorities after the rising but it re-emerged in 1917 as the paramilitary wing of the new Republican movement. It grew in size alongside Sinn Féin and expanded during the conscription crisis of 1918, although the numbers contracted slightly after the

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 24 reference 37.

crisis had passed.<sup>2</sup> The stature of Republican Volunteer leaders grew after many of them were wrongly arrested by the authorities for involvement in an imaginary “German Plot”.<sup>3</sup> Other factors increased support for the Volunteers. John Hanley suggests that the half hearted coercion methods introduced by the British were a determining factor.<sup>4</sup>

Although popular support was growing for Sinn Féin and the Volunteers, the internal relationship between the political and military wing of the Republican movement was not clear cut. Theoretically control of the Volunteers passed from the Volunteers own elected executive, to the Dáil Minister for Defence Cathal Brugha, when the Dáil first came into existence in January 1919.<sup>5</sup> On 10 April 1919, Eamon de Valera told the Dáil that “the minister of national defence is of course in close association with the voluntary military forces”. This carefully worded statement suggested that the Volunteers were “closely associated” rather than subordinate to the Dáil minister. Unlike de Valera, Brugha wanted a more controlling Dáil influence. On August 20 1919, he proposed that all Dáil deputies and all Volunteers should take the same oath of allegiance to the state. Contained in this oath was a recognition of the Dáil as the government of the Irish Republic, and a pledge of allegiance to support the Dáil. The Dáil ministers took the oath and it appears that the Volunteer executive agreed to recommend acceptance at the next Volunteer convention. However due to the War of Independence it was too risky to call a convention to alter the Volunteer constitution. Instead representatives of local units were

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<sup>2</sup> Kevin B. Nowlan “Dáil Eireann and the Army: unity in division”, in Desmond Williams et al. *The Irish Struggle 1916-26* (London 1966), pp 67-77.

<sup>3</sup> F. S. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (New York, 1971), pp 395-396.

<sup>4</sup> John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

invited to signify their approval or disapproval of the oath. The majority of them accepted it eventually, which was undoubtedly a considerable concession to Brugha.<sup>6</sup>

Four groups vied for control of military policy throughout the War of Independence. The Dáil, the IRB, Volunteer GHQ and local IRA commanders. Cathal Brugha as Dáil Minister for Defence occasionally tried to influence military strategy. Bold military gestures such as the attempted capture of Lord French and the burning of the Custom House appear to stem from a political rather than a military perspective. Although Brugha and the Dáil ministers allocated some funding to the Volunteers and reported on their activities, they did not interfere with its running throughout the War of Independence. Kevin B. Nowlan notes that the consultations which took place between the Cabinet, the Ministry of Defence and Volunteer Headquarters is unknown.<sup>7</sup> The link between the Volunteers and the Dáil is reinforced by its dual members. Richard Mulcahy was Chief of Staff of the IRA and head of volunteer General Headquarters(GHQ), was also an elected member of Dáil Eireann. Similarly, Michael Collins was both Dáil Minister for Finance and simultaneously Director of IRA Intelligence and sat on the volunteer executive. Collins position meant that although as Director of Intelligence he was supposedly subordinate to his Minister for Defence, Cathal Brugha, at the same time he held the purse strings from which Brugha could spend, in his capacity as Minister for Finance. These complexities lead to confusion and conflict, but by and large, the Volunteers saw themselves as independent of Dáil control.

The secret IRB organisation was small, but had many prominent members in high positions who saw themselves as players in determining military decisions. Until the IRB

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<sup>6</sup> Kevin B. Nowlan "Dáil Eireann and the Army: unity in division", in Desmond Williams et al. *The Irish Struggle 1916-26*, (London 1966) p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* p. 73.



constitution was changed in 1919, they had maintained that the President of the IRB was by right the President of the Irish Republic. Although this claim was dropped, they still maintained a strong interest in determining military policy. The IRB contained Michael Collins as its leader, Richard Mulcahy the Volunteers Chief of Staff and also Liam Lynch. Lynch played a major role in urging the Volunteers to intensify attacks on Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks and British military installations in order to secure arms.<sup>8</sup>

The day to day running of the Volunteers remained in the hands of the full time officers of the Volunteer General Headquarters (GHQ).<sup>9</sup> GHQ was the administrative centre of the Volunteers and was established at the beginning of 1918.<sup>10</sup> It was based in a network of safe houses in Dublin under the command of the Volunteer Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy. The other leading officers were Michael Collins, Adjutant General, Director of Organisations and Director of Intelligence. J.J. O'Connell, Assistant Chief of Staff. Seán MacMahon, Quartermaster General. Dick McKee, Director of Training and Commander of the Dublin Brigade. Rory O'Connor, Director of Engineering and Piaras Béaslaí, Editor of *An t-óglach*.<sup>11</sup> GHQ sought to regulate Volunteer activity throughout the country. In reality they were not in a position to influence policy outside Dublin. Many rural IRA commanders resented attempts at control and interference from GHQ. They did not take much notice of standard orders and acted independently of GHQ. This was especially relevant in the case of the South Tipperary Brigade.<sup>12</sup> GHQ to a lesser extent experienced some friction from Dublin Brigade officers who ironically felt aggrieved over their lack of freedom in comparison with the country Brigades. It was in

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid p. 72.

<sup>9</sup> John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, p. 345.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p. 342.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid p. 348.

this setting that Dan Bryan entered and worked in the Dublin Brigade section of the Volunteers throughout the War of Independence.

Dan Bryan served in the C Company of the Fourth Battalion Dublin Brigade under the command of Dick Mckee. When Bryan joined the Brigade it was mainly made up of 1916 veterans released from prison in Frongoch.<sup>13</sup> As the War of Independence developed the ranks of the Brigade swelled. Bryan was recruited in 1917, before the main body of recruits joined following the anti-conscription crisis in 1918 and after the truce was signed in July 1921. According to Brigadier Oscar Traynor, the Brigade was made up in the main of Dublin artisans with a sprinkling of students from the National University and Trinity College.<sup>14</sup> Dan Bryan was one of the sprinkling from the National University along with others such as Todd Andrews, Fergus Murphy, Richard Mulcahy and Ernie O'Malley. O'Malley like Bryan was studying medicine but joined a year after him.<sup>15</sup> Due to the number of University students absent on leave at different times, the Brigade's strength fluctuated from time to time.<sup>16</sup> Dan Bryan organised a special volunteer unit in UCD which ran an anti-conscription campaign, parades, raids and armed patrols.<sup>17</sup>

The Dublin Brigade consisted initially of six battalions. The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion was an engineering unit that operated city wide and was mostly concerned with manufacturing and using explosives. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion operated in the North East and North West of Dublin. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> operated in the South East and South West. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was formed later in 1920. It was detached to form the nucleus of a second Dublin

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<sup>13</sup> Many of the prisoners with lighter sentences i.e. internees were released in December 1916, this was followed by the release of sentenced prisoners in June 1917.

See Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Quote taken from John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> See the Introduction to the Ernie O'Malley papers (UCD Archives, O'Malley papers, P17).

<sup>16</sup> See Interview with John Cullinan (UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17b/106).

<sup>17</sup> Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398 (Military Archives, Dublin).

Brigade. By the time of the truce this unit had expanded to field four more battalions. This Second Dublin Brigade operated in south County Dublin and north Wicklow.<sup>18</sup>

Within each battalion there was a further division into six or seven companies and then in turn into sections. Dan Bryan started his active service in the C Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion which recruited and operated in south Dublin where he was living and attending college.<sup>19</sup> C Company was led by Company Captain John Joyce and First Lieutenant Sean Dowling. Bryan in his early days as a volunteer private participated in raids, armed patrols, observation work and attended the various training meetings. Training included signals, first aid, cycling and chemicals. Instructors would operate on a company basis.<sup>20</sup> For many of the student members of the Dublin Brigade in its early days of 1917 and 1918 the Brigade functioned more as a social club and a medium to express varying nationalist and sometimes republican ideals. As the battalion leaders began to organise and regroup support for the Volunteer movement became more popular. After the effective anti-conscription campaign at the end of 1918 the companies took on a more aggressive militant nature.

No major fighting took place until after the shootings at Soloheadbeg, in Tipperary on 21 January 1919, which marks the beginning of the war. By early 1919 patrolling for enemy targets became a regular feature of Dublin Brigade volunteer activity. The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion C Company patrols were carried out by ten to twelve men with the aim of attacking any weak enemy post or escort they should pass. C Company were poorly armed with a scattering of grenades and pistols amongst the patrol men. They met at Winetavern Street and patrolled along Thomas Street attacking passing armoured lorries and Auxiliary raiding parties. All C Company patrols had to close down before the

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<sup>18</sup> John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> For a fuller account of the Dublin Brigade structure see John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Different types of training in the Dublin Brigade is mentioned in Todd Andrew, *Dublin made me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, Cork, 1979).

imposed curfew since if a patrol was spotted they could not disperse into the crowd.<sup>21</sup> In addition to raids, the Dublin Brigade marched and drilled frequently. In December 1918 the entire Dublin Brigade paraded at the funeral of Richard Coleman a prisoner at Usk prison and one of the first “martyrs” of the War of Independence.

The War of Independence escalated in 1920 as did support for the Volunteers. In April 1920 the Dublin Brigade was ordered to burn all income tax offices, a move which proved popular. According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Patrick Coughlan, between April 1920 and March 1921 Dan Bryan’s military activity increased. One of his first assignments was the capture of arms from the Custom House.<sup>22</sup> The Custom House attack on 25 May 1921 was ordered by de Valera and backed by GHQ. It was primarily a political move to show the British government that the IRA had sufficient power to hold down a large centre. Its secondary aim was to paralyse the British administrative system by destroying most of its files. It was the biggest operation since the 1916 rising, especially for the Dublin Brigade. According to Hanley *“the operation seems to have required the involvement of just about every volunteer that could be found”*.<sup>23</sup> The Custom House attack, although a propaganda success, cost the Dublin Brigade the heavy price of nearly eighty men. Needless to say the Custom House operation caused some friction between the Brigade officers and GHQ.

Despite this setback, recruits for the Dublin Brigade continued to filter in. During the summer of the previous year, 1920, the ranks of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion’s C Company swelled and the area it covered increased to include from the city south of the Liffey to Dolphin’s Barn and Crumlin. As a result it was decided to form another company, G Company. G Company was given jurisdiction over Rathmines where Dan Bryan now resided and was commanded by Sean McCurtain. Many of C Company’s swollen ranks,

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with John Cullinan (UCD Archives, Ernie O’Malley Notebooks, P17b/106).

<sup>22</sup> Information came from Coughlan’s testimony for Bryan’s years of service in (Military Archives, Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398).

<sup>23</sup> John P. Hanley, Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 14.

including Dan Bryan, were sent to G Company in the summer of 1920 when G Company had a paper strength of one hundred men but only about forty were active.

At the beginning of the war neither side had an adequate intelligence network. The British had let intelligence files on Irish subjects lapse. The "black list" drawn up in 1916 was not kept up to date. British military intelligence was controlled by an RIC officer who had no formal military intelligence training and was primarily concerned with counterespionage against potential German spies. By the beginning of 1919 the RIC officer was replaced by a General Staff Officer and the Volunteers began to be investigated as a hostile force. However the RIC's Crimes Special Branch which was responsible for political intelligence gathering was under funded.<sup>24</sup> During the Liberal Chief Secretaryship of Mr. Birrell, the flow of secret information ceased due to financial cutbacks. Despite this, towards the end of 1919, British troops in Ireland were reorganised and intelligence officers were appointed to various battalions. In addition to military intelligence, civil police agents were sent to Ireland, directly controlled by the Scotland House Organisation in London. They were known as the "Cairo gang". They worked independently of the Dublin Metropolitan Police and its detective wing the G Division.

The Irish intelligence system was equally disorganised at the beginning of the war. Despite the large scale re-organisation of the Volunteers in 1917 following prisoner releases, no provision was made for an intelligence section. At the first Volunteer Convention since the rising in October 1917 many military staff appointments were made, but intelligence went unmentioned. It was not until around March 1918 that an Intelligence Department was established by Volunteer GHQ. Ironically, it was the pressure of the increased scale of British Military Intelligence, that gave birth to a counter

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Irish Military Intelligence unit.<sup>25</sup> Eamonn Duggan a solicitor was its first Director.<sup>26</sup> He ran the Department with one member of staff, Christopher Carberry, from his office in Dame Street. Although open fighting had not yet broken out, the Department because of its size was not functioning effectively. The authorities soon learnt of Mr. Duggan's office and found intelligence files hidden amongst deed boxes.

Soon after the Department had been set up, information on police raiding parties became known to republicans, not via the Intelligence Department but through connections and friends of the Volunteer Adjutant General and Director of Operations, Michael Collins. From within the ranks of the DMP's own G Division two detectives in sympathy with the republican cause decided to aid it. Eamonn Broy, who worked in G Divisions headquarters in Brunswick Street, passed to a Sinn Féin friend, Michael Foley, a list of prominent men who were to be rounded up. They were charged on the pretence of being involved with what was called the "German Plot". This list quickly found its way to Michael Collins. Two days later Joseph Kavanagh a G-man who worked in Dublin Castle, gave a republican contact Thomas Gay, a Librarian in Capel Street, the details of preparations for the same raid which was to be carried out that night. This information was quickly passed to Collins, who notified the names on his original list of the danger. Along with Collins own name was, de Valera's, Griffith's and Cosgrave's. The later three were captured despite the warning, but Collins and the majority of the military active Volunteers on the list evaded capture.

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<sup>24</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

<sup>25</sup> According to Séan Kavanagh, one of Collins' agents, "About the time Collins became Adjutant General an intelligence Department was set up". Collins became Adjutant General in March 1918.

Sean Kavanagh, "The Irish Volunteers' Intelligence Organisation" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, p. 354.

<sup>26</sup> Duggan later became Minister for Home Affairs(Justice). See Development of Military Intelligence (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers P71/171(1)).

Within a few days Collins, probably through Foley and Gay made contact with both Broy and Kavanagh (neither of whom until now knew the political feelings of the other).<sup>27</sup> A little later he was introduced to a third detective who worked in Dublin Castle, James MacNamara. Later again, Collins managed to secure the services of David Nelligan, another double agent in G Division.<sup>28</sup> Quite coincidentally, Collins' cousin Nancy O'Brien, was appointed by Sir James MacMahon to handle all of Dublin Castle's most secret coded messages. This Collins exploited to its full potential.<sup>29</sup> Collins had another female agent working in Dublin Castle. Lily Merin, a cousin of Republican Piarás Beásláí. She was a typist who smuggled files to Collins and walked arm in arm with Intelligence Officers such as Tom Cullen or Frank Saurin, up and down Grafton Street, identifying British agents for the Squad. Josephine Marchmont a secretary in a barracks in Cork supplied Collins with valuable information. Ms. Marchmont agreed to aid the IRA after they kidnapped her children who were in the custody of her mother in law in Wales, and returned them to her.<sup>30</sup> These men and women became the nucleus of a powerful counter intelligence system and were present at the birth of Irish military intelligence.<sup>31</sup>

Although Collins kept these informers closely under his control and began to expand his network of contacts, officially he had nothing to do with the running of the Volunteer Intelligence Department in Dame Street. Despite this, due to his counter intelligence successes and his large influence within the IRB and the Volunteer movement, he was officially named Director of Intelligence (D/I), early in 1919. He

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<sup>27</sup> Collins gave Thomas Gay £5 for Detective Sergeant Joe Kavanagh after he supplied the names of those to be arrested in connection with the German plot. However Gay never passed the money on. See T Ryle. Dwyer, *Michael Collins - The man who won the war* (Dublin, 1990), p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the peace* (Dublin, 1974), p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins* (London, 1990), p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> See the article by one of Collins' agents, Sean Kavanagh, "The Irish Volunteers' Intelligence Organisation" in *Capuchin Annual*, 1969 pp 354-367.

maintained the position as D/I throughout the War of Independence, while still holding the posts of Director of Organisation(D/O), Adjutant General and Minister for Finance. He eventually gave the position as D/O to Diarmuid O'Hegarty and Adjutant General to Gearóid O Súilleabháin in the summer of 1919, so that he could concentrate on intelligence.

It was during the summer of 1919 that the Intelligence Department started to develop. Dan Bryan commented that Intelligence under Collins began purely as a protective measure, but developed into a machine which was used to destroy British Intelligence in Ireland.<sup>32</sup> Collins went about creating an intelligence network and system from scratch, selecting men he knew from his links in the IRB and the IRA. He made Liam Tobin the then Intelligence Officer of the Dublin Brigade, Assistant D/I. Tobin ran a secret intelligence office set up in Crow street in Dublin over a print shop, which Collins himself never visited in case he attracted too much attention.<sup>33</sup> Collins made Frank Thornton and Tom Cullen his main lieutenants. Gradually a staff was built up, with Frank Saurin, Joe Guilfoyle, Charlie Dalton and Joe Dolan all serving in the GHQ Intelligence Department. The GHQ Intelligence Department attempted to keep comparatively few written intelligence records and reports. The system itself was as decentralised as possible and control was maintained by Collins and his other travelling staff officers issuing oral directives to different commands. Due to the danger of records falling into British hands, it is easy to understand why IRA GHQ feared the formation of a large central intelligence office.<sup>34</sup>

In June 1919, Collins through his intelligence network organised de Valera's and Harry Boland's safe passage to the U.S. In October his Department orchestrated Austin

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<sup>32</sup> Development of Military Intelligence (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers P71/171(1)).

<sup>33</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins - The man who won the war* (Dublin, 1990), p. 62.



Stack's rescue from Manchester prison to take up his position as Minister for Home Affairs.<sup>35</sup> Collins through his IRB connections in British and American ports, ran and controlled arms purchasing and communications. The end of July 1919 saw the first British government spy shot by members of Collins' intelligence network. This was followed by another assassination in September and two more in November.

At the close of 1919 Collins through IRA GHQ in Dublin ordered all commands to establish an intelligence section of their own which would report frequently back to GHQ intelligence. This order marked the first attempt at applying a formal structure to information gathering and processing within the Republican camp. Up until 1919 there were only ad-hoc appointments of intelligence staff made within the general Volunteer body. The Dublin Brigade who had appointed Liam Tobin as their intelligence officer before he was transferred to GHQ was unusual, most Brigades at this stage had no intelligence staff whatsoever. Intelligence gathering was left to the quartermasters of Brigades and Battalions.<sup>36</sup> The order from GHQ not only made it compulsory to appoint a Brigade Intelligence Officer, but also a Battalion I/O and a Company I/O. The Company I/O who was usually the Company's captain who reported information on a regular basis to the Battalion I/O. In turn the Battalion I/O on gathering reports from all his companies would report to the overall Brigade I/O who was in direct contact with the GHQ Intelligence Department. In order to reduce the chances of this long chain of command slowing up the flow of information, any information that could be acted upon immediately was given priority. The officer in question did not have to wait for his weekly or fortnightly meetings with his superior I/O to despatch the information. The

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<sup>34</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 p. 41, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

<sup>35</sup> Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, pp 343-344.

<sup>36</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 p. 41, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

company area intelligence system became the backbone of the intelligence organisation. Through this system of instant reporting, an efficient front line intelligence system operated in certain areas of Ireland, where various groups acted quickly on information given to them. Company front line intelligence was used to good effect by the rural flying columns. Immediate intelligence information on British and RIC troop movements was supplied, so that ambushes could be carried out. In Dublin the constant flow of information on British military vehicles leaving barracks made them a constant target of different companies of the Dublin Brigade. This system worked to such a powerful effect in some areas that Dan Bryan records,

The most intensive activities in Dublin took place almost against the walls of Dublin Castle,...Aungier Street, Redmond's Hill and Wexford Street. The Ship Street Military Barracks which was the military centre of the Dublin Castle enclave, almost extended to those streets, at the junction of Stephen Street and Aungier Street. Those streets were the direct and shortest route from Dublin Castle to Portobello (Cathal Brugha) barracks. The persistence and successive bombing attacks on lorried military parties,...led to this route being known as the Dardanelles.<sup>37</sup>

A feature of the Republican intelligence system which has largely gone unnoticed was the role of the Republican auxiliary units. Each Battalion in theory had an attached auxiliary youth division. These male youth groups were most active in Dublin and were collectively known as Na Fianna Eireann. Their training manual included a programme for intelligence training and they were actively used at company level as scouts to prepare ambushes and supply information on enemy movements. Another auxiliary group which had intelligence functions was Cumann na mBan. An all female organisation, they carried information all over Dublin as it was thought that they were less likely to be stopped and searched. Cumann na mBan members were encouraged to go out with British officers and personnel to pick up information. British authorities suspected many Cumann women and

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<sup>37</sup> Dan Bryan, "Guerrilla Warfare in Dublin" in *An Cosantoir* (July 1964) p. 399.

women with republican sympathies were encouraged to work as domestic servants in centres of British administration and other republican target areas to gather information.<sup>38</sup>

For a plan of how these auxiliary bodies fitted into the overall intelligence structure, see Table 1 below.

This GHQ intelligence order was enforced to some degree in Dublin, where it was widely thought that the war would be won or lost. But the establishment of rural intelligence units was to a large degree at the discretion of the local company commander and was often haphazardly run. The standard of intelligence gathering and reporting varied considerably over the country. It was near the end of the war before a formalised structure of intelligence gathering was applied in the majority of commands. The assignment of Divisional Intelligence Officers in April 1921, forced rural commands outside the disciplining power of Dublin GHQ, to establish the prescribed intelligence system. The Divisional Chief of Intelligence was issued with a typist and given a freehand by GHQ to develop the intelligence service in his division. It was normal for Battalion I/O's to circumvent the chain of command and report fortnightly to the Divisional Intelligence Officer, thus his appointment made the Brigade I/O's job redundant. Despite this circumvention, Divisional I/O's proved very effective. Although due to their late appointment their full potential was not achieved. According to the 1<sup>st</sup> Western Divisional I/O, "in my area it was not in working order until shortly before the truce."<sup>39</sup>

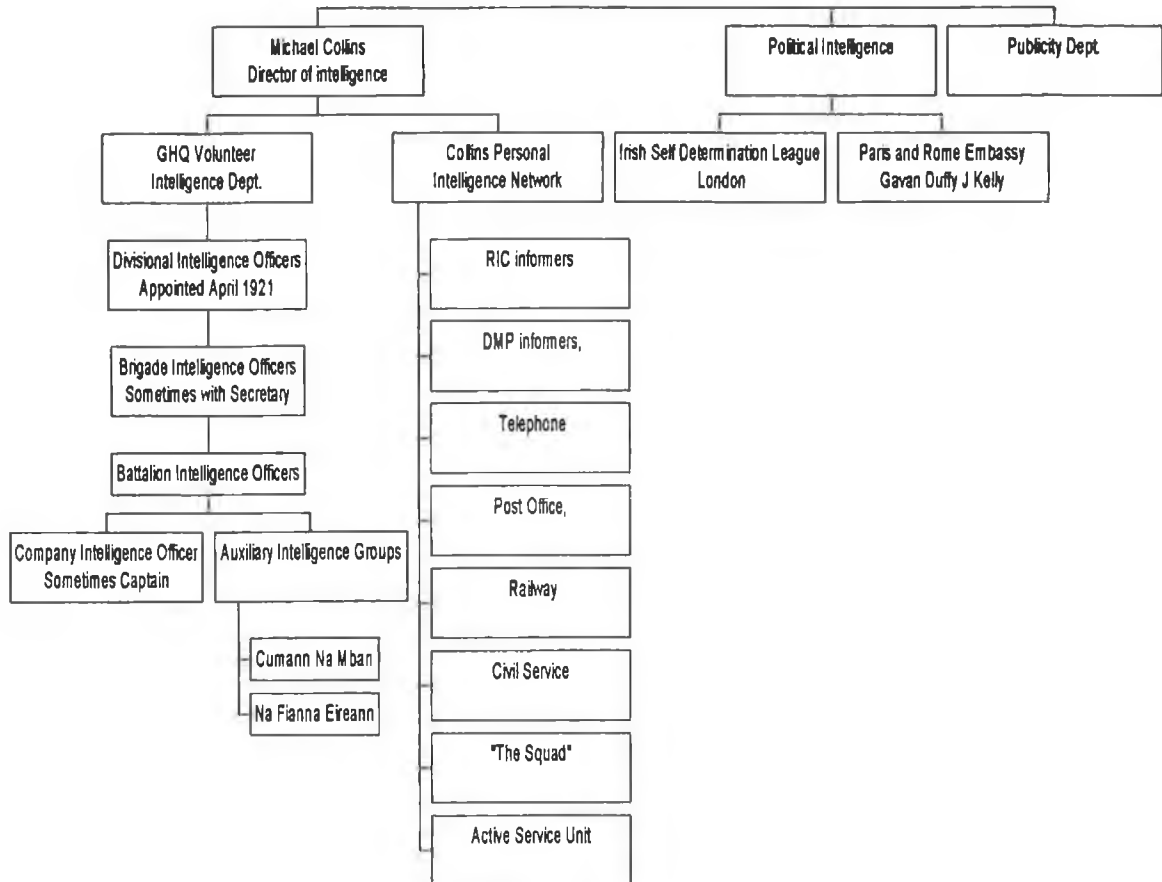
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<sup>38</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 p. 42, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

<sup>39</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 p. 42, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

TABLE 1.

Organisation of Republican Intelligence  
1919 to 1921



Source: Based on research carried out by the author and information from: *Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it*, Vol. II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

In Dublin measures to increase the effectiveness of the intelligence system were being implemented in the early days of the war. In September 1919 Paddy O'Daly organised a group to supplement Collins' network of agents.<sup>40</sup> O'Daly started with eight

<sup>40</sup> Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, p. 348.

men. A year later its strength increased to twelve and eventually fifty. This group was known as the Active Service Unit (ASU) and was formed from the best men in the Dublin Brigade. These trained gunmen were made available to the GHQ Intelligence Department to carry out work acting directly on intelligence information.<sup>41</sup> However the ASU saw themselves as independent of control from the Intelligence Department, their loyalty was to their respective Dublin Battalion commands from which they had been picked and also to Collins and Paddy O'Daly who had regular meetings with them. It was because of this independent spirit that the ASU got on so well with men from the South Tipperary Brigade who also worked independently of GHQ. Early on in the struggle they became closely associated with activities in Dublin and through a number of contacts co-operated with the Dublin Brigade.

The success of the ASU prompted the formation of another group of trained gunmen known as "The Squad" or "The Twelve Apostles" who acted on information from Collins and his intelligence contacts. This group of men were under Collins' direct control and did not act or move without his authorisation. Both the Squad and the ASU took their orders from their respective commanders and Collins. Outside influence and control of these groups particularly from the GHQ Intelligence Department did not exist.

The Squad began recruiting in 1920, although according to Mulcahy a small group of seven men had formed to work directly under Collins in July 1919.<sup>42</sup> At first this group concentrated on the security and protection of Dáil members and subsidiary workers. This protection role was paramount in safeguarding the success of the republican movement during the War of Independence. Without the guarding and warning functions carried out by republican intelligence forces, the republican political and military machinery which in the main was scattered throughout safe houses spread across Dublin, was likely to have

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, p. 348.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

collapsed. Between July and December 1919, the increased volume of protection required and the demand to neutralise potential DMP and RIC agents and informers, threatening the underground republican movement, put pressure on Collins to increase the number of active agents. A selection committee from GHQ Intelligence led by Collins went about recruiting. Initially a group of five men were selected on a part time basis. The Squad was initially organised by Mick McDonald, a Wicklow man before he left for "important assignments outside Dublin".<sup>43</sup> The number of Squad men by the autumn of 1920 had increased to twelve, paid on a full time basis. The Squad would at first meet regularly at Oriel house, until it came under suspicion. The Squad comprised of: Tom Kehoe, Jim Conroy, Frank Bolster, Paddy Griffin, Ben Byrne, Johnny Dunne, Jim Slattery, Mick Kennedy, Eddie Byrne, Vinny Byrne, Mick Reilly, Bill Stapleton. Also included was Pat McCrea, part time Squad driver. They operated mainly in Dublin as a separate unit until the truce in July 1921.<sup>44</sup>

Through GHQ Intelligence Department, the Active Service Unit and his own personal agents, Collins managed to establish a highly effective disciplined intelligence system in Dublin. So much so that by January 1920 he managed to effectively destroy the DMP's G Division and their agents. G division was easy to infiltrate and intimidate since most of its constables resided with their families in Dublin city. The first British government agent was shot at the end of July 1919, a second in September and two more in November which extinguished Dublin Castle's eyes.<sup>45</sup> Sir Basil Thompson a senior British Intelligence chief realised that G Division was not working. He wrote a report which resulted in G Division's Superintendent being replaced with a Belfast RIC man named Redmond. He immediately increased the number of active agents and concentrated on infiltrating the military wing of Sinn Fein. During his few days in office,

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<sup>43</sup> William Stapleton, "Michael Collins' Squad" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, p. 368.

<sup>44</sup> John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 75.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, p. 348.

Collins found himself in Sinn Féin headquarters at 6 Harcourt Street when it was raided by Redmond's men. Collins managed to bluff his way out pretending to be a lowly clerk. Collins' men in January 1920 shot Redmond and thereafter G Division ceased to operate directly against Sinn Fein and the IRA as an intelligence service.<sup>46</sup>

The general body of the RIC who had been the eyes and ears of the British government were targeted by the Volunteers. From 1919, the IRA supplied with information from the Intelligence Department, carried out a systematic murder campaign against the "more energetic RIC officers". Many were killed and others were transferred to places where their local knowledge was useless. Consequently the RIC Crimes Special Branch was paralysed.<sup>47</sup> Many RIC men resigned, some through fear and some for patriotic reasons.

Despite this the British military had managed to build up a fairly accurate picture of formations and units in Dublin and Cork and on 30 and 31 January 1920 they rounded up sixty four "prominent" IRA Volunteers. However they found it impossible to obtain definite information on IRA GHQ and its subsections. In rural areas British Intelligence was in the hands of the RIC commanders who were more of a hindrance than a help being set in their ways and sceptical of military intelligence, their information was sparse and unreliable. British Military Intelligence was given the perception that IRA staff work was primitive and that its GHQ did not know which units comprised their own Second Southern Division.<sup>48</sup> In order to counteract the inactivity of the G Division and the inaccuracy of the RIC, the British Authorities despatched their own agents directly controlled from London. The brunt of British intelligence work was left to these agents from the Scotland House organisation in London. They were known as the Cairo gang,

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<sup>46</sup> John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

after a Dublin café they used to frequent. This force was independent of Dublin Castle HQ and responsible to someone in London. Sir Basil Thompson creator of the Special Branch at Scotland Yard, claims not to have had any say in the organisation. It is probable that Vernon Kell Director of MI5 played a part in its organisation although he remained silent on the subject. It is most likely that Sir Hammar Greenwood, Minister for Irish Affairs supervised the group of agents.<sup>49</sup> The Cairo gang set about building up a network of informers with a view to infiltrating and destroying the upper echelons of the Volunteer organisation. They became known in intelligence circles to be brutal and violent. One of the Secret Service officers, Bowen, a former British officer with a distinguished war record became so disgusted with their tactics that he foolishly told his superiors in the gang that he would report the irregular way in which the service was being run to David Davies an influential Welsh politician. Some time later Bowen's dead body was pulled out of the Liffey.<sup>50</sup>

Another set back for British Military Intelligence was the introduction of the infamous Black and Tans. Their reputation for brutality helped dry up support for the British administration and discouraged potential informants. The Black and Tans often exceeded their duties by crudely indulging in counterespionage. This constantly upset the work of Basil Thomson's Special Branch and also of the MI5 agents that were despatched. According to Thomson "Many lives would have been saved if, instead of a force of thugs, a disciplined counter-espionage unit had been organised and moved to Dublin".<sup>51</sup>

Despite these setbacks the Cairo gang was making plans to destroy the Volunteer IRA leadership. Michael Collins realised that it was only a matter of time before IRA

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<sup>48</sup> John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Deacon, *British Secret Service*, (London, 1991), p. 231.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Deacon, *British Secret Service*, (London, 1991), p. 231.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*



GHQ would be infiltrated and his intelligence network destroyed. Already attempts had been made by British agents to join the IRA. Suspected double agents were fed false information and if the British acted upon it these double agents were immediately killed by the IRA. Both a Scotland House agent and a double agent from British GHQ had been caught and killed. However Collins realised that this system was not fool proof.<sup>52</sup> He learned of a planned Cairo gang attack to assassinate all the Sinn Fein leaders. In anticipation of this, on Sunday 21 November 1920 at 9 a.m the Active Service Unit assassinated twelve British intelligence officers.<sup>53</sup> The Dublin Brigade 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion G Company where Dan Bryan was working, provided cover for members of the Active Service Unit operating in Aylesbury Road at that time.<sup>54</sup> That afternoon (Bloody Sunday) angry troops went to Croke Park and killed ten spectators and wounded sixty five. The Commandant and the Vice-Commandant of the Dublin Brigade Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy who had been picked up were tortured and killed.

As the war continued the British sent in more troops. By June 1921 another eighteen battalions arrived in the country. Although troop numbers increased, the British intelligence network was in disarray. The RIC had been silenced, informants and agents were drying up. During the Chief Secretaryship of Birrell the secret service had practically ceased to exist.<sup>55</sup> Collins and GHQ intelligence used this time to organise. They planted a mole in the Central Telegraph Office who supplied copies of confidential telegrams to Liam Tobin, Assistant IRA Director of Intelligence. Information on impending raids and arrests was deciphered and distributed. The British changed their

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<sup>52</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 p. 44, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

<sup>53</sup> According to Dan Bryan "The Active Service Unit itself was limited and controlled by the Dublin Brigade", probably because many of the units members were also Brigade members, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/191(4)).

<sup>54</sup> Interview with John Cullinan (UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17b/106).

<sup>55</sup> Despite saying that British secret service was having major problems in Ireland in 1921 he also says between 1920-1921 the British organisation of Intelligence was paying off, but sources this information as

code for sending orders every month or so, but the code was changed using the old code, so the Volunteer Intelligence Department had no problem in deciphering. Collins managed to use a network of personal agents to infiltrate military mail and telephone messages. He also had an efficient and secure message delivery service courtesy of sympathetic railway employees and station masters who would pass on messages the length and breadth of the country. Other areas which proved valuable once they were infiltrated were the Civil Service and a series of hotels.<sup>56</sup> British Intelligence also had direct evidence to suggest that IRA agents were trained and ordered to enlist as soldier clerks in the British Army at British Military GHQ in Dublin and at the Adjutant General's office in Cork.<sup>57</sup>

While serving in the Dublin Brigade Dan Bryan received his first taste of intelligence gathering. In January 1921 Joe Kinsella the head of intelligence in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion was transferred to aid in grenade manufacturing and Dan Bryan after four years service in C and G Company, at the age of twenty, was promoted to Assistant Battalion Intelligence officer for the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The Battalion's intelligence section worked in co-operation with each of the Battalion's company leaders and intelligence officers. Bryan also liaised with the overall commanding Dublin Brigade Intelligence Officer who reported directly to Collins.

Dan Bryan as the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Assistant Intelligence Officer, gave intelligence reports to the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Commandant Sean Dowling, the G Company Captain Sean McCurtain, the E Company Captain F. X. Coughlan and to his own Fourth Battalion intelligence section. Bryan spent much of his time correlating information from the

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n21 "A confidential source". Information from John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 p. 43, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Kildare Street Club. The billiard room in this club was the meeting place for many British officials working in Dublin. Tommy Daly, the battalion's intelligence officer, worked undercover in the club and reported to Bryan who in turn processed and distributed the information. Daly was very successful and because of his accurate reporting he was appointed to work directly for Collins' GHQ intelligence.<sup>58</sup> For substantial periods of the War of Independence Dan Bryan held the position of Battalion I/O when the I/O was missing. According to a Lieutenant O'Hanlon, Dan Bryan was acting Battalion I/O from January 1921 up until the Anglo Irish truce in July 1921.<sup>59</sup> He met with the I/O's of all the Battalion's companies and knew what they were doing and working on. He saw reports James Dwyer G Company's I/O, had on Sir James McMahan who was an old class mate of Dwyers and at the time Under Secretary for Ireland. The reports detailed the political situation in Dublin Castle and the feeling amongst individual government officials towards the nationalist movement.<sup>60</sup> Political intelligence was important to the political wing of the Republican movement. Steps were taken to secure political intelligence not just from company and battalion I/O's, but from republican groups which could access this information more readily. The Irish Self Determination League led by Arthur O'Brien in London supplied information on trends in British public opinion and political attitudes towards Sinn Féin within parliamentary circles. Erskine Childers and Desmond Fitzgerald supplied similar information. Political intelligence which gauged support for and against Sinn Féin on the continent came from Sinn Féin ambassadors in Rome and Paris.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Information on Bryan's entry into intelligence came from Padraic O'Farrell, *A who's who of the Irish War of Independence 1916-21*, (Dublin 1983), p. 22.

<sup>59</sup> See Lieutenant O'Hanlon's testimony for Bryan's years of military service in (Military Archives, Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398).

<sup>60</sup> (UCD Archives, Bryan papers, P71/198).

<sup>61</sup> Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 p. 44, found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

Between April 1921 and July 1921 Dan Bryan worked closely with former T.D. James or Seamus Dwyer gathering intelligence reports on police raids and suspects.<sup>62</sup> According to Company Commander F.X. Coughlan, Bryan showed a natural aptitude for the business of intelligence and gave the greatest satisfaction to his company and the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion.<sup>63</sup> He probably also had knowledge of the figures for the number of R.I.C. and Auxiliaries in operation in Ireland at the time.<sup>64</sup>

Dan, within C and G Company was responsible for the removal and safety of many arms dumps hidden around the area.<sup>65</sup> Between April 1921 and July 1921 the targeting and destruction of the Dartry Dye works as enemy property was orchestrated by Dan Bryan.<sup>66</sup> As well as collecting intelligence reports, filling the position of acting Battalion I/O, Bryan also held the position of Battalion Unemployment officer<sup>67</sup>. GHQ had issued a mandate to stop emigration of potential and current Volunteers. Bryan was involved in encouraging this policy within the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion.<sup>68</sup> These new positions meant that Bryan did not have much time for study. Unknown to his parents in Kilkenny, he dropped out of medical school and did not sit his summer exams in 1922 despite having a good attendance record.

On 11 July 1921 an Anglo-Irish truce was in place and was followed in December 1921 by the infamous Anglo-Irish treaty. Many historians have tried to gauge the strengths of the IRA at this period to ascertain if the fight could have been continued.

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<sup>62</sup> See F.X. Coughlan's testimony for Bryan's years of military service in (Military Archives, Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398).

<sup>63</sup> See F.X. Coughlan's testimony for Bryan's years of military service in (Military Archives, Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398).

<sup>64</sup> According to F.S. L. Lyons, in an interview with Bryan in 1983 he disclosed that between Oct 1920 to Jan 1922 the number of Auxiliaries had increased from 770 to 1,418. Similarly in this period the R.I.C. had increased from 11,056 to 14,174. Whether Dan Bryan had access to this information during or after the War of Independence, is not clear.

See F.S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (New York, 1971), p. 416.

<sup>65</sup> See Lieutenant O'Hanlon's testimony for Bryan's years of military service in (Military Archives, Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398).

<sup>66</sup> Military Archives, Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398.

<sup>67</sup> See testimony of Captain J Fulham (Military Archives, Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398).

<sup>68</sup> For reference to anti emigration policy see Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992).

There is little doubt that at the time of the truce, the IRA was experiencing some difficulties. The dramatic increase in the pace of operations between January and July 1921 had left the military organisation tired and weary. This coupled with improved British tactics, a critical shortage of arms and ammunition and the pyrrhic victory at the Custom House meant that the Truce had come at the right time. The British Military who were at first hampered by the disarray of their intelligence system, began by April 1921 to adopt a systematic approach to raiding which began to yield results.<sup>69</sup> By the time of the truce British Intelligence estimated that,

*nearly all the officers of the Dublin Brigade were known and a good percentage of them had been arrested, including the IRA Director of Intelligence...and four Battalion I/O's." "Eight of the principal departments of Dáil Eireann and the IRA had been successfully raided and three arms dumps taken. Twice was GHQ of the IRA raided. On one occasion the Chief of Staff's personal office and plans were captured, and only three days before the truce the office of the IRA police was taken."<sup>70</sup>*

This is not to say that the IRA was unable to sustain the campaign, rather a much needed breathing space would be beneficial. During 1921 British pressure, increasingly applied where it mattered in Munster, was making life extremely difficult for the IRA. Collins' intelligence system was feeling the strain. According to Mulcahy, had it not been for the truce, plans would have gone ahead for another Bloody Sunday to ease the pressure from British Intelligence agents.<sup>71</sup> Volunteer GHQ towards the end of the war realised that they had to change tactics to avoid open military conflict, since they were sure to lose. Guerrilla warfare tactics prevented large scale open military conflict, but even attacks on British military convoys or personnel had to be limited since this too was using up men and ammunition. Instead unguarded enemy property and communication lines were targeted. This policy proved more effective and much more cost effective.

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<sup>69</sup> Charles Townsend, *British Campaign in Ireland* (Oxford, 1975), pp 130-131.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted from, Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Vol II Intelligence. British General Staff, War office document May 1922 found in (UCD Archives, Bryan papers P71/181).

<sup>71</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 9.

However these new tactics were never fully implemented, since the Truce removed the necessity.

The Truce period was used by the Dáil and Sinn Féin, the political wing of the nationalist movement, to formally establish control over the military section. The Dáil issued proclamations verifying its authority over the Volunteers and the IRA, and emphasised the subordinate nature of the relationship between the two. In March 1921, de Valera sought to tighten the links between the Volunteers and the Dáil by issuing a press statement acknowledging that the government was responsible for the actions of its army. Although this strengthened links, military policy decisions were outside the realm of the Dáil's Defence Ministry. Hostilities were officially suspended but it was feared by many that if the talks in London should break down, the British would launch a massive military assault. Both Brugha and de Valera wanted a reorganisation of the army under their Dáil control, in case the war should resume. According to Nowlan, there is some evidence to suggest that early on, part of this reorganisation meant replacing Collins as Director of Intelligence, although this is likely to have been more a personal vendetta of Brugha's.<sup>72</sup> In October, the Dáil cabinet decided in favour of army reorganisation. The Dáil's "New Army" plan, offered new commissions issued under Dáil authority to existing officers. Brugha as Minister for Defence sent a circular letter to every officer which at this stage included Dan Bryan, offering a fresh commission in the Dáil controlled "New Army". This "New Army" was to come into existence on 25 November, the eighth anniversary of the founding of the Volunteers.<sup>73</sup> The initial response from

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<sup>72</sup> Kevin B. Nowlan "Dáil Eireann and the Army: unity in division", in Desmond Williams et al. *The Irish Struggle 1916-26* (London 1966), p. 75.

<sup>73</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 105.

officers was disappointing for de Valera and Brugha. The majority of officers were surprised to receive any notice from the Minister of Defence. Frank Aitken, O/C, 4<sup>th</sup> Northern Division said that the circular “was the first we ever received from the Minister for Defence”. Other officers such as Dan Hogan expressed their need to consult with GHQ and the Chief of Staff before taking any commission.<sup>74</sup>

Under the reorganisation plan the oath of allegiance to the Dáil and the Republic was to be re-administered to all the Volunteers. After the constitutional ruling of the Dáil’s power over the army, the Dáil would then have jurisdiction to appoint new people to military commands and even onto GHQ staff. On 25 November the cabinet met with GHQ staff to discuss the reorganisation. GHQ was upset about Brugha’s proposal that Eoin O’Duffy, a member of the Supreme Council of the IRB, should be removed from the office of deputy chief of staff and be replaced by Austin Stack. Mulcahy as Chief of Staff said that he would take his commission in the “New Army”, only if he was given jurisdiction to appoint his own GHQ staff. Brugha refused this request and so a stalemate emerged. Mulcahy’s stance was supported by many influential IRA officers including Liam Lynch. de Valera attempted a compromise at the meeting, which would have kept O’Duffy as deputy chief of staff and appointed Stack as a “Ghost deputy” at the same time. This was rejected and the government’s plan was dropped. Some commentators have interpreted Mulcahy’s position as an attempt to preserve military autonomy and cultivating the seeds for a military dictatorship. Valiulis argues that if his position in appointing the GHQ staff was undermined, the IRA Volunteers would have been in a divided and much weaker position, if fighting had resumed. The IRA would be handicapped by a divided and antagonistic central staff. Brugha’s man Austin Stack, was

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

openly critical and on unfriendly terms with some of the staff members.<sup>75</sup> To a large extent de Valera's and Brugha's motives for bringing the army under Dáil control was not for democratic political reasons but they needed to exert a tighter control as the popularity and cult status of IRA men such as Lynch, Collins and Mulcahy was seen as threatening.

Between July and December 1921 membership of the IRA and the Dublin Brigade grew rapidly.<sup>76</sup> It became more acceptable and to a degree less dangerous to join the organisation during this period. Although numbers in the Dublin Brigade grew larger, military activity declined during the period of the truce. On the ground during the truce, the brunt of the rank and file IRA and its staff were too busy reorganising, replenishing and recruiting to give any major attention to political moves to bring them under control. IRA Volunteer GHQ, was wary of the fact that members might become lax and be unprepared if fighting should resume. Training camps all over the country were organised to keep recruits on their toes. It was also used as a public relations exercise, to demonstrate their power. After several complaints by the British authorities about this open drilling, the media coverage was significantly reduced.

GHQ also set about tightening its control over the whole of the IRA. As mentioned before many IRA units in rural areas, were not monitored by GHQ and acted solely on their own initiative. The period of the truce allowed GHQ the space to manoeuvre and exert their authority. However many of these attempts were resented and there was a complaint that GHQ in Dublin was attempting to form an officer corps solely from UCD students.<sup>77</sup> However GHQ's main worry was not its chain of command, rather the indiscreet activities of some of their members during the period. Their public displays

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.* p. 108.

<sup>76</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, "The Army in Independent Ireland" in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (ed.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 408.

<sup>77</sup> Uinseann MacEoin, *Survivors* (Dublin, 1985), p. 497.



and open drilling threatened the underground character of the IRA, which the Intelligence Department had worked so hard to preserve. GHQ feared that, if the conflict resumed, British Military Intelligence would have been able to infiltrate and destroy the Republican movement.<sup>78</sup> To what extent this is true is hard to judge without access to British Military Intelligence records for the period. However it would be naïve to think that the British intelligence agencies working in Ireland at the time abandoned their work with the signing of the truce. Despite a significant drop in British troop levels during this period, intelligence reports on IRA meetings and rallies were continuous during the lead up to the Irish Civil War.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Tim P. Coogan, *The I.R.A.* (London, 1970), p. 47.

<sup>79</sup> For drop in troop levels see John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 27. For an example of British Intelligence gathering after the truce see, Weekly situation report by G.O.C. Ireland to cabinet, week ending 1 April 1922. Public Record Office, London, CAB 24\136 cp. 3933. Public Record Office, London, henceforth cited as PRO.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CIVIL WAR

#### A CATALYST FOR INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT

Treaty negotiations took place between July and December 1921. The Treaty was put to a vote in the Dáil 7 January 1922 where it was passed narrowly by sixty four votes to fifty seven. On 14 January 1922 under the terms of the Treaty the Provisional Government was established to administer the twenty six counties until the Irish Free State government was established on 6 December 1922. This effectively curbed the power of the Dáil. The country was divided over the treaty issue and civil war loomed. An election on the treaty was held in June 1922 which favoured the pro treaty wing of Sinn Fein.

Although the Dail and the elections of 1922 highlighted the majority support the pro-treaty political elements had over the anti-treaty side, this was not reflected militarily. Like the politicians the army was split over the treaty but unlike the politicians the split was not as clear cut. The Dáil had voted on the issue of the treaty whereas the Army did not have to make a decision until the last minute. The IRA which had grown out of the Irish Volunteers always regarded themselves as independent of the political control of the Dáil. They took their orders from their respective IRA commanders such as Liam Lynch, Tom Barry and Ernie O'Malley. They did not believe that they were under the supreme control of the Minister of Defence, Cathal Brugha, rather the commander in chief of the Army Michael Collins was their leader. So anyone who thought that the IRA would naturally support the treaty after the Dail voted in favour of it was foolhardy. The IRA, who had borne the brunt of the War of Independence, did split over the Treaty. Unlike

their political counterparts Sinn Fein a very formidable group of IRA officers was opposed to the treaty.

In Munster the majority of IRA leaders and rank and file members were anti-Treaty. They had sworn to uphold the Irish Republic, as established by Pearse in 1916 and had no wish to join in any government or army which might be used to disestablish the Republic. The Munster republican officers called for an army convention to renew the army's allegiance to the republic. The convention was held on 26 March 1922 to discuss the attitude of the army towards the treaty. It was clear from the results of brigade elections of delegates to the convention, that there was a considerable anti-treaty majority. The provisional government treaty supporters realised that if the convention went ahead the strength of the anti-treaty troops would become known. Arthur Griffith issued an order banning the convention on 16 March. Despite this, fifty two out of the seventy three brigades in the country had delegates attend the convention. In April 1922 the Republican army appointed a seven-strong Army Council, with Liam Lynch as chief of staff. On 13 April Rory O'Connor and a number of other Republicans occupied the Four Courts and issued a declaration in which they refused to recognise the provisional government. This was interpreted as an act of open rebellion by the provisional government but it hesitated to be the first to use force. Moreover it realised that its military strength was far from adequate at the time.

The Provisional Government had immediately moved to form a new National Army as soon as it was realised the IRA had split and could not be depended on. This Provisional Government recognised the urgency in forming this new army since British military evacuation had left a scramble for bases and barracks around the country. Towards the end of January the first full time regular unit of the Provisional Army was established. It was made up of the Active Service Unit and the Squad who had up until then shared camps together in Glenasmole and Kilmore. They formed firstly into a

company commanded by Capt. Paddy O'Daly and assembled for fitting out in Celbridge. In February they marched with Collins to take over Beggar's Bush Barracks from the departing British forces. The Provisional Government immediately went on an army recruiting drive. Unlike the Republican forces the Provisional government had powerful economic backing, could afford a strong advertising campaign and offer steady wages. Their campaign proved successful. The Dublin Guards as the first unit were now known, had expanded from a company in February to a battalion by March and a brigade by May. However all this was not happening without serious dissent. All of the original unit had pre-truce active IRA service, the new recruits tended to be looked down on since most of them had not participated in the War of Independence. In the Provisional Government's hurry to create an Army for itself, the criteria for recruits were very lax. A body of British officers from the old regime was recruited since trained officers were scarce. These decisions were to prove problematic in the future but in the short term the Provisional Government had managed to raise a force of 3,500 by April.

Lessons from the War of Independence highlighted the importance of an effective intelligence system. The Provisional Army commanders realised this and began to organise their own Irish Military Intelligence Department. The government also realised the importance of efficient intelligence agencies and allocated large amounts of financial aid to keep them going. Intelligence agencies funded from the Secret Service vote spent almost twice the size of the largest amount spent by the British authorities in Ireland in any one year.<sup>1</sup> The Provisional Intelligence Department worked initially from Military GHQ out of the old British officer's club in Kildare Street. This is where Dan Bryan had his first real dealings with Collins and GHQ intelligence<sup>2</sup>. Military GHQ then moved by May 1922 to Beggars Bush Barracks, after it had been handed over by the British. GHQ

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<sup>1</sup> This was £118, 762 8s 3d in its first year, See Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 5, no.1 (January, 1990), pp 51-83.

operated here until August 1922 when it finally moved into Parkgate Street.<sup>3</sup> However during this period it was not uncommon for intelligence staff and the Department to be moved around to other locations. Frequently reports would come from the Office of Director of Intelligence located in Portobello Barracks. Also intelligence staff lists came from 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Division headquarters at Oriel House. The Criminal Investigation Department(CID), a supplementary Intelligence Department had its headquarters there.

The Military Intelligence branch of GHQ developed within the army from the original Intelligence Department of pre-treaty days. Significantly, unlike the rest of the IRA, the intelligence section was not affected that badly by the split. The majority of the GHQ staff which included the Intelligence Department had declared their support for the treaty. Richard Mulcahy as head of GHQ and as Chief of Staff of the Army was the most senior figure in the army, alongside Collins. Mulcahy's backing of the treaty had an important effect on the manner in which the split affected the army. His influence could particularly be felt amongst the GHQ staff. Hopkinson suggests that the secret IRB society controlled by Collins, also played a large part in influencing the GHQ staff. As a result the core of the GHQ Intelligence Department from the War of Independence remained intact for the civil war. In May 1922, the Intelligence Department consisted of: Liam Tobin Deputy Director of Intelligence, Tom Cullen Assistant Deputy Director, Frank Thornton Acting I/O Wellington Barracks, followed by officers, F. Saurin, J. Dolan, J. Guilfoyle, C. Dalton, C. Byrne, H. Conroy, D. McDonnell, J. Shanahan, and J. Murray.<sup>4</sup> Michael Collins remained as Director of Intelligence until June 1922. He then took up a nominal position of Commander in Chief of the army.<sup>5</sup> As a result of his

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<sup>2</sup> P17a\171 O'Malley papers. Also Dan Bryan's Personal Recollections, Memoir Notes from 1984, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/404).

<sup>3</sup> Letters marked from D/I's office in Beggars Bush and Parkgate Street August 1922 (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/29).

<sup>4</sup> List of GHQ Military Intelligence Staff, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1922 (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/26).

<sup>5</sup> List of Commanders in Chief See J.P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army*, (Dublin:1991) Appendix 1.

military promotion, the position of Intelligence Director was opened. Joseph McGrath a member of the Provisional Government was appointed to the position and served here until the Dáil reassembled and declared that all ministers serving in military appointments had to return to ministerial duties.<sup>6</sup>

The second side of the Intelligence operation was made up of Collins' own men. Although the Intelligence offensive units, the Squad and the Active Service Unit would tend to be more militant in their outlook, they were strongly influenced by their leader Collins and also sided with the Treaty supporters. At an early stage during the truce Collins had kept the Squad and the ASU together in training camps separate to the rest of the army. During the early months of the Provisional Army, intelligence work was confined mostly to Dublin with the remnants of the old intelligence service throughout the country. It initially dealt with internal army matters owing to the uncertain state of affairs at the time.<sup>7</sup> These internal military matters were most likely to have concerned finding out which way relevant IRA commanders were going to side, as well as monitoring those influential officers who had come out in support of the anti treaty side. As early as January some IRA units in Munster had issued anti treaty statements. While in Dublin anti treaty literature was posted around the city. Provisional military Intelligence was particularly concerned about Liam Mellows. He was a GHQ officer who began editing an anti treaty newspaper called "Poblacht na hEireann" in January 1922.<sup>8</sup>

While Irish Military Intelligence and the Provisional government army were desperately mobilising personnel for the anticipated Civil War, Dan Bryan had returned home to Kilkenny. In December 1921 at the time of the treaty negotiations up until the first major outbreak of civil war fighting in June 1922, Bryan was officially absent from

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<sup>6</sup> Development of Military Intelligence 1916-45 (UCD Archives Bryan Papers, P7/171).

<sup>7</sup> General Sean MacMahon's statement to the Army Inquiry Committee Section IV Matters affecting him as Chief of Staff September 1922 to March 1924 p17 1924 in (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/14).

<sup>8</sup> John P. Hanley, Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 44.

duty. During this six month period his personal file claims that he kept in touch with his own Dublin battalion intelligence and indeed GHQ intelligence on matters connected with the split. Once home, Bryan had to explain his six months absence from medical school. According to his nephew Bartley Bryan his family were under the impression that he was still attending college.<sup>9</sup> He possibly blamed the lapse of his studies on the disruption the War of Independence was causing. Apart from Bryan's own desires, it is quite likely that GHQ encouraged him to return home also. Bryan was still reporting to GHQ during this period and it seems reasonable to suggest that he was working for GHQ as an agent. He was possibly gathering information on the strengths and weaknesses of different IRA commands and gauging support for and against the treaty outside Dublin. If he did carry out this work, it was most likely to have been connected with his home area of Kilkenny. On 1 July 1922 Dan Bryan is recorded to have officially enlisted in the Provisional Army as an officer at a Kilkenny recruitment centre in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern Division.<sup>10</sup>

After a brief period in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern he was transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Division. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Division was made up of the Fingal Brigade in north county Dublin and beyond, Dublin No. 1 Brigade and Dublin No. 2 Brigade which had been formed due to increase in numbers in the first brigade during late 1920 and 1921.<sup>11</sup> While serving in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Division of the Provisional Army, he was quickly recruited to work directly for the new Provisional Army Intelligence Department at GHQ, which at this stage operated from Beggars Bush Barracks in Dublin.

Bryan returned to a Dublin which was undergoing the first fighting of the civil war. This move back to Dublin also brought him immediately into direct opposition to his former colleagues in the Dublin Brigade who had rejected the treaty in favour of their

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<sup>9</sup> Author's Interview with Bartley Bryan, Bridget Bryan 20-09-98, Dunbell Co. Kilkenny.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Bryan Pension file, 24 SP 11398 (Military Archives, Dublin).

republican ideals. Unlike Dan Bryan who came from a strong land owning background, most of the Dublin Brigade who's rank and file were made up of working class Dublin men, rejected the treaty. There is no doubt that class lines and divisions had much bearing on determining support for or against the treaty, but within military IRA circles it was also determined by the views of respective commanders.

It is very difficult to estimate the support for and against the Treaty within the Dublin Brigade. In an April 1922 edition of *An t-Oglach*, the pro treaty Chief of Staff General Eoin O'Duffy, estimated that, within the Dublin Brigade 1,900 men supported the treaty whereas 1,250 sided with the anti-treaty forces.<sup>12</sup> He also estimated that a further 920 men joined the Provisional Army in the Dublin Brigade area. In Dan Bryan's own 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, O'Duffy claimed that 250 supported the treaty and 100 supported the anti-treaty forces. But although the Brigade seemed to favour the pro-treaty forces in Dublin it is noted that the majority of the company and battalion officers of Bryan's Dublin Battalion, were in favour of the anti-treaty side.<sup>13</sup> O'Duffy himself also notes that the total figures for each Battalion was based on the numbers that were in them before the truce. Therefore all the recruits between July 1921 and April 1922 are not accounted for. A group of plainclothes British military observers in the crowd of a Dublin Brigade meeting at Smithfield record a different figure. The Republican Dublin Brigade meeting addressed by Traynor and O'Connor was said to have had 3,300 Dublin Brigade republicans attend.<sup>14</sup> If this figure of 3,300 estimated by the British Officers is correct, it would mean that the forces in Dublin were very finely balanced, since at the time of the Four Courts attack the Provisional Government had an armed force of 3,000.<sup>15</sup> According

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<sup>11</sup> Information from *An t-Oglach* April 25<sup>th</sup> 1922, vol. iii, no. 51 National Library of Ireland.

<sup>12</sup> Information from *An t-Oglach* April 25<sup>th</sup> 1922, vol. iii, no. 51 National Library of Ireland.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p62.

Quote from Weekly situation report by G.O.C. Ireland to cabinet, week ending 1 April 1922. P.R.O. CAB 24\136 cp. 3933.

<sup>15</sup> See John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 63.



to Provisional Army General Sean MacMahon an effort was made to bring the Dublin City and South Dublin Brigades in on the Treaty side in order to counteract the Republican organised Army Convention. A divisional staff was established especially to recruit the Dublin Brigade members. Officers in Dublin Brigades were targeted to boost support from the general rank and file. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Dublin Brigade formed two companies, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion five companies, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion three and Bryan's own 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion formed one company. General MacMahon attributed the success of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in recruiting due to the fact that most of the recruiting staff came from this battalion and also that one of their officers ASU member Major General Tom Ennis had concentrated on swamping Republican influences in the Battalion.<sup>16</sup>

Despite several moves at negotiating a settlement in military IRA and IRB circles, by June 1922 the Civil War was inevitable. Collins' negotiations with Republican leader Liam Lynch were crucial in delaying the outbreak of civil war and thus gave the Provisional forces some necessary precious time in which to build up their armed forces. Although they had superior financial backing and military support from Britain had they required, the Provisional Government army was in an inferior military position to the Republican armed forces. The Provisional Army needed more time to mobilise and train recruits since the brunt of the officers had sided with the Republic. It had only 6,000 armed men at the time hostilities broke out.<sup>17</sup>

On 22 June 1922, two IRA men in London assassinated Sir Henry Wilson and were caught. It appears that this assassination was ordered by Collins. Joe Dolan and Tom Cullen squad members and senior GHQ Intelligence officers, were sent by Collins to London to investigate a possible escape, but they failed and O'Sullivan and Dunne the assassins were executed. Wilson's assassination put further pressure on the Provisional

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<sup>16</sup>General Sean MacMahon's statement to the Army Inquiry Committee Section II The General Development of the Army 1924, p. 10 (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/14).

Government to attack the Four Courts from where the Republican Executive operated. The British authorities although suspicious of Collins' involvement in the assassination believed it was orchestrated from the Four Courts. On 27 June Free State troops began to shell the Four Courts which marked the official start of the civil war.

The Republican Four Courts Executive itself had not planned well for an attack. The members of the Republican Dublin No.1 Brigade had been contacted and reformed and were ordered to issue relief to the Four Court garrison. This was hampered by the lack of satisfactory lines of communications between the Brigade commanders and the Four Courts garrison. Before the attack there was considerable disagreement between the Brigade and the Four Courts leadership. The commanders of No. 1 Brigade were opposed to sending relief, according to a Republican officer in the Dublin Brigade, Todd Andrews,

their was little confidence in the Dublin Brigade as a relieving force... the senior anti-treaty officers of the Brigade who were left could hardly be said to be over endowed with qualities of leadership, I could not believe we were going to indulge in such a foolishly futile military exercise.<sup>18</sup>

Both Oscar Traynor and Ernie O'Malley urged that the buildings around the Four Courts should be fortified so as to prevent access by Free State troops instead of sending more troops directly to the Four Courts. However the Republican Four Court executive appear not to have shared the same view. According to Bryan there was a split within the Four Courts executive over what action to take, just before the Provisional Army attack. Bryan notes, that the failure of the Provisional Army's intelligence Department to become aware of this, highlighted that the Department initially was not as well informed as it could have been.<sup>19</sup> A number of buildings in various parts of Dublin were taken over by the Republican Dublin Brigade but with no coherent military plan. The brigade headquarters was established in Barry's hotel, which was poorly placed for any projected

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Todd Andrew, *Dublin made me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1979), p. 230.

<sup>19</sup> Development of Military Intelligence 1916-45 (UCD Archives Bryan Papers, P7/171).

relief of the Four Courts. On 29 June Oscar Traynor took over the Hammam and Gresham Hotels, together with two other adjacent hotels on the east side of O'Connell Street. The four hotels were linked up by smashing the walls through. All Republican Dublin Brigade captured buildings on the south side were vulnerable and retaken quickly by Free State troops. Free State firepower was then concentrated at the Four Courts and O'Connell Street. On 5 July, five days after Dan Bryan had enlisted in the Provisional army in Kilkenny the Republican O'Connell Street garrison surrendered. This surrender was followed by a Republican evacuation of Dublin. Both Oscar Traynor and Ernie O'Malley managed to escape capture during their surrender from the Four Courts and O'Connell Street. A Provisional Intelligence report notes that many of the republican leaders managed to escape from the Hammman Hotel dressed up as nurses.<sup>20</sup> Both O'Malley and Traynor were now in charge of reorganising and reforming the Dublin Brigade members who had been evacuated.

Oscar Traynor was chagrined that Liam Lynch, the Republican commander had not sent in support from country units to aid the fighting in Dublin. But Lynch only wanted to use the fighting in Dublin to stall the Provisional Government forces and give the Republicans more time to organise. This is similar to what Collins had done for the Provisional forces a month earlier. Collins delayed the outbreak of conflict through IRB negotiations with Lynch himself. During the Dublin fighting a column of a hundred men from the South Tipperary Brigade led by Mick Sheehan were the only response to Traynor's call for relief. They descended on Blessington in County Wicklow with the intention of then moving on to support Dublin. After the surrender in Dublin, they were joined in Blessington by O'Malley, Traynor and other Dublin Brigade evacuees. They were also joined by two hundred men from the South Dublin Brigade and from Kildare.

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<sup>20</sup> Intelligence report, Captain Dalton North City District, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1922 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers P7/B/106).

Traynor reorganised the Dublin Blessington forces into units. He felt a swoop on Dublin or Blessington could not be made. The South Dublin Brigade men had failed to cut roads which would have stopped the Free State troops advancing and secondly many of the Tipperary men were agitated and wanted to return home.

Sean Moylan the Republican Tipperary leader wrote to Ernie O'Malley

“We have no food supply, base transport or intelligence. The local volunteers are scarce and of very little assistance. I am therefore taking my fellows back to concentrate on Thurles, Nenagh and perhaps Kilkenny. I hate leaving here but I can see no use in having a column here which has no knowledge of the country and which would be blind and useless.”<sup>21</sup>

The Provisional Government troops learned of the IRA reorganisation in Blessington from numerous Intelligence reports. The Director of Intelligence Joseph McGrath on 5 July 1922 had received a report from one of his intelligence officers, Commandant Tom Ennis. Ennis said one of his men had overheard an injured republican in hospital saying, he had come with a party of 150 men and materials from Tipperary to Blessington and met with a further 135 men from Dublin.<sup>22</sup> Consequently Free State troops advanced in an encircling motion at Blessington on 8 July from the Curragh, Dublin and the coast. However the Blessington post had been deserted and little fighting took place. The Republican Dublin Brigade were ordered by Traynor to hide their arms in dumps and slip back into the city.

This move proved fatal for many of the Republican Dublin Brigade since, naively many of them stayed at home and were immediately arrested. Due to his experience as an intelligence officer in the War of Independence and his connections Dan Bryan had now been enrolled to work directly for Provisional GHQ intelligence as an officer against the Blessington Republicans. He had detailed knowledge and files on all the Republican

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<sup>21</sup> Quote from Moylan to O'Malley 10-07-22, republican documents captured at Blessington, Daily reports to GHQ June-July 1922, (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers P7/B/94).

<sup>22</sup> Daily reports to GHQ June - July 1922, 5<sup>th</sup> July Intelligence report (UCD Archives, .Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/94).

Dublin Brigade members since they had all fought together in the War of Independence. Dan Bryan now at the age of twenty two was one of the main intelligence agents working in Dublin picking up Republican soldiers. He orchestrated the large capture of his old Dublin Brigade colleagues following their evacuation from Blessington. According to Republican Dublin Brigade Volunteer John Cullinan, "It was difficult to stop off at home for Dan Bryan our former Intelligence Officer knew us all and he also knew all our old haunts. I did not stay at home".<sup>23</sup>

After his move into military GHQ intelligence Bryan had proved very effective. He managed to establish himself as one of the main cogs in the Provisional intelligence system. His information and tracking down of Republican IRA men in the city made him a target of Republican IRA GHQ. The failure in O'Connell Street and Blessington had greatly weakened the Republican Dublin Brigade. After the large scale round up of Republican troops on their return home to Dublin, the Brigade was close to breaking point. According to George Gilmore "There was practically no one left in our battalion".<sup>24</sup> Dan Bryan and Military Intelligence began to monitor a number of suspects. They captured a suspect Liam Clarke shortly before 5 August, and found he carried a series of Republican plans to blow up all the major bridges in the city. On the night of 5 August Dan Bryan and his intelligence men captured and arrested 104 men including Pat Sweeney the officer in charge. This swoop sounded the death knell for Republican activity in the city. According to Republican Christy Smith "It was the bridges job that crushed the Dublin Brigade".<sup>25</sup>

As is evident from above, GHQ had by August 1922 established its intelligence network firmly in Dublin but elsewhere it was poor. Following the death of Collins in August 1922, General Sean Mac Mahon was appointed Chief of Staff. He was given the

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with John Cullinan (UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17b/106).

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 143.

task of developing military intelligence. Collins had handed over his post of Director of Intelligence(D/I) which he held throughout the War of Independence, to his assistant and squad member Liam Tobin, following a brief spell by Joseph McGrath. There had been many problems during Tobin's reign as D/I. According to a former Intelligence chief Mickey Joe Costello,

*"Tobin was never given a clear cut job. The old Intelligence Department which Tobin inherited was badly messed about. There was talk and promises of forming a Scotland Yard for Ireland, but there never was any time to consider details and consequently interest was lost".<sup>26</sup>*

Once Civil War fighting began there was an immediate rush to establish new intelligence agencies in the Dublin area. Along with Military Intelligence, a number of new supplementary agencies were set up. The Criminal Investigation Department(CID) which had its headquarters in Oriel House was established. CID was run by Pat Moynihan one of Collins' most trusted agents. Moynihan had played a large role in Collins' intelligence network in the investigation branch of the Post Office. He was given the title of Director of CID and staffed with three Lieutenants. Joe Kinsella, a 1916 veteran and an explosive distributor, who had also been Dan Bryan's I/O in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Finion O'Driscoll, a tough intelligence officer from Cork, and Peter Ennis who went on to become head of the Garda Síochána's Special Branch. Both O'Driscoll and Ennis were Superintendents and Kinsella was an Inspector.<sup>27</sup> The organisation headquarters at Oriel House on Westland Row was an old squad meeting place. The headquarters transferred to Merrion Square in February 1923, although the organisation was always popularly known as the Oriel House gang.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

<sup>26</sup> Quote from Costello's statement to the Army Inquiry Committee (UCD Archives, .Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25).

<sup>27</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), p. 32.

It was reportedly established to combat armed crime and aid Military Intelligence in supplying information on Republican suspects working in Dublin. According to Bryan, the army and in particular intelligence in Dublin was often saddled with pure crime duties which could only be performed by a well trained gendarme or military police force. CID was established to deal with the extensive amount of armed crimes which came in the aftermath of the British administration withdrawing their forces. However after a short period of time CID gradually involved itself with all aspects of civil and military trouble which infringed on the realm of military intelligence.<sup>28</sup> In fact many members of the GHQ Military Intelligence Department had been despatched to work for CID. Frank Saurin, Joe Guilfoyle, Charlie Dalton and J Murray all had connections with both CID and the GHQ Intelligence Staff.<sup>29</sup> This did not harmonise relationships between the two bodies, rather it proved to be a source of conflict.

CID was organised along military lines. As well as its Director and three Lieutenants which ran the organisation, it had an Acting Officer in Command, this was Frank Saurin the GHQ intelligence officer. Like the army it had an Adjutant General, Seán Tumbleton and a Quartermaster General Martin Hoo.<sup>30</sup> Initially CID was divided into four divisions of ten to eleven men per division.<sup>31</sup> This number quickly grew. By the time the Civil war was underway, CID consisted of seventy five ex-IRA men and soldiers, who now operated in plainclothes, mainly in Dublin city. Many of its recruits came from the Republican Police Force which had been formed to administer the Republican courts during the War of Independence. The CID officers were exclusively composed of pre-truce IRA volunteers. They were now chasing their former comrades around Dublin city.

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<sup>28</sup> Development of Military Intelligence 1916-45 (UCD Archives Bryan Papers, P7/171).

<sup>29</sup> List of GHQ Military Intelligence Staff, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1922 (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/26).

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> List of GHQ Military Intelligence Staff, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1922 (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/26).

The force at its peak never contained more than a hundred men, of which only forty were active at any one time. Despite this they had an effect which far outweighed their size.

Over a short space of time CID acquired a reputation for brutality.<sup>32</sup> The CID commander said that, while his organisation had some useful agents in the IRA, most of its information came from “the judicious interrogation of prisoners”.<sup>33</sup> There is little doubt that suspects were tortured and that some prisoners were killed in cold blood. CID operated with the main aim not of penetration of the IRA but of its eradication.<sup>34</sup> It appears that the government knew of, and tolerated a certain amount of ill-treatment of prisoners at the hands of interrogators.<sup>35</sup>

A large part of CID work consisted of raiding places looking for Republicans. They collected information for raids from a network of informers which they built and also from the interrogation or torture, as the Republican press insisted, of prisoners. It practised mouse trap raiding around Dublin. This entailed going to well known haunts of IRA members and arresting everyone present. Then interrogating everyone until IRA members were found. The CID officers patrolled the city at night, raiding houses for men and arms. The more usual type of CID operation was the sit down raid, where CID officers quietly occupied suspected houses and arrested any callers for interrogation. Another innovation was the use of female searchers at checkpoints. This put a halt to much of the activity of the Republican Cumman Na mBan movement which had operated quite freely delivering messages around Dublin until then. As well as raiding and interrogating Republican's, CID officers also attempted to infiltrate the movement. Two of these double agents were arrested by British police while working undercover in an

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<sup>32</sup> Proposed Disbandment of CID, Report by Captain A.S. O'Muireadhaigh, CID, 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1923, Department of Home Affairs S. 3331 (N.A. Dublin).

<sup>33</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, Intelligence and security in Ireland 1922-45 in *Intelligence and National Security* Vol 5, no. 1 Jan 1990, p. 53

<sup>34</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, Intelligence and security in Ireland 1922-45 in *Intelligence and National Security* Vol 5, no. 1 Jan 1990, p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), p. 125.



arms smuggling operation in Cardiff.<sup>36</sup> As early as October 1922, Moynihan as Director of CID was complaining that he was finding it difficult to supply enough men to fill guard detail.<sup>37</sup> The demand for guard details increased as Republican forces started their burning campaign and widened the circle of legitimate targets. This demand reached such a level, that a supplementary body was set up within CID, specifically aimed at guard duty.

In November 1922 the Protective Officers Corps also commanded by Captain P.M. Moynihan was hurriedly established as an auxiliary force to CID. It was made up initially of twenty demobilised pre truce IRA men. Its numbers increased rapidly to one hundred and seventy five men at its peak. As well as acting as an auxiliary force its main function was in protecting buildings, Ministers, senior civil servants, journalists, Dáil and Seanád members thought to be potential Republican targets during the Civil war.

A third force called the Citizen Defence Force was also formed, in October 1922. It had 101 members and was made up of ex-British Officers and some Irish Volunteers. A former British Officer Captain H. Harrison was its commander. Although the force was initially organised by Sheamus Dwyer and others closely linked to Cumman na nGaedhael. It was organised on semi-secret lines and was involved with guarding, patrolling and intelligence gathering. Little is known about the Citizen Defence Force. Even a casualty list of its personnel during the civil war, attributes deaths to several accidents, but seemingly none to the IRA.<sup>38</sup> Apart from these new intelligence gathering bodies the state did inherit one unit from the British. That was the G Division of the

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<sup>36</sup>Telegrams on subject in the P.R.O. CO. 906\21 vol 2. 1922.

John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 127.

<sup>37</sup>ibid. p. 129.

Department of Justice H6\30, Director CID to Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs 28/02/23, (N.A. Dublin).

<sup>38</sup> John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 130.

DMP, but as mentioned earlier Collins had effectively neutralised it and it learned to avert its eyes from political crime.

The Citizen Defence Force, the Protective Officers Corps and CID all amalgamated in February 1923. This was an attempt by the government to gain a more direct control over these agencies. However, despite attempts to exert control, CID continued to act on its own initiative. Its situation was ambiguous. Although military leaders claimed jurisdiction over the organisation and it was supposedly a supplementary body to Military Intelligence, it operated very much independently. CID's brief was left open and its limits were never clearly defined. Its statutory basis was doubtful and it was unclear for a time to which government department it was responsible, Defence or Home Affairs. In the past the members had simply just reported to Collins. But Collins' death had left them with no greater authority in their eyes. On numerous occasions CID co-operated with the RIC, the Republican Police, the British Army, the DMP and on one occasion the Black and Tans<sup>39</sup>. These measures helped increase their unpopularity in Dublin.

The republicans had found it hard to combat CID activities even though they had managed to place their own sources in Oriel House. They attacked Oriel House in September 1922, killed one officer but failed to take the building. In October another attack was launched by Ernie O'Malley himself. A mine was detonated in front of the building which caused extensive damage, but it also trapped Republican prisoners kept there under rubble. The building was plunged into darkness. In the basement, detectives who had been guarding prisoners were rescued by their charges who had literally been blown out of their cells. In the end, there were only three casualties. Three of the attacking party were captured and shot by firing squad at Westland Row station under the

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<sup>39</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), pp 32-33.

new Emergency Powers legislation brought in by the Provisional Government. Questions were asked regarding the possibility of a Republican agent who might have been responsible for smuggling the mine. The Republicans by December deliberately adopted a policy of assassination of CID officers. They managed to kill Inspector Matthew Daly on 23<sup>rd</sup> December.

In late 1922 and early 1923 evidence came to light of the maltreatment of prisoners. This evidence was given further credence when the Republican press alleged that a number of murders and assassinations had been carried out by CID officers. Rightly or wrongly, Oriel House had been suspected of responsibility for the murder of two young Republicans shot at Yellow Lane in Drumcondra in August 1922.<sup>40</sup> They were also implicated in the death of Noel Lemass who was taken into custody in Dublin in July and whose body was found in the Dublin Mountains in October. Ironically CID came under pressure when claims of ill-treatment of prisoners started to come not from republicans but from members of the Free State Army. Some Free State soldiers had been picked up by CID in Dublin for relatively trivial offences. But while they were prisoners they claimed they were tortured, physically beaten, deprived of sleep and had guns fired behind their heads. By the end of 1922 even hard line Cumman Na Gaedhael members were wary of CID. Collins' death in August 1922 meant that CID was virtually free of any outside control. Liam Tobin as D/I had little or no power to keep CID in line and had lost his job as a result. Accountability and control of CID was transferred from the Minister of Defence to the Minister for Home Affairs in September 1922 and Tobin was replaced by Dáil TD Joseph McGrath. This was an astute political move which transferred power from Richard Mulcahy to Kevin O'Higgins who was now emerging as a formidable force. It was also an attempt to bring CID under more direct government control, as O'Higgins unlike Mulcahy had no army ties.

Despite these attempts to control CID, its name was closely associated with a Dublin murder gang. Although never proven it was alleged that some CID officers were members of a gang that targeted Republicans around Dublin, which was to claim the life of nearly twenty victims by November 1923.<sup>41</sup> 28 August 1922, Bernard Daly an IRA volunteer was found dead in Malahide. According to Hanley there were a number of other definite victims. These are listed in Appendix 2. Although it is not possible to say who was definitely responsible for the murder gang, most of its victims were being actively sought by the authorities at the time. Robert Blondfield was wanted for the suspected killing of Sheamus Dwyer.<sup>42</sup> Dwyer who was a TD and was a founder of the Citizen Defence Force, had worked very closely with Dan Bryan in Intelligence during the War of Independence. Witnesses at the coroners inquests of several of the victims reported military raids on the family homes of the victims shortly before the murders. In a number of surviving documents the Republican IRA's intelligence department expressed its conviction that both CID and army officers were involved. Two 17 year old boys, Alfred Colley and Sean Cole both of whom were active republicans were found dead on 26 August 1922. According to Brady, Free State intelligence officers dragged the two young Republicans from a car at Drumcondra, placed them against the piers of a gate and shot them in full public view.<sup>43</sup> Michael Staines who was Commissioner of the Civic Guards, made a point of turning up at the inquest to stress that the Civic Guards had no connection with CID or Free State Intelligence. Republican Intelligence named CID officer Cecil Loftus as a participant in the Clondalkin murders, and two army officers Bolster and Dolan were implicated in another shooting.<sup>44</sup> Presumably Republican Intelligence was referring to Frank Bolster and Joe Dolan. Both these men fit the profile

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 125.

<sup>41</sup> John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 130.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 131.

<sup>43</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 132.

of possible members of a murder gang. Frank Bolster was a trained gunman and an original member of the Squad. While Joe Dolan was a GHQ Military Intelligence officer who was involved with the attempted rescue of Sir Henry Wilson's assassins and was later connected with the killing of Republican prisoners in Ballyseedy, Co. Kerry. He was also a major player in the Army Mutiny plot of 1924. All evidence for this "Murder Gang" is circumstantial, however it seems likely that it did exist within CID and indeed within military circles. It was never seriously investigated and highly likely that it was quietly closed down at the end of the Civil war.

Although the CID, Protective Officer Corps, Citizen's Defence Force and the DMP all had intelligence functions, they were all deemed supplementary to Military Intelligence at the time. These supplementary intelligence agencies dealt with particular areas within the ambit of Military Intelligence which required special treatment.<sup>45</sup> The result of all these new intelligence agencies led to internal conflict. Instead of co-operating with each other they vied for information and for funding and recognition. Both CID and the Protective Officer Corps were funded under the CID vote whereas the Citizen Defence Force was financed from the Secret Service Vote. Both CID and the Protective Officers Corps acted as an outlet for Collins' former agents in the War of Independence to remain active.<sup>46</sup>

Military Intelligence on the other hand was not. Although Bryan and other pre-truce intelligence officers were recruited, Military Intelligence was largely staffed by civilians.<sup>47</sup> This lack of pre-truce calibre caused further animosity between the rival intelligence agencies. The functions of all these agencies overlapped as they competed for coups. Despite an abundant flow of information from the general public throughout

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<sup>45</sup> General Sean MacMahon's statement to the Army Inquiry Committee Section IV The General Development of Military Intelligence p. 17. 1924 (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/14).

<sup>46</sup> Liam Tobin was D/I, Tom Ennis was a Superintendent in CID. See Proposed Disbandment of CID, Report by Captain A.S. O'Muireadhaigh, CID, 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1923, Department of Home Affairs S. 3331 (N.A. Dublin).

the civil war, work was seldom co-ordinated between these intelligence agencies and many activities were poorly directed. However the republican IRA as the war went on became disorganised and were an easy target without unified leadership.<sup>48</sup>

Liam Tobin's nominal control over CID did not last too long. He had been heavily criticised for letting CID become semi-military in character and out of control.<sup>49</sup> His authority over CID was undermined by the government appointment of Joseph McGrath as director of CID in August 1922. McGrath had worked as an Intelligence agent in GHQ previously and had been the Department's first Director of Intelligence in July 1922. He had processed a report from former Squad member General Tom Ennis of the Republican regrouping at Blessington.<sup>50</sup> McGrath who was later to become Minister for Industry and Commerce kept CID under his influence. Despite McGrath's appointment to CID, he did not have any sway over the operation of Military Intelligence. Technically Military Intelligence was still under the direct command of Tobin. But following Collins' death Tobin was taking a back seat. Much of Tobin's work as Director of Intelligence can be attributed to Collins. When Tobin took over the position of D/I from McGrath, Collins supplied him with information. Although Collins as Commander and Chief had strictly left the Intelligence Department, in reality he was very much propping it up. He still kept his network of agents very close to him and through himself supplied Tobin with information. As Commander in Chief he required regular intelligence summaries from Tobin and demanded to be kept up to date. On numerous occasions Collins ordered Tobin to pursue a certain area or aspect of intelligence, as if in fact Collins himself had never

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<sup>47</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, Intelligence and security in Ireland 1922-45 in *Intelligence and National Security* Vol 5, no. 1 (Jan 1990), p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 225.

<sup>50</sup> General Ennis himself had received a report that an injured republican in hospital was overheard saying he had come with a party of 150 men from Tipperary to Blessington and met with a further 135 men. This information was passed on to McGrath in GHQ. Daily reports to GHQ 5<sup>th</sup> July 1922 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/106).

left the Department. Although Collins was now commander in chief and Tobin D/I, Collins appears to have conducted his relationship with Tobin as if he had never left the Intelligence Department. Collins gave Tobin access to his informer network through himself. Right up until Collins' death, Tobin was highly reliant on Collins' instruction. On 2 September, Collins gave Tobin a list of potential IRA spies that were operating in the Provisional Army encampment at Wellington Barracks.<sup>51</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> September Collins issued Tobin with an order to examine the setting up of a coast watching force as an intelligence force.<sup>52</sup> Following Collins' death Tobin found himself out of his depth. As a result between September and December 1922 the main driving force behind Military Intelligence came not from Tobin, but from the measures General Sean Mac Mahon was taking to reorganise it following his appointment as Chief of Staff in August 1922.

General MacMahon initially looked at Dublin, where Bryan and his fellow GHQ intelligence staff had an efficient network operating. They had wire taps applied in the Crown Alley phone Exchange. This managed to pick up a number of planned Republican offensives. It also uncovered some of the brutal treatment Republican prisoners were subjected to in Mountjoy prison.<sup>53</sup> Along with Telephone interception, agents were also placed in the Post Office as they had been in the War of Independence.<sup>54</sup> Although the scope and work of the Intelligence Department was increasing greatly, it had elements which were being associated with strong arm tactics. Dan Bryan himself at the time was in charge of a unit of plain clothes army intelligence officers which patrolled Dublin, looking for Republicans. This was an initiative of Collins. Bryan's patrols spent the bulk of their time trying to locate IRA volunteers on their way to and from operations. On more than one occasion Bryan's men shot innocent civilians who refused to halt for them.

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<sup>51</sup> Commander in Chief Collins to D/I Tobin 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1922 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/46).

<sup>52</sup> Commander in Chief Collins to D/I Tobin 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1922 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/46).

<sup>53</sup> Daily reports to GHQ 13<sup>th</sup> July 1922 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/106).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

The unit operated from a network of their own informants they had built up and catalogued. Some of the units men were implicated in the murder of a number of IRA members and have been associated with a Dublin Murder gang.<sup>55</sup> Overall though, the GHQ Intelligence Department had established itself as a substantial force in the capital.

Despite all the Intelligence Departments early measures at expansion, its influence outside Dublin was still very poor. General MacMahon set about developing an intelligence service throughout the country. Most of the men picked for the job had, like Bryan been acting I/O's in pre-treaty days. In some cases men from Dublin were sent to take on this work. On some occasions though even the men sent from Dublin to fill rural intelligence positions were not very effective. Commandant Frank Thornton the GHQ Intelligence officer was appointed to act as the main Intelligence Officer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern Command operating around Kilkenny. Despite this his reports which filtered back to GHQ were criticised heavily by Collins at the time, who pointed out they were ineffective and being sent through the wrong channels.<sup>56</sup> As the Civil War progressed and the Free State troops moved into rural areas, an intelligence officer was appointed at almost every post they held.

The system of processing intelligence was similar to the pre-treaty one. Information was passed from intelligence officers to their command intelligence officer. The Command Intelligence officer in turn was required to make daily and weekly reports to GHQ. An officer at GHQ like Bryan was then responsible for preparing Summary of Intelligence reports to the D/I and the Commander in Chief and other Army Council members<sup>57</sup>. For a period Command Intelligence Officers were left to work from their own

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<sup>55</sup> John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 127. Collins to acting Chairman Provisional Government 29.7.22., (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/29). Undated report in UCD Archives, (O'Malley papers, P.17.A.35.)

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Commander in Chief Collins to Chief of Staff Mulcahy on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1922 (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/43).

<sup>57</sup> Following the death of Collins on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, the Army Council on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1922 had been constituted as follows: Richard Mulcahy Commander in Chief, Sean MacMahon Chief of Staff, Gearoid



resources. However the Intelligence Department in GHQ expanded rapidly and gradually assumed direct control over all their Command I/O's. The Chief of Staff General Seán MacMahon's scheme of Intelligence reorganisation was fully functional by January 1923.<sup>58</sup> However its effectiveness began to be felt towards the end of 1922. Military Intelligence was starting to show beneficial results not only in the Dublin area but outside it as well.<sup>59</sup>

Bryan was now working hard at GHQ processing information from Command Intelligence Officers all over the country as well as gathering information himself in the Dublin area. In October he orchestrated raids on the work places of many Republicans in Dublin. He raided a bank, the workplace of John Cullinan a former officer who had served alongside Bryan in both C and G Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion and had also been a medical student in UCD. Cullinan had now become the G Company commander after Frank Dowling was picked up in June 1922. Bryan's work against the Republicans in Dublin was greatly restricting any offensive activity that might have been planned for the city. The focus was now entirely on the rest of the country.

By November 1922 Tobin had stepped down as D/I and was replaced by the Director of Organisations Diarmuid O'Hegarty. O'Hegarty like MacMahon had realised the importance of expanding the intelligence network outside Dublin and had worked to the same aim. Writing in October 1922 he said

While some commands were doing well, in Limerick it was stated that an intelligence service was being set up, but so far we do not know of its existence beyond the absolute lack of any form of communication with this Department.<sup>60</sup>

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O'Sullivan Adjutant General, Joseph McGrath Director of Intelligence and Diarmuid O'Hegarty Director of Organisation. See John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 62.

<sup>58</sup> General Sean MacMahon's statement to the Army Inquiry Committee Section IV The General Development of Military Intelligence p.18. 1924 in (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/14).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> See Intelligence Organisation, 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1922 (UCD Archives, O'Hegarty papers, P8/7).

Limerick itself had proved a problem to the Free State forces from the outbreak of Civil war. If the Republicans had gained control of Limerick, it would have cut and isolated the Free State forces in Athlone under Mac Eoin and in Clare and Galway under Brennan. Also Republican success in Limerick and the south east could have become a springboard for a move on Dublin.<sup>61</sup> On 4 July 1922, a truce was signed allowing the Republicans into Limerick. Pro-Treaty GHQ were alarmed at this fact since they had not ordered this truce and they knew that Free State commander Michael Brennan and Liam Lynch the Republican commander had strong IRB ties and links from the War of Independence. On 11 July 150 men were sent to Limerick from Dublin and Brennan ended the truce. On 19 July the Provisional Government forces began attacking Limerick City with a British 18 pounder Gun. Limerick city was quickly taken by the Provisional Forces and General O'Duffy set up a base there from which to launch an offensive into the rest of the "Munster Republic".

A large number of Republicans retreated from Limerick to Clare and managed to take over West and Mid Clare. Provisional Government Forces were despatched to reinforce the 1<sup>st</sup> Western Division. The Dublin Guards made up the brunt of the reinforcements. Meanwhile another attack was made by the Provisional Government forces from their new base in Limerick on Kilmallock directly South. For probably the first time in the civil war intelligence information started to come into GHQ from areas outside Dublin. Intelligence reports claimed that 500 republicans were in Kilmallock and that 1,000 were based in Buttevant south of Kilmallock ready to support.<sup>62</sup> On 20 July some of the garrison in Bruff, situated between Kilmallock and Limerick deserted to the Republican side. On 22 July, thirty Free State soldiers had been captured between Kilmallock and Bruff. O'Duffy ordered that no troops should advance south of

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<sup>61</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 146.

Kilmallock, until Limerick had been cleared and reinforcements had arrived. Ned Cronin disobeyed this order, and he and 47 of his men were captured at Thomastown.

The reinforcements that O'Duffy was looking for in order to advance south of Kilmallock arrived at the beginning of August. The reinforcements coincided with the sea landings of Free State troops in Cork and Kerry. On 5 August Free State troops took Kilmallock with only a token republican force to contend with. The Cork and Kerry Republicans in Kilmallock had learnt of the sea landings and returned to defend their native counties.

The 500 Free State soldiers that landed at Fenit in Kerry on 2 August, were made up from the Dublin Guards and commanded by General Paddy O' Daly. Paddy Cahill the Republican leader in Tralee at the time could only offer limited resistance, with the majority of Kerry Republicans still returning from Kilmallock. O'Daly's forces were reinforced further by the 1<sup>st</sup> Western Division which had taken control of Clare and had travelled south to Kerry by boat via Tarbert. O'Daly's men encountered their first real resistance when trying to take Farranfore. Republican leader Johnny Connor's men were back from Kilmallock and they kept the Free State forces at bay. Despite this, by late August Free State troops had managed to control most of the major towns in Kerry. O'Duffy admitted, although Kerry Republicans had been driven from their bases and towns have been captured, very few men and arms had been captured. From August 22 onwards guerrilla warfare tactics were adopted by the Republicans in Cork and Kerry. On 26 August a convoy of 100 Free State soldiers were ambushed operating between Tralee and Killorglin. Large sections of the population, especially in Tralee supported the Republicans, which made Kerry particularly difficult for the Free State forces to control. More violent and extreme tactics were used by Paddy O'Daly and his men in their attempts to find Republicans and their dumps in the countryside. Free State army

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<sup>62</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 151.

inspection reports claimed that O'Daly's command left much to be desired in discipline and behaviour. O'Daly himself was reported as saying "nobody asked me to take my kid gloves to Kerry and I did not take them". He and his officers which included many of Collins' old squad men, such as Joe Dolan and also some of Collins' agents such as David Nelligan, were accused of violence and murdering prisoners. They were associated with the Ballyseedy affair, where IRA prisoners were killed in mysterious circumstances clearing mines that their own organisation had allegedly planted.<sup>63</sup> Despite this little attempt was made by GHQ to deal with this problem.

However GHQ and indeed the Intelligence Department had become better organised and more efficient as the war progressed. The beginning of 1923 which heralded the retreat of the IRA republican forces, gave the Department time to expand their field of organisation and study. The wide scale organisation of subject files within the Department had taken place under General Sean MacMahon's reorganisation in August 1922. The success of his scheme of record keeping meant that by early 1923, there was a need for a separate record section within the Department to deal exclusively with the files that were generated. In June 1923 the record section itself introduced a whole new index card system. All files were cross referenced and divided into two distinct categories, Biographical or Subject.

A report from the record section of the Intelligence Department from June 1923, highlights just how much the Department had developed. It would be wrong to presuppose that it was only engaged in monitoring Republicans operating within the Free State. It defined its own brief as, monitoring "persons of all parties suspected of acting in a manner inimical to national progress". In accordance to the file subjects it had, it appears it did this and much more. The Record Section was divided into basically six

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<sup>63</sup> For account of Ballyseedy and references to Free State Intelligence Officers who were involved see Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988).

categories. Ulster, Foreign, Ireland, Britain, USA and Intelligence staff. Within the Ulster section, files were kept on the Special Constabulary, Orange Lodges, Orange Agents and British Agents. The Intelligence Staff sub sections dealt with Free State operatives in Ireland, Ulster, Britain, America and other Foreign states. Free State agents in the US were monitoring the activities of sympathetic republican organisations, such as Clan Na Gael. The surveillance of republican gun running from Britain, the US and other Foreign countries was monitored. Also Communist bodies in Britain and their supporters in the Free State were watched.<sup>64</sup>

Irish Military Intelligence had undergone a profound transformation. It had developed from the effective but ad-hoc organisation under Collins, into a specialised and organised machine. It distinguished itself as the premier intelligence gathering agency in the state. The Civil War had obviously acted as a catalyst in the Department's development, but ironically it had facilitated its growth to such an extent that it no longer was solely focusing on the Republican threat. By the time the Civil War officially came to a close on 24 May 1923, Military Intelligence was now examining British, and Unionist forces as well as Communist and other continental forces that were perceived as a potential menace. This broader perspective demonstrates a maturity of the Department despite its short history.

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<sup>64</sup> Departmental Orders Intelligence Branch No. 5, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1923, Records Section, Intelligence Files 1925-30, Box 6 (Military Archives, Dublin).

**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT**  
**AND THE ARMY MUTINY**

In the early hours of 19 March 1924 a number of Free State Army troops raided Devlin's public house on Parnell Street in Dublin. They arrested a group of army officers that were allegedly plotting to assassinate government officials. The raid culminated in a series of Dáil debates on the issue, the resignation of the Army Council and the establishment of a government inquiry into the whole affair. Superficially the mutiny presented itself to the bewildered public as a storm in a tea cup. But underneath the surface lay a series of intricate political events and faction fights that could have evolved into another bloody civil war and crippled the Free State in its infancy. However the Army emerged from the whole affair significantly reorganised for a peace time existence and suitably acknowledging the power and authority of government structures, something which was doubtful not less than twelve months before. Dan Bryan and the Second Bureau played a major part in the whole affair and had much bearing in the dramatic transformation of the army.

Although the mutiny took place in March 1924, the actual foundations of the whole episode can be traced back to the early months of 1922. After the ratification of the treaty by the Dail on 7 January 1922, the Army Chief of Staff and Chief of the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood, Michael Collins, attempted to negotiate at leadership level with the IRA. Since most of the IRB held controlling positions in the IRA, it was Collins intention to use his influence as head of the IRB to stop or minimise the split in the IRA over the treaty. He had used this tactic before to control the IRA and to good effect. Even during the War of Independence, although Mulcahy was Minister for Defence, in reality

Collins had control. But the IRB did not survive the treaty. It had declined as a force after the truce had been called in July 1921. Collins influence could not prevent the split in the IRA ranks. He held the last IRB meeting on 19 April 1922 in a vain attempt to persuade men like Harry Boland and Liam Lynch to accept the treaty.<sup>1</sup> During the civil war many of the Supreme Council which ran the IRB were killed. Collins was dead on the treaty side and later during the Civil war on the anti treaty side Liam Lynch and Harry Boland were both killed. With the exception of a journal it ran for its members called the *Separatist* between January 1922 and September 1922 the original IRB did not meet or function after April 1922.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the split in the IRA and the ending of the IRB all Collins' Squad men and the majority of his agents remained loyal to him. Collins had continued to meet them informally in Vaughan's Hotel which had been their meeting place during the War of Independence. But as the War of Independence came to a close Collins' "apostles" as they were sometimes known were becoming restless. Their specialised trained gun talents were less in demand and they began to feel somewhat alienated. In the early months of 1922, the mere presence of Collins and his assurances to them that "you will be alright" kept them in check.<sup>3</sup> But the seeds of mutiny were there.

Initially Collins' Squad and intelligence men were seen as important and loyal pro-treaty men that could be relied on in a time of uncertainty in what was a very weak pro-treaty army. They were used on important missions. In the spring of 1922 there was a

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<sup>1</sup> O'Donoghue was present at these final IRB meetings. For an account see Florence O'Donoghue, *No Other Law* (Dublin, 1954), pp 231-246.

<sup>2</sup> The IRB after the declaration of the treaty accepted "the present governmental position of An Saorstát" but declared once more that the Supreme Council of the IRB would remain the sole government of the Irish Republic until Ireland's complete independence was achieved, and that the President of the Supreme Council was president of the Republic.

See Leon O'Broin *Revolutionary underground The story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), p. 203.

This statement made by the IRB appears to be somewhat ironic since they suggest the establishing of a military dictatorship in reality in order to safeguard a republic.

<sup>3</sup> Col. C. Russell, supplementary statement to Committee of Inquiry into army mutiny, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1924 (UCD Archives, .Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/20).

scramble throughout the country for barracks left unoccupied by British forces. This competition for barracks between pro and anti-treaty forces came to a head in Limerick. On 18 February a mid-Limerick brigade passed a resolution declaring loyalty to the Republic. The provisional government felt that if Limerick was lost it would directly link their lack of control in the west with Munster. It was decided to send commander Michael Brennan and the 1<sup>st</sup> Western Division based in Clare to occupy the vacant barracks. Brennan was also given support by troops from Dublin led by Collins' old squad members. Jim Slattery was one of these squad members who took control of the castle barracks. He and his men were issued an ultimatum to leave by Republican leader Rory O'Connor and his far superior force outside. But fighting was averted when it was decided that the Limerick Corporation should hold the barracks and all other troops return to their own area.<sup>4</sup>

As the civil war developed Collins had placed Liam Tobin and other squad members in charge of the new Civil Police Intelligence Department at Oriel House. But he soon became unhappy about the failure to establish an efficient service and it was brought directly under government control in September 1922. Collins decided to send some of his old Squad men to Cork under Charlie Dalton and some to Tipperary, in the belief that they would respond better to fighting. This initiative did not prove fruitful since both former intelligence officers Charlie Dalton and Tom Ennis were keen to negotiate with leaders of the Republican forces who had been their comrades in arms less than a year before and were therefore unhappy with their work in Cork. Tom Ennis and other officers opposed the execution of three Republicans in Cork and refused to execute any in his area.<sup>5</sup> Dalton had left Cork briefly in September 1922 to get married and,

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<sup>4</sup>For an account of the Limerick affair see Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

Taken from Doyle's interview (UCD Archives, O'Malley Notebooks, P17B/33).



evidently, had returned to his job with no great fervour. In November Dalton left his Cork command altogether in mysterious circumstances.<sup>6</sup> He may have left because of the lack of co-operation from other commanding officers. Dalton maintained, that had Eoin O'Duffy's troops "in Banteer, Millstreet and Killarney on the Blackwater line pushed in and co-operated with him, the fight would now be over."<sup>7</sup> Collins himself admitted that his old squad members constituted a problem, and had contemplated sending them on a mission to the U.S.A.<sup>8</sup> After Collins' death at Beál na Bláth on 22 August 1922 his men were now leaderless and felt that any say or control they had over the running of the army or indeed the country died with him.

Collins successor as Commander in Chief of the Army was Richard Mulcahy. Although Mulcahy had fought in the War of Independence and was a prominent IRB member, he never enjoyed the same rapport as Collins had with these men. Unlike Collins, Mulcahy did not meet informally with them in Vaughan's hotel. According to Valiulis he was a shy individual and did not have the powerful communication skills of Collins.<sup>9</sup> Instead of selecting Mulcahy as their leader, Collins' men began to look to Liam Tobin, a former squad member who had been the assistant Director of Intelligence during the War of Independence. As the numbers in the Free State army increased in the autumn of 1922 so did the gap between Collins' men and Mulcahy and his men at GHQ. Liam Tobin was unhappy with his position in the army as ADC to the Governor General. Similarly more of Collins' intelligence unit were disgruntled with their positions. Charles

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 203. Taken from Dalton to Commander in Chief, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1922, (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/67).

<sup>7</sup> Dalton to Commander in Chief, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1922, Military Archives. Dalton to Commander in Chief 12<sup>th</sup> August 1922, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/20; Dalton to C of GS, 2, 5 Sept. 1922, ., P7/B/71 Dalton to Commander in Chief, 18 Nov 1922, P7/B/67; O'Duffy to C of GS, n.d., probably early September 1922. P7/B/71.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 138. Provisional Government Minutes, 26 Aug 1922, GI/3; O'Sullivan at Army Inquiry, (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/12). David Nelligan (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/17). Charles Russell, (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/18, 20, 28).

Dalton was not satisfied initially with his position as Adjutant of the tiny Irish Air service before he was made a GOC in Cork. Neither was Frank Thornton content with being a Brigade Major, he felt he should have been named Director of Intelligence, a job that went to Joe McGrath at the time.<sup>10</sup> All three of these men felt that they were being excluded from positions of power in the army because they did not hold enough influence in the dormant secret IRB organisation. Dan Bryan in a later interview offers an alternative reason for their frustration. He claimed that although they had performed well in the War of Independence and the civil war, with peace time approaching they were officers poorly suited to the bureaucratic work necessary in a professional peace time army.<sup>11</sup> Bryan's GHQ intelligence interpretation of the situation was most probably correct, but GHQ were naïve in forsaking these men since they were likely to be a useful force in the future.<sup>12</sup> The men from Collins' intelligence unit believed strongly that Richard Mulcahy had secretly now become the IRB's new leader succeeding Collins, although Valiulis argues that in fact, it was Sean MacMahon the Free State army's chief of staff who held the position.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of who really held the IRB chair, in the eyes of Collins' men it was Mulcahy and his men at GHQ that were preventing their promotions and restricting their power and control over army matters.

In order to remedy their position Collins' men started to mobilise. Towards the end of 1922 Major General Liam Tobin and Colonel Charles F Dalton, set about reviving

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Material for preparation of Interim report of Army Enquiry, (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/41, 42)

<sup>9</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy*, (Dublin, 1992), p. 203.  
<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Interview between Valiulis and Dan Bryan Dublin 18<sup>th</sup> March 1975, see Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 203 n21.

<sup>12</sup> There is some suggestion that Collins' was going to use these men in their IRB capacity to carry out political assassinations. According to Richard Barret a former close friend of Collins, these assassinations were to ensure that the government remained in the hands of those prepared to resume the national advance once what concessions the treaty offered had been extracted. See Conor Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard* (Dublin, 1985), p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> She argues that although Sean O'Murthuile the army's quarter master general later publicly took responsibility for the IRB reorganisation, she has a taped interview between Mulcahy and General Sean MacEoin which puts Sean MacMahon the army's chief of staff as the new head of the IRB. But if this fact was known to the IRAO it would have made little difference. Since MacMahon, O'Murthuile and Mulcahy

the IRB organisation within the Free State Army and met in circles and groups at Portobello Barracks. According to O'Broin the first meeting took place at the Vice Regal Lodge in the Phoenix Park where Liam Tobin was ADC to the Governor General T.M.Healy. They agreed at their meetings that reviving the IRB was a bad decision since they would be unable to obtain a controlling influence over the dormant Supreme Council where the army leaders Mulcahy, O'Muirthuile and MacMahon sat. Mulcahy and the Army council according to Lee had brought the IRB organisation under their control in November 1922 in order to counteract an attempt made by Liam Lynch to revitalise it for Anti - Treaty purposes<sup>14</sup>.

Collins' men therefore proceeded to form a new organisation called the Irish Republican Army Organisation (IRA) in order to address their promotional grievances. Membership of the IRA was confined to pro treaty supporters who had seen active service in the IRA before the Truce in July 1921. The IRA leaders had a particular contempt for people who joined the army after the truce, referring to them as "trucers". They held their first meetings in January and February of 1923. At these first meetings, Liam Tobin was appointed chairman and Tom Cullen another of Collins' squad was made organiser. The scope of the agenda of the IRA started to increase from just promotional issues to include political nationalist aims. Those asked to join were only officers with the "proper past and present outlook from a national point of view".<sup>15</sup> The goals of the organisation was to carry out Collins' policy of using the treaty only as a stepping stone towards the republic, a policy which they believed the government had abandoned. The IRA also started to complain about the number of ex British soldiers that were being taken into the army. According to Liam Tobin the Army was made up of

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all belonged to the army council and all were associated with the Free State Army's GHQ. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 203.

<sup>14</sup> See Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912 - 1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p99 n177 O'Beirne Ranelagh, "The IRB", *HIS*, xx, no. 77 (March 1976), pp. 34-36.

40% Old IRA, 50% ex British soldiers and 10 % ex civilians.<sup>16</sup> These figures were of course totally inaccurate, but it is true that some British officers were recruited into the army during the civil war because they were highly qualified and disciplined, although the political ramifications of such actions weren't considered by the Army council at the time. Valiulis suggests that the reason that the IRAO dressed their grievances in a nationalist rhetoric was purely to appeal to a wider spectrum of people. She states "by merging nationalist aims with personal ambition, the old IRA created an effective patriotic platform from which to attack Mulcahy".<sup>17</sup>

But it would be unfair to say that the IRAO leadership did not have a more extreme form of nationalist policy in mind for the Free State when they signed up. According to Bell when the IRAO leaders were initially toying with the idea of resurrecting the IRB, they made contact with some of their late opponents using links they formed in the War of Independence. Some of their contacts were still in Free State prisons.<sup>18</sup>

Dan Bryan working alongside Mickey Joe Costello in GHQ's Military Intelligence section or the Second Bureau as it was then named, soon discovered this new secret IRAO organisation was in existence. They informed Mulcahy immediately who must have realised that until they had more detailed information on the exact names and numbers of officers involved they could not reprimand them. Instead in order to counteract the IRAO Mulcahy decided that he would try to deflect the nationalist patriotic appeal of the IRAO by using the IRB within the Army. Mulcahy increasingly became favourable to using the organisation directly against Tobin and the IRAO. Tobin, Dalton and Thornton were old IRB members but had never reached the organisation's

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<sup>15</sup> Tobin Mutiny File, (UCD Archives Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195).

<sup>16</sup> See Leon O'Broin *Revolutionary underground The story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), p. 208.

<sup>17</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), pp 202-203.

<sup>18</sup> James Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: A history of the IRA, 1916-70* (London, 1970), p. 47.

upper echelons.<sup>19</sup> Sean O Muirthuile who had sat on the IRB's Supreme Council and was also a member of the army council now went about reorganising the IRB within the army with a nationalist appeal. A new IRB constitution was completed by June 1923 which reaffirmed their intention to establish a free and independent republican government in Ireland. It also provided for the establishing of clubs and divisions corresponding to Free State army formations.<sup>20</sup> This decision accepted by Mulcahy was a bad one. By not incorporating the IRAO leaders into the IRB they only further alienated the IRAO from GHQ. It also politically gave the IRAO a stick with which to beat Mulcahy and GHQ.

The most important and pressing matter for Mulcahy and the Army Council at the time was their plans to reorganise the army. By February 1923 it was clear that the Anti Treaty IRA forces were on the defensive. The large Free State army during the civil war at its peak had swelled to nearly 60,000. This quadrupling of the army size had taken place between the autumn of 1922 and April 1923.<sup>21</sup> It was obvious that this expensive force would have to be scaled down for peace time requirements. But the task of demobilisation proved more daunting than mobilisation. In a climate of desperate poverty, high unemployment and no adequate social welfare system it was to become even more difficult. The planned demobilisation was to reduce 52,000 men and 3,000 officers in May 1923 to 30,000 men and 1,300 officers by January 1924. Final projections were for an army of 18,000 men.<sup>22</sup> Mulcahy and GHQ not only wanted to significantly reduce the size of the army, they also wanted to restructure the army and implement a formal centralised organisation which would come under civilian control. During the War

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<sup>19</sup> None of Collins' intelligence unit had any power in the IRB except Collins himself and maybe Liam Tobin, who was put on an IRB committee with Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Sean O'Muirthuile, and Martin Conlon in order to represent the pro treaty army side in an effort by Collins' to avoid civil war. But maybe not surprisingly these nominations were objected to by the anti treaty leader Liam Lynch on the grounds that he did not believe "they were in a position to act with any authority on behalf of the pro treaty side". See Florence O'Donoghue, *No Other Law* (Dublin, 1954), p. 235.

<sup>20</sup> IRB constitution, 1923, clause 13b, quoted in O'Beirne Ranelagh, "The IRB", in *HIS*, xx, no. 77 (March 1976), p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> See Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912 - 1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 99.

of Independence and the Civil War it was evident that much of the army regarded themselves as operating independently and outside the jurisdiction of the Dail. Mulcahy believed the way to change this was through controversially altering the officer corps. The selection criteria for officers had up until now given preference to those with pre Truce service or those men likely to be most popular and win over other IRA personal to support the Free State . But Mulcahy now stated

*An efficient army - bearing in mind the material from which the present army has grown, and the necessity and the possibility of utilising the older roots of the army, but it is in no part of my conception of my policy to keep in the army men who are unfitted for it...or do not have the proper attitude with regard to discipline. My general attitude too is that these men must be weaned away from the idea and the use of arms.*<sup>23</sup>

These moves at demobilisation and restructuring were interpreted as a direct threat by the IRAO. In their eyes not only were their chances of promotion and securing influence in Army Policy now undermined but their very jobs were under threat. They focused their grievances against GHQ, since this was the body which decided which officers and soldiers should be decommissioned and which ones could stay. Mulcahy and his staff sought to compile active records for every officer in the army so as to evaluate which ones to keep on. On many occasions the Director of Intelligence had to give evaluations of different officers. Professor James Hogan who succeeded Diarmuid O'Hegarty as the Intelligence Department's Director in April 1923, submitted numerous evaluation reports. Hogan was made D/I after he had threatened to resign from his position as General officer in Charge of Inspection. General Seán MacMahon had appointed Hogan chiefly for the purpose of reorganising the Intelligence Department in the

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<sup>22</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy*, (Dublin, 1992), p. 202.

<sup>23</sup> Quote taken from Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912 - 1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 99 n173. Refers to Mulcahy to Cosgrave 11 January 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers ,P7/C/12).

aftermath of the Civil War. However Hogan's desire to leave the army couldn't be quelled and he resigned in August 1923.<sup>24</sup>

His successor David Nelligan, only assumed the position as Director of Intelligence for a month between September and October 1923. However Nelligan who left the Department to develop the Armed Detective unit in the new Civic Guards, still managed to submit evaluation reports in his new role. The Armed Detective unit submitted a list of army officers who were "a social menace in Dublin" to the Chief of Staff.<sup>25</sup> Nelligan was succeeded as Director by Michael Costello in October 1923.<sup>26</sup> Costello had been a Volunteer during the War of Independence, before he joined the Provisional Army in February 1922. He transferred from Birr Barracks to Dublin in February 1923, where he worked as Assistant Director in the Intelligence Department. Costello on his appointment as D/I states he was ordered by Mulcahy to supply information regarding officers to the Staff Duties Branch who were at the time dealing with demobilisation. He submitted a list of officers that he believed to be members or in touch with the IRA.<sup>27</sup> Within the Intelligence Department itself Costello had to make recommendations for the retention of officers. He says

I had to decide between the most efficient and capable officer in the Department and the officer with the best record. In some cases I had to recommend the ablest man in the Department for demobilisation because he was not sufficiently reliable.<sup>28</sup>

It is not clear which GHQ intelligence officers Costello was referring to. However many of the original GHQ intelligence staff that had remained since the War of Independence days, were now active members within the IRAO. The power that Costello and other

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<sup>24</sup> Hogan's Statement to the Army Inquiry (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/6)

<sup>25</sup> Report on evidence given at interview by Kevin O'Higgins to Army Inquiry 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1924 p9 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/23)

<sup>26</sup> For full run down of D/I appointments see Appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup> Costello's Statement to the Army Inquiry 28<sup>th</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25 D.7)

<sup>28</sup> Costello's Statement to the Army Inquiry 28<sup>th</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25 D.6)

senior GHQ officers had over determining demobilisation was making them the centre of the IRAO's fears. The Intelligence Department attracted particular attention since there were a considerable number of IRAO members working there. The atmosphere and tension in the Department between July 1923 and March 1924, resulted in Costello feeling that he could not trust some of his officers. This helped create a divide within the Department itself.

Despite being able to create this air of disruption, Tobin and his IRAO group realised that at this stage they could not achieve their demands without outside support and aid. Tobin and the IRAO leaders had been working secretly to use all their contacts in order to get political backing. As it was they had urged their members to take

“control of vital sections of the Army and oust those undesirable persons who were holding those positions and secondly to establish a strong voice in army policy with a view to securing complete national independence when a suitable occasion arose”.<sup>29</sup>

At one of their meetings in April Major General Patrick O'Daly objected to the action proposed. He left the meeting and is alleged to have contacted Mulcahy and MacMahon afterwards and given them names of those present. O'Daly and some other senior officers who had been working for the IRAO were persuaded to come over and join the new IRB. O'Daly was given a place on the Supreme Council of the IRB.<sup>30</sup> Dan Bryan alongside Mickey Joe Costello had agents infiltrating the IRAO and were processing reports on attendance at meetings, their objectives and lists of the main ring leaders. Combined with O'Daly's information this could have provided the Second Bureau and Mulcahy with grounds for arresting some of the leaders of the IRAO. As a result of O'Daly's defection the IRAO were “forced to drop things for a while as it meant reorganising”.<sup>31</sup> But any

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<sup>29</sup> Tobin Mutiny File (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/105).

<sup>30</sup> See Leon O'Broin *Revolutionary underground The story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), p. 208.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*



arrests Mulcahy could make were put on hold when the IRAO started to make overtures to political ministers.

They cleverly concentrated their complaints not on army policy but on the IRB. This won them sympathy from many government officials such as Minister for Home Affairs Kevin O'Higgins who disapproved of a secret revolutionary society, especially within the army. The reason for O'Higgins initial support for the mutineers can be seen as two fold. As well as his disapproval of secret societies he was disgruntled with Mulcahy. He had initially backed Mulcahy over Cosgrave for the Presidency of the Executive Council in August 1922 because he believed Mulcahy would be more vigorous in prosecuting the civil war. However by January 1923 O'Higgins emerging as the strong man of the government now believed Mulcahy was failing to take sufficient measures against the Irregulars or agrarian anarchy.<sup>32</sup> O'Higgins who was obsessed with attaining social order, argued that the execution of prisoners should take place in every county rather than just in Dublin, since this would considerably shorten the struggle.<sup>33</sup> In February 1923, O'Higgins pushed through the establishment of the Supreme Council of Defence. This consisted of Cosgrave, Mulcahy, O'Higgins and Minister for Agriculture Joe McGrath. In affect it gave O'Higgins a say in army matters and reduced Mulcahy's power and control. Mulcahy felt that this new Supreme Council of Defence just encouraged factions in the army to go behind his back with their grievances.

On 6 June 1923, the IRAO after receiving encouragement from O'Higgins and other cabinet members, sent a letter to President Cosgrave requesting a meeting with him and Mulcahy, in order to discuss the government's deviation

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<sup>32</sup>See Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912 - 1985* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 98.

from Collins' position on the treaty.<sup>34</sup> As a result of the letter a meeting between Mulcahy, Cosgrave and the Attorney General was convened. Cosgrave's main worry was that the IRAO might move into the political arena and cause a split within Cumann Na nGaedhael. Mulcahy insisted that they shouldn't tolerate their interference and continue with demobilisation.<sup>35</sup> But despite Mulcahy's objections the IRAO met several times with Joseph McGrath in his capacity as Minister, President Cosgrave and even Mulcahy himself.

During these meetings the IRAO officers condemned the re organisation of the IRB, the current composition of the officer corps and demanded a committee of enquiry to be set up to investigate the retention and demobilisation of officers. The IRAO officers as these meetings gained in confidence, so much so that their tone became more threatening. At one meeting they exclaimed

Until satisfactory arrangements are come to, we will expose this treachery and take what steps we consider necessary to bring about an honest, cleaner and genuine effort to secure the Republic.<sup>36</sup>

Mulcahy enraged left the room stating, "I do not think that in any country in the world four officers would come in uniform and sit down in front of the commander in chief of that country and read in his presence that document".<sup>37</sup>

But Mulcahy under pressure from Joseph McGrath and Cosgrave agreed to continue meeting with the officers. Essentially Mulcahy was made keep lines of communication open with the IRAO at least until the elections in August 1923 were over. After the election GHQ and the army staff had no qualms with taking a hard line with Tobin's group. In September and October 1923, 763 officers were dismissed for marked inefficiency or in-discipline. This demobilisation process was in stark contrast to the slow

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<sup>34</sup> Tobin Mutiny File (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195).

<sup>35</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 204.

<sup>36</sup> Tobin Mutiny File (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

smooth one pursued between June and August 1923 before the elections. Following the step up in demobilisation, the IRAO wrote to Mulcahy requesting him to prevent demobilisation of certain officers. Mulcahy with election pressure gone, considered the letter improper and irregular and never replied.

While the political wrangling and letters were being passed between the government the army and the IRAO, the newly named Second Bureau was working hard behind the scenes studying the situation. The Department working from the Red House in Parkgate Street noticed that the IRAO group became very active between May and August 1923. But according to former D/I at the time Prof. Hogan, it only started to get out of hand in July.<sup>38</sup> Intelligence reports started to come in to GHQ on a widescale in July 1923 of officers from Tobin's base in the Vice Regal Lodge going up and down the country trying to seduce officers from their allegiance to the National Army. The Intelligence Department realised the importance and potential threat the IRAO group posed. So much so that two separate sections within the Department were set up specifically to deal with the problem. The Internal Army Supervision section and the Ex-Army Organisation section.<sup>39</sup> Due to the delicate situation over loyalty which existed within the Intelligence Department itself, it was necessary to appoint Intelligence personnel who could be trusted. Dan Bryan due to his service and close relationship with the Director of Intelligence, Costello, was appointed to concentrate on the Ex -Army Organisation section. This section looked at the IRAO, IRB, Old IRA, Ex-National Army Officers, The Legion of Irish Ex-Service men and numerous other mushrooming Ex-Army organisations, which were being organised almost weekly.<sup>40</sup> At first Bryan's main concern was about the movements of the IRAO leaders, which he frequently relayed back to the Intelligence Department. Bryan and his fellow agents quickly managed to identify

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<sup>38</sup> Hogan's interview 28<sup>th</sup> April 1924 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25).

the principal leaders and structures within the IRAO. There were three distinct groups within the organisation. Firstly, Collin's old men such as Liam Tobin, Frank Thornton Charlie Dalton and even Minister Joseph McGrath, who had worked alongside many of these men as D/I and as D/G of CID. Secondly there was a group of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion old Dublin Brigade men who had milder views than the first group. Finally there was a section of rural western officers led by Col. Simmons and Col. Madden who also subscribed to Tobin's organisation.

A large number of files were built up pertaining to the organisation and membership of the IRAO and its subsidiary bodies. The files which resulted from the reports of both of the Intelligence sections dealing with the affair could not be stored normally for fear of infiltration from within the Intelligence Department. Costello noted that "It was not possible to openly deal with the matter although a considerable amount of work was done otherwise".<sup>41</sup> However despite these precautions to hide the work from a group of the Department, information on who was carrying out observation on the IRAO was soon relayed back to Tobin. According to an intelligence report, Ex -Commandant Joe Dolan had asked an agent from the Military Intelligence Department to watch Dan Bryan.<sup>42</sup> Dolan himself had been a member of the GHQ Intelligence Department under Collins and had also been connected with a Dublin murder gang and implicated in the Ballyseedy affair. Currently he was an active member of the IRAO executive and was the most feared of all the officers involved in the organisation. The majority of the leaders of the IRAO and its related organisations had considerable experience in Army Intelligence. According to Costello "At times the position resolved itself into a conflict between their intelligence service and ours, in which a number of them had been serving until a short

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<sup>39</sup> Annual Report on the Intelligence Service Oct 1924 -Dec 1925, (Military Archives Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

time previously".<sup>43</sup> Although serving intelligence officers in the IRAO posed a serious threat to the Department, Costello and Bryan managed to use them to their advantage. Commandant Frank Saurin who was attached to the Intelligence Department was also an active member of the IRAO. Costello learned of his IRAO membership through Bryan and his other agents working in the Ex Army Organisation section. Consequently Costello gave Saurin a room to himself with a telephone, in order that he might be free to organise the group from inside GHQ at the Red House in Parkgate Street. Costello placed a microphone in the ventilator in Comdt. Saurin's room and had the telephone tapped. Conversations in the room and on the telephone were recorded by a relay of short hand writers and thus Costello was kept informed.<sup>44</sup>

This information combined with Bryan's and other agents reports meant that the Intelligence Department had detailed information on IRAO movement and meetings long before the Mutiny erupted in March 1924. Consequently, when IRAO leaders began to infiltrate the Curragh command in October 1923, intelligence reports about their movements were relayed back to GHQ almost immediately. The Curragh was targeted by the IRAO because they realised it would be easy to ferment discontent in this command. Officers who had just completed the new training program in the Curragh, were the first officers to be released under Mulcahy's demobilisation program. According to Costello who was serving as Assistant D/I at the time "It became a hotbed for the growth of a mutinous organisation".<sup>45</sup> The Officer Training Corps (O.T.C.) at the Curragh training camp was spoken to by members of the IRAO. Intelligence recorded that "An outsider who had no business in the camp got in and spoke to them at an informal gathering." It

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<sup>42</sup> Box no. S/12858 - Crisis/C/W/ Mutiny Box 24/ A Files 14<sup>th</sup> July 1925, (Military Archives Army Crisis Files).

<sup>43</sup> Annual Report on the Intelligence Service Oct 1924 -Dec 1925, (Military Archives Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>44</sup> Record of Conversation between General Costello and M Moynihan Secretary Dept. An Taoiseach 22 December 1948. (National Archives, Dept. An Taoiseach S 3678 E).

was thought from other sources that this man was Tom Cullen, there was even reports suggesting it was Tobin himself. However, although the Chief of Staff was informed no action against either man was taken.<sup>46</sup> Following a number of secret IRAO meetings in the Curragh a protest against demobilisation occurred on 9 November 1923. Seven officers who were discharged refused to accept their papers. They were placed under arrest, charged with disobedience, and tried at a general court martial. In their defence they claimed they had sworn an oath to the Old IRA not to lay down their arms until Ireland was an independent republic.<sup>47</sup> Consequently in sympathy with the seven officers, sixty other officers at the Curragh protested and refused to accept their demobilisation papers. The Army council removed them from the camp and denied separation pay and grants.

It appeared at this stage that the matter had come to an end. However the early warnings Military Intelligence had given to the Chief of Staff concerning the political overtures that the IRAO were making, were not heeded. The IRAO contacts within the Cumann na nGaedhael party were proving to be a formidable ally. So much so that in response to the protest at the Curragh, the government formed a cabinet committee on demobilisation consisting of Minister of Education MacNeill, Minister of Finance Ernest Blythe and Minister of Industry and Commerce Joseph McGrath. But despite McGrath's protests the committee received and denied sixty applications for re-instatement from officers who had rebelled at the Curragh. McGrath now seen as the political voice of the IRAO resigned from the committee because some of the officers, whose cases he believed should be decided by the committee, had already been demobilised. According to Valiulis, after McGrath's resignation Cosgrave managed to entice him back. McGrath and the IRAO leaders were given a guarantee that the cabinet committee's decisions

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<sup>45</sup> Costello's Statement to the Army Inquiry 28<sup>th</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25)

<sup>46</sup> Costello's Statement to the Army Inquiry 28<sup>th</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25 F:2).

would be binding over Mulcahy and the Army council. This was a big enough incentive to entice him back on to the committee.<sup>48</sup> The IRAO's political bargaining power, in the person of McGrath appears to have kept their organisation alive in expectation. Mulcahy exclaimed that the incident in the Curragh would have ended any threat of mutiny were it not for the encouragement by politicians.<sup>49</sup>

Based on intelligence reports Mulcahy's assertions were correct. They noted that IRAO activity after the Curragh incident centred around the political arena. Joseph McGrath was seen as the main man involved in this side of the operation. Military Intelligence took a close look at Joseph McGrath's involvement in the IRAO. The Second Bureau through observation and reports from their agents managed to uncover a network of touts and informers which McGrath and his private secretary Harry Murray were running. Intelligence found a number of IRAO agents and men that McGrath had kept in touch with since his days as Director General of CID, reporting to an office of his at Government Buildings.<sup>50</sup> This highlighted the seriousness of the situation at the time. The fact that the IRAO movement were running a counter intelligence system whose primary function was to undermine the steps the Military Intelligence Department were taking to monitor their organisation. This is not surprising since the intelligence calibre and connections the IRAO had could be traced back to the War of Independence.

Following the Curragh, the IRAO stepped up their level of activity. It seems that the failure of the Cabinet Committee to sway army policy in the IRAO's favour led its leaders to plan more drastic action. In January 1924, Intelligence informed GHQ that the IRAO intended to seize arms, take over a number of barracks and issue terms to the government. Consequently GHQ took their first active steps against the IRAO. Quietly

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<sup>47</sup> O' Connor's Statement to the Army Inquiry (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/1).

<sup>48</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 208.

<sup>49</sup> Mulcahy's Statement to the Army Inquiry (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/37).

<sup>50</sup> Intelligence Report for Col M. J. Costello 1<sup>st</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

commanding officers were notified of a possible mutiny and certain troops thought to be mutinous were relocated.<sup>51</sup> Mulcahy sent Cosgrave a memo on the situation and a meeting between Mulcahy, Cosgrave and McGrath was held as a result. Although no uprising took place for the first three months of 1924, the Cabinet Committee refused to alter Mulcahy's demobilisation plan to suit the IRAO leaders.

Mulcahy's reorganisation and demobilisation plan for the Army included the Second Bureau Military Intelligence Department. The Department was reorganised and scaled down. Due to the delicate situation that existed many officers were kept on. Although Costello probably used this as an opportunity to re assign some officers, did not use the situation to purge the Department of the IRAO men that were working there. Under the reorganisation of the Department two IRAO officers Captain Séan Tumbleton and Commandant F.X. Coughlan held senior positions within the Department. To decommission these officers who had distinguished service records would have caused an uproar. One consequence however of this reorganisation, was that Dan Bryan on the 20 February 1924 was made a Captain within the Department. His service record and the fact at the age of twenty three he was one of the few officers the D/I Costello could trust had a strong bearing on his promotion.

Following his promotion Bryan went on working as normal monitoring the IRAO and other Ex Army organisations. The months of January and February 1924 saw the internal activity of IRAO members significantly increase. The flow of recently decommissioned officers formed a natural growing bed for their organisation. Intelligence reports warned Mulcahy and his staff about the dangers of releasing trained gun men into a civilian population with high unemployment. Despite this large scale demobilisation pressed on. Intelligence reports at the end of February and at the

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<sup>51</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy*, (Dublin, 1992), p. 208.



beginning of March were indicating a deteriorating situation. On 5 March reports came into intelligence of officers in Templemore under the Waterford Command absconding with weapons and being abusive and drunk. In addition, an attempt on the Waterford Commander's life outside the Barracks was also reported. Following a series of Intelligence reports similar to the one just mentioned GHQ took steps to stop the leaders of the IRAO from meeting. An order was passed preventing officers leaving barracks without written permission and stopping officers who were on leave visiting Dublin from contacting GHQ where many of the IRAO leaders were based.

These steps at curbing the influence of the IRAO were taken too late by GHQ, despite the constant warnings from intelligence. The IRAO leaders egged on by some Cumann na nGaedhael politicians and under pressure to act from the large number of Pre-Truce officers that were about to be decommissioned on 7 March, were now motivated to take direct steps so as to redirect army policy. On 6 March 1924 Liam Tobin and Charles Dalton signed an ultimatum which was presented to the Government. It demanded the suspension of army demobilisation and the removal of the Army Council. The government was given until 12 noon on 10 March 1924 to reply. Failure to comply meant that "we will take such action that will make clear to the Irish People that we are not renegades or traitors to the ideals that induced them to accept the Treaty".<sup>52</sup>

This ultimatum caused chaos inside the Intelligence Department. There were reports coming in from all over the country of officers absconding with weapons as news of the mutiny spread. On 8 March a report came in from the Cork Command stated that officers had been individually approached and asked to sign a document tendering their resignations to Major General Liam Tobin.<sup>53</sup> In Roscommon on the same day, Captain Madden ordered an arms inspection. He then ordered all the arms to be placed in cars

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<sup>52</sup> S3578D, Department of An Taoiseach, National Archives Dublin.

<sup>53</sup> Intelligence Reports 8<sup>th</sup> March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

waiting outside the barracks, being driven by Ex Col Simmons and Ex Col Madden who was the Captain's brother.<sup>54</sup> Col Simmons and Col Madden were leaders of the Western Officer clique within the IRAO. Madden and Simmons made a statement looking for the removal of certain officers including the present D/I Costello. They had also called for the appointment of Col. Frank Thornton as D/I.<sup>55</sup> This information was relayed back to GHQ and brought about both officer's resignations. The first few days following the issue of the ultimatum, the Intelligence Department was littered with radio reports from different Commands telling of officers absconding with arms. With government authority, the arrest of Tobin and Dalton was ordered. Several houses in Dublin were searched by the military including Joseph McGrath's, but to no avail. In expectation of trouble resulting from the ultimatum's deadline, Guards were strengthened after dark in a series of barracks around the country. Convoys of troops in Dublin had mounted machine guns on their tender vehicles in case of a revolt in the city. Because of the nationalist slant the IRAO had put on their ultimatum and the demands they had made in the past concerning the inadequacies of the current government's nationalist policy, the Northern authorities were also worried. Irish military intelligence picked up a report on 11 March that the RUC and the Ulster "Specials" had mobilised on the border. They were checking all cars for IRAO captured arms being shipped to Derry City.<sup>56</sup> During the ensuing days after the ultimatum was issued a number of declarations of loyalty to GHQ came in from different commands. However Waterford and the Cork command were the only two that GHQ were significantly worried about.<sup>57</sup> The mutiny was an officers revolt and the majority of the rank and file did not involve themselves. For this reason intelligence

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Costello's Statement to the Army Inquiry 28<sup>th</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25 F:3).

<sup>56</sup> Intelligence Reports 11<sup>th</sup> March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

<sup>57</sup> Intelligence Reports 12<sup>th</sup> March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

estimated that loyal personnel outnumbered IRAO supporters ten to one.<sup>58</sup> Despite this Cork proved to be a problem. Dalton and Tom Ennis leaders in the IRAO had been given jurisdiction in the Cork command during the civil war. They had a strong influence over the officers and their loyalty could not be counted on if open fighting broke out. Within Dublin itself some weapons were taken from Gormanstown and Baldonell, but Reports suggested that the place of prime concern was Island Bridge. According to intelligence reports the IRAO had a strong position there.<sup>59</sup> The Intelligence Department and GHQ sent out troops to hunt down the mutineers. It is not clear how successful they were, but on 13 March a child was shot in the leg accidentally while troops failed to apprehend a mutineer in Dublin.<sup>60</sup>

The increase in military activity was reflected in an increase in political activity. McGrath in sympathy with the mutineers and in condemnation of the way the government had handled the whole affair, resigned on 7 March from his post as Minister. In response, Cumann na nGaedhael, held several meetings throughout the army crisis, with a well regimented section within the party giving a certain support for the mutineers.<sup>61</sup> McGrath minimised the mutiny at these party meetings, reducing it to a dispute between the IRB run by Mulcahy and the IRAO. Essentially what emerged at these party meetings were three distinct factions. Firstly McGrath and his followers, secondly Mulcahy and his support and thirdly Kevin O'Higgins who with the Minister for Agriculture Patrick Hogan formed another formidable faction of the party. In the background giving his support to all of the three sides was Cosgrave. As a result of the talks at these party meetings O'Higgins and his supporters had attacked Mulcahy and the Army Council. However their criticism was not that they failed to recognise the mutineers needs, but that they facilitated the existence of a secret society, the IRB, within the national army. This was

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<sup>58</sup> Costello's Statement to the Army Inquiry 28<sup>th</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25 E:1).

<sup>59</sup> Intelligence Reports (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

used by O'Higgins to attack Mulcahy and introduce one of O'Higgins' converts General Eoin O'Duffy into the equation. It was decided by the Government's Executive Council that Mulcahy and his Army Council were tainted with their association with the IRB and therefore could not deal with the IRAO. So instead O'Duffy was made General Commanding Officer of the Defence Forces of Saorstát Eireann on 10 March. O'Duffy himself was Chief of the Civic Guards which came under O'Higgins' jurisdiction as Minister for Home Affairs. In reducing Mulcahy's power and in installing O'Duffy, O'Higgins had scored a strong political victory within the Cumann na nGaedhael party. Meanwhile Cosgrave delegated McGrath to unofficially approach the mutineers and induce them to "undo, so far as they can the mischief created by their actions".<sup>62</sup> This McGrath did. McGrath on behalf of the government offered lenient terms to those who mutinied and offered reinstatement without victimisation. He also promised them that an inquiry board would be set up to examine the whole demobilisation procedure. Consequently on 12 March the Executive council ordered the Intelligence Department and other army authorities to stop the search for the mutineers and gave them the opportunity to return all stolen property. As a result of these decisions, the mutineers sent another document to the government in which they repented their decision and McGrath on 13 March withdrew his resignation.

However, despite all these claims of repentance on behalf of the IRAO, the Intelligence Department was getting a completely different picture after the 12 March. Instead of IRAO activity scaling down it appeared to be more active than ever. A barracks in New Ross was attacked for twenty minutes with weapons taken by the IRAO. A sentry

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<sup>60</sup> Intelligence Reports 13<sup>th</sup> March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

<sup>61</sup> O'Higgins' Statement to the Army Inquiry (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/23).

<sup>62</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 212.

was wounded and the attackers retreated.<sup>63</sup> Captain Bryan as he now was, had received reports from a number of agents and informers within the IRAO of frequent meetings of the organisation. The tap room over a pub in Fleet Street was identified as a hive of IRAO activity.<sup>64</sup> Technically the military authorities no longer had the power to arrest these men since the government had officially called off the search for mutineers on 12 March.

What made matters even more chaotic for the intelligence service was that seven senior intelligence officers resigned in sympathy with the IRAO leaders between the 10 March and the 13 March. Commandant Saurin who's office had been bugged, Commandant F.X. Coughlan and Captain Seán Roche all resigned on the 10 March. They were followed by Lieutenant O'Neill, Lieutenant J. Byrne, Commandant S. Twomey and Captain J. Tumbleton by 13 March.<sup>65</sup> These resignations needless to say caused large scale upheaval within the Department and would have posed a strong security risk. Despite taking precautions many of these resigning trained intelligence officers had knowledge of files and the movement of agents within the Intelligence Department, that were operating directly against the IRAO. The IRAO had enough men and expertise at their disposal now to set up a counter intelligence system and even enough power to possibly infiltrate the existing Intelligence Department. The worst fears of GHQ were confirmed when the Intelligence Department picked up information on directives given to certain IRAO officers. Movements of Army Intelligence personnel were to be reported. The IRAO had already detailed an agent to shadow Dan Bryan. IRAO agents who still remained in GHQ were also encouraged to get copies of routine orders. Lists of reliable men to be attached to IRAO intelligence were sought as were lists of arms stores in different barracks around the country. Special attention was paid to the holdings in the

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<sup>63</sup> Intelligence Reports 12<sup>th</sup> March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

<sup>64</sup> Intelligence Reports 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

<sup>65</sup> Director of Intelligence Reports 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park.<sup>66</sup> It appeared now that GHQ had an intelligence war on their hands and information security had to be tightened.

GHQ was also concerned that the mutineers appeared to be using their time of grace, supposedly to return stolen weaponry, to spread discontent not only in army circles but also into the Civic Guards. There were many Ex-Army officers in the Guards and the IRAO used this to further their aims.<sup>67</sup> Many IRAO members like McGrath and Séan Tumbleton had been members of CID during the civil war and maintained connections with members of the Civic Guard organisation which swallowed up the old Oriel house organisation in 1923. An intelligence report indicated that the head of the Armed Detective Unit former Director of Intelligence, David Nelligan “and his G Division were friendly to” the IRAO cause.<sup>68</sup> The reliability of this assertion made at an IRAO meeting is indeterminable. Nelligan’s own testimony at the army inquiry and the fact that only six months before he himself as D/I had listed officers for demobilisation, makes it unlikely that he was a staunch IRAO supporter. However he was one of Collins’ men and he had later stated it is undeniable that many of his officers were supporters, and indeed G Division men were supposedly caught at the scene of the mutiny a few days later.<sup>69</sup>

The mobilisation of the Mutineers after the 12 March was causing the Intelligence Department and other military authorities grave concern. Bryan stated that Mulcahy and GHQ were extremely worried about the unpredictable nature of some of the mutineers and that there were threats of “plugging all and sundry”.<sup>70</sup> The intelligence reports of political intrigue and alleged assassination plots only helped fuel these fears.<sup>71</sup> However despite these fears of a revolt conveyed by Intelligence, the political forces were taking a

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<sup>66</sup> Intelligence Reports 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/196).

<sup>67</sup> Intelligence Report S/21.501 Military Archives, quoted in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 212.

<sup>68</sup> Intelligence Reports 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Interview Valiulis had with Bryan 18<sup>th</sup> March 1975, quoted in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 214.

more lenient view of the situation. Cosgrave instructed McGrath on 17 March to relay to the mutineers that they had until 20 March to surrender, together with all stolen property.<sup>72</sup> Despite this the Intelligence Department continued to monitor the mutineers movements very closely.

The tracking and gathering of information on the mutineers was proving easy for the Intelligence Department. According to Bryan its leading lights were hopelessly indiscreet.<sup>73</sup> The Department had a surveillance operation in action at the Crown Alley phone exchange in Dublin. This had been operational at different times as far back as the Civil War. It was currently being used to track the mutineers. Bryan from this source received information that Tobin and some senior IRAO leaders had scheduled a meeting for the night of 18 March for Devlins' Hotel in Parnell Street.<sup>74</sup> Bryan immediately informed Costello and news of the planned meeting was conveyed to the higher staff of the Army. However the higher Army staff did not consult the Executive, General O'Duffy whom the government had put in charge of the affair or indeed General Mulcahy himself. Colonel Hugo MacNeill was detailed to surround the hotel with troops and await further instruction. MacNeill with his troops in place contacted a "higher authority" in Portobello barracks.<sup>75</sup> MacNeill was told to maintain the cordon but not enter without further instruction. Costello who was with MacNeill outside the hotel went to Portobello. Here he met the Adjutant General Gearóid O Suilibheáin and Diarmuid O'Hegarty the secretary of the Executive Council. A discussion ensued on whether the Minister for Defence should be contacted, but it was felt it would take too long to get an answer.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1994), p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland", In *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5, 1990, p. 54 Reference to Bryan Tapes.

<sup>74</sup> Recollection of Conversation Maurice Moynihan had with Michael Costello on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1948 (National Archives, Dept. An Taoiseach S3678 E.) Commandant Peter Young at Military Archives recalls Dan Bryan saying that he had been the one involved with processing the first news of the meeting.

<sup>75</sup> Recollection of Conversation Maurice Moynihan had with Michael Costello on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1948 (National Archives, Dept. An Taoiseach S3678 E.)

Eventually it was agreed that entry and arrest should be effected. General Costello returned to Parnell Street with this information at about 1 am.

While Costello was gone, the mutineers had become aware that the hotel was surrounded. Liam Tobin who was late for the meeting had stepped off a tram in O'Connell Street and saw the troops outside. At which point he left without making any attempt to enter the hotel.<sup>76</sup> The rest of the mutineers proceeded to make their way onto the roof top of the building. Many of them had a good knowledge of the surrounding area since Devlin's had been an intelligence meeting place of Collins during the War of Independence. Intelligence recorded on 18 March that two mutinous officers had been ringing up from somewhere in town trying to locate a Minister. They had rang every Minister except Defence, but could not get hold of anyone.<sup>77</sup> Despite this, a message of the mutineers plight had managed to find its way to McGrath. He arrived on the scene demanding that the troops withdraw. His protests weren't entertained. Col MacNeill entered the building and eleven mutinous officers were captured, and a small quantity of arms were confiscated. It is not clear for what purpose the mutineers were meeting, or to what extent the Intelligence Department knew before the raid what they were planning. Intelligence reports dated after the mutiny on 22 March and 1 April 1924, suggest that they were planning to kidnap the governor general, the wife of the GOC in Dublin, Mrs. Hogan and a number of other officers.<sup>78</sup> According to Sunday Press journalist John Murdoch who talked to one of the mutineers sometime after the incident, the purpose of the meeting was far more sinister. General Tobin had planned to kidnap the entire Free State Cabinet with the exception of Joseph McGrath. This was decided by the main IRAO leaders before they issued their ultimatum on 7 March. The purpose of the meeting in

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<sup>76</sup> Recollection of Conversation Maurice Moynihan had with Michael Costello on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1948 (National Archives, Dept. An Taoiseach S3678 E.)

<sup>77</sup> Intelligence Memo 18<sup>th</sup> March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/196).

<sup>78</sup> Reports quoted in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy*, (Dublin, 1992), p. 215.



Devlins was to inform the rank and file of the plan and how it was to be carried out.<sup>79</sup> This article by Murdoch doesn't name the mutineer who gave him this information over forty years after the event took place. However the article's assertion of a cabinet kidnap plan is given credence by the detail of how the plan was to be executed. Secondly, on the troops arrival in Devlins they found a significant amount of scorched papers recently burned in the room where the mutineers were meeting.

Bryan exclaimed that their scheme itself was launched "in a haze of whiskey".<sup>80</sup> However despite the contention over whether a kidnapping plan was going to be implemented or not, on the night of the raid the main ringleaders of the IRAO seem to have managed to avoid capture. According to the report prepared for the D/I the following morning, Col. MacDonald attempted first to enter Devlins at 11:30 pm. He was held up at the door by mutineers Commandant Joe Dolan who had a gun in his pocket and Commandant Shanahan. Col. MacDonald retreated and proceeded to clear the surrounding streets of all civilians. At 12:15 am MacNeill's troops entered the building and some shots were fired. Whether they were fired defensively or as a warning, was unclear. However MacNeill searched the building and couldn't find any of the mutineers. However it became clear that they had escaped onto the rooftop. At 2:30am the mutineers commenced surrendering and retreated from the roof.<sup>81</sup> Many of the mutineer party had managed to escape via the rooftop and only ten mutineers were arrested.<sup>82</sup> However those arrested included some influential intelligence personnel. Three former members of the Squad were present. Col. James Slattery, Commdt. Pat Mc Crae and Commdt. Patrick Griffin as were the three former GHQ intelligence officers, Joe Dolan, Joseph Shannahan and Frank Thornton. Following their arrests, McGrath was becoming more restless. He

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<sup>79</sup> Mutiny of the Generals, *Sunday Press*, 28<sup>th</sup> Nov 1965.

<sup>80</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland", in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 54 Reference to O'Halpin's interview with Bryan December 1983.

<sup>81</sup> Report to Director of Intelligence 19<sup>th</sup> March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

<sup>82</sup> Uinseann MacEoin, *The IRA in the Twilight Years 1923 - 1948* (Dublin: ), p. 97.

demanded to stand the mutineers a drink before they were locked up. McGrath's wish was granted before the arrested officers were removed in lorries to Arbour Hill barracks. Troops opened fire on an arrested mutineer who had jumped out of one of the lorries on O'Connell Bridge. He was not wounded, but was recaptured.<sup>83</sup>

The following day the political arena erupted as news of the events of the night before came through. The Executive council met twice and Mulcahy was asked to furnish a report on the event. The Executive Council in the absence of Cosgrave, who was ill, demanded the resignation of MacMahon, O'Muirthuile, O'Súileabháin and Mulcahy which made up the Army council. The Executive council dominated by O'Higgin's in Cosgrave's wake, were seeking the resignations because the army had broke the government deadline of the 20 March in arresting the Mutineers. The resignations were forthcoming and the Executive Council established a three man committee of inquiry to look into the whole affair. Essentially O'Higgins had successfully used the Mutiny to purge himself of Mulcahy who he now saw as a political rival for control within the party. Cosgrave's illness had saved him from making any controversial decision.

The D/I Costello believed that this illness was a deliberate ploy on Cosgrave's behalf. Cosgrave himself did not like Mulcahy or O'Higgins. His feelings towards Mr. O'Higgins was generated by O'Higgin's "masterful way and perhaps his imperialist tendencies". General Mulcahy was disliked for different reasons and generally because "he was a pain in the neck" to Cosgrave. It is Costello's belief that Cosgrave who had the special confidence of McGrath, encouraged him to incite an ultimatum from the mutineers, thus provoking a situation that he hoped would force O'Higgins' resignation from the Executive council. However O'Higgins who was the second in command in government and took over from Cosgrave, skilfully transferred the blame to Mulcahy and

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<sup>83</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1994), p.21.

forced his resignation.<sup>84</sup> This theory of Costello's has no firm evidence to support it, however given his position as head of Intelligence it must be considered possible.

O'Higgins emerged from the whole affair in a very strong position. He had established himself as a force to be reckoned with politically. His position as Minister for Home Affairs which gave him control of the Civic Guards also meant he had access to its intelligence department under Nelligan, which could keep him up to date on a whole series of contentious issues.<sup>85</sup> O'Higgins following the Army Council's resignations reversed his support or understanding of the mutineers predicament. Once Mulcahy and his Council's power was undermined O'Higgins did not need the mutineers and ironically sought a more vigilant prosecution of the mutineers. However Cosgrave wanted to get the affair out of the public eye as quickly as possible. He issued a statement when the affair first broke to the public on 19 March that, "This government had never discussed questions of politics with Army Officers", although Tobin and Dalton met with him at least once to discuss such issues.<sup>86</sup> This fact was one of Cosgrave's main motivations in designing the type of Committee of Inquiry that was formed to examine the whole affair. By the time the Army Inquiry Committee had issued its report in June 1924, both the political and military crises had been sufficiently defused to preclude the Dáil from re-lighting them. The committee itself was closed to the public and the Inquiry was instructed to ignore the actual mutiny itself which fell outside its scope.<sup>87</sup> All these preventative measures ensured that the Mutiny would not rear its head in the political arena again or alert the public to what extent government members had contact with the mutineers before the crisis unfolded.

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<sup>84</sup> Dept. An Taoiseach S3678 E, Recollection of Conversation Maurice Moynihan had with Michael Costello on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1948 (N.A. Dublin)

<sup>85</sup> Minister Kevin O'Higgins Report on evidence given at interview 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/23).

<sup>86</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary General Richard Mulcahy* (Dublin, 1992), p. 209.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p. 221.

As far as the government and other politicians were concerned the Army Crisis was over and no more attention should be paid to it. However this was far from the attitude taken by the Intelligence Department. The events of the mutiny were traumatic for the Department. As well as bringing the resignation of seven of its more senior officers, the loyal ones were beginning to feel uneasy. Costello and many of the intelligence branch in GHQ were appalled at the way Mulcahy and the Army Council were treated. So much so that Costello himself is believed to have suggested that GHQ could repudiate the government measures. But the former Chief of Staff General MacMahon reprimanded him sharply. Other GHQ staff and intelligence officers shared Costello's views but the resigned Army Council members encouraged them to tow the line. Mulcahy, MacMahon, O'Súilleabháin and O'Muirthuile were the chief victims of the Mutiny, but ironically they were the men most responsible for creating a disciplined, non political army. The Army Council had reduced the army to a size manageable for a peace time existence and had secured its recognition of political authority. The contentious issue of recognition of political authority was something that was not guaranteed since the Irish Army was formed.

Despite the resignation of the Army Council, the dismissal of the mutineers and the government's claim that the affair was now over, the Intelligence Department refused to believe so. Their refusal to let go of the affair was reinforced by the continued intelligence reports they received of mutineers being active in organising outside the Army. The Internal Army Section and The Ex-Army Organisation section of the Intelligence Department were picking up reports that were very alarming. It appeared that the IRAO were attempting to make contact with the IRA. The Department realised the potential threat this would pose and continued to monitor the situation very closely. The mutineers were using the nostalgia of the War of Independence to good effect.

Intelligence reported that there were attempts by decommissioned officers to re-establish their old commands from their War of Independence days. Captain Bryan recorded a meeting that took place at Foley's Provision shop on the North Circular road, of disenchanted officers trying to reform the Dublin Brigade. Bryan noted that the question at issue was whether to let people "who had republican ideas and left the Free State Army because of them into their secret society". There was not strong support for this proposal. However Bryan's old commander in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Dublin Brigade and one of the Intelligence Department officers who resigned, F.X. Coughlan strongly supported the idea.<sup>88</sup> Despite the lack of support for Coughlan, the rest of the mutineer leadership toyed with the idea of dealing with the IRA to keep their ambitions alive. However if they were to make overtures to the IRA, they would have to solve some differences. Early on in the Civil War, an intelligence report noted that Tobin had made the trustee of the Sinn Féin party W. J.Griffin hand over £1,800 on his arrest by Free State troops. Although it was becoming more and more obvious that the IRAO were using their desires for a united Ireland as a political and recruiting tool rather than as a fundamental basis of their policy, they realised they needed support if they were to keep their designs on influencing Army policy alive.

Bryan reported that negotiations between Ex Army officers and IRA officers were underway. Intermediaries acceptable to both sides were being used to start talks.<sup>89</sup> Neutral IRA i.e. those who remained neutral during the Civil war were also approached.<sup>90</sup> The relations between Free State officers and IRA officers had been one of contempt throughout the Civil War. However towards the end relations were improving. According

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<sup>88</sup> Box no. S/12858 - Crisis/C/W/ Mutiny Box 24/ A Files, Intelligence report Bryan to D/I 13-07-25, (Military Archives Army Crisis Files).

<sup>89</sup> Box no. S/12858 - Crisis/C/W/ Mutiny Box 24/ A Files, Intelligence report Bryan to D/I 15-07-25, (Military Archives Army Crisis Files).

<sup>90</sup> It appears Florence O'Donoghue was approached. Intelligence Memo March 1924 (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/189).

to Conor Foley, some jailers were facilitating IRA prisoner communication with the outside leadership. During the mass hunger strikes many Free State soldiers had expressed their sympathy for the prisoners. Two days before the mutiny became public, Peadar O'Donnell escaped from the internment camp in the Curragh, with the collusion of quite a number of guards.<sup>91</sup> Tom Barry an IRA leader in the South made representations to Mulcahy and some of his Army Council using his old IRB contacts during the Civil war. Barry was looking for the formation of a national organisation into which the best elements from both sides could co-operate. In return the IRA would release themselves from allegiance to de Valera and publicly destroy their arms. This proposal was thrown out by Cosgrave and O'Higgins when Mulcahy brought it to them.<sup>92</sup> They realised the IRA were defeated and they did not need to negotiate a settlement.

The IRAO leadership while toying with the idea of reconvening the IRB in November 1923, had made some contact with IRA members of the brotherhood, some of whom were in Free State prisons.<sup>93</sup> However this never materialised and contacts weren't pursued. Now the situation had changed the mutineers were seeking an alliance.

Tom Heavey a member of the IRA's GHQ staff was sent to attend an IRAO meeting. The IRA Army Council gave serious thought to co-operation with the mutineers, but there was a strong group within the IRA leadership which doubted their authenticity. They counselled against involvement with what they saw as a squabble between rival cliques of careerists within the Free State Army. Another factor which influenced caution on the IRA's behalf had been the record of some of the mutineers involved. Many of them had been the most ruthless Free State Army officers during the Civil War. Joe Dolan the former Intelligence officer and part of the IRAO leadership was believed by the

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<sup>91</sup> Conor Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard* (Dublin, 1985), p. 48.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47.

<sup>93</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *IRA* (London, 1986), p. 47.

IRA to have been involved in the Ballyseedy massacre in Kerry.<sup>94</sup> The IRA's leadership were also of the firm belief that the mutineers were not prepared to risk an all out clash with the authorities.

However according to Foley, IRA commander Frank Aitken believed that the mutineers resolve might be stiffened if a way could be found to provoke the common foe.<sup>95</sup> According to Coogan IRA men acting independently of IRA GHQ, were sent to assassinate the British soldiers stationed at the Treaty port in Cobh.<sup>96</sup> Civilians and British soldiers were shot and it was publicly announced by the assassins that this was done in the name of Tobin and Dalton. However this attempt to force the IRAO's hand did not work, and the threat of an IRAO IRA alliance slowly deteriorated.

Although the Intelligence Department kept both their intelligence sections monitoring the Mutineers, the main threat had now subsided. The disgruntled officers continued to meet and indeed continued to be monitored. However the Intelligence Department's main worry as they entered 1925 was not the mutineers but rather the Department of Finance and the lack of funding that had been made available to them. Despite the upheaval and controversy the mutiny affair created, the Intelligence Department had progressed significantly as a result. The mutiny had highlighted the important job the Department played in safeguarding and protecting the political institutions of the day. It also demonstrated to itself the need for internal and external monitoring. The Department's response to the mutiny which facilitated the establishment of the two sub sections set up specifically to deal with the affair was very successful. This success helped bring about a series of new sections which specifically dealt with particular areas of Intelligence. However despite these progressions it was still

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<sup>94</sup> Conor Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard* (Dublin, 1985), p. 47.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

<sup>96</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *IRA*, (London, 1986) p. 46.

problematic that the Intelligence Department and indeed the Army as a whole were ready to cope with a peace time existence.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE 1920'S

#### AND THE SCRAMBLE FOR INTELLIGENCE DOMINANCE

As the Military Intelligence Department emerged from the Army Mutiny affair somewhat scarred but very much still the premier intelligence force within the new state, its destiny was unknown. The Department which had proved itself to be an intricate part of the new Free State administration, was entering an era of conservatism. These conditions had proved to be very conducive to the growth of state controlled intelligence agencies in many countries. However before the mutiny erupted in March 1924, demobilisation and reorganisation of the Army for peace time had significantly reduced military intelligence establishments outside of GHQ. All those Brigade, Battalion and Company intelligence officers positions which had taken so much energy to create and sustain during the War of Independence and the Civil War were surplus to requirements in the eyes of the government and especially the Department of Finance. The mutiny and the threat of a second republican rising left the government realising that they might have been a little too hasty in planning the dismantling of the military intelligence machinery. According to Bryan, "somebody was looking at British Peace Tables of organisation and not monitoring the actual conditions in the country at the time".<sup>1</sup> Consequently following the Mutiny, many active agents outside of GHQ were retained although this was only a small concession before the inevitable removal of military agencies from the civil administration took place.

Throughout 1924 and 1925 Irish Military Intelligence was still the main intelligence force in the country. The organisation had undergone a radical change following the Civil War. In addition to the demobilisation and re-organisation plans of

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<sup>1</sup> Development of Military Intelligence 1916-45 (UCD Archives Bryan Papers, P7/171).

Mulcahy, army circles wanted to create an identity separate to that of Britain. The organisation and the structure of the Free State army had been modelled on the British Army. In an attempt to break with this, the GHQ staff were divided into different bureaux based on the French Army system of organisation. In 1924 the First Bureau and the Second Bureau were introduced. The Second Bureau was primarily reserved for Military Intelligence and was henceforth addressed as such. Despite these attempts to give the army a more continental flavour, its grass roots structure was very much British in orientation. The different commands outside of GHQ still mimicked the British structures and the chain of command was not altered.

The history of the Second Bureau Military Intelligence Department between 1923 and 1930 appears to be one of constant structural and organisational change. Its sections and divisions seem to be re-ordered every two years or so. This was probably a response to the fluctuating power and financial backing the Department had from year to year. The first major organisational changes within the Department occurred between October 1924 and December 1925 with the ordering of specific intelligence sections into different divisions. These changes were a consequence of the large number of new intelligence sections that had emerged since the Civil War.

The Army Mutiny affair brought two new intelligence sections into existence, The Internal Army Supervision section and the Ex-Army Organisation section. Added to this was the Press Survey section, which had been established by Intelligence officer, Commandant Whitmore at the close of 1923. It monitored a whole series of national and regional newspapers, along with journals, articles and books of the day. This move into the more military side of intelligence was followed by specific sections being established for, Censorship, Archives, Topographical, Statistical and Foreign Armies. The growth of

internal sections was again facilitated when late in 1923, the Department took over the remnants of the intelligence service which had existed in North East Ulster.

The Army Staff decided to reorganise the Second Bureau Intelligence Department again in 1925.<sup>2</sup> The Department was divided into seven sections lettered A to G. Specific intelligence sub sections were appointed to each lettered Section.<sup>3</sup> For example Section A, which was commanded by Commadant Egan was in charge of the North East Ulster Section and the Record or Registry Section. Section C under Captain Power controlled all press related sections.<sup>4</sup> These included, Publicity, Censorship, Press Survey and An T-Óglac. The Volunteer magazine had been kept going since the War of Independence and the responsibility for its maintenance was given to the Second Bureau. Captain Dan Bryan who was attached to the Ex-Army Organisation section did not come under any of these lettered sections. Both the mutiny sections, presumably because of their internal sensitivity, were attached to the Second Bureau's Personal Staff. This Personal Staff worked directly for the Bureau's Director. The Bureau's Director in 1925 was Costello until he transferred and was replaced by Col. E.V. O'Carroll.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the 1920's the Bureau's Sub sections were shuffled around from section to section as were the staff. Dan Bryan's Ex Army Organisation section was transferred from the Personal Staff office to C section. While in C section, the activity of the mutineers decreased and Bryan's agents briefs were extended to include the monitoring of Labour and Communism. The Ex Army Organisation section officially ceased in November 1925 and its operatives were re-dispatched.<sup>6</sup> Although this section closed temporarily, the other section born of the mutiny, Internal Army Surveillance, was

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<sup>2</sup> Intelligence Monthly and Weekly reports 1925-32,(Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>3</sup> Monthly Report Feb 1926 F- Section, Intelligence Monthly and Weekly reports 1925-32,(Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>4</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Personnel, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

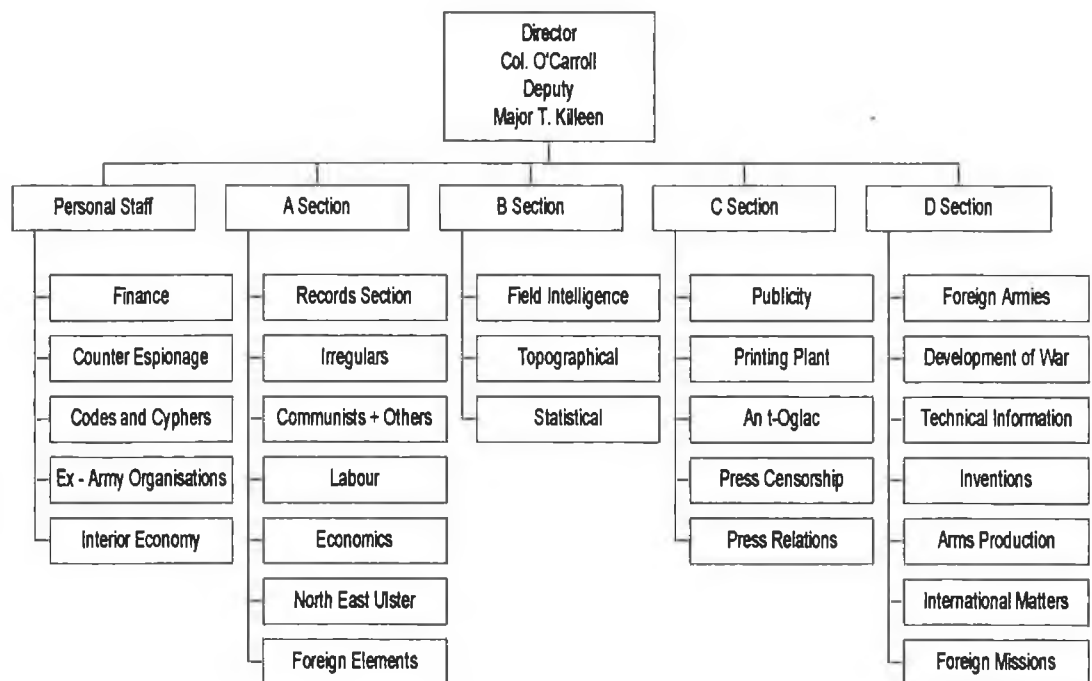
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Annual Report on the Intelligence Service for Oct 1924 to Dec 1925,(Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

kept open. As well as sub sections moving and forming during this period, whole new sections appeared from time to time. H Section appeared in 1927 specifically concentrating on Foreign Armies and Technical Military Research. This reshuffling of subsections and staff made the Bureau's structure very fluid, however, despite the constant reorganisation the main sub sections remained the same. See Table 2 below for a guideline to the layout of the Intelligence Department.

TABLE 2

2nd Bureau Organisation 1926-27



Source: Diagram copied from 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Annual Report 1926-27, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

One of the most controversial but least mentioned intelligence sections was the North East section. The North East Intelligence officers who had remained in service throughout the Civil War had been attached to the Military Customs Brigade active in the North. However after the Civil War they were transferred to the Intelligence Department

and constituted the new North East Section which was established in 1924.<sup>7</sup> The North East section of the Army had proved problematic ever since the Treaty was signed. The soldiers from the Northern command which supported Collins and Cosgrave had to be put somewhere, since their activity in the North would jeopardise the Treaty. Many Northern officers were brought to Dublin which caused much animosity amongst Dublin officers, particularly those connected with Tobin and the IRAO. Decisions on what to do with them varied between Government and Army leaders. According to military tradition, Collins had intended to use these men to launch a northern offensive after the Civil War. Although the truth of this intention is open to debate, in an interview carried out much later with former D/I Costello, he claimed that during the Boundary Commission talks in 1925 steps were taken to form a force to take control of the six counties.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Hughes the then Minister for Defence had instructed a number of officers who were known to have nationalist outlooks, to select a number of trustworthy men and hold themselves in readiness to act on further instruction. The following morning however they were told to regard the instructions of the previous night as being cancelled. Costello is reported to go on to say that a little while after the Boundary Commission a special unit of the Army was formed again by Mr. Hughes in the Curragh. Known as The Border Unit and under the command of an Ex- British Officer, they were installed to prevent the IRA from taking violent action against the six county authorities. According to Costello it was this change in the type of men selected for the first group compared with the Border Unit which marked the change in government policy on the North East.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these claims by Costello, the government's change of policy on the North East appears to have fallen on deaf ears within GHQ. In 1923 Cosgrave issued a directive

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<sup>7</sup> Annual Report on the Intelligence Service for Oct 1924 to Dec 1925, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>8</sup> Dept. An Taoiseach S3678 E Recollection of Conversation Maurice Moynihan had with Michael Costello on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1948 (N. A. Dublin)

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

to Mulcahy while he was Commander in Chief, to withdraw all agents from Britain and the six counties.<sup>10</sup> Whether this directive was later retracted by Cosgrave is unknown, however the Intelligence North East Section continued to function throughout the 1920's. As well as carrying out surveillance operations on Unionist, Loyalist and Republican bodies in the North it also reported on suspected Unionist agents and sympathisers active in the Free State. A Second Bureau report noted that there were a number of "six county agents in the Saorstát" and reportedly a sum of £5,000 had been spent by the Northern government on agents and sympathisers in the South. The North East section's Intelligence agents also reported on the strength and morale of the RUC, the Specials and the British Military personnel stationed there.<sup>11</sup>

Another section which expanded within the Second Bureau was the Communist and Labour section. Initially coupled with the Ex-Army section, its operatives and files grew into a completely separate section.<sup>12</sup> The air of religious conservatism which was prevalent in the 1920's helped to manufacture a "Red Scare". The Intelligence Department personnel were no different from their government counterparts in fearing the threat of a communist take over. The perceived communist threat in Ireland never materialised, however, this didn't prevent the Second Bureau from monitoring a whole series of organisations they perceived as having communist tendencies. Bryan was involved in monitoring a series of left wing organisations operating from rented meeting rooms in Parnell Street. He noted that between 1923-25 there was a small Irish Communist Party. However a number of workers clubs which were established and run by left wing IRA men and women were proving more threatening. The James Connolly Workers Club, at 47 Parnell Square contained within its leadership, IRA commander

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<sup>10</sup> February to June Army Council meeting notes and minutes, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1923, (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/178).

<sup>11</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Annual Report 1926-27(Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>12</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Personnel, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

Frank Ryan, and Shiela Bowen a Cumman na mBan activist. The Second Bureau had detailed files on most of the principal members of the various workers clubs. These clubs were easily infiltrated and information was supplied to Bryan by a network of agents. Most of the workers club members had backgrounds in land agitation, union lobbying while many others were left wing IRA men and women. However it was noted by the Second Bureau that three members of the Connolly Workers Club were supposed to be in Russia. Peadar Breslin, Bill Denn and Young Jim Larkin were thought to be in Moscow University training in techniques to provoke a workers revolution. Apart from Workers Clubs, the Second Bureau also monitored The Soviet Unity Committee, The Prisoner's Defendants Organisation, The International Anti Imperialism League, and Cumann na mBan. The number of these groups could give the impression that left wing socialist and communist organisations were strong in number in the 1920's. However this was not the case and the Second Bureau noted that there was much cross over in memberships amongst the various organisations.<sup>13</sup>

What appeared to be the most pressing of issues for the Communist and Labour Intelligence section, was the relationship these left wing groups had with the Republican movement. The Republican movement itself was starting to split by the mid 1920's. De Valera's constitutional push with the founding of Fianna Fáil had brought this about. The Second Bureau who had monitored left wing IRA men, started to examine the left wing of Fianna Fáil. Frank Aitken, Frank Kearney, Eamonn Cooney, and Séamus Robinson all came under suspicion. Intelligence reports claimed that Oscar Traynor who now owned the Fodhla Printing works was responsible for much of the communist literary material. It was also suggested later that Briscoe, a T.D. had revolutionary service in another country

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<sup>13</sup> 1929 Report on Communism in Ireland, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/6).

apart from Ireland.<sup>14</sup> The extent of left wing surveillance carried out by the Second Bureau was excessive in relation to the potential threat it posed. The desire to monitor these organisations stemmed more from the conservative right wing political orientation of the Free State administration at the time. The extent to which this anti -communist feeling grew is exemplified by Cosgrave who backed by the Irish Catholic Church, banned the republican left wing party Saor Eire from contesting the 1932 general elections.

Apart from monitoring groups and suspects internally and externally, much of the work of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau was primarily concerned with dealing with pension and personal claims. Many of these claims arose from the Army Pensions Act 1923 which dealt with Volunteers killed, wounded or incapacitated in the War of Independence or killed by national forces. Free State soldiers demobilised and serving were granted a pension for service given in the Civil War and the War of Independence. Indeed recognition to the small number who fought in 1916 was also granted. Although the government were not disposed to issue pensions to those who had fought on the anti-treaty side during the Civil War, army pensions were on occasion used by the government to get IRA men to recognise the Free State. In a time of mass unemployment, thousands of applications for this pension and for various claims of loss during the Civil War were received and were referred to the Second Bureau. It was felt that the Second Bureau's knowledge and access to their central registry record section, put them in a position to advise whether the claim was bona fide or not. Due to the amount of filing and secretarial work which this involved the Second Bureau recruited a large number of civilian clerks and typists. In September 1924 there were 18 civilian clerks and 10 typists working within the Intelligence Department. One of these typists was Lily Merrin the former intelligence

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<sup>14</sup> 1929 Report on Communism in Ireland, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/6).



agent of Collins during the War of Independence.<sup>15</sup> The recruitment of civilian staff while officers were being demobilised was one of the grievances the mutineers had expressed.

However despite these civilian appointments, the Army and especially the Intelligence Department were poorly funded following the conclusion of the Civil War. The salary of office clerks in the Second Bureau were reduced, as were many of its military employees. The Director Costello however made a special provision that those “engaged on work of a very special nature” would receive a wage supplement of between 5 to 30 shillings.<sup>16</sup> The Second Bureau’s history during the 1920’s is one dogged by financial inadequacy. From 1923 onwards submission of requests for more funding and personnel was made year after year. Bryan and other Intelligence officers were most worried by the possibility they might lose the resources to keep their outside informers operating. Two of Bryan’s informants listed as 100 A. and 101 A. were being paid £3 10 shillings and £4 10 shillings a week respectively. This regular sum which came direct from GHQ came under scrutiny in September 1924 and was examined as a possible source of cutback. Bryan and his colleagues worked for a considerable time under this type of financial duress. An T-Óglac which had been handed over to Commandant Whitmore who headed the Press Survey section, also suffered cutbacks. Despite the complaints of Whitmore (who claims he only took the job of editing An T-Óglac on as a favour) the car which was used to distribute and get articles for the journal was removed. Apart from informants and An T-Óglac another more pressing concern was the under staffing of the Department. Many experienced Intelligence officers who had resigned as a consequence of the mutiny and for other reasons were not replaced while many others were transferred out of the Department. Commandant Whitmore, Captain Power and

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<sup>15</sup> Job 47 Adjustment of Pay September 1924, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Captain McGuinness all senior Intelligence officers, resigned in 1927 while Captain Nolan was transferred to the Army School of Instruction.<sup>17</sup> The failure to replace these officers, seriously jeopardised the smooth running of the Bureau.

Despite these financial setbacks the Bureau did manage to arrest and harass what it saw as the states primary enemy, the IRA. The main Intelligence sub section within the Second Bureau between 1922 and 1925 was still principally concerned with IRA activity. Well after the Civil War had come to a close, surveillance and tracking down of Republicans was carried out by Bureau officers. Bryan as well as involving himself in the Ex Officers section had been involved in the arrest of the IRA Director of Elections. While Nelligan was Director of Intelligence in August 1923, Lieutenant Bryan as he was then, was ordered to find and arrest Eamon Donnelly. Donnelly had been identified as the Republican Director of Elections from documents captured in a raid on the Republican Publicity Department. Bryan tracked Donnelly to a series of offices in Suffolk street. An agent was sent with an envelope for Donnelly marked personal. This gave him access to Donnelly following which an arrest was made. A number of important Republican documents were captured during this raid. One contained correspondence between the secretary to the Northern Government W.B.Spender and a Captain White who claimed to be working on behalf of six county refugees and internees, with the view to obtaining an amnesty. Another captured document on this raid, was a Political Intelligence report given by the Sinn Féin envoy Leopold Kearney, to the acting Republican President P.J. Rutledge, detailing sympathy for the Republican cause in France and de Valera's arrest.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Memo on Functions and Organisation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau 1926-1928(Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>18</sup>Captured documents (UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/94).

The Second Bureau carried out anti-republican raids throughout the first half of the 1920's. Although the IRA were in complete disarray after their Civil War defeat, there were units throughout the country which continued to operate sporadically. Their number increased following the large scale political prisoner releases. By May 1924 the number of political prisoners had fallen from 12,000 to just over six hundred.<sup>19</sup> However once these prisoners were released the Bureau monitored many of their movements. Many ex-prisoners returned to the republican cause. This was encouraged by the government policy of black-listing ex-prisoners for state employment. Furthermore the harassment they and their families received from state military personnel was not conducive to their peaceful integration into society.

However the Second Bureau and its agents weren't the only ones involved in monitoring and harrying IRA suspects. The newly formed state police force the Garda Síochanna were also engaged in tracking Republican suspects. Consequently the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau crossed paths with the new Armed Detective Branch of the Garda Síochanna on numerous occasions. The relationship between the two bodies was far from amicable and as had happened in the Civil War competition for informants and information broke out between rival state intelligence bodies. The Gardaí Detective Unit under David Nelligan emerged from the Civil War CID organisation and the antagonistic relationship it had with the Military Intelligence Department was preserved.

From the outset of the Civil War, CID (then supposedly a supplemental intelligence agency to Military Intelligence GHQ) earned a reputation for brutality and maverick ways of operating.<sup>20</sup> Consequently nominal control of CID was switched from the Department of Defence to the Department of Home Affairs in September 1922 and Minister Joseph McGrath was made a Director General of the organisation. This was an

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<sup>19</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), pp 98-112.

attempt to bring CID under direct government control and sever the Department of Defence and military attachment to the organisation. However, although CID no longer took any directives from military or GHQ commanders it still managed to operate independently outside the realm of direct government control. As the scale of the Civil War reduced, O'Higgins the Minister responsible for CID decided to merge the organisation with all its sister bodies in an attempt to centralise crime work and make it more effective. The Protective Officer Corps and The Citizen's Defence Force in February 1923 joined with CID and moved from Oriel House to Merrion Square. This extended McGrath's powers but caused some friction with the other agency leaders.<sup>21</sup> Apart from Military Intelligence, the only body with intelligence functions to remain outside of CID was the old detective G wing of the DMP. However in October 1923 O'Higgins despite protest from McGrath, absorbed CID into the Detective wing of the DMP organisation. This absorption meant a significant reduction in CID staff and reflected O'Higgins general plan of scaling down bodies designed for Civil War conditions. CID officers on merging with the DMP were reduced from 73 to 24. Many of the disbanded officers were given generous pension plans, none more so than McGrath.<sup>22</sup>

In November 1923 under O'Higgins directives, David Nelligan transferred from Military Intelligence to organise a new armed detective branch which was to take over the DMP G division. Nelligan's detective branch absorbed many of the original Civil War CID officers which were left in G Division. However more importantly it also recruited 31 of the disbanded CID officers dismissed a month previously.<sup>23</sup> Naturally the Armed Detective Unit took on many of the characteristics of CID. According to Brady the methods of Nelligan's detectives were not always orthodox. In March 1924 a number of

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>21</sup> Captain A S O'Muireadhaigh report 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1923, (National Archives, Dublin, Dept of Home Affairs S3331.)

<sup>22</sup> Proposed Disbandment of CID Oct 1923, (National Archives, Dublin, Dept of Home Affairs S3331.)

<sup>23</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), p. 128.

them confronted known Republicans in Dublin. Gerry Boland, then in charge of the Dublin Brigade IRA, was informed if any member of the Detective Unit was shot he would be shot immediately.<sup>24</sup>

Nelligan's detective branch came into close contact with Second Bureau operations, since both organisations were monitoring Republicans. Moves were made by the Department of Defence to facilitate co-operation between the two bodies. In November 1923, D/I Costello recommended that information requested by the Guards, should be supplied directly by the Second Bureau, rather than having to consult the Minister for Defence every time.<sup>25</sup> In October 1923 a direct liaison between Civil and Military Intelligence was established. Three military intelligence officers were named by Costello in July 1924 to co-operate with the Guards. One of whom was Capt. Dan Bryan. Bryan during this time made suggestions on possible methods of collaboration. In August 1925, following intelligence reports of Republican plans to shoot Civic Guards in Lucan and Celbridge, Bryan suggested that a platoon of soldiers could be appointed to reinforce each Garda Station.<sup>26</sup>

However despite these attempts at co-operation, the Civil and Military Intelligence agencies largely failed to communicate and share information with each other. Many of the Military Intelligence officers were highly critical of police methods. Although the military authorities had been involved with some of the worse atrocities of the Civil War and its aftermath, the Guards especially those from the old CID organisation were continuing to pursue illegal tactics. The Guards endeavours to control the IRA became more sinister as the years unfolded. The IRA's shooting of a number of unarmed guards especially in Clare had fuelled the Guard IRA war.<sup>27</sup> Bryan criticised many of the Armed Detective Units and Civic Guards actions towards the IRA, although

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Intelligence Branch co-operation with Civic Guards (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

not strictly on a moral ground. Bryan believed that they were misusing the Treason Act to raid and prosecute Republican supporters for trivial offences. He stated in a report in August 1925 that :

This policy of extensive raiding and prosecution helps to create a general sense of insecurity and the imprisonment of large number of individuals. It is doubtful if this will break the IRA, which itself has internal difficulties. The split in IRA is between Military and Political. If present raiding policy continues it will help the IRA to unify under the military wing.<sup>28</sup>

Although Bryan's fears were realistic at the time, the split within the Republican movement which Bryan referred to, was eventually formalised in 1926, when de Valera formed the Fianna Fáil party and led it back into the Dáil.

Both military and civil intelligence agencies entered 1925 competing for the same coups and information. The Second Bureau under the direction of Costello, with officers like Bryan, had the more efficient agency. The Bureau's Central registry of files had built up to approximately 25,000. Their record section was far superior to that of the Armed Detective Unit, so much so that Guards on occasion made requests to see 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau files. However despite the superior organisation and efficiency of the Second Bureau, measures were afoot to transfer much of its power to the Detective Unit. The decrease in armed troubles and the gradual spread of the Garda Síochanna throughout the country were determining factors in allocating the intelligence duties of the Free State. The insistence on the supremacy of civil authorities over military ones was perceived as a necessary precondition to progress to becoming a democratic state, as opposed to a military dictatorship. However the pursuit of these lofty ideals were also motivated to a degree by a desire for increased power. O'Higgins who had emerged from the Mutiny affair as the strong man in the government, realised the importance of controlling the state

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), pp 142 - 160.

<sup>28</sup> Intelligence Branch co-operation with Civic Guards (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

intelligence system. Although the Second Bureau had prevented a mutiny and later uncovered an assassination plan to kill O'Higgins, this did not exempt it from O'Higgins' own reform.<sup>29</sup>

In late 1925 he issued a decree to transfer all responsibility for internal matters affecting the state over to the Detective Unit, leaving the Second Bureau to primarily concentrate on military intelligence and on internal army security. Political crime, subversion and the protection of politicians became the exclusive responsibility of the guards. The Second Bureau sections, such as Labour and Communism, and the IRA had to be shut down. To facilitate the changeover the Second Bureau was asked to transfer all its intelligence files and its outside agents to the Guards. The change over of power caused much dissent within Second Bureau circles and there was a reluctance on the part of many army staff to hand over their informers and dismantle the various intelligence sections. Bryan after handing over some of his informers monitoring "Communist organisations", claimed they were being mishandled by the guards. In 1929 he sought the reemployment of "a source formerly found trustworthy by the Military Intelligence Section" who had approached him with information on Communist activities. This source maintained that the police did not take sufficient precautions to ensure his safety in dealings with them. The informer explained that when the police wanted information they would drive up to his house in broad daylight.<sup>30</sup> Bryan reported this but his proposal was ignored. Attempts were made by other Second Bureau officers to maintain some files and keep some sections open. The life span of the North East Section was kept going on an indefinite basis, although due to financial pressures the scale of its operations was reduced. The 1927 Second Bureau report noted "Many files have been handed to the

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<sup>29</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 (London, 1990), p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 (London, 1990), p. 55 reference. O'Halpin's Interview with Bryan July 1983.

Gardaí, but it is essential that touch with the North East corner should not be lost as the economic and military situation in the North is of vital importance from our own point of view”.<sup>31</sup> One division that the Second Bureau had to transfer, was that of the Claims section. The investigation and processing of claims which the Second Bureau Claims division had to carry out was maintained within the Bureau for a while. The Bureau had used the Claims division to retain a considerable amount of records for purposes in connection with its work.<sup>32</sup> However the division with its files were eventually transferred to the Guards in 1927.

This move freed up much of the Bureau’s staff, although this was counteracted with an alteration in the financial backing for Military Intelligence following the changeover. As late as 1925 the Bureau had been funded from two main sources, the Secret Service Vote and the Department of Defence Army Vote. An estimate of total expenditure by the Intelligence Department for 1925-26, came to almost £18,000, excluding military pay but including the generous sum of £8,580 for the “payments of Regular and Casual agents in Saorstát (Irish Free State) and Britain”.<sup>33</sup> However following the transfer of political and internal matters to the guards, the money made available to the Second Bureau significantly reduced. In 1925 the Army vote funded £2,050 and the Secret Service Vote funded £8,603. By 1926 the Army Vote figures had remained practically the same at £2,411, however the Secret Service Vote expenditure dropped to £807.<sup>34</sup> Between 1926 and 1933 the Department of Defence’s annual spending from the Secret Service Vote never reached over £1,000.<sup>35</sup> This lack of funding was a

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<sup>31</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Annual Report 1926-27 (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>32</sup> Memo on Functions and Organisation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau 1926-28, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>33</sup> Estimate of Expenditure 1925-26, undated, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/3).

<sup>34</sup> Figures quoted in Co-operative Statement of Expenditure 1925 and 1926, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Annual Report 1926-27, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>35</sup> Eunan O’Halpin, “Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45” in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 55 reference 21.



major complaint of subsequent Intelligence Directors during this period. However their reduction in funding was justified by government officials, claiming that the Second Bureau no longer had the responsibility for surveillance of the IRA and other internal subversive organisations.

The Second Bureau's intelligence network was also scaled down. The Battalion and Brigade intelligence system which had been shakily preserved since the Civil War, was phased out. When it became clear that the Guards were taking over, many I/O's believed they were now surplus to requirements. It was noted in May 1926, that many of them had been approached by the Irish Air Force and had signed up on training courses. The Second Bureau reluctant to dismantle their intelligence network, sent a letter making sure that they understood they were not to abandon their functions as I/O's. "The work on which they will be employed in the future is Military Intelligence and this will be largely the training of Scouts".<sup>36</sup> Despite these attempts by the Second Bureau to hold on to their battalion and brigade I/O's, on 5 May 1926 they were ordered to return to the position to which they were posted before being attached to Intelligence.<sup>37</sup> However it was decided by the Chief of Staff Peadar MacMahon, that Battalion I/O's would be allowed "facility for any work ordered by 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau".<sup>38</sup>

By 1927 Military Intelligence became a backwater. The scale of its operations considerably reduced and confined to purely military matters. Some military minded officers interpreted this as a positive step. For the first time in its history, Military Intelligence could now direct all its energies at orthodox military intelligence duties as understood in other armies. Consequently in 1926 and 1927 the Second Bureau's organisational structure was again altered. Based on a continental model, the Foreign

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<sup>36</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Personnel, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Athlone Barracks to Director 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau, 5 May 1926, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Personnel, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>38</sup> Letter D/I to Chief of Staff 10 March 1926, Intelligence Personnel (General), (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

Armies Section and the Scouting Topographical Section became two of the most important sections within the Bureau. The Foreign Armies Section, studied other armies use of training, equipment, organisation and administration. A series of guideline bulletins for the Army Staff were then produced. This proved successful and as a result of the fact that several other sections of Second Bureau "had outlived the military need which originally called them into existence", it was decided to concentrate the efforts of the Second Bureau on the studying of foreign military methods. The foreign studies of military organisation tended to be very continental in focus and appeared to keep away from British military studies. Consequently in 1927, the Second Bureau demanded the services of six capable translators in French, German and Italian, who translated a whole series of foreign military studies.<sup>39</sup>

Dan Bryan by 1927 had attained a very senior position within the Second Bureau, while simultaneously holding the recently defunct position of Command Intelligence Officer for the entire Eastern Division. He was one of the longest serving intelligence officers within the Bureau although he was only twenty seven years old. It was this service since 1919 with the Intelligence Department that led to his promotion to Commandant in 1925.<sup>40</sup> Bryan like many Second Bureau staff at the time, was troubled by the transfer of internal duties to the police. His misgivings appear to have stemmed from his lack of faith in the police rather than in the reduction of his own Department's power. Bryan was a strong supporter of developing military structures and organisation, functions which he did believe had taken a back seat within the Second Bureau due to its internal subversive commitments. Bryan believed that it was not until the Civil War and the Army Mutiny were over that the Army could make any effort to think collectively about military organisation. According to Hugo MacNeill, attempts were made early on

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to expand the role of study of the army outside that of internal disorder. Six officers in 1926 were despatched to the US to study American military strategy. Another mission to England followed shortly to study technical aspects of modern warfare.<sup>41</sup> However, Bryan writing in *An T-Oglac* explains it was not until after the transfer of power to the Guards that we began to lose our “internal disorder complex”.<sup>42</sup>

This loss of the internal disorder complex brought about the formation of the Defence Plans Division within the army. It operated as a branch of the General Staff under the direct control of the Chief of Staff.<sup>43</sup> Its primary function was to develop an official defence policy for the state, since none in detail had been drawn up. In order to do this, expert personnel were selected from different areas of the army. Bryan had distinguished himself as a very forward thinking and progressive officer. He had co-operated in organising mock manoeuvres in order to train command and battalion I/O's in 1925.<sup>44</sup> It was his close affiliation with different training corps and his service in intelligence that led to him to be selected as the Chief Intelligence Officer to the Defence Plans Division. He officially transferred from the Intelligence Department in 1927 to take up his new position. Immediately the Defence Plans Division set about analysing possible defence policies and also different scenarios should the state be attacked.

The officers involved in developing the Defence Policy realised though that any decisions they made on Defence Policy would have to be ratified by the government. Before the Defence Plans Division was established, the General Army Staff had pleaded with their political counterparts for a definite outline of a Defence policy. However this had been slow in coming and had prevented any real development work the Army could

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<sup>39</sup> Memo on Functions and Organisation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau Feb 1926-1928 (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>40</sup> An T-Oglac section 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 1).

<sup>41</sup> Hugo MacNeill, “The Defence Plans Division”, *An T-Oglac* vol. 1 no. 2 April - June 1928 p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Dan Bryan, “Why we need a defence force?”, *An T-Oglac* vo. 1 no.1 October 1927 pp108 -115.

<sup>43</sup> Hugo MacNeill, “The Defence Plans Division”, *An T-Oglac* vol. 1 no. 2 April - June 1928 p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Intelligence Department Army Manoeuvres, (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 1).

do on it. Following a memo from the Chief of Staff Peadar MacMahon on various types of policy, the Government approved their own Defence Policy in November 1925. The military authorities finally received the policy in May 1926. It provided for the holding of a small standing army capable of expansion in time of need. It also advocated the co-operation between Irish and British forces in the event of a general attack on these Islands.<sup>45</sup> The government suggested that the size of the standing army in normal times should never exceed 12,000, but conceded that in cases of internal disorder it would have to increase to 25,000, while under Foreign invasion 100,000. These concessions on the numerical value of the army were suggested by the Chief of Staff, but only granted by the government on the condition that the present army size be reduced to 10,000, and with the reservation that details as to number and cost were to be settled with Finance. The Defence Policy turned into a bargaining tool between government and army officials. However the army had managed to attain some sort of guidelines on Defence Policy despite the many faults they found with it.

In order to comply with the government's policy many alterations had to be made. A very large reserve had to be established if the army was expected to double or even increase ten fold in times of emergency. Army staff suggested that conscription in Europe or the National Guard militia in the US, should be considered as possible reserve systems. The government's policy also suggested that every man should be trained to NCO standard and every NCO to officer standard. However this provision was impractical, as Duggan points out at the time the Army and the country as a whole suffered from low standards of education, financial constraints and low rates of pay.<sup>46</sup> Another part of the government's policy put a heavy emphasis on co-operation with Britain. It suggested that it was considered practical to take steps to ensure Irish officers were capable of

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<sup>45</sup> Secret Special Memo 1 Preparation for War 20<sup>th</sup> June 1928, (Military Archives, Defence Plans Division (T) Chief of Staff's Office).

commanding mixed Irish and British forces operating on Irish territory. It also acknowledged that defence by sea of both Great Britain and Ireland was undertaken by the British Navy.

Due to the government emphasis on a policy of co-operation, it was necessary to talk with the British about coastal defence. The discussions of Articles 6 and 7 of the treaty with the British in 1926 was selected as the place to bring up coastal defence talks. In order to facilitate this, Chief of Staff Peadar MacMahon and Staff officer Dan Bryan were selected to accompany members of the government to the Imperial Conference in 1926. However despite their best attempts, the British delegation refused to consider mutual coast defence at the conference. When Bryan and MacMahon returned from the Conference they continued to petition the government over the impracticality of a standing army of 10,000. Following a government statement in the Dáil that the reserve would only amount to 4,500, MacMahon angrily refused to accept responsibility for that statement: "If I, or any responsible military officer advised you that this country could be defended against anyone by an Army of 10,000 men plus 4,500 Reservists, we would immediately be deprived of our commissions".<sup>47</sup> The Defence Policy issue was turning into a three way squabble between the Army staff, the government and the Department of Finance. So much so that MacMahon further remarked: "The responsibility for advising you on matters of military policy is mine not the Army Finance Officer".<sup>48</sup>

It was in this environment that the Defence Plans Division developed from its inception in 1927. Its base of study was established following the return of Hugo MacNeill, M.J. Costello and other officers from a training course in the US. However it was noted by MacNeill that some of their studies of US military tactics and strategy were far from practical or applicable to the Free State. One of the Divisions first notable results

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<sup>46</sup> See John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army*, (Dublin, 1991), p. 149.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151.

was the establishment of an Irish Military College, forming part of a progressive system of military education for Irish Army officers. This was followed in June 1928 by the submission of the Defence Plans Divisions Proposals on Defensive issues to the Minister for Defence. In July the Minister approved the proposals dealing with, preparation for war, a scheme for tactical war organisations, peace establishments embodying a militia system and proposals for military education. However despite the Minister's agreement these plans were not implemented. The army strength continued to decrease. Furthermore the utterances of politicians complicated the issue. In 1927 the Minister for External Affairs, Desmond Fitzgerald, declared "it was practically inconceivable" that British and Irish soldiers would ever fight each other and must co-operate. He scoffed at the notion of neutrality on the grounds of geographical propinquity.<sup>49</sup> Other Government and Cumann na nGaedhael members advocated an even more extreme policy. In the event of a war they suggested that measures should be taken to secure our neutrality by disarming completely except for the purpose of internal order.<sup>50</sup> The government continued to refuse to commit itself on Defence Policy. The probable nature of aggression and the identity of the aggressors still remained unclear.

Despite these setbacks the Defence Plans Division drew up a Doctrine of War, which contained guidelines to implement the State's Defence policy. Studies were carried out under four main categories:

1. Possible enemies of this country.
2. Possible actions of such enemies, under particular circumstances.
3. Possible theatre of operations, or scenes of such actions.
4. Our General Theory of Defence, based on these first three factors, and on the characteristics of our people and our State, our natural and other resources, and of course the facts of our geographical situation.<sup>51</sup>

Studies of other political party's Defence policies were prompted by the trouble they were having with the present administration.

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<sup>48</sup>ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Dan Bryan, " Why we need a defence force?", *An T-Oglac* vo. 1 no.1 October 1927 p. 111.

While we are bound to carry out in the letter and spirit the Defence Policy of the government in power, we must at the same time take cognisance of the two other policies which are adopted by other important political parties.<sup>52</sup>

Consequently the Defence Plans Division looked at Fianna Fáil's and Labour's defence policy. The Division findings concluded that Fianna Fáil's policy was unclear but it was suspected to be aggressive towards England. The Labour Party's Defence Policy was one of neutrality. The Division however points out that this is hard to achieve since the Treaty ports and North East Ulster are out of government control. Therefore the Labour policy of scrapping any amendments to the Treaty, is contradictory to their own defence policy.

Although Bryan was very much to the fore of the Defence Plans Division, he never lost contact with the Intelligence Department. He operated in the Division in his capacity as a senior Intelligence officer. On occasion he was asked to fill in for officers who were absent in the much depleted Second Bureau. In 1931 the Director of the Second Bureau J.J O'Connell wrote in his half yearly report, "The Second Bureau laboured under considerable difficulty...A necessity for additional personnel to bring the Bureau in line with the Defence Plans Division proposals is required".<sup>53</sup> The officer personnel in the Bureau consisted of five, while the Defence Plans Division recommended eleven and the official establishment reports require a minimum of thirteen.<sup>54</sup> This was the extent to which the Intelligence Department had been depleted. In April 1931 Bryan took over the Department temporarily while JJ O'Connell was absent on a staff course. While holding this position for a number of months he also involved

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Hugo MacNeill, "The Defence Plans Division", *An T-Oglac* vol. 1 no. 2 April - June 1928 p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Secret Special Memo 1 Preparation for War 20<sup>th</sup> June 1928, (Military Archives, Defence Plans Division (T) Chief of Staff's Office).

<sup>53</sup> Confidential half yearly report Oct 1931, Monthly and Weekly reports 1925-32 (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>54</sup> Confidential half yearly report April 1930, Monthly and Weekly reports 1925-32 (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

himself with the Army Disarmament Conference and drafted a document on the care of secret and confidential documents.<sup>55</sup> Although Bryan was supposed to take a back seat within the Intelligence Department, according to O'Halpin, from the end of the Civil War he "was the secret service." While he was officially operating outside the realm of the Department, "he maintained unofficial contact with some of his old contacts, and he kept an eye on affairs generally."<sup>56</sup>

In the Summer of 1931 it became evident that there was a strong possibility that the Fianna Fáil party might come to power. In an air of alarm and subversion within Free State military and Cumann na nGaedhael circles, former army Commander, and the then Garda Commissioner Eoin O'Duffy, organised a coup d'etat against a Fianna Fáil political take over. According to Foley, O'Duffy approached a number of senior army officers who were sympathetic to his cause. Together they drew up a proclamation, calling on the public to stand behind a military government under O'Duffy's leadership.<sup>57</sup> O'Duffy sought support for his scheme from Michael Brennan the Army Chief of Staff and David Nelligan the head of the Special Branch. However they both strongly opposed the plan and reported it to Cosgrave. According to Coogan, "Nelligan and my father would have nothing to do with the proposal. Their view was that they had upheld democracy against de Valera in 1922 and they were not going to threaten it in 1932 because of him."<sup>58</sup> When Cosgrave was informed of the plan he shared Brennan's and Nelligan's opposition, although he took no disciplinary action against O'Duffy. According to Foley, Cosgrave and many other government ministers regarded O'Duffy as erratic and were resolved that he should be relieved of his post after the election. O'Duffy

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<sup>55</sup> Confidential half yearly report Oct 1931, Monthly and Weekly reports 1925-32 (Military Archives, Intelligence Files 1925-30 Box 5).

<sup>56</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 55.

<sup>57</sup> Conor Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard* (Dublin, 1974), p. 104.

<sup>58</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *DeValera* (London, 1993), p. 434.



unaware how isolated he was, decided against the military takeover due to lack of support.<sup>59</sup>

However despite O'Duffy's failure in the Summer of 1931, it appears that his moves managed to add fuel to a series of rumours of coup d'état on the part of the Guards, the Army and the Government. On 10 February 1932, at Wynn's Hotel in Dublin, a decision was taken to organise ex-national army officers and men who had pre-truce service with the IRA. A convention was subsequently held on 17 March, a week after the Dáil had reconvened and the Army Comrades Association(ACA) was founded. During the Fianna Fáil election campaign great publicity was given to the high level of gratuities and pensions paid to ex-members of the Free State Army. According to Manning, this might easily have given the impression that such pensions would be terminated or reduced.<sup>60</sup> Defence of these pensions was probably a leading factor in establishing the ACA. Those pensions Fianna Fáil publicly highlighted in the run up to the election were, D. Hogan £3,300, E. Cronin £1,100, Austin Brennan £1,300, T.F. O'Higgins £3,034 and Seán Mac Eoin £3,300.<sup>61</sup> Both T.F. O'Higgins and Austin Brennan were Presidents of the ACA. Amidst the formation of the ACA and O'Duffy's proposal a few months earlier, speculation and rumour took place concerning the possibility of a coup d'état. The Press learned of the first meeting of the ACA which ironically was attended by Mulcahy, the major antagonist of ex-Army organisations. On the 26 February 1932, the *Irish Press* claimed "that two ministers, a well known member of the Cumann na nGaedhael Party, and some others are engaged in a movement to obstruct the transfer of Government to Fianna Fáil".<sup>62</sup> Lee claims that Ernest Blythe was one of the Ministers rumoured to want

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<sup>59</sup> Conor Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard* (Dublin, 1974), p. 104.

<sup>60</sup> Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1987), p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17 reference 9.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1994), p. 62.

an army coup.<sup>63</sup> Although these claims by the *Irish Press* which were subsequently raised in the Dáil were denounced by Cosgrave as being “grotesquely untrue”, it was later repeated in the Dáil by a Fianna Fáil T.D. Despite these claims of treason by the ACA, it seems unlikely its leaders were prepared or even contemplated resisting the new government. Eight years before, Mulcahy had done everything in his power to ensure that the army recognised the state, so it would seem out of character for him to support such an unconstitutional move. Similarly the ACA president Austin Brennan, was the brother of the chief of staff Michael Brennan, who had refuted O’Duffy’s original coup d’etat proposals and carried out the re-deployment of many potential mutinous officers. So it transpired that in the midst of all this rumour and speculation the Fianna Fáil T.D.’s entered the Dáil peacefully and there was a smooth transition of power. Although Manning claims that a number of Fianna Fáil backbenchers fearing the worst entered the Dáil chamber “on that March afternoon with revolvers in their pockets”.<sup>64</sup>

However despite the smooth transition and the apparent false rumour that the ACA were set to halt the democratic process, it seems that there were a group of army officers who were militarily prepared to act should Fianna Fáil gain power. The lack of accounts and the conflict in a number of varying testimonies of what happened in military circles in the lead up to the change over of power to Fianna Fáil is a contentious matter. It is particularly difficult because of its underground nature to determine the importance or effect that O’Duffy’s failed planned military coup had on military personnel. However Dan Bryan was involved in monitoring officers affected by O’Duffy’s overtures. It must be stressed at this point that the unavailability of intelligence files for this period greatly

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<sup>63</sup> J.J Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985 Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 175.

<sup>64</sup> Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1987), p. 18 reference.

hampers any study of the event. Despite this, it appears that Bryan and the Second Bureau had kept their Ex-Army organisation and Internal Army Surveillance section open from the Army Mutiny days. Although staffing levels and resources must have been greatly reduced, it was recognised that these sections were vital in order to maintain army loyalty to the state. In the face of the Fianna Fáil take over, it seems a number of officers felt that O'Duffy's suggestions were appealing. Although O'Duffy's plot itself was snuffed out in the summer of 1931, a number of officers took it upon themselves to organise as the elections came closer. They talked of refusing to take orders from a Fianna Fáil government if elected. According to Duggan, "To shoot or salute was the stark choice some senior officers saw facing them".<sup>65</sup> However Bryan through his intelligence network is accredited with defusing an incipient plot, and ensuring a peaceful transfer of power.<sup>66</sup> It seems Bryan was working closely with the Chief of Staff Michael Brennan at the time. According to Coogan, Brennan took steps to transfer disaffected officers who might have acted otherwise.<sup>67</sup> Bryan's hands on experience of the Army Mutiny of 1924 prepared him well for this plot.

In 1932 when Fianna Fáil did come to power there were many nervous civil servants, army and police officers who felt that they would now be dismissed or passed over for promotion due to their operations in the past. However de Valera in coming to power gave assurances that no victimisation of Treaty supporters would take place. With the exception of O'Duffy, and the movement of senior civil servants O'Hegarty from secretary to the government and Henry O'Friel from the Department of Justice, de Valera

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<sup>65</sup> John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 157.

<sup>66</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 55 reference 23, O'Halpin's Interview with Bryan, Dec 1983.

<sup>67</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London, 1993), p. 435.

appears to have kept his word.<sup>68</sup> This came as a relief to Bryan who had been one of the greatest thorns in Republican side during the Civil War, when his agents had managed to capture hundreds of IRA men. Throughout the 1920's his men had continued to harass and monitor Republicans and later Fianna Fáil. Despite this de Valera realised that Bryan had curbed any threat of insurrection on his entry into government. He was also informed of Bryan's knowledge and usefulness in an effective Intelligence Department. In 1932 the Fianna Fáil government ordered Bryan discretely back to the Intelligence Department to "destroy certain old Intelligence Records" principally on Civil War informants<sup>69</sup>. Bryan along with another intelligence officer Niall Harrington did this, but had to operate while Director J.J. O'Connell was away. Bryan realised that O'Connell a strong Cumann na nGaedhael supporter would not have tolerated this. O'Connell did not find out and temporarily everything calmed down. It appeared that Bryan just as in the Civil War had managed to back the winning side and come out on top. Similarly as in the Army Mutiny of 1924, he had again managed to stop a plot threatening the government, bringing stability to a potentially explosive situation.

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<sup>68</sup> DeValera could not get rid of O'Duffy straight away as the Labour Party who they were in coalition with had given him their support. However once Fianna Fáil were no longer dependent on Labour support, in 1933, they got rid of him. For reference to civil servant transfers on Fianna Fáil coming to power see J.J Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985 Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 176.

<sup>69</sup> Note on Intelligence Records by Bryan, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/81).

## CHAPTER 5

### WAR AND FRIENDLY NEUTRALITY

The 1930's was a turbulent decade in Irish history. 1932 saw the replacement of Cumann na nGaedhael by the de Valera dominated Fianna Fáil government. 1933 brought the extremist semi-fascist Blueshirt movement and 1934 saw a republican left wing alliance in the form of the Republican Congress. Despite these volatile movements and events, the 1930's was a time of limbo for Military Intelligence. Their powers which had been stifled democratically since 1925, enjoyed slightly more financial freedom during the early years of the Fianna Fáil administration. However Fianna Fáil member's wariness of a military establishment which seven years previously was planning their arrest and interrogation was reason enough to discourage any move which would increase the Intelligence Department's powers. In the absence of any state threatening event, political and financial considerations dictated no significant changes to the division's powers. The Second World War came as a lifeline to the Intelligence Department. The Irish State under threat of invasion and espionage restored many of the intelligence functions of the Department to that of the early 1920's. It was now up to the Department to prove to new masters that it could operate as efficiently against threats to neutrality, as it had done against many of the government's members in the past.

Fianna Fáil's rise to power was greeted with trepidation by the political, military and civil machinery that had supported the Cumann na nGaedhael administration. Particular anxiety was felt by the Intelligence bodies, that operated so forcefully against their new controllers. Despite de Valera's claims of no victimisation, the fears of the Cumann na nGaedhael state machinery were strengthened when a series of laws sympathetic to the IRA were passed. The IRA, Cumann na mBan, Fianna Eireann, Saor

Eire, Irish Labour Defence League, Workers Revolutionary Party, Irish Working Farmers Committee, Work Defence Committee, Workers Research Bureau, Irish Tribute League, The Friends of Soviet Russia and Women Prisoners Defence League were declared unlawful by the Cosgrave government in 1931.<sup>1</sup> de Valera lifted the ban in June 1932. He also considered calls by the IRA, highlighted in *An Poblacht*, for the reform of the Garda Intelligence Department, the introduction of uniforms for plain clothes officers<sup>2</sup> and the retirement of the Gardaí's most notorious intelligence officers. "Old gang servants Eoin O'Duffy, Col. D. Nelligan and Major Joe Sweeney" were the most wanted on the IRA retirement list.<sup>3</sup> de Valera realised in 1932 that he could not retire O'Duffy before the next election, since his position was guaranteed by the Labour Party and he needed their support to remain in government. However David Nelligan was expendable. In December 1932 in the run up to the January 1933 elections, the Garda Intelligence chief was compulsorily retired, accepting instead a post at equal pay in the Land Commission.<sup>4</sup> In February 1933 two Garda intelligence officers were arrested and charged under the Official Secrets Act. E. M. O'Connell the deputy Special Branch chief and another senior officer Col. M Hogan, the brother of Dan Hogan former Cumann na nGaedhael minister, were tried and found not guilty. During their trial false rumours of plots against the government and leaking of secret information were spread. In the climate of controversy surrounding the Gardaí, de Valera took the opportunity to compulsorily retire Garda Commissioner O'Duffy and replace him with Col. Eamon Broy.

Broy like Nelligan was another of Collin's former intelligence agents who worked in Dublin Castle during the War of Independence. Broy accompanied Collins to the Treaty talks in London and supported the pro-treaty side on his return. However

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<sup>1</sup> Uinseann Mac Eoin, *The IRA in the Twilight Years* (Dublin, 1997), p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p. 217.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 230.

according to Brady, Fianna Fáil were now promoting him over the heads of four Deputy or Assistant Commissioners; Coogan, Murphy, Walsh and Cullen. The Special Branch also underwent change following an incident in Killrush when Republicans T.J Ryan and George Gilmore were severely beaten and wounded by Special Branch officers. An inquiry followed and *An Poblacht* called for the sacking of a number of Special Branch officers.<sup>5</sup> In 1934 one of the named officers, Michael Gill, along with five other Special Branch detective sergeants were returned to uniform, demoted and transferred to obscure rural stations or innocuous desk jobs where their political knowledge was neutralised.<sup>6</sup>

Under Fianna Fáil, military intelligence underwent a similar clear out and readjustment program but its limited powers meant it was not on the same scale as the Gardaí and Special Branch. De Valera appointed Frank Aitken as Minister for Defence and he in turn made alterations within the army. J.J O'Connell the staunch pro treaty and Cumann na nGaedhael supporter was replaced by Liam Archer as Director of Intelligence. Dan Bryan survived the political take over but initially was kept out of the Intelligence Department. The Chief of Staff Michael Brennan also managed to survive. Brennan like Bryan had been involved in stopping an anti Fianna Fáil plot which enabled the new administration to look favourably on both men. Brennan a Civil War hero of the Free State Army was kept on until 1940, much longer than many expected. According to Lee, Brennan appointed under Cosgrave was probably the most conciliatory Fianna Fáil appointment.<sup>7</sup> He co-operated loyally with Frank Aitken and relations between the two men ran smoothly. Lee also claims that "Aitken was probably more acceptable to Free State officers than any other appointment."<sup>8</sup> According to MacEoin, although Aitken was

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace* (Dublin, 1974), p. 181.

<sup>7</sup> J.J Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985 Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 175.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 176.

a former IRA Chief of Staff, of all the Fianna Fáil ministers, he was the one most opposed to the IRA.<sup>9</sup>

Fianna Fáil alterations to the Garda Special Branch and upper echelons of the Army was a reaction to pressure or support from the IRA. The Fianna Fáil's pro IRA stance contributed to the increase in support and growth of the IRA during the early 1930's. According to MacEoin, "By 1933-35 the IRA had reached a peak of membership".<sup>10</sup> However despite these outward republican sentiments, de Valera was using the IRA for his own political objectives. Following the 1933 elections de Valera realised he no longer needed IRA support. Government pensions and appointments were offered to IRA activists to get them to join Fianna Fáil. Army pensions for anti-treaty IRA men proved effective in a time of mass unemployment and grinding poverty. Soon the intelligence duties of the Gardaí reverted to what they had been under the Cosgrave government. The Detective Branch under Broy tracked and harassed the IRA although as Brady points out, the arrest and interrogation of IRA suspects didn't fully take off until 1936, when Fianna Fáil officially severed all ties with the organisation.<sup>11</sup> The Branch's reputation for brutality gained from the Civil War continued under the Fianna Fáil administration.

Bryan was also effected by the 1932 change in government. Following his brief return to the Intelligence Department to destroy certain records, he served in the office of Chief of Staff. He developed a sound partnership with the new Chief of Staff Michael Brennan and carried out many duties for his office. He worked on the development of a regular civil aviation service between Dublin, London and Belfast. This three way service

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<sup>9</sup>Unseann Mac Eoin, *The IRA in the Twilight Years* (Dublin, 1997), p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 233.

<sup>11</sup> Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace*, (Dublin, 1974), p. 202.



was outside the preserve of the army, but it was felt at the time they would be the most skilled in taking on the task. Bryan also worked on intelligence training programs and lectured frequently at the new military officers college set up under the provisions of the Defence Plans Division. Although now officially outside the Defence Plans Division he was asked from time to time to give advice. His role in getting British co-operation for a mutual coast watching service was severely setback by the failure of the 1926 Imperial Conference. He gained support for the venture in a subsequent conference in 1930 although the service never materialised since Anglo-Irish relations deteriorated with the outbreak of the Economic War.

As in his position in the Defence Plans Division, Bryan while in the office of Chief of Staff, was never far away from intelligence. Following 1932, the Intelligence Department had been amalgamated to form part of the overall military machinery of the state. Due to this move, the Department was no longer referred to as the French styled 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau. It now became known as G2 in line with the American form of military organisation. Despite its new name, little changed within the Department. Although it had a new Director, its low staffing levels and limited fields of operation ensured that it remained on the periphery. Its work was principally concerned with the study of foreign armies. According to O'Halpin "in addition to what was gleaned from published material, the army show jumping team was always carefully debriefed by intelligence following trips abroad."<sup>12</sup>

Military Intelligence experienced a slight resurgence when funding for the Department was increased significantly probably as a result of the rise of the Blueshirt movement.<sup>13</sup> This right wing organisation with its roots in the ACA and other Ex-Army

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<sup>12</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> In 1933 -34 the Dept. of Defence's annual spending from the Secret Service vote went from £307 to £2,009 . This was followed by a rise to £4,174 and £4, 820 in successive years. See Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 55.

organisations gave G2 unexpected latitude as technically G2 had some jurisdiction since it was a military related matter. Bryan's old Ex-Army section from 1924 which had not become totally redundant although it operated on a much reduced level, was now revived to monitor the Blueshirts. It was important that G2 carried out surveillance of the Blueshirt organisation, since under O'Duffy's influence, many of the Guards were supporters of the right wing organisation. The Blueshirt movement inside the Guards played a similar role to the IRAO within the army. The Blueshirt movement was crushed by both state and IRA supporters and by 1936 its threat (except briefly in Spain) had fizzled out. However, de Valera did not fully trust army intelligence and realising the strength of the old Commissioner O'Duffy's support amongst the guards turned to his own force to harry and snuff out the Blueshirts. He introduced a series of Republican gunmen under Ned Broy (reminiscent of his former boss Collins) to track down the Blueshirts. Initially organised by Oscar Traynor they became known as the Broy Harriers and were introduced as a separate unit within the Garda Detective Branch. This was the only significant change de Valera made to the intelligence system in his early years of government. Even this measure had to be curtailed when many of the Broy Harriers were found operating as double agents for the IRA.<sup>14</sup>

After three years service in the Chief of Staff's office and following the slight upsurge in activity within G2, in 1935 Bryan was allowed to return to intelligence. He was named as Deputy Director, and together with Liam Archer he commanded the Intelligence Department. From studying press and political intelligence reports it became evident to Archer as early as 1936 that there was a major European conflict brewing. Archer and Bryan were aware of the intelligence role in protecting the state from foreign invasion, particularly as G2 had become an integral part of the state's defence against

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

outside attack. Archer in February in a strongly worded memo to the Chief of Staff warned that the “international situation gives cause for great unease. I fear this unease is not felt outside this Department”.<sup>15</sup> Archer argued for rearmament in line with other European states and that a committee of national defence be established.<sup>16</sup> Brennan the Chief of Staff sent Archer’s memo accompanied with his own to the government, warning of the looming conflict. Its response was the establishment in the Autumn, of a cabinet committee on “national defence”, chaired by de Valera. Following this the Chief of Staff sent the Minister for Defence a “programme which would complete the existing units of the defence forces in the shortest period possible”.<sup>17</sup> A document on Irish defence which was 90% Bryan’s work and the rest Archer’s was included. This document on “Fundamental Factors affecting Irish Defence Policy” took into consideration British occupation of North East Ulster and the Treaty ports. The strategic implications of the country’s position in relation to Britain and her trade routes dominated the framework and findings of the document and advised accordingly.<sup>18</sup> According to the report, due to British control of the Treaty ports at the time of writing in 1936, Ireland would not be considered neutral in any conflict involving Britain. Furthermore Bryan and Archer argued, if Britain was threatened by another power, she would take control of whatever facilities she might require in Ireland. The report estimated that although the defence forces would at that time be unable to engage in organised resistance, if they took over port facilities by force, a campaign of guerrilla warfare would require a huge British garrison in Ireland to defend their gains. This observation was recognised by British

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<sup>15</sup> Copy of Archer to Brennan, 2 Feb. 1936, with Brennan to minister for defence, 22 Sept. 1936(UCD Archives, MacEntee papers, P67/191(3)).

<sup>16</sup> Peter Young, “Defence and the new Irish State 1919-39”, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Eunan O’Halpin, Aspects of Intelligence, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> “Fundamental Factors” G2 documents G2/0075, May 1936 (Military Archives).

military planners some time later.<sup>19</sup> Apart from advocating a neutral defence policy that was appealing to Britain, both Archer and Bryan pointed out the importance of strengthening the army. They believed that there was a greater chance of preserving neutrality if a significant increase was made in military armoury and personnel and backed their claims with numerous references to studies of neutral countries in the past. However, their advice was ignored by government officials who were not prepared to make a large financial commitment. Despite this initial rejection of their suggestions and the hand over of the ports in 1938 rendering much of the report obsolete, according to Commandant Peter Young “its basic defensive premises were to remain the cornerstone of Irish military strategy up to and including the emergency.”<sup>20</sup> It was not until 1938 that the government were willing to concede the seriousness of the situation and agreed to make some provisions to organise the country defensively.

G2 by 1938 had carried out studies and anticipated many of the security problems to face them in the next seven years, even though political, financial, staff and policy restraints prevented any immediate action on them. According to O’Halpin, “G2’s emergency performance was not the result of *a priori improvisation*”. The fact that two of its “most senior officers had extensive intelligence experience from the war of independence and civil war, reasonably placed it to handle various jobs given to it between 1939 and 1945.”<sup>21</sup> By 1938 it was merely a matter of persuading the political authorities that they were up to the task. In 1938, following further warnings of a global conflict, G2 were given a mandate by the government to initially cover counterespionage and security. Despite this a special garda aliens unit was established under Sergeant Michael Wymes to seek out potential foreign spies and although the IRA had embarked on a mainland bombing campaign of Britain, G2 were warned not to poach on a police

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Young, “Defence and the new Irish State 1919-39”, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 6.

preserve by renewing surveillance of the republican movement. G2's new brief only materialised after Archer held a series of meetings with his British counterparts.

According to MI5 intelligence files, following the agreement signed between Britain and Ireland in April 1938, de Valera sent military officers to discuss defence measures in London. During these discussions Mr. Joe Walshe, the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, asked the British Dominions Office to put him in touch with the British counterespionage department, "as he had reason to think that there was a good deal going on in Eire which needed attention".<sup>22</sup> On the 31 August 1938 a meeting took place between an MI5 officer, Joe Walshe and Mr. John Dulanty, the "Eire High Commissioner in London".<sup>23</sup> At this meeting, according to MI5, Mr. Walshe expressed concern about German activities in Ireland and their desire to set up a department similar to the British Security Service. The MI5 officer expressed his readiness to assist and it was agreed that an exchange of information be made between MI5 and G2 on the activities of Germans in Ireland. Following this agreement, Archer in October 1938 met MI5 officials in London and was briefed on the workings of the British counterespionage department. It was MI5's belief that de Valera made this offer of intelligence co-operation as a gesture of goodwill following the British termination of the Economic War and the hand over of the Treaty Ports.<sup>24</sup> However, soon it was to prove much more significant than just an Irish thank you present.

As a result of this meeting an official was sent from the Irish Post Office Investigation Branch, to be briefed in London on the various postal methods of assisting counterespionage. He was also trained in telephone supervision and consequently on his return a Postal Interception Unit was established within the Post Office's Investigation

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, *Aspects of Intelligence*, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 59.

<sup>22</sup> Liason with Dept. of Defence, Dublin, Part 1, p. 5. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> The 1938 Agreement, Part 1, p. 12. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

Branch. This was important in the evolution of Irish military intelligence, since this new postal unit reported not to the civil authorities but directly to G2. This brought the army back into internal security work, since one of the principal aims of the unit was to look for communication between the republican movement and foreign powers.<sup>25</sup> However not all of the early suggestions of MI5 were accepted by G2. MI5's request to place a G2 agent in the Gardaí which indicated MI5's desire to have access to the entire Irish Intelligence network was rejected by Bryan since it would lead to friction with the Gardaí and the Dept. of Justice.<sup>26</sup> According to MI5's Irish section B1H, MI5 were quick to test the limitations of their new found intelligence network, however "it was not considered advisable to make enquiries about Eire nationals or to disclose to the Irish information about them which might be in our possession."<sup>27</sup>

This collaboration between MI5 and G2 developed into an effective operational unit before war broke out. Regular correspondence took place between the organisations through John Dulanty the British High Commissioner for Eire's postal bag. As the war progressed IRA intelligence were suspicious of co-operation and attempted to intercept the mail, but were foiled by two Irish detectives accompanying it.<sup>28</sup> Although MI5-G2 correspondence was confined to German activity in Ireland,<sup>29</sup> the passing of information quickly bore fruit. Following an MI5 tip off, a German visitor was shadowed but left suddenly and it later transpired that he was a member of the Abwehr, German intelligence, sent to make contact with the IRA. A German woman in Dublin, to whose address a French naval officer was sending information was put under surveillance, but again left abruptly. Surveillance tasks had been given to the police although the

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<sup>25</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 65. O'Halpin's Information referenced as Bryan Tapes p. 5. Interview Dec 1983.

<sup>26</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Liason with Dept. of Defence, Dublin, Part 1, p. 6. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>28</sup> Terence De Vere White, "Lord Rugby Remembers" in *Irish Times*, July 3 1962.

information was sent to G2. Bryan felt that the police bungled operations by watching suspects too closely, although the zeal of the Irish authorities was important in developing British trust.<sup>30</sup>

British trust was paramount to de Valera in pursuit of his policy of neutrality. He realised that due to geographic proximity, economic factors and the far superior military capabilities of Britain, his main worry was a British rather than a German breach of his policy. De Valera permitted his intelligence service to work alongside the British, not because of any secret deep rooted faith in the Allied cause. Rather he used the intelligence link as a political bargaining counter to throw back at the British when they pushed to reoccupy the Irish state. If this shrewd step was to work, he had to have the complete trust of his military intelligence officers, something which he had been wary about less than six years previously. Officers with a similar Civil war history to Bryan's had managed to gain the trust of the upper ranks of Fianna Fáil. This was facilitated by Fianna Fáil's official split with the IRA, and the banning of the organisation. Significantly, it was at this time that Bryan was officially transferred back to the Intelligence Directorate.

By the start of the Second World War on 3 September 1939, the G2-MI5 link was fully operational. G2 continued to supply MI5 with information on the movement of suspected German spies. However the relationship between G2 and MI5 was often jeopardised by the rivalry between the various British intelligence agencies. This worked against British interests rather than for them. In 1939 British intelligence was far from a co-ordinated operation, and was undergoing complete re-organisation. MI5 referred to as the Security Service, were appointed to look after counter-espionage and had direct

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<sup>29</sup> Liason with Dept. of Defence, Dublin, Part 1, p. 6. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>30</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 65.

access to the Home Secretary. MI6 sometimes called the Secret Intelligence Service, were to take care of espionage and reported to the Foreign Office. According to Deacon, “although “MI” stands for military intelligence, this is an anachronism, since neither agency is concerned directly with military intelligence, and the military intelligence sections of the Defence Ministry are quite separate from either.”<sup>31</sup> Standard military intelligence was responsible to the Defence Ministry, although the Naval Intelligence Division (N.I.D.) were responsible to the Admiralty. Responsibility for all the intelligence services lay directly with the Prime Minister who had access to the Joint Intelligence Committee, which comprised the heads of all the British intelligence services. However the Joint Intelligence Committee was not effective in co-ordinating the measures taken in Ireland. The various intelligence agencies had different aims in Ireland and varying opinions on how to carry them out. MI5’s mandate being counterespionage, they were only concerned with the existence of Axis spies in Ireland. Whereas MI6 were chiefly concerned with the possibility of a large scale Axis invasion of Ireland. Conflict and consultation on what intelligence policy to adopt towards Ireland can be traced back to before the War.

Britain had until 1932 mainly relied on the RUC and Cumann na nGaedhael as sources of information.<sup>32</sup> With the arrival of Fianna Fáil, the British Government realised it “would become increasingly difficult to obtain reliable information about happenings in Eire”.<sup>33</sup> Both Sir Vernon Kell head of MI5 and MI6 were asked to establish a network. Despite this MI5 declined and only MI6 set up a restricted information service. The reports of MI6 informers and agents gave “a limited cross section of private opinion on

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<sup>31</sup> Richard Deacon, *British Secret Service* (Glasgow, 1991), p. 264.

<sup>32</sup> Eunan O’Halpin, “Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45” in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> Special Sources of information available to the Irish Section p. 3, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)



current events of political or public interest”.<sup>34</sup> British Petroleum (BP) supplied MI6 with material on the Russian Oil Products company in Dublin, while estimates on Ireland’s arms manufacturing potential was obtained from a firm of Dublin consulting engineers.<sup>35</sup> According to Bryan an MI6 intelligence report written in 1932 deemed Fianna Fáil’s prospect of continuity as poor.<sup>36</sup> MI6 depended on the RUC to supply much of their information. As the RIC had been the eyes and the ears of British Intelligence during the War of Independence the RUC had a similar intelligence function. In 1931 MI6’s Irish section and the RUC established a direct information link. With the Second World War looming MI5 realised the strategic importance of good intelligence reports on Ireland, however by 1938 MI5 would have to get consent from MI6 to run agents since they had established Ireland as their own preserve. Despite this in 1938 MI5 managed to get the RUC information link redirected to their own Irish section. Through this link they gained access to informants within the Gardaí, although this information tended to be primarily focused on IRA activity rather than foreign espionage. MI5 noted that although they received some valuable information from the RUC, it was not trained or equipped for counterespionage. In order to overcome this MI5 wanted to send an officer to help, however this was advised against when it was found that “the RUC did not welcome the amateur interference of intelligence officers who lack local knowledge”.<sup>37</sup> Much of MI5’s information came from RUC inspector general Charles Wickham whom they regarded as particularly well informed and astute.<sup>38</sup> With the creation of the Dublin link, MI5 were no longer worried about establishing agents in Ireland. However with the outbreak of war, both the Naval Intelligence Division and MI6 were especially concerned and wanted to

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<sup>34</sup>ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Eunan O’Halpin, “Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45” in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 64.

<sup>36</sup> Bryan’s book review carried in *Irish Times* 19 November 1983, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/175).

<sup>37</sup> Part 1 RUC Northern Ireland pp 8-10, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>38</sup>Eunan O’Halpin, Aspects of Intelligence, in *Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 64.

step up their network. This was facilitated when on 20 December 1939, Lord Hankey, Minister without Portfolio who had been appointed to set up an intelligence organisation in Ireland had his proposals approved.<sup>39</sup>

The temporary organisation the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) established in 1938 by Col. Laurence Grand was a section within MI6, although it worked independently from the rest of the organisation. Known as Section D (for Destruction), it was intended, to be an aggressive unit for sabotage behind enemy lines. One of its plots was an assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler.<sup>40</sup> The S.O.E. tried to establish a stay behind organisation in the south should Ireland be invaded. Operating from Northern Ireland they detailed British officers to enter Ireland in plain clothes masquerading as tourists to obtain military information about roads and bridges.<sup>41</sup> According to Bryan the British wanted to set up a covert organisation for radio work to be operational in the event of a German invasion.<sup>42</sup> In July 1940, Major E.Y. Byass, a British Army staff officer from Northern Ireland was arrested with his wife by the Gardaí at Mullingar in Co. Meath, while driving a car containing military plans and maps. An RUC informant sent to enquire about the arrest of Byass, was told by a Garda officer "that if he'd only go to the Army, as you came to me, he'd be told anything he wanted, but we can't have them running round sketching the whole place".<sup>43</sup> Byass was handed over to John Maffey the British Representative in Dublin, and despatched hastily back to Belfast.<sup>44</sup> Another British army major was named by the Gardaí as travelling south of the border from Northern Ireland each week. Following a warning from the Irish government that arrests

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph Carroll, *Ireland during the Emergency 1939-45* (Dublin, 1975), p. 35.

<sup>40</sup> The SOE files that were recently released were ominously missing all their files concerning their operations in Ireland, although an entry in the index to the files contains a reference to them.

<sup>41</sup> Special Sources of information available to the Irish Section p. 3, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>42</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 75.

<sup>43</sup> Quote taken from Robert Fisk, *In time of War* (London, 1983), p. 126.

would be made in future, MI5 who did not want to jeopardise their Dublin link, put pressure on MI6 to obtain a promise from the S.O.E. that this would stop. However they only agreed on condition that other MI6 sections were allowed provide the necessary information.<sup>45</sup>

In the autumn of 1939, MI6 now seen as the authority for running agents in Ireland, was requested by the British Admiralty to check numerous reports of German submarines refuelling and landing personnel on the West coast of Ireland. Winston Churchill, the head of the Admiralty, was pressurising the War Cabinet to retake the Irish treaty ports. Reports from Churchill's NID officers documented the importance of these ports for anti-submarine warfare, giving destroyers and sea planes an extra 400 miles range. On 17 October the Royal Oak battleship was sunk by a German submarine at Scapa Flow. This convinced the War Cabinet of the need to control two of the treaty ports Lough Swilly in Donegal and Berehaven in Cork. However de Valera through Maffey managed to convince the War Cabinet that this was not an option.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the British failure to retake the Treaty Ports, MI6 were asked by the NID and the War Cabinet to monitor the movement of German vessels off the Irish coast. Although unable to provide a coast watching service, they increased their organisation to provide some checks on reports of German naval activity. Col. Valentine Vivian a deputy head of MI6 appointed Sir Charles Teagart a graduate from Trinity College and ex-Chief of the Bombay Police "to keep an eye on events in Eire".<sup>47</sup> His reports were alarming. According to Tegart "local Irishmen accept the visit of U-Boats as commonplace" and "up to 2,000 leaders have been landed in Eire from German U-Boats and by other

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<sup>44</sup>ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Special Sources of information available to the Irish Section p. 3, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Carroll, *Ireland during the Emergency 1939-45* (Dublin, 1975), p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> Quote taken from Robert Fisk, *In time of War* (London, 1983), p. 121.

methods since the outbreak of war”.<sup>48</sup> Tegart’s reports and his insistence on a German plan to occupy Ireland caused grave concern. He backed his claim of a German invasion by stating that staff at the German legation in Dublin were busy buying coastal properties in preparation for German landing craft.<sup>49</sup> His dramatic narrative had increased effect as it came at a crucial time during the French and British evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940. The Germans controlled France and the Channel Islands, so both Ireland and Britain were very much in striking distance. Coupled with this, Tegart during his former career on the Calcutta police force had impressed and gained the confidence of Churchill.<sup>50</sup> So despite Tegart’s claims being totally untrue, Churchill on hearing them prepared a trawler to watch the Irish coast and sent submarines on occasion for the same purpose.<sup>51</sup> This trawler, the Q-boat Tamura, commanded by Captain W. R. Fell, patrolled the west coast of Ireland between September 1939 and March 1940.<sup>52</sup> Churchill was of the belief that there were U-boats lurking in the inlets and bays of Cork, Kerry and Galway. However Fell records in his memoirs that he never saw or heard of a U-boat in Irish bays.<sup>53</sup> According to Carroll a second trawler was commissioned “to poke around the western ports of Ireland to report enemy activity”. However the Captain went ashore in search of an alleged spy ring, only to be arrested by the Gardaí and released through Maffey in Dublin.<sup>54</sup> Ironically the British now wanted joint co-operation on coast watching, the issue they were unwilling to discuss with Bryan fourteen years earlier at the Imperial Conference.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* p. 122.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* p. 121.

<sup>51</sup> Eunan O’Halpin, “Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45” in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 75.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Carroll, *Ireland during the Emergency 1939-45* (Dublin, 1975), p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* p. 35.

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 4.

Despite the negative findings of the NID, Captain Richard Pim another Trinity College graduate and former member of the RIC accompanied by a naval intelligence officer was sent to look into the claims by Tegart. Pim used an RUC officer who had a senior informant in the Gardaí and a contact with Richard Mulcahy.<sup>56</sup> It is quite likely that G2 were aware of the British Intelligence - RUC link, since Bryan knew that the RUC and Gardaí forged friendly relations and co-operated with each other in relation to the IRA and counterespionage.<sup>57</sup> Pim's findings contradicted most of Tegart's earlier claims. There were only 318 Germans and 149 Italians in Ireland, not 2,000 as Tegart had suggested. There had only been one or two instances of U-boat landings and there was a significant improvement in the Irish coast watching service.<sup>58</sup> However despite Pim's report, MI6 continued to run a network of agents in Ireland. According to the BIH section of MI5, MI6 ran agents in Ireland both as a source of information and as a check on reports received from other sources. "it will be noted that this organisation had to be kept secret from the enemy in Eire, but also from the Eire authorities".<sup>59</sup> This "checking of reports received" appears to have prompted the arrest of at least one British agent that G2 picked up after the coast watching service in Wicklow noted he was asking them too many questions.<sup>60</sup> G2 also brought another agent who like Teagart had been a former Indian police officer, into custody after he was found to be distributing radio transmission sets to sympathetic Irishmen who would give London advance warning of a German

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<sup>56</sup> Pim's intelligence report is very similar to that made by Mulcahy on "Germans with Hotels" submitted to Dept. of Justice

<sup>57</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Fisk, *In time of War* (London, 1983), p. 123.

<sup>59</sup> Special Sources of information available to the Irish Section p. 4, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>60</sup> Robert Fisk, *In time of War* (London, 1983), p. 127.

invasion. This was followed by the arrest of Geoffrey Jules Marcus in August 1941 after he was found making a personal inspection of defences on the west coast.<sup>61</sup>

The British continued to run operatives in Ireland throughout the war period, despite having access to G2 information. When British agents were caught it strained relations between MI5 and G2, however for the most part they remained healthy. In September 1939, the link helped facilitate a hundred Germans, many with ties to the Nazi party, go from Ireland to Germany via Britain. MI5 realised they posed a greater counterespionage problem in Ireland than in Germany. However some Germans intent on spying stayed behind. One of these, Werner Unland, was found by MI5 to be writing to an address in Denmark. Co-operation between MI5 and G2 led to Unland's surveillance and his arrest in April 1941 after his photograph was found in the possession of Gunther Schutz a captured German agent.<sup>62</sup> Reports and rumours which came from or related to persons in Ireland were passed to Col. Archer by MI5. It tended to be MI6 misinformation which fuelled MI5's enquiries. Almost without exception they were found to be without foundation and MI5 were generally satisfied at the steps G2 were taking. Despite this, the controllers of MI6 and the NID felt insecure and compelled to check the situation themselves. The lack of co-operation and co-ordination was a great problem within the British intelligence structure. According to Duggan, MI5 and SOE loathed MI6 and its controllers.<sup>63</sup>

Despite internal British intelligence problems leading to pressure being placed on the MI5-G2 link the link was preserved throughout the war. On the British side the man responsible for maintaining the good relations was Cecil Liddell (head of B1H Irish Section), whose brother Guy was head of MI5's counterespionage section. Both Liddells were frequent visitors to Ireland and knew the country well. Both Archer and Bryan

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. pp 126-127.

<sup>62</sup> Part II German Activities p. 40, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9) .

developed a good relationship with these MI5 men. Relations between Bryan and Cecil Liddell were cemented by regular packages of Irish brisket, spiced beef and turkey. For some time after the war Bryan kept in contact with the Liddells and on hearing of Guy's death he wrote to Cecil. Following the early meetings in 1938 and 1939 concerning postal interception and counterespionage which established the link, another meeting was organised in 1940.

The meeting in May 1940 came at a critical time during the war when tensions were high in the British and indeed the Irish camp. Germany had taken Norway and Denmark in April, displaying a complete disregard for neutrality. By May 1940, Hitler advanced his forces through France and took control of the Channel Islands. An assault on Ireland now appeared more realistic than at any stage during the war. It was with this background that Liam Archer and Joe Walshe met Cecil Liddell at Droitwich outside London on 24 May. The original agenda for the meeting had been to discuss arrangements to improve G2's Illicit Wireless Interception. However Archer quickly focused on Irish demands.<sup>64</sup> He assured Liddell that the IRA would be handled, but would not give an assurance that all enemy aliens would be interned. Archer suggested that if the Irish contracts for arms equipment placed with Britain were fulfilled they would be in a better position to repel invasion. Archer stressed the danger of a German airborne landing saying that little resistance could be offered.<sup>65</sup> Archer's push for arms coincided with a similar request by de Valera at a meeting with John Maffey. This type of two pronged military and political policy worked and although MI5 claimed "the cupboard was bare", Maffey returned with a list of material that could be supplied.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> J. P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1989), p. 229.

<sup>64</sup> Part II Meeting with Archer May 1940 p. 44, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>65</sup> B1H Irish Section, MI5 p. 266 MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV42)

<sup>66</sup> Part II Meeting with Archer May 1940 p. 44, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

As a result of the meeting, firstly, a British Military Mission was sent to Dublin to form a joint defence plan between the Irish military and Northern Ireland troops should Germany invade. Known in British Intelligence circles as Mission 18,<sup>67</sup> Cecil Liddell appointed Captain Caroe in March 1941 to act as a liaison between MI5 and the Northern Ireland force which was to repel a German invasion.<sup>68</sup> Secondly, in June 1940 a British Passport Control Officer was appointed to Dublin under the pretext of controlling the flow of people between Ireland and Britain.<sup>69</sup> Attached to Maffey's office he made confidential enquiries and ran a small network of agents in Dublin which was quickly penetrated by G2.<sup>70</sup> With the appointment of the Passport Officer and the Censorship Unit of Irish mail through Britain fully functional, the flow of information into MI5's Irish section dramatically increased. This unprecedented amount of information and the wave of rumours and reports about Fifth Columnists which spread through the country after the invasion of Holland, led to an expansion in personnel at the MI5 Irish section B1H in May 1940.<sup>71</sup> Despite this increase in staff B1H, suffered a large setback in March 1941 when its offices in London were bombed. Part of the section moved to Oxford but this impaired its efficiency. BIH were dependent on direct access to MI6's Irish section files and government departments based in London. The section eventually reverted back to London in October 1943.<sup>72</sup> From the outbreak of war until 1940 MI5's B1H section consisted of just one man, Cecil Liddell who had been brought into the organisation in the autumn of 1939 by his brother Guy. The sections numbers from that point increased but fluctuated and essentially act as a marker to measure British perceptions of the level

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<sup>67</sup> Joint Defence plans, Part II p. 49, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>68</sup> B1H Irish Section, MI5 p. 267 MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV42)

<sup>69</sup> Part II Meeting with Archer May 1940 p. 44, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>70</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 76 Reference O'Halpin's interview with Bryan Jan. 1983.

<sup>71</sup> Part II Meeting with Archer May 1940 p. 44, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>72</sup> Irish Section move to Oxford, Part II, p. 49. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)



of security threat posed by Ireland. There is a steady increase in BIH staff between May 1940 and March 1943. For details of the varying size of BIH see Appendix 3.

On Archer and Walshe's return from Droitwich, they were accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Clarke, who had just returned from German occupied Norway. He was assigned to co-ordinate the Anglo-Irish defence measures. On Walshe and Archer's insistence Clarke travelled in civilian clothing. Walshe took Clarke from the Shelbourne Hotel and drove him around for some time before reaching their meeting place inside Government Buildings, which was less than three minutes away, to disguise the location and ensure they were not followed. Clarke met Archer, Bryan and the new Irish Chief of Staff General McKenna. Despite Clarke's pleas, McKenna said British troops could not enter the country before a German invasion started and therefore a British counter invasion unit was stationed in the North. It was conceded that a British Military attaché would be stationed in Dublin but in a civilian guise.<sup>73</sup> This attaché worked as a British intelligence officer, reporting on Ireland. Clarke was taken to the Phoenix Park to advise against German Paratroop landings and spent time with the Minister for Defensive Measures, Frank Aitken, who is reported to have spent much of the time explaining his ideas for mechanical improvement of the war!<sup>74</sup>

Despite the co-ordinated defence plan and the steady flow of information through G2 and to some extent through the Gardai, British intelligence and the War Cabinet were still in disarray over Ireland and were the victim of their own misguided intelligence reporting. While BIH staff did not believe that intelligence reports from British agents in Ireland were reliable, the War Cabinet, Churchill and MI6 leaders did. MI5 had relayed Tegart's reports back to G2, who checked them. Bryan described Tegart's reports, to MI5

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<sup>73</sup> Joseph Carroll, *Ireland during the Emergency 1939-45* (Dublin, 1975), p. 44.

<sup>74</sup> According to Carroll, Aitken was a most enthusiastic amateur inventor". Ibid.

as misleading and as “public house stories”. Neville Chamberlain also believed these false intelligence reports. On 28 May he told the War Cabinet, the IRA was strong enough to overrun the Irish Defence Forces. On 3 June the cabinet heard that a German invasion force was gathering in Cadiz for an invasion of Ireland and that de Valera had already been informed.<sup>75</sup> This report may have emanated from German deception or from sloppy intelligence work<sup>76</sup> but Chamberlain was now determined to have British troops in Ireland before a German invasion. Since Clarke had failed to do this, British Health Minister Malcom MacDonald was sent to talk to de Valera. MacDonald, a friend of de Valera, was briefed and told to:- 1) secure the entry of British troops, 2) insist on internment of the IRA and 3) demand the internment of Germans. If de Valera raised partition, to offer him a council to be set up to discuss the issue. However despite MacDonald’s best efforts he failed. De Valera would not allow British troops since it would openly breach his policy of neutrality which had strong support within the country. He also rejected the British veiled promise of a united Ireland, realising that that’s all it was. De Valera said “if an agreement on a constitutional as well as agreement in principle was made for an United Ireland then the Irish government might agree to enter”.<sup>77</sup> De Valera realised that the British War Cabinet had not secured any backing to overturn their Unionist supporters and knew that they couldn’t deliver on his constitutional demand. Even when MacDonald changed the conversation to the arrest of the IRA leadership he was treading on weak ground. Ten days earlier 390 IRA suspects had been arrested and interned.<sup>78</sup> After reading MacDonald’s report, the War Cabinet discussed taking the treaty ports by force. However they decided the risk of U.S. alienation would be too dangerous at a time when they were desperate for American support.

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.* pp 44-45.

<sup>76</sup> See T. Ryle Dwyer, *Guests of the State* (Dingle, 1994), p. 23.

<sup>77</sup> See Joseph Carroll, *Ireland during the Emergency 1939-45* (Dublin, 1975), p. 50.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* pp 45-48.

Due to de Valera's sharp political manoeuvring, the US factor and the "friendly neutrality" policy G2 were adopting towards MI5, the state escaped invasion. However according to MI5 "From May 1940, the time of the fall of France, until the German attack on Russia in June 1941, Eire was as much under threat of invasion as Britain."<sup>79</sup> As the allied forces began to take the upper hand, the threat of invasion by Germany and therefore Britain, declined. The G2-MI5 relationship also improved during this period. Certain problems did arise, but after the potential crisis of the summer of 1940, G2's attitude towards the British became even more friendly. In May 1941 Bryan and Archer met with Liddell in Dublin. Archer was concerned about the British proposal to apply conscription to Northern Ireland.<sup>80</sup> Bryan went to London and presented notes on the Dublin meeting to a member of the British cabinet Sir John Anderson. According to MI5, Anderson referred to these notes during the cabinet discussion on the issue and the proposal was dropped.<sup>81</sup> As well as conscription, the Dublin meeting also discussed the British fear of illicit wireless messages being released through a transmitter in the German legation. Archer told Liddell his main problems in preventing illicit wireless transmission was insufficient trained personnel to maintain a twenty four hour watch and a lack of equipment. Liddell asked that a British radio expert be assigned to examine and improve the Irish Signal Corps. Archer and Bryan both said that they would have to consult External Affairs before they could sanction a move like this. External Affairs had reservations as they wanted to deal with the problem with out outside help. However by 7 October 1941 it was agreed and on 11 November, Bryan met with MI5 to discuss the arrangements for the radio officers visit. Colonel Stratton visited the G2 Signal Corp in December 1941 and arranged that G2 who were monitoring the German legation traffic would pass a report of the information picked up to him. In return Stratton agreed to send

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<sup>79</sup> Neutrality of Eire, Part I, p. 17. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

reports of any transmissions they received from Ireland which G2 were unable to receive.<sup>82</sup> Following Stratton's visit, a follow up MI5-G2 meeting was organised in Dublin in March 1942. The focus of the meeting was still the radio traffic from the German Embassy. The British had toyed with the idea of keeping the traffic open to break the code. But it was thought there was only a remote chance of breaking the cipher. It was suggested by British intelligence that Bryan should be asked to secretly copy the cipher books in the German Legation. However MI5 refused to ask him to do this.<sup>83</sup> During the March meeting, Bryan suggested that G2 would jam the signal. MI5 had anticipated this suggestion and retorted, "while we do not think that jamming would be satisfactory we should be interested to know the results".<sup>84</sup> This wording was expressly adopted so as not to enable the Irish to say they would have jammed the transmissions, but the British were opposed to it.

In November 1943 Captain Liddell of MI5 visited Bryan in Dublin to again discuss security matters. While Liddell was visiting he dined with General McKenna the Irish chief of staff and stayed the night at Collins Barracks. Liddell unofficially disclosed to McKenna of the British plans to formally ask for the removal of the German legation transmitter. Liddell exclaimed "The fact that the set was being watched could not prevent the message being sent".<sup>85</sup> On learning of this formal approach, External Affairs through Walshe met the German ambassador Herr Hempel and duly confiscated the set. However even after G2 confiscated the transmission set from the German ambassador, the British were looking for his complete expulsion. They believed it was still a potential security risk and could jeopardise the plans for operation "OVERLORD" or D-Day as it was more

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<sup>80</sup> Meetings and development of link with Irish Security service, Part II, p. 54. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.* p. 58.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.* pp 58-59.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* p. 59.

<sup>85</sup> Liddell visit to Dublin November 1943, Part II, p. 75. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

popularly known. Despite this Capt. Liddell through the Joint Intelligence Committee prepared a note on the situation for the cabinet. It concluded that if the German legation whose communication we control was removed, it might be replaced at this most critical time by enemy agents and it might strain relations with Eire so much that assistance would be broken off.<sup>86</sup> Consequently it was decided not to press for the Legations removal. However following the American note which is discussed in more detail below, the British felt compelled to support a claim for its removal. Despite this, de Valera remained steadfast and the German delegation were not removed. But in order to calm allied fears Walshe through an American agent organised a Security Conference in Dublin between British, American and Irish representatives. Bryan, Liddell and US agents Marlin and Will all attended. Held in May 1944 it acted as a type of Irish reassurance step to the Allied forces before D-Day eventually took place on the 6 June.<sup>87</sup>

Following D-Day British intelligence was no longer that worried about security matters or leakage of information from Ireland. Travelling restrictions enforced for D-Day preparations were lifted. Essentially British intelligence activity in Ireland began to scale down as the war came to a close. In September 1944 MI6 withdrew many of its agents only leaving a nucleus similar to those levels of pre 1940.<sup>88</sup> In March 1945 MI6 further reduced it's agents in Ireland again only leaving a skeleton operation. Intelligence reports on Ireland were now only being generated from MI5 contact with G2 and the reports from Maffey's office.<sup>89</sup> However on 6 November 1945 a meeting was held to discuss British intelligence in Ireland. Sir John Stephenson represented the Dominion office who controlled Maffey's organisation. Col. Vivian Valentine and Mrs. Archer represented MI6 while Captain Guy Liddell and Cecil Liddell represented the MI5 Irish section B1H. It was decided that because the existence of the MI5-G2 link was

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<sup>86</sup> Preparations for "OVERLORD", Part II, p. 80. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

<sup>87</sup> Preparations for "OVERLORD", Part II, p. 86. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

completely dependent on good relations existing between British and Irish governments it was not a good idea to become too dependent on this source for intelligence. Since MI6 had been the main British intelligence operators in Ireland since 1932, they were again given the responsibility to furnish reports on Ireland in the future. Valentine and Mrs. Archer accepted this task but said it would take some time to rebuild their networks after abolishing most of them over a year ago.<sup>90</sup>

Although G2 initially refused to accede to the British demand to confiscate the transmitter and dismiss the German legation, co-operation between G2 and the British continued. Already G2 had released captured British spies, had turned a blind eye to the British invasion of Irish air and sea space and most importantly had not complained about the British censorship of Irish mail outside Ireland. The foolishness of the British censorship affair was highlighted at Foynes airport. All Irish mail travelling outside the country went through the British Censorship offices in Liverpool. Although G2 knew this, in order to satisfy Irish national sensitivities, the westbound Irish mail was delivered to the BOAC mail aircraft at Foynes. Before the mail boarded the aircraft it was sent to Liverpool, and then returned to Foynes for the USA, instead of being sent direct from Liverpool.<sup>91</sup> G2 also facilitated the British by allowing British military personnel to inspect Irish defensive measures and by sending officers to train in Britain in the more technical aspects of censorship and signals. Furthermore they agreed a joint defensive strategy in case of German invasion and made joint preparation plans. Despite this the British were still worried about the possibility of a leakage of information.

In February 1941, MI5 learned that Foynes airport in Limerick was to become a port of call for the commercial air route between Lisbon and England. The British air company B.O.A.C. ran the flights, but MI5 felt that Lisbon, a centre for Axis espionage,

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<sup>88</sup> Intelligence operations following D-Day, Part II, p. 97. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>89</sup> Meeting to discuss Intelligence in Ireland, Part II, p. 100. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

could channel information back and forth through this source. MI5 in the summer of 1941 without telling G2 appointed an undercover officer as a member of the B.O.A.C. staff at Foynes. MI5's involvement in Foynes increased when in June 1942, the Irish government suggested if Irish priests on the continent were allowed to travel direct from Lisbon to Foynes, they would agree to having a British security representative who would co-operate with a G2 officer and the immigration staff. MI5 wholeheartedly agreed and in July 1942, Mr. F. B. Carruthers was appointed to the position. He was given an annual salary of £500 a year plus £300 for entertainment. He regularly reported to London on passenger traffic and remained at Foynes well after the war had concluded.<sup>92</sup>

The improvement in relations between MI5 and G2, continued to be jeopardised by other sections of the British intelligence service. Whereas MI6 and the SOE had been the main culprit in the past, NID were now surpassing them. In May 1941 G2 uncovered a large NID spy network. The British changed tactics and were now using native Irish people with no British connection whom they hoped would not attract so much attention. James Flynn the son of a Cork hotel owner was arrested by G2 and interrogated by Bryan and the southern G2 commander Florence O'Donoghue.<sup>93</sup> Flynn identified a man named Michael Fitzgerald based in Galway who controlled operatives up and down the West and South coast. G2 recognised Fitzgerald as an NID officer who had formerly served in the Palestine police force.<sup>94</sup> Flynn's job was to monitor a stretch of coast in Cork and Kerry for which he was provided with a car. He then had to report to Fitzgerald any sighting of German submarines or other suspicious vessels. Flynn was operating since January 1940.

However shortly after Fitzgerald approached him, a man named Lywood also met him. Lywood, the air attache appointed to Maffey's office, wanted Flynn to keep an eye

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<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> B.O.A.C. at Foynes, Part II, p. 67. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.* p. 68.

<sup>93</sup> Report 15 May 1941, British Activities in Eire (Military Archives, G2/X/0266)

<sup>94</sup> Report 15 May 1941, British Activities in Eire (Military Archives, G2/X/0266)

on a number of people suspected of being German spies. Lywood also asked Flynn to report any German aircraft crashes or landings. G2 quickly placed all the suspected operatives under surveillance. Another coast watcher Stuart Pearson was caught and found to be in correspondence with a Col. Craig, who was the Assistant Director of British Naval Intelligence. NID were also found to be in correspondence with a number of ex British Army soldiers based in Ireland, requiring information on "coastal and inland areas including ports and anchorages, railways, roads, bridges, communications, water supply, industrial plants, power and mineral resources".<sup>95</sup> The level of NID operations was scaled down, mainly due to G2 pressure although it was noted that Lywood's movements could not be restricted due to diplomatic immunity.<sup>96</sup> Maffey's office became a haven for British intelligence operations in Ireland. Lywood and other British attachés operated intelligence networks from there. Before the war there was no official British representative in Eire, but in October 1939, Maffey was appointed with a staff which included a dominion office official, a private secretary, a naval attaché, a military attaché, an air attaché and a press attaché. MI6 normally use their foreign diplomats and staffs all over the world as a basis for intelligence networks, however they were not the only ones using Maffey's office. NID were sending reports from their agents through his office, as of course were MI5 and G2. However as was characteristic of British intelligence operations in Ireland, Maffey and his dominion office staff were not always kept informed of which agents were responsible to whom. It was noted that working in the air attaché, Mr. Lywood's residence in Castleknock, there were two radio experts posing as his personal secretary and butler. However it came as a shock to Maffey's office and

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<sup>95</sup> Notes on activities of British agents in Ireland, British Activities in Eire Part II to 31/12/42 (Military Archives, G2/X/0266)

<sup>96</sup> Report 15 May 1941, British Activities in Eire (Military Archives, G2/X/0266)



Lywood when it was found that these radio experts were reporting to the passport control office, a subset of MI6 and to discover that the radio they had did not work.<sup>97</sup>

Despite G2's unveiling of the NID network British intelligence continued to persevere. In September 1942, Bryan and G2 uncovered an escape organisation which had been set up in conjunction with MI9 to help Allied internees to escape to Northern Ireland. MI9 were established to carry out rescue missions throughout Europe, but were working in Ireland without the knowledge of MI5 and other British intelligence sections. The organisation recruited in Ireland was mainly made up of Irishmen who had served in the First War. Two members of MI9, a Dublin doctor Thomas Wilson and his friend Rutledge were arrested when caught trying to help a New Zealand pilot Bruce Girdlestone escape from the Curragh. The Curragh housed a considerable number of British and German air and naval crews who had made forced landings. Although British spies apprehended were repatriated, the Irish government balked at releasing all uniformed soldiers as this would openly undermine its policy of neutrality. The prison conditions for allied and axis internees was lax (with the exception of some of the captured German spies) and they were often allowed out of prison on passes. Along with Girdlestone a number of British air men had escaped although it is unclear if they were all aided by MI9. MI9's intervention greatly irritated the Irish government and was likely to jeopardise Irish co-operation with the Allies. G2 discovered from telephone taps where some of the escapees were hiding, but instructions were given to take no action.<sup>98</sup> Maffey embarrassed by the whole affair pleaded with de Valera not to intern the two MI9 men. However before agreeing de Valera consulted Bryan. De Valera wished to know if the military would resent it if Wilson was not jailed. However Bryan raised no objections and

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<sup>97</sup>Eunan O'Halpin, Aspects of Intelligence, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 64.

<sup>98</sup>Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 76 reference 97.

Wilson was fined and released.<sup>99</sup> This air of friendliness which colours Irish neutrality throughout the war, was not the direct reason for the lenient action taken against the MI9 operatives on this occasion. According to Wilson's G2 file it was due to the fear that the British would cancel Irish orders for bombers.<sup>100</sup> No further attempts at escape were made during the war because of the possible impact on Anglo-Irish relations. The MI9 "escape club" as it was known, was closed down following Girdlestone's arrest.<sup>101</sup> However according to T. Ryle Dwyer, MI9 was acting in a far greater capacity than just the running of an escape club. Dwyer claims that it had organised in Ireland "a kind of 5<sup>th</sup> column ready to help British forces" and consequently "Maffey was afraid of the implications if it became public".<sup>102</sup> Despite the fact that Dwyer does not source his information and the fact that MI6 had been reprimanded for trying to run a similar venture, it is not incredible that MI9 ran a 5<sup>th</sup> column, especially when one considers the total lack of co-ordination between the different British intelligence bodies.

Throughout the war MI5 and MI6 had little knowledge of what plans MI9 were making in relation to Ireland. MI5 through the censorship of prisoner of war (POW) mail, learnt that attempts were being made by the Germans to recruit an Irish brigade from their own POW's of Irish origin. This brigade was to accompany a German force invading Ireland and to co-operate with the IRA. Although MI5 had gathered this information in the Autumn of 1940, it was not until the Spring of 1941 that both MI5 and MI6's Irish sections learnt that MI9 had considerable information on the subject. Consequently a meeting was held between MI9, MI5 and MI6 where it was decided that all information pertaining to Ireland would be passed onto MI6's Irish section.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *DeValera - the man and the myths* (Dublin, 1991), p. 265.

<sup>100</sup> Dr. T. Wilson File (Military Archives, G2/4184).

<sup>101</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *Guests of the State* (Dingle, 1994), p. 152.

<sup>102</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *Guests of the State* (Dingle, 1994), p. 152.

<sup>103</sup> Irish Brigade, Part II, p. 48, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

The lack of co-ordination between the British intelligence agencies in Ireland made covert operations counterproductive. Reports were ineffective and incorrect, inevitably attracting attention and increasing the flood of rumours reaching London about unusual activity in Ireland. The fact that many operatives were caught or were under surveillance by G2 strengthened Irish suspicions about British intentions. According to a British intelligence chief Godfrey, "that having only recently emerged from a state of civil war the Irish police were particularly good at detecting underground activities and the unmasking of covert British organisations".<sup>104</sup> Although MI5 and the British Representative in Ireland conceded, "in this underground of intelligence and intrigue a British authority in Ireland could never achieve what was achieved by a native authority"<sup>105</sup>, the rest of the British intelligence and war leaders took much longer to convince.

In 1941 the United States entered the war on the allied side. Relations between Ireland and the US were now different. Whereas before, the threat of American abstention from the war had come to de Valera's rescue and saved him from a Churchill backed invasion in 1940, now the US would be looking for Ireland's aid in supporting the allied cause. Moves were afoot to get American President Roosevelt to openly ask de Valera for access to Irish bases to protect the North Atlantic shipping route which the Germans had targeted. Gray along with Maffey and the Canadian high commissioner John Kearney suggested asking Roosevelt to make de Valera a formal request thus forcing the Taoiseach's hand in the open. Gray believed that in the light of recent Allied success and with the "orientation of Irish opinion toward the bandwagon it would be almost impossible for de Valera to order his troops to fire on naval forces occupying the

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<sup>104</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 76.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.* p. 77.

area in question".<sup>106</sup> How reliable Gray's estimations of Irish public opinion was is debatable, however it is almost certain that G2 who had all embassies and foreign diplomats under close surveillance knew of this plan. De Valera realised that the Americans just like the British had to be humoured if his neutrality policy was to succeed. On 4 January 1943 Joseph Walshe approached the American Ambassador in Dublin, David Gray along with an American Intelligence officer Spike Marlin with an offer to cooperate with America's European intelligence network. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) a forerunner to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), were very keen on the idea while the American Ambassador Gray was not. According to T. Ryle Dwyer, Gray was of the opinion that de Valera and his policy of neutrality should be discredited in the eyes of the American people for not having helped during the war. He therefore (quite correctly) saw this offer as a kind of trap.<sup>107</sup> Despite this the OSS saw this as too good an opportunity to miss and sent David Bruce, head of the organisation's European operations, to meet Irish officials. At this first meeting on 15 March 1943, Bruce met the Garda commissioner Paddy O'Carroll, Walshe and Bryan. It was decided that Bryan would supply Spike Marlin with reports on

such matters as IRA strength, radio interceptions, daily, weekly and monthly reports on aeroplane and submarine sightings, the names and addresses of people in America to whom German nationals living in Ireland or pro-German Irish people were writing; and files on German spies already captured.<sup>108</sup>

In the face of heightened US pressure to openly compromise his neutrality policy, de Valera decided to offer G2's files to the Americans. G2 sent copies of over 4,000 subject files to the Irish desk at OSS headquarters over the course of the war.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *Strained Relations, Ireland at peace and the USA at war 1941-45* (Dublin, 1988), p. 101.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 90.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.* p. 91.

Following the preliminary meetings Bryan and the American officials had in March, Spike Marlin the US Irish liaison officer moved back and forth from London to Dublin collecting reports and discussing various issues with G2. G2 reports to the OSS Irish desk were sent via Marlin in London, rather than through Gray in Dublin. This was indicative of the distrust the Irish authorities had for Gray. R. Carter Nicholas, the head of the OSS Irish desk in Washington decided in May 1943 to assign a new agent to Ireland. Following some recruiting mishaps, Martin Quigley an Irish-American took up the post. Quigley soon reported the strong allied bias which existed within Irish neutrality. To him Gray's attitude and desire to discredit de Valera was a puzzle. The US intelligence link was further enhanced when in July 1943, Marlin approached Walshe for Irish help in communicating with Switzerland or any other part of Europe, where the Irish had diplomatic missions.<sup>110</sup> Walshe provisionally agreed if the documents carried through the Irish diplomatic pouch were untraceable. This agreement opened up the possibility of the OSS using Irish diplomats as American spies. Consequently, Nicholas and Marlin met Walshe in Dublin on 25 September 1943. The Americans extended Irish intelligence co-operation even further at this meeting when Walshe agreed not just to send information through Irish diplomatic pouches, but also to get specific information from Irish diplomats which the OSS required. The next day Nicholas and Marlin met Bryan to ask for access to potential double agents. With preparations for D-Day the Allies were frantic to supply false information to the Germans. Nicholas on reading the G2 files on German nationals forwarded to his desk, believed that Joseph Andrews was a possibility. This ex IRA man had made a number of attempts to contact the Abwehr but had failed. However Bryan told Nicholas that Andrews' prime motivation for contacting the Abwehr was to extort money and that he was unreliable and possibly distrusted by the Germans. Despite this Bryan informed the OSS delegation that he would "look out for a suitable candidate,

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p. 94.

but he was not too hopeful.”<sup>111</sup> Throughout 1943, the OSS were furnished with Irish diplomatic political intelligence reports on conditions, morale support for and against the allied and axis causes. Although files are not readily available, Irish diplomatic channels almost certainly passed information to US agents throughout Europe. An account in T. Ryle Dwyer’s book, although uncorroborated, claims Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini (later Pope Paul VI), offered to arrange the transfer to the Americans of information from a source in Japan on strategic bombing sites in that country. Michael MacWhite the Irish envoy in Rome forwarded the information to Dublin where it was passed to the OSS.<sup>112</sup> The truth of this recollection of a former CIA agent is open to debate, but it is undeniable that Irish diplomats were used as American spies in the latter half of the war.

Following the successful invasion of Normandy the SI branch of the OSS lost interest in Ireland. Marlin and Quigley were recalled but X2, the counterespionage division of the OSS, sent their own agent to Dublin. Edward Lawler came with the full co-operation of the Irish authorities to act as a liaison. He like Quigley and Marlin, reported a hundred per cent co-operation from the Irish authorities. Lawler located himself in London and was in direct communication with MI5. According to MI5 reports Lawler deliberately located in London because he did not want to get too close to the Irish. According to MI5 writing on Lawler’s position,

it was most important to avoid, as far as possible, political contacts in Eire and to restrict his contacts to Col. Bryan of Dept. of Defence and his activities to security matters only, leaving any political questions to American ministers.<sup>113</sup>

This view of the danger of over friendliness with the Irish probably resulted from Liddell’s disclosure to McKenna during the German transmitter incident. It also came

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 95.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 97.

<sup>113</sup> OSS intelligence set up in Eire, Part II, p. 89. MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

from the MI5 perception that Marlin's friendly attitude with Irish personnel angered Gray and led to his dismissal. Even though Lawler distanced himself he managed to forge an effective intelligence regime. Gray would report any rumours or security queries he had. Lawler would in turn check them with MI5. If this did not suffice he would then confer with Bryan before reporting back to Gray.<sup>114</sup>

Despite this Gray was still unhappy about the Irish situation and was determined to force the issue of neutrality with de Valera. Gray believed if he could formally discredit the Taoiseach in American eyes, there was little chance of his being able to cause problems later for the Anglo-American alliance by stirring up trouble in the US over the partition question. Gray after consulting with Maffey and with American officials sent the "American note" personally to de Valera on 21 February 1944. The note asked for the removal of all Axis representatives in Ireland. This was followed by a "British note" from Maffey later that afternoon supporting the American request for the Axis Legation dismissal. De Valera managed to obtain assurances that his rejection of these notes would not result in an Allied invasion although a strong anti neutral press campaign against Ireland was launched in the US when the story of the notes broke. Churchill in a speech at the time talked of isolating Ireland and there were Irish fears that Britain was going to re-introduce economic sanctions but this did not happen. The threat of ending the MI5-G2 link helped keep Anglo-Irish relations friendly. According to an MI5 official writing after the war, "The Dublin link was not always favourable to British policy. Its existence provided de Valera with an answer to British complaints".<sup>115</sup> In order to keep the Americans happy they were offered to instate their own agents in Ireland. However the OSS decided against this since it would exonerate the Irish authorities if Axis representatives in Dublin did manage to betray plans for an Allied invasion. Despite

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Part I, The Dublin Link p. 7, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

this the OSS agents in Britain reported complete satisfaction with the steps the Irish security forces were taking. By April 1944 word reached the Irish government that the Americans were preparing a second note to let de Valera reconsider his refusal. Marlin was informed that if a second note was delivered, any further intelligence co-operation would be terminated.<sup>116</sup> Both the American and the British decided against the issuing of a second note, and subsequently on 2 May 1944 a security conference in Dublin between the Irish, British and the Americans was called. Among the things discussed were intensification of radio security, details of co-operation between the Irish army Signal Corps and the British, and the existing co-operation between the Irish coast watching service and the RAF in Northern Ireland to prevent agents being dropped by aircraft. G2 monitoring of Axis sympathisers and the German legation was also discussed. Again both the American and British security and intelligence representatives left the conference feeling assured at the steps G2 and the Irish authorities were taking

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<sup>116</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *Strained Relations, Ireland at peace and the USA at war 1941-45* (Dublin, 1988), p. 150.



## CHAPTER 6

### BRYAN'S LEADERSHIP

### AND AN INTELLIGENCE RENAISSANCE

As the war progressed, G2's dormant sections revived and many new sections were formed. Sections were established to deal with, Combat Intelligence, Counterespionage, Code and Signals, Air and Marine Intelligence, Coastwatching, Communications, Censorship and other Defensive measures. The Signals and Combat Intelligence Sections existed in a former life under the Second Bureau, but now had increased funding and staffing levels under Emergency conditions. G2's Censorship and Signals Sections practised what their commanders had been preaching during their Defence Plans Division days. The G2 Foreign Armies section was split between the growing Combat Intelligence Section and the newly emerging Counterespionage Section. With the re-emergence of military involvement in tracking IRA and republican organisation the Internal Subversive Section was also reawakened.

Although Emergency conditions and efforts to preserve the policy of neutrality acted as catalysts for military intelligence's rebirth, the driving force behind the Department's reorganisation was Col. Dan Bryan. During the early war period Bryan played an influential role guiding, training and advising new G2 operatives. His role in running the Department became official when in July 1941 he was appointed Director of Intelligence. No person within the Department had such a long service record in intelligence and no one was more interested or dedicated to intelligence than Bryan. However it still remained to be seen how he and his Department would cope with the global shifts in power which threatened to erupt and spill over into Ireland.

Archer and Bryan's main concern at the beginning of the conflict was the staffing of the Department. They realised that for G2 to operate effectively it had to increase staff

levels to deal with the security threat the war posed. As was the case for many of G2's early ventures, contingency plans had been prepared. A 1928 Defence Plans' document recommended a centralised intelligence corps, where personnel with special talents such as interpreting, interrogation, censorship, internal security, etc. should be gathered together to pool resources. It was anticipated that the intelligence corps would not exist in peacetime but would be mobilised in time of war and be used to relieve full time intelligence staff from their routine duties to allow them to concentrate on more pressing and important affairs.<sup>1</sup> It is unclear if this was formally introduced but many skilled civil servants and people known to have talents in special areas were drafted in. Dr. Richard Hayes, a mathematician and Director of the National Library was brought in to aid the Code and Signals Section. The Emergency army recruiting drive targeted Ex-Civil war IRA men, although their numbers were small. Tom Barry was drafted into the army as was "neutral IRA" leader Florence O'Donoghue. O'Donoghue served as a senior G2 officer in the south and was influential in recruiting "neutral" and ex IRA men into the national army.

O'Donoghue proved a vital asset to G2's Combat Intelligence department and it was due to his leadership that the Supplementary Intelligence Service (SIS) was established. The British SOE and possibly MI9's idea of setting up a "stay behind" force in Ireland in case of a German invasion was not lost on G2. Although the origins of the idea are unclear, in January 1942, G2 held a conference to discuss the formation of such a body.<sup>2</sup> The SIS was an exception to most of G2's developments as it had not been planned in the pre-war studies, rather it was a sudden improvisation which displayed Bryan and G2's commitment to total war if need be. Its principal functions were combat

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<sup>1</sup> Defence Plans, Special Memorandum No.2. 1928, Tactical Organisation of the Defence Forces, p. 66. (Military Archives, Dublin).

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Commandant MacKay to Bryan 7 January 1942, Supplementary Intelligence Service, G2/X363 (Military Archives, Dublin).

intelligence, counter espionage and behind lines reporting.<sup>3</sup> This behind the lines organisation was to relay reports on the movement and the strength of the enemy and facilitate the cutting of roads and bridges etc. to restrict the enemy's advance. SIS members were under a standing order to remain in their areas if overrun "unless ordered to leave" by their army controller.<sup>4</sup> SIS agents were required to furnish 5<sup>th</sup> columnist lists i.e. lists of people in their assigned area they thought likely to help a potential invader.<sup>5</sup> The SIS was kept totally secret and although theoretically they were attached to the Local Defence Force (LDF) they were to have no connection with the Gardaí or the reserve army units of the Local Defence Force. SIS members were sworn to secrecy and were assigned code numbers for communication purposes. They received no pay or allowances, though their postal and telephone costs were reimbursed each month.<sup>6</sup> The SIS command areas corresponded with the old pre 1921 IRA battalion areas. O'Donoghue used the nostalgia for the War of Independence to attract republican and ex-republican recruits who were the most skilled in the form of guerrilla warfare the SIS would need to adopt. These republican and IRA recruits provided intelligence on the IRA and alerted O'Donoghue to attempts by a renegade Special Branch officer Jim Crofton, to get a seaworthy boat for the escape of a German spy. O'Donoghue's group also uncovered the NID coast watching ring along the south coast.<sup>7</sup> Within a month an SIS group formed in Waterford and was followed by others in South Leinster and Munster. The internal secrecy surrounding the organisation was not only generated by the necessity to keep the SIS undercover in case of invasion but also the political ramifications that

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Eunan O'Halpin, *Aspects of Intelligence*, in *Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 62 Ref. Document marked "Secret. Supplementary intelligence service", 10 Mar. 1941 (Military Archives, Dublin).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Letter from SIS to Bryan, 10 March 1941, Supplementary Intelligence Service, G2/X363 (Military Archives, Dublin).

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Eunan O'Halpin, *Aspects of Intelligence*, in *Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 5.

might occur if the government or the opposition found out about the recruitment of IRA personnel and republicans into its ranks.

Bryan never extended the SIS organisation outside of the south of the country which suggests that he only anticipated a southern attack and did not prepare for invasion from the north. If this is the case Bryan was probably only worrying about a German attack since they were the most likely to launch a southerly invasion. Although by early 1942, the threat of British invasion was not as great as it had been in the Summer of 1941, it would have been foolhardy of Bryan not to prepare for a British invasion as he had done for a German. Perhaps the close links with Liddell convinced him not to, or he simply did not have the quality of personnel like O'Donoghue who could forge secretive contacts in the North to enter on such an expedition. O'Halpin suggests that the SIS could cause friction between the army and the *gárdaí* who had the primary responsibility for local security.<sup>8</sup> However it is possible that he feared a northern organisation with a strong IRA or republican membership organised to fight a British invasion could pose a future potential internal threat if it was not controlled tightly.

Although the SIS was never tested it proved to be one of the more practical and visionary steps made during the period. So much so that after the war the Department of Defence said that the secrecy surrounding the SIS should be maintained "as assistance from its members might possibly be sought again".<sup>9</sup>

The SIS would be vital in supplying information in case of invasion, however it was hoped that they would not be the only Section to provide data on the enemy. The Combat Intelligence Section also focused on preparing measures in the event of a German or British invasion. It issued intelligence notes to officers<sup>10</sup> covering subjects

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<sup>8</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, *Aspects of Intelligence*, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, *Aspects of Intelligence*, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> This form of reporting seems to have really taken off in the Irish Army during the Defence Plans Divisions of the late 1920's.

such as “British Army organisation, German Army organisation, Anti-Aircraft tactics, obstruction of aerodromes and airborne and parachute troops”.<sup>11</sup> Further intelligence notes were issued to higher officers giving up-to-date situation reports on Irish defence topics such as the possibility and nature of an invasion. Much of the intelligence gleaned by G2 on a German invasion came from reports published by British and US military officers. The G2-MI5 link which prompted the joint contingency plan for co-operation in the case of a German invasion (Mission 18) helped provide the Combat Intelligence Section with information on the German army. In addition, the Foreign Armies Section founded in the early 1920’s and the Defence Plans Division founded in 1927 carried out many studies of military tactics. Bryan who was an authority on general and Irish military history believed strongly in this approach and these studies were now called on.<sup>12</sup>

The Combat Intelligence Section paid particular attention to inferior forces defeating superior ones. Of special interest were home made anti tank measures, since although orders had been placed with the British, the state had no anti tank weaponry. Studies of the Finnish Army’s effective halting of a Russian tank invasion showed that strategically placed felled trees could hold up advancing tanks for days, although it was noted unlike the Finnish, the Irish did not have dense forestry or severe winters to capitalise on such a move. Other home made Finnish anti tank measures were camouflaged pits and the use of stone obstacles.<sup>13</sup> G2 also supported the use of molotov cocktails which were used as an effective anti tank measure in both the Russo-Finnish war and by both sides in the Spanish Civil war. They were cheap and easy to make, a

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<sup>11</sup> Military information and General Section 1939-45 (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/28).

<sup>12</sup> In an article he wrote in his retirement he noted how a conquering army in Ireland always controlled Dublin. He made references to the Vikings, the Normans and the War of Independence. He noted the primary reason why the 1916 rising failed and the War of Independence succeeded was because the IRA made Dublin uncontrollable for the British and forced the introduction of British “no go areas” which isolated them.

See Dan Bryan, “Guerrilla Warfare in Dublin” In *An Cosantoir*, (July 1964) pp 397-401.

<sup>13</sup> Intelligence Note No. 21, Notes on Anti-Tank Measures, Russo-Finnish War, 2 August 1940 (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/38).

glass bottle is filled with petrol and tar and a lit paraffin soaked rag is used as a fuse. When the bottle breaks against an object the liquid sticks to the target and is ignited.<sup>14</sup> 100,000 molotov cocktails were commissioned and stored in the Phoenix Park. 50,000 grenades were also purchased for the same purpose. Following a study of reports from German tank crews during the invasion of Poland the use of metal rail barriers and the use of manmade ditches were also considered.<sup>15</sup> Despite the references to home made anti tank measures, G2 did not dismiss the use of traditional anti-tank weapons. The army corps manufactured 5,100 anti-tank mines which were distributed to all commands.<sup>16</sup> Anti-tank obstacles and home made weapons permitted the sparing use of mines which would be vital considering the lack of equipment available to the army.

Combat Intelligence Section issued reports on the organisation of potential invaders. On 18 November, 1940, Intelligence Note no. 48 was a synopsis study of the German invasion of France.<sup>17</sup> It covered the organisation of the higher German command, the use of propaganda and news services by the Germans. It also describes the actions of army corps engineers, artillery, infantry, etc. In Section 5 entitled: "Irregular methods of warfare", some examples of "dirty tricks" used by the Germans are cited, one being, "Concealing anti-tank guns in farm carts driven by civilians or troops in civilian clothes". Another states "Bombing and machine-gunning columns of refugees to cause blocking of roads in rear of the enemy".<sup>18</sup> The German application of Blitzkrieg tactics i.e. advancing from newly captured territory without attempting to consolidate, but using speed and surprise to neutralise enemy counter measures was also examined,

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Warner, *Firepower, From Slings to Star Wars* (London, 1989), p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> Intelligence Note No. 23, Notes on Anti-Tank Measures In the Polish Campaign 25 July 1940, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/40).

<sup>16</sup> John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 208.

<sup>17</sup> Intelligence Note No. 48, Lessons to be learned from the success of the German Army in France, 18 November 1940, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/40).

<sup>18</sup> Intelligence Note No. 48, Lessons to be learned from the success of the German Army in France, 18 November 1940, (UCD Archives, Bryan Papers, P71/40).

Irish Combat intelligence took on a new significance when G2 discovered German invasion plans. For a while it was unclear whether G2 had knowledge of these plans during the Emergency, however all evidence suggests that they did. The invasion plan entitled "Military Geographical Data on Ireland" was discovered in a store house in Brussels shortly after the war. In 1946 the Irish authorities received a copy from an Irish-American soldier who said he had found them in Bavaria. However Colm Cox claims that G2 received a copy of these plans as early as 1942, while Douglas Gaegby a G2 officer recalls seeing them during the Emergency.<sup>19</sup> The German plans were drawn up in September 1940 and detail the geographical, social, cultural and political background to Ireland from the point of view of a German tourist from which much of the plans information was gleaned. Much of the physical and geographical information was out of date, for example, railway stations long closed were thought to be operational. The plan outlined landing sites particularly targeting the Wexford-Waterford coasts. It is claimed that a large scale Irish army exercise held in this area in 1942 was a direct result of this plan and proof of Irish knowledge of it.<sup>20</sup> It is thought that the plan was only realistically considered by the Germans after the fall of France in 1940, as a diversion or "back door" for the invasion of England. This operation was known as Operation Gruen and although the invasion plan for Britain Operation Sealion was postponed, training for operation Gruen continued through September and October 1940.<sup>21</sup> According to Bryan, when Operation Sealion was abandoned, Ireland was discussed at the Fuhrer's Naval conferences. Hitler declared that there was insufficient information for an Irish invasion but that this information should be prepared.<sup>22</sup> However the strength of the British navy

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<sup>19</sup> Colm Cox, "Militar Geographische Angaben Uber Irland" In *An Cosantoir*, (March 1975) p. 83. For Gaegby's testimony see Brian D. Martin, *The Role of G2 during The Emergency 1939-45*, M.A. Maynooth 1994, p. 20, Reference to transcript of an interview with Douglas Gaegby p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Brian D. Martin, *The Role of G2 during The Emergency 1939-45*, M.A. Maynooth 1994, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> Dan Bryan, "The Days of the Emergency" in *Irish Times*, 3 September, 1979.

and the problem of supplying troops in Ireland led German commanders to conclude that even a diversionary invasion of Ireland was too costly.

A British invasion appeared as likely as a German one. Although plans had been agreed for dual defensive measures should Germany invade, British commanders might be unwilling to wait for an Irish invitation. British Troops Northern Ireland (B.T.N.I.), commanded by Sir Hubert Huddleston had a mobile column waiting for the code signal to advance south and documents containing details of his military instructions for this move are still withheld.<sup>23</sup> Fisk maintains that the British counter invasion plan known as Plan W, was to operate with or without Irish consent. He supports this with W plan orders to send a large force of British troops to Lough Swilly in Donegal. As there were over two hundred Irish troops stationed there and the main German invasion was anticipated over two hundred miles away off the Irish southern coast, this precaution was a bit extreme unless the British intention was to occupy the country without consent.<sup>24</sup> The number of Irish files pertaining to studies directly related to a British or Allied invasion, although they exist are not as numerous as those of a German invasion. There are many possible reasons for this. G2 did not entertain the threat of a British invasion as likely as a German one due to good intelligence relations they enjoyed with MI5. Secondly the British, who had between 1938 and the outbreak of war left tables of British military organisation open to the Irish, had now sealed them. Finally the fact that plans to deal with a British invasion would be sensitive for both countries may have led to their destruction or withholding.

Although like the SIS, the Combat Intelligence measures were never needed, it demonstrated the foresight of Bryan and other G2 commanders and their willingness to contemplate all-out war.

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Fisk, *In time of War* (London, 1983), p. 202.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



As well as carrying out studies of foreign wars, journals, handbooks and reports, G2 obtained intelligence information themselves. G2 were dependent on censored news or British reports on how the war was progressing and its likely outcome. With the exception of some of the Foreign envoys, the Irish state did not send spies into the field, they did operate agents close to foreign sources on home soil. Foynes was one of one of these foreign sources. Throughout the course of the Emergency over 1,650 serving members of the US Armed forces passed through Foynes.<sup>25</sup> Practically all of these were commissioned officers. This figure does not include the foreign diplomats, British military staff and other civilians who had first hand information on the war. In order to obtain useful information from military and civilian passengers, G2 appointed a team with a senior officer Lieutenant Niall Hewett to work at the airport. Initially Hewett was stationed permanently in Foynes and an assistant officer was rotated every six to nine months.<sup>26</sup> As activity at Foynes increased so did G2 and Garda surveillance of the airport. Hewett and his staff kept an inventory of passengers coming through Shannon and accompanied passengers on flights and around the airport to gather information. Hewett compiled intelligence reports covering aspects of the war and conditions on the continent of particular interest to the Combat Intelligence Section. Informal conversations with Mr. Lowenstein, a passenger who worked for an arms firm, gave information on US aircraft production. Information obtained by G2 officer Lieutenant Summerling, from Sir Arthur Street of the British Air Ministry revealed flaws in the design of the new German Focke-Wulf fighter. G2 anticipated a large Allied offensive (D-Day), when the Foynes team intercepted mail to American employees in Shannon, making reference to the large amount of American military personnel who had left the US for Europe.<sup>27</sup> The G2 team at

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<sup>25</sup> Analysis Military Naval & RAF traffic for month of June 1942, 29 July 1942 (Military Archives, G2/X/0379).

<sup>26</sup> Brian D. Martin, *The Role of G2 during The Emergency 1939-45*, M.A. Maynooth 1994, p. 20, Reference to transcript of an interview with Douglas Gaegby p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Shannon Airport Foynes, 22 January to 12 February 1944 (Military Archives, G2/X/757).

Shannon were the most useful collectors of combat intelligence during the war. They not only collected combat information for the army on equipment, campaigns, defensive measures etc, they also supplied political information useful to the government on conditions in and opinions of foreign countries.

The G2 presence at Foynes was also used to prevent the leakage of information from Ireland, maintaining the Irish policy of neutrality and more importantly disappating the wrath of Britain. MIS's undercover agent at Foynes operating as a B.O.A.C. employee was quickly discovered by Hewett. The G2 team had tapped all the B.O.A.C. staff phones.<sup>28</sup> No steps were taken by G2 to remove him and to allay British fears, G2 even granted the formal establishment of a British Security Officer at Foynes in June 1942.<sup>29</sup> Many other facilities were afforded to the Allies at Foynes. Towards the end of the war British and US military personnel in uniform and war stores for Allied forces were allowed through the airport. Hewett reported that boxes with dust filters for US military aircraft passed through at one stage.<sup>30</sup> Although G2 was aware of British screening of Irish Diplomatic mail at Foynes, Bryan took no action. The consequences of these concessions was two-fold. Firstly, it calmed British concerns but secondly it afforded G2 a source of information from British security correspondence, which was monitored.

Another G2 Section which played a large role during the Emergency was the Censorship Department. Through the War of Independence and then the Civil War, the army had found postal and telephone interception a useful source of information. Bryan's tapping of the Crown Alley phone exchange had heralded the foiling of the 1924 Mutiny plot. Irish Military Intelligence continued to run a Censorship department under the Second Bureau administration during the 1920's. In 1925 the Director of Intelligence Michael J. Costello said "the fundamental flaw in our censorship and propaganda

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<sup>28</sup> Foynes, reporting on B.O. A.C, (Military Archives, G2/X/0379).

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 5 p. 131.

arrangements...is our flagrant dishonesty and consequently all our pronouncements are regarded with suspicion even by our friends".<sup>31</sup> The Second Bureau propaganda and censorship section were not as skilled at mixing truth with falsehood as the War of Independence Publicity Department. The failures within the section were examined and reviewed in 1925. It was acknowledged that by 1925 the role of censorship had changed from a measure to protect military secrets to a system designed to cover the whole life of the nation against the leakage of information. Problems regarding censorship if a conflict were to break out were examined. The study focused on control of the press, postal censorship, letter interception, telephone censorship, eavesdropping and cable censorship. Amongst its recommendations it concluded that "the government should appoint in time of peace a person who will act as director of censorship and publicity in time of war or when otherwise required." "This person would be a military officer who would liaise, as required with civilian departments."<sup>32</sup> None of the recommendations were acted upon, the Government probably believing them to be misplaced in the context of 1925. Bryan noted in his and Archer's Fundamental Factors document a decade later that the British had mentioned the possibility of censorship co-operation at the Imperial conference in 1926, but it did not develop past this stage.<sup>33</sup> An interdepartmental committee on censorship was established in 1931 and reconstituted in 1935 but nothing was done until the threat of War became obvious.

So like many other G2 sections, the Censorship sections aims and objectives had been studied and laid out over a decade previously. More importantly, both Liam Archer and Dan Bryan had been involved in the 1925-6 analysis of wartime censorship problems, Archer as director of signals and Bryan as a Second Bureau officer.<sup>34</sup> Following the early

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<sup>30</sup> Hewitt report on US war stores, (Military Archives, G2/X/0379).

<sup>31</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, Aspects of Intelligence, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, Aspects of Intelligence, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

secretive talks with MI5 in 1938 both Bryan and Archer set about reviving the redundant Censorship section and began applying their own organisation plan which drew on studies from the 1920's. The Censorship section in G2 was among the first sections to mobilise in preparation for war. The Postal Interception unit with the aid of British training was established within the GPO. This was an important development for G2, since observing illicit Axis mail to and from the IRA returned unofficially many of G2's internal surveillance powers. The Post Office Investigation branch reporting to G2 came into full operation in May 1939. The Minister for Justice issued warrants for postal supervision on G2's request, (previously only issued on the written request of the Garda Commissioner.<sup>35</sup>) Although G2 monitored the mail and telephone calls, most state censorship was carried out by organisations independent of army control. However civilian organisations co-operated closely with the army and looked to G2 for a lead on even the most innocuous points with any military or security bearing. G2 commanders advised and helped establish the Civil censorship department, since the G2 covert one had been in active operation since 1938. Proposals on the state's censorship structures were sent by the Dept. of Defence to the Dept. of Finance in April 1939.<sup>36</sup> Owing to G2's supervisory role and the fact that he had a phone and Archer did not, Bryan claimed he was plagued with night time calls from the press censors during the "phoney war" period.<sup>37</sup> However Bryan had developed odd working hours, operating very early in the morning and very late at night. A G2 officer commenting on his odd working hours said he would not have been amused to be told that he kept Kremlin time.<sup>38</sup>

During the day the G2 Censorship Department's link with its civil counterpart was between Liam Archer and Thomas J. Coyne. As the Emergency progressed G2 officer

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<sup>35</sup> Donal O'Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-1945, Neutrality, Politics and Society* (Cork, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, Aspects of Intelligence, in *The Irish Sword, The Emergency 1939-45* p. 59. Reference to Bryan tapes p. 27.

Captain McCall was assigned to act as the liaison officer. However relations between the civil censorship body and G2 were not always amicable. Following the publication of an item on a crashed belligerent plane in June 1942, McCall told Censorship to inform him about such matters in future but he was told that it was their responsibility to decide not G2's.

The G2 officer Major Joe Guilfoyle accompanied the "March of Time" team while they filmed in Ireland in December 1943. He viewed all the shots taken and only objected to one scene showing waiters carrying bottles of champagne to guests at the Gresham Hotel. This scene of decadence was duly deleted.<sup>39</sup> It was G2's intention to enforce censorship of press, radio, telephone and letters to such an extent that "national interests" would never be compromised. Material was censored under three headings:- defensive, political and economic. Defensively, G2 wished to prevent the disclosure of information relating to the defence of the state. This included all references to defence policy, army movements, numbers, equipment, fortifications etc. All indiscreet letters, including those complaining about conditions, from army personnel were sent to the adjutant general. Defensive censorship included any weather reports which might aid a belligerent side. Political censorship covered statements which prejudiced or adversely affect national policy or prestige or relations with other states. Particular attention was paid to comments on neutrality, especially by influential persons or in newspapers published outside the state. Political censorship also controlled propaganda which might encourage violence or disaffection against the government. This was especially included to obstruct IRA and republican correspondence and literature. G2 and the Department of External Affairs administered this type of political censorship. The task of economic

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<sup>38</sup> Douglas Gaegby, "Colonel Dan Bryan" in *Irish Times* 8 June, 1985.

<sup>39</sup> Donal O'Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-1945, Neutrality, Politics and Society* (Cork, 1996), p. 44.

censorship was to prevent the circulation of matter prejudicial to national commercial interests and to seek out tax evasion and financial irregularities.

The potential scope of censorship was beyond the resources of G2. Although a staff of 200 were employed in the civil Postal Censorship division housed in a converted warehouse in Exchequer Street in Dublin, this staff level was small when compared with the 10,000 people who were employed by the British, and therefor only partial censorship was carried out. Despite this the Postal Censorship unit was effective. Workers in the Postal Censorship unit were screened by G2, due to the sensitive nature of their work. They were lectured by Liam Archer on breaches of the Official Secrets Act and warned about taking correspondence outside of work.<sup>40</sup> Despite these warnings, although the effectiveness of the unit did not suffer, there were many problems of this nature. The sorters opened the letters, examined them and set aside those addressed to persons on a “Black List”, “White List” and a “Watching List”. The White List contained those whose correspondence was exempted from censorship. The Watching List consisted of correspondence which was temporarily observed to determine whether they were safe. The Black List contained those under suspicion whose correspondence was required by G2. This mail was passed to G2’s Censorship Unit who examined these letters and material from their own Postal Interception Unit which was attached to the Postal Investigation Branch. This with the aid of British training had been running since May 1939 on postal warrants issued to G2 from the Dept. of Justice.<sup>41</sup> Among this unit’s early surveillance were a select list of post from Northern Ireland. G2 learned as early as 1925 that the Northern authorities had been running a similar system on outgoing mail to the south.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 67.

In 1943 G2's postal interception concentrated on the high level of desertion from the Irish to the British Army. In order to counteract this they censored all post for Irish soldiers coming from outside the state, in order to frustrate the British Recruiting Centre in Belfast which was writing to them. G2 were successful and there was a marked decrease in desertion rates.<sup>43</sup>

G2's Censorship Section not only examined post but also scrutinised press and published media. A letter printed in the *Irish Press* in June 1942, written by Fianna Fáil T.D. Dan Breen, slated the paper's pro British line. This letter was withdrawn after censorship, Bryan believed that Breen's information was being fed by Thomsen from the German legation who had strong feelings against the *Irish Press* believing it to have a pro-British sub editor. However G2 put all the journalists and senior staff of the paper under surveillance and found them to have pro-Axis sympathies if any.<sup>44</sup>

G2's Postal Unit often investigated post on the White List, i.e. those with censorship exemptions. Theoretically diplomatic bags and foreign missions should receive diplomatic immunity from censorship. However G2 kept all such correspondence under close surveillance, on the basis that "the immunity enjoyed by letters of this kind is a matter of courtesy, not of right".<sup>45</sup> On many occasions diplomatic mail was even kept back from its destination. Dan Bryan, in consulting Joseph Walshe from External Affairs about forwarding a letter containing indiscreet references to current events, reminded him that Thomsen, the German Legation's second in command's last letter had been "lost".<sup>46</sup> According to Bryan, postal censorship was upgraded with new British equipment and

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 68.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 170.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 71.

from that point on the work done “was of the highest quality” in terms both of security and intelligence.<sup>47</sup>

G2's Censorship Section also covered telephone tapping and telegraph supervision. Irish military intelligence had been practising telephone interception since the war of independence, but large scale monitoring did not begin until the outbreak of the Second World war. Like the postal interception unit, it's founding members were sent on courses to London organised by MI5. Telephone-tapping began on a large scale early in 1940. The chief press censor declared that this fell within his brief and ironically said he wished to begin with the telephone of the British representative. Bryan argued strongly that it was a counterespionage function. He also thought that the German Legation should be first on the list, although he kept his opinions to himself. Boldly acting on his own authority he told his Post Office contacts, just returned from British training, to initiate tapping and report directly to him. This they did and up until 1945 the telephones of all foreign diplomats and legations were supervised and relevant transcripts passed to the Department of External Affairs and elsewhere. Irish people thought sympathetic to Germany were also watched this way. This included a former government minister and the founder of the 1930's Blueshirt movement.<sup>48</sup> In May 1945, after he had been informed it was to shut down, Bryan argued vigorously for the retention of telephone surveillance. Bryan writing to Aitken as Minister for Defence argued on a legal basis, stating that he “never regarded this service as a section of Censorship...I can only reiterate that I regard telephone supervision as essential to a security machine...it has proved itself the most valuable portion of supervision which has been exercised by the Post Office for a number of years”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, “Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45” in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Department Foreign Affairs A11 “Security Intelligence” Bryan to Aitken, 25 May 1945 (National Archives, Dublin).



Apart from post, press and telephone, illicit wireless transmissions were monitored by G2. Due to its technical aspects and the fact that many messages were in code, a separate section known as Code and Signals was responsible for its surveillance. Again this section had its roots in the 1920's Second Bureau's Signals section of which Liam Archer had been a prominent member. However it like most of G2's sections got a lease of life with the outbreak of war in Europe. It was initially used to track down an IRA broadcasting operation and later to trace transmissions from a secret radio in the German Legation. The existence of this transmitter caused many problems with the British but it led to a British radio expert being sent in December 1941 to help improve the Code & Signals Section and in return for co-operation Britain fed the section with transmissions picked up to and from Ireland.<sup>50</sup> The British probably had more precise knowledge of the nature of the activities of the German Legation than they were prepared to tell Irish intelligence.<sup>51</sup> The problem was initially raised by the British, who said that a radio was transmitting signals in a German diplomatic code from a point about twenty five miles north of Dublin. Bryan accompanied by an Irish signals officer went to the area on a preliminary investigation which Bryan declared in hindsight "was a waste of time". Following an improvement within the G2 Signals Section the transmissions were traced directly to the German Legation in Dublin. A small code breaking unit was established to tackle the wireless traffic under the Director of the National Library Dr. Richard Hayes, a mathematician who had previously worked for military intelligence. Although unable to recruit the two or three operatives with university qualifications in maths and science he requested, the son of the Minister for Justice and a member of the government's Defence Council were recruited. The unit was unable to break the German diplomatic cipher from their base in an Army barracks just behind the legation.

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 5 p. 128.

This presented the government with a problem as they did not want to provoke the Germans, then in the ascendant, by asking them to shut down the legation radio without good cause. The precise source of the transmissions was concealed from the British while the government considered the problem. The decision to conceal this information caused great strain between G2 and MI5 and for a time in 1941 all dealings ceased. However Bryan's meeting with Liddell in London at MI5's invitation put relations back on track. He told MI5 that the transmitter had been located, was being constantly monitored and was told to inform MI5 that it would cease operating. However to Bryan's embarrassment the legation radio continued to transmit. Finally the break out of German battleships from channel ports wrongly thought to have been aided by weather reporting sent from the legation transmitter, gave the Department of External Affairs the confidence to approach the German Minister about the transmissions. The transmitter ceased to transmit although the Ambassador was frequently asked to reply to messages sent from Germany. Following further pressure from the Allies in the build up to D-Day, the Irish government was persuaded to force the legation to hand over the transmitter altogether. They did this in December 1943.

Despite Dr. Hayes code breaking unit's failure to break the Legation traffic, his team did manage to intercept ciphers and codes used by German agents in Ireland between 1940 and 1943. In this respect he enjoyed considerable success. The Code and Signals section according to Hayes only really developed towards the end of the war.

"We had so very little material to work on during the first two or three years that our experience had nothing on which to crystallise and it was only towards the end of the war that it was possible to face up to the problems with confidence and without unnecessary wasted effort".<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, "Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72.

The success that Hayes and his team enjoyed towards the end of the war prompted British interest. According to Hayes, early in 1943 British cipher experts Denys Page, philosopher Gilbert Ryle and the head of the British Codes and Ciphers Department met with Hayes in Dublin to discuss Abwehr messages being sent from Dublin to Lisbon by ship.<sup>53</sup> Following the visit the British cipher experts managed to break the cipher. Consequently Hayes was given a document from Cecil Liddell detailing technical information on German ciphers already known to the British.

Hayes and his team's most important work was the breaking of Abwehr agent Herman Goertz's code. Following Goertz's capture and imprisonment in October 1941, he continued to send messages by hand from prison, through a bribed Irish sentry. G2 intercepted these messages and led Goertz to believe he was in contact with Herr Hempel from the German Legation and that he agreed to pass his messages on to Germany. Hayes received 18 messages from Goertz which detailed his mission in Ireland including his efforts to make contact with some Irish Army officers. This was a particularly valuable and sensitive coup for G2. Hayes said that the cipher Goertz was using was the best that the Irish had come in contact with and according to British experts was amongst the best three or four used in the war.<sup>54</sup> Hayes had managed to break most of the Goertz code, but after G2 decided to pass the broken cipher to the British, they managed to completely break it.<sup>55</sup> The passing of German codes to the British caused some friction inside G2. Although Bryan as D/I was to be updated constantly on any developments within the Code and Signals section, he was not informed that Goertz's code had been cracked until a year after the event. When he remonstrated with Hayes he was told that the new Deputy Director, Eamonn de Buitléar had prevented this information reaching him, believing (rightly) that Bryan would run hot-foot to the British with it. De Buitléar was an ardent

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Irish speaker who went to Berlin before the war to perfect his German. Although according to Duggan he was a loyal officer he was regarded by Bryan as strongly anti-British. Bryan regarded “dyed-in-the-wood Gaelic Leaguers like Butler as being anti-British to the point of irrationality”.<sup>56</sup> However Bryan acknowledged that being anti-British was not the same as being pro-German. This was not the only clash between Bryan and Butler, they also come to loggerheads on methodology. Bryan gave Butler confidential work and his way of tackling tasks was not to Bryan’s liking. He felt his subordinate was unable to keep more than one ball in the air at a time. However according to Duggan, “these internal squabbles within G2 were characteristic of the organisation. Clashes arose from time to time as officers vied to excel each other in professionalism and patriotism. There was also an element of dog-eat-dog for promotion”.<sup>57</sup>

Despite internal friction the Code and Signals section operated effectively. Another German code was gleaned from an interned Irishman who agreed to relay messages for the Germans. John Francis O’Reilly while imprisoned in Arbour Hill was interrogated by G2. Bryan tricked O’Reilly into disclosing the ciphering system he had been taught. O’Reilly claimed the code was unbreakable and rashly accepted a challenge to test his captors. However G2 agents cheated by going to his cell when he was on exercise and taking the ashes from the fireplace where he had burned the papers on which he had “done his homework”. The ashes were brought to the Garda technical office in Kilmainham where they were pieced back together. Within two weeks of O’Reilly’s arrest, G2 passed details of his interrogation to MI5. Even before Hayes had managed to break O’Reilly’s code, Guy Liddell wrote to Bryan on 3 January 1944 saying he “would be delighted to come over when you think a suitable state of interrogation has been

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 229.

reached” and that Bryan’s preliminary report to MI5 indicates “it might be of a type not hitherto known here.”<sup>58</sup> By 21 January, Col. Bryan was able to cable MI5 that O’Reilly’s code had been broken. The success of Bryan and Hayes in capturing and breaking Abwehr codes quickly spread in Allied diplomatic circles. Despite the factual inaccuracy of some of the stories, they served a useful purpose in impressing Allied diplomats. In 1944 Maffey told Gray that the Irish had a very skilled cryptographer who had broken his code messages from London.<sup>59</sup>

A subsection of the G2 Code and Signals department monitored German radio transmissions targeted at Ireland. Many of these German propaganda broadcasts were in Irish. The G2 centre for monitoring these transmissions was in McKee Barracks and began its monitoring in December 1939. The army monitors reported on the content of the transmissions as well as the accent or dialect of Irish was being used. Although coded messages wrapped up in radio plays were missed by the monitors,<sup>60</sup> G2 got a better picture of the German propaganda set up when one of the Irish broadcasters John O’Reilly was captured by G2 on a spying mission.<sup>61</sup> As Allied forces closed in around Germany at the end of the war the broadcasts were disrupted as broadcasting headquarters had to be moved.

Of late the most publicised section within G2 during the Emergency was the Counterespionage Section. Its exploits in tracking German agents is mentioned in several Emergency studies.<sup>62</sup> Despite its coverage in the past, this thesis will deal with the topic and focus on Dan Bryan and his important role in organising and running the Section.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 230.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. pp 229-230.

<sup>58</sup> David O’Donoghue, *Hitler's Irish Voices* (Dublin, 1998), p. 215.

<sup>59</sup> Eunan O’Halpin, “Intelligence and Security in Ireland 1922-45” in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 5 1990, p. 73.

<sup>60</sup> David O’Donoghue, *Hitler's Irish Voices* (Dublin, 1998), p. 108.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 92.

<sup>62</sup> See John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985) and Enno Stephan, *Spies in Ireland* (London, 1963).

The Counterespionage Section was one of the first G2 sections to be reborn as a consequence of the looming conflict. Although the tenets of the Counterespionage Section were set out in a 1928 Department of Defence Memorandum, its renaissance followed the preliminary meetings Archer held with MI5 counterespionage officials in London in 1938.<sup>63</sup> The reorganisation of the Counterespionage Section was to act as a forerunner to the other G2 sections. Its need to monitor telephone and postal correspondence brought other G2 sections into play and the licence the Counterespionage section was given to investigate IRA-German co-operation, brought military intelligence back into the domestic monitoring of Republican activity. The early effectiveness and success of the Counterespionage Section coupled with the fact that it developed a good working relationship with its British counterpart made G2's position unassailable as war conditions escalated. Although a Garda body known as the Aliens Unit had been established with a similar brief, G2 was given the task of counterespionage since it was supposed that most other nations gave this task to their military.<sup>64</sup> G2's Counterespionage Section was primarily concerned with belligerent forces using Ireland as a spying base. Although much of the Section's time was taken up with tracking British agents from rival intelligence agencies, it is most famous for its success in capturing and interrogating German agents.

Before the war, there was a small but influential German population of approximately four hundred residing in Ireland.<sup>65</sup> Many of them were well educated and had been requested to come to Ireland to aid technical developments. In 1926 the contract for the Shannon Hydro-Electric Scheme was given to the German firm Siemens, a number of whose engineers and technicians settled in Ireland along with others from

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<sup>63</sup> Defence Plans, Special Memorandum No.3. 1928, Territorial Organisation of the Defence Forces, pp 87-90, (Military Archives).

<sup>64</sup> Department Foreign Affairs A8/1, Defence Security Intelligence, 25 June 1945 (National Archives, Dublin).

<sup>65</sup> David O'Donoghue, *Hitler's Irish Voices* (Dublin, 1998), p. 7.

German managed industrial developments. In addition to industrial technicians and managers, there were a number of Germans engaged in the study of Celtic and Irish culture, including Dr. Adolf Mahr a leading archaeologist and Celtic scholar who was appointed curator of the National Museum in Dublin.

In 1934, following the Nazi rise to power, a fresh impetus was given to German activities in Ireland, when foreign "Ausland" divisions of the party were formed. Dr. Mahr a party member was made leader of the Irish group which was a subsidiary of the British division. The membership of the Irish section of the Nazi party was never more than twenty, but many held influential positions in Irish society. As well as a small Nazi party, the German foreign propaganda agency known as the "Fichte Bund", established contacts in Dublin. Mahr, together with a large number of Germans, returned home to attend the Nuremburg rallies. G2 intercepted one of his letters which suggested he was copying maps and supplying other military information on Ireland for the Germans. G2 suspected that this information would form the basis of a German invasion plan for Ireland, "Operation Gruen". Consequently when Mahr wished to return as Museum director, Bryan advised against his return and he was excluded.<sup>66</sup>

Towards the end of 1939 Liam D. Walsh an ex-Irish Army officer and former Second Bureau operative was found to be in correspondence with Oscar Pfaus of the Fichte Bund. Walsh submitted proposals to Pfaus to run a bureau and a paper in Ireland and was seeking funds. MI5 informed G2 of this, and G2 replied they had Walsh and other correspondence with the Fichte Bund under observation for some time. MI5 reported further developments to G2, when they received a report that an undercover agent talked to Pfaus in New York pretending to be a pro-Nazi wanting to set up in

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

Ireland. Pfaus had given him Walsh's name as a contact.<sup>67</sup> It was particularly ironic that Walsh was under surveillance using the censorship proposals he himself had laid out during his time as an intelligence officer.<sup>68</sup> G2 kept Walsh under close surveillance and found he was now working for the Italian legation while acting as adjutant or second in command to Blueshirt leader Eoin O'Duffy.<sup>69</sup> Walsh was a member of an Irish fascist group called the People's National Party and later co-founded an organisation called the Irish Friends of Germany. G2 kept Walsh and his correspondence under observation which led them to two German agents, Walter Simon and Gunther Schutz who came to Ireland and were given Walsh's name as a contact. Walsh tried to merge his Irish Friends of Germany organisation with the IRA, before he was finally interned in the Curragh for subversive activities.<sup>70</sup> Following his arrest, in September 1940 his wife telegraphed the German Legation in Dublin demanding regular payments now that Walsh was interned. Although German Ambassador Hempel did not approve of the Fichte Bund and believed its propaganda was jeopardising his position it appears that the Abwehr thought Walsh could be useful.<sup>71</sup>

While G2 put all those they suspected of pro-Axis sympathies or those with even distant German connections under surveillance, anyone thought to be in contact with the IRA were immediately picked up. This vigilance against a German-IRA alliance stemmed not only from G2's own priorities but also a desire to keep the British at bay. The Counterespionage Section had initially been established with help from MI5 with this in mind. Although split from Fianna Fáil, by the mid 1930's the IRA had gained some support. Despite spending much of its time during this decade opposing the Blueshirt

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<sup>67</sup> Germans in Ireland before the War, Part I, p. 31. B1H Irish Section, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9)

<sup>68</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, Aspects of Intelligence, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 58 reference Censorship in time of war, 9 March 1925 (Military Archives, P/21560).

<sup>69</sup> Donal O'Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland 1939-1945, Neutrality, Politics and Society* (Cork, 1996), p. 76.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



organisation, when the Second World War broke out, the IRA saw this as a case of “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity”. It was decided to carry out the S-Plan, a mainland bombing campaign of Britain. However the IRA at this point had a shortage of arms and in December 1939 they took the Army completely by surprise and raided the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park capturing a large quantity of arms and ammunition. This incident which Bryan described as “our Pearl Harbour” was highly embarrassing for the government, especially after Irish assurances to the British that the IRA threat was minimal. Searches and raids on Republicans and IRA headquarters were escalated which resulted in more ammunition being recovered than was actually taken. However this was just a foretaste of what was to follow. The Fianna Fáil government introduced the Offences Against the State Act in the summer of 1939 and in June 1940 the Emergency Powers Amendment Act. This Emergency legislation returned to the State draconian powers of internment, military tribunals and legal prosecution and sentencing without trial, powers similar to those used in the Civil War. Although theoretically this legislation was aimed at both belligerent agents and subversive organisations, the IRA suffered most from this legislation. Its members and supporters met harsh state treatment and its numbers dropped considerably. However, the IRA contributed to its own down fall. Following an internal IRA dispute, in June 1940 the IRA Chief of Staff Stephen Hayes turned himself in and was placed in police custody where he recorded a series of confessions. During the war, G2 infiltrated and tracked the IRA. Evidence suggests that G2 used the Department of External Affairs to gather information on IRA suspects abroad, especially in the US.<sup>72</sup> Douglas Gageby a junior officer in G2 confirmed a separate section operated to deal with anti-IRA work.<sup>73</sup> At times Bryan had to discourage G2 officers from pursuing republican contacts in order to appease the Gardaí, though

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<sup>71</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 150.

Bryan kept in touch with IRA informants. In fact Dan Bryan recalled receiving a good deal of information during the Emergency from "old foes". Information on the MI5 intelligence network established by the British passport control officer in Maffey's office, was supplied to Bryan by an IRA member.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the weakness of the IRA, the British were convinced by the Magazine Fort episode that they were a large force and the German Abwehr saw them as a realistically for a German invasion or a fifth column. This and the fact that Germany would succeed in using Ireland as a base for espionage against Britain was G2's main worry at the start of the war. Bryan paid attention to the foreign diplomats in Dublin and he knew the leanings of most of them. The German legation came in for particular scrutiny. Bryan had everyone who entered the German Embassy put under surveillance including T.D.'s like Dan Breen who was a frequent visitor.<sup>75</sup> Although the Counterespionage Section had many IRA and German sympathisers under surveillance, the IRA's pre-war talks with the Abwehr went undetected. The IRA's S-Plan had aroused Abwehr interest and the ban on IRA contact was lifted. A German student studying in Dublin who was a member of the Foreign Nazi party offered to make contact with the IRA in 1938. Abwehr II as it was known turned him down on the grounds that it was forbidden to make IRA contact.<sup>76</sup> However following the escalation of the IRA S-Plan, Oscar Pfaus was sent by the Abwehr to make IRA contact in February 1939. Due to poor information which characterised most German agents missions to Ireland, he approached Eoin O'Duffy, sworn enemy of the IRA to put him in touch with the republican movement. However O'Duffy's adjutant, Liam Walsh helped Pfaus to make contact. Bryan identified Pfaus and Walsh's initial IRA go between as Joy Payne whom Bryan described as "a flapper", However it is not

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<sup>72</sup> IRA Activities, Department of Foreign Affairs (National Archives, Dublin, A12).

<sup>73</sup> Brian D. Martin, *The Role of G2 during The Emergency 1939-45*, M.A. Maynooth 1994, p. 40.

<sup>74</sup> See Eunan O'Halpin, *Aspects of Intelligence*, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939-45 p. 63.

<sup>75</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-1942* (Dublin, 1988), p. 179.

<sup>76</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 62.

clear after this how much more G2 knew of these early meetings.<sup>77</sup> Pfaus met Seán Russel, Chief of Staff of the IRA at the time and it was arranged that Jim O'Donovan an IRA man would be sent to Germany to instigate plans. O'Donovan a school teacher who masterminded the S-Plan with Stephen Hayes visited Germany in February, April and August 1939 before the war broke out. On his last trip to Germany however O'Donovan's wife was stripped searched by an over zealous custom's officer.<sup>78</sup> At these meetings the S-Plan was discussed and arrangements made for sending agents to Ireland and supplying equipment.<sup>79</sup> Shortly after O'Donovan's meetings, the IRA sought to make contact with the Abwehr again as the radio they had been given had been confiscated in a police raid and they required a new one. Francis Stuart, a writer who had been offered a position in Berlin University's English Department starting in January 1940, was contacted by the IRA who persuaded him to convey their message. Following Stuart's departure, Seán Russell the IRA Chief of Staff, also went to Germany via America. Although his movements in the US were picked up by G2 and MI5 he managed to make his way to Berlin, where he learnt German sabotage methods.

While in Germany, Stuart met Helmut Clissmann who introduced him to Kurt Haller. Haller approached Stuart to convey a message to the IRA concerning the return of Seán Russell. Russell was to return by U-Boat organised by both Haller and the German Foreign Office's coup d'etat specialist Edmund Vessenmeyer. Stuart was to travel to Ireland shortly before the U-Boats arrival to give the IRA notice of Russell's arrival. However Stuart never had to make this trip as Russell died en-route. It is believed that Russell's mission was to target British military installations in Northern Ireland. He was accompanied on the voyage by former IRA commander Frank Ryan. Ryan had been

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. pp 60-61.

<sup>79</sup> Brian D. Martin, *The Role of G2 during The Emergency 1939-45*, M.A. Maynooth 1994, p. 39.

released from a Spanish prison where he had been interned by the Germans following the Spanish civil war. They had hoped to use him with Russell to further their sabotage plan. Although Ryan agreed he and Russell represented complete opposite strands of the Republican movement. Ryan had been a prominent member of the Republican left and the Republican Congress, this is probably why the Germans entrusted the details of the mission to Russell rather than Ryan. Ryan's ignorance of the mission meant that following Russell's death just off the Irish coast the U-Boat had to turn back.

Although Bryan was oblivious to these plans, Ryan's dramatic departure from Spain caused him some consternation. Ryan while in the Spanish prison had been in correspondence with the Irish Envoy in Madrid, Leopold Kearney. Kearney handled some of Ryan's mail from Ireland and had conducted appeals for his release. Following Ryan's absence from prison in July 1940, External Affairs asked Kearney to get an official statement on the matter from the Spanish government. It replied in November 1940 that Ryan had officially escaped. Kearney's diplomatic mail carrying correspondence to Ryan and also a visit from Helmut Clissmann's wife aroused suspicions in both G2 and MI5 circles. Archer in March 1941 informed External Affairs that they believed that Kearney was passing mail to Helmut Clissmann who was fighting with the German army in Belgium. Bryan also reported from censorship of Kearney's mail it appeared that he had made contact with Ryan that had not been reported to External Affairs. Kearney's mail which passed through the British censor was causing some concern with MI5. Bryan was under pressure to convince them that Kearney's actions were under control. Further consternation in the MI5 camp was aroused when Kearney between November 1941 and May 1942, met with Helmut Clissman, Kurt Haller and Edmund Vessenmeyer. Kearney reported the Vessenmeyer meeting to Dublin and reported that "some information of value could be obtained by me" and that he left them without any doubt of Ireland's position of neutrality. Kearney's meeting was immediately picked up by MI5 and

consequently put great strain on the G2-MI5 link. However Bryan negotiated and assured MI5 that the appropriate steps would be taken to direct Kearney's actions in the future. Kearney was recalled to Dublin in 1943, where he returned with details of the German meetings and a Spanish plan to form a neutral Catholic bloc which was also causing British concern. On his arrival in Dublin he was debriefed by Bryan, de Valera, Walshe and Frederick Boland. He was told in no uncertain terms not to go near the Germans or to entertain any involvement in a Catholic Bloc before he returned to Madrid.

Between 1939 and 1943 German agents were sent to Ireland to collect intelligence on the British and make contact with the Republican movement. Most agents were badly trained and equipped with hazy and sometimes false information. At the time a stranger appearing in a small coastal village would attract considerable attention. These factors together with security precautions such as supervision of mail and telephone communication aided G2's counterespionage unit and ensured its efficiency.

Following Pfaus's pre war contact with the IRA, the ensuing O'Donovan meetings in Berlin and Stuart's request for a transmitter, the Abwehr in February 1940 despatched Ernest Weber Drohl to strengthen intelligence relations with the IRA. Unlike many German agents, Weber Drohl had been to Ireland before. He had been given a transmitter and money for the IRA, however on coming ashore from a submarine off the Sligo coast he lost the transmitter. He managed to get to Dublin, contact Jim O'Donovan and gave the IRA an invitation to send an agent to contact Germany for equipment and a shipment of arms. In return he requested the IRA to target the British military rather than civilians. Weber Drohl remained at large until 24 April, 1940 when he was arrested under the Aliens Act. He was fined and then G2 had him released so that he could be watched and followed. Three days after his release G2 picked him up and he was interned for a year. He was released in 1941, worked in Ireland as a strongman under the name "Atlas the Strong" and was re-interned in August 1942. The fact that Hempel had knowledge of

Weber Drohl and referred to him in his reports back to Germany as W. D. was of particular interest to G2.<sup>80</sup>

The German espionage problem escalated by the Summer of 1940. Following the capture of Weber Drohl in April, on 5 May 1940 a German Abwehr agent Hermann Goertz parachuted into Meath. He was the only agent to remain at large for any length of time. Goertz was imprisoned in Britain in 1935 after he was caught sketching an RAF station in Kent. He was deported back to Germany in February 1939<sup>81</sup> and was asked by the German Supreme Command to go on a mission to Ireland. The purpose of this mission was to contact the IRA and organise an uprising in Northern Ireland.<sup>82</sup> This plan was inspired by a Dublin man, Liam Gaynor in which he proposed an IRA attack on Northern Ireland supported by German paratroopers. An IRA supporter Stephen Held brought "Plan Kathleen" to Germany in April 1940. Despite the efficiency with which the S-Plan was being carried out, the IRA invasion plan was far from well thought through. Bryan who had access to agents who had infiltrated the IRA ensured that an outline of this plan reached his desk. He noted that "they were planning to bring German warships where you couldn't bring a row boat".<sup>83</sup>

Goertz like Weber-Drohl lost his radio transmitter on his arrival in Ireland. He was given the contact address of Francis Stuart's wife Iseult Stuart. He headed for her house in County Wicklow walking 120km to Laragh but on his way he left clues to his arrival. On 13 May G2 picked up their first evidence when Christopher O'Reilly a resident in Ballivor County Meath claimed he met a German parachutist who asked for directions to Wicklow. On 16 May Commandant RC Daly confirmed to G2 that an aircraft flew over Ballivor and the search was on for a parachutist.<sup>84</sup> Once Goertz reached the

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<sup>80</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 155.

<sup>81</sup> Brian D. Martin, *The Role of G2 during The Emergency 1939-45*, M.A. Maynooth 1994, p. 43.

<sup>82</sup> Herman Goertz, Goertz Document 1944 (Military Archives, G2/1722).

<sup>83</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 230.

<sup>84</sup> Herman Goertz, Goertz Document 1944 (Military Archives, G2/1722).

Stuart's house he was taken in and Jim O'Donovan was contacted. He collected Goertz and brought him to Stephen Held's house in Templeogue. While staying at Held's house he met Stephen Hayes, the IRA Chief of Staff following Russell's departure. G2, probably through their IRA network, learned of Goertz's arrival and on 22 May Held's house was raided and some of Goertz's possessions were found. Held was arrested but Goertz escaped to Laragh. He did not stay there long as Iseult Stuart was arrested on 25 May. The Fall of France took place in May 1940 and a German invasion was now a possibility. This heightened MI5 tensions and placed a strain on their link with G2. The elusiveness of Goertz was one of their primary concerns.

Goertz remained at large during the Spring of 1941 but by this stage G2 had picked up his coded orders. According to Eamon de Buitléar, Goertz's "orders were relayed in a cypher which nobody could understand and I spent two years working on it while I was with the President, I succeeded in working out the system but I could not figure out its meaning".<sup>85</sup> The British had also been alerted to Goertz's messages since some of them emanated from the German Legation which they were monitoring. Although Goertz's code was intercepted, Goertz was beginning to move more freely. He made contact with General Hugo MacNeill who commanded the Second Division of the Irish Army during the Emergency. MacNeill who probably had sympathies for the Axis cause was a significant figure in the Irish army. He had led troops into Devlins during the Army Mutiny Affair and had been actively involved in the Defence Plans Division with Bryan. During the Economic War with Britain (1933-38) he talked to the Minister for Defence Frank Aitken about the possibility of fighting the British with small mobile columns. Bryan on his Command and Staff course in 1935 wrote a thesis demolishing this contention. According to Duggan "Conceptually these two were on a collision course that

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<sup>85</sup>De Buitléar was aide de camp to Douglas Hyde between 1938-41. See Brian D. Martin, *The Role of G2 during The Emergency 1939-45*, M.A. Maynooth 1994, p. 47.

climaxed during the Emergency when MacNeill tried to bypass and belittle Bryan in intelligence work.”<sup>86</sup> Bryan stressed, that while he distrusted MacNeill he had no concrete evidence linking him to Goertz.<sup>87</sup> However without government knowledge MacNeill made contact with the German Legation and Goertz. MacNeill believed that Goertz could be used to reach an understanding between Ireland and Germany in the case of an Allied invasion. Bryan said that MacNeill had no authority to act as he did while G2 continued searching for the agent<sup>88</sup>.

Florence O’Donoghue the SIS commander through his IRA contacts discovered that the IRA had planned Goetz’s escape in a boat from Kerry.<sup>89</sup> O’Donoghue rounded up Goertz’s collaborators in Kerry. According to General Michael Costello, Goertz was captured but placed under the protection of a uniformed Garda, an IRA plant named Jim Crofton, (controlled by Stephen Hayes) who allowed Goertz escape through the backdoor of the house in which he was held.<sup>90</sup>

Hempel the German Ambassador reported that Goertz was still at large and had met MacNeill and the head of Irish Military Intelligence. Bryan on seeing this report was outraged, and vehemently refuted any suggestion that official Irish intelligence had any contact with Goertz.<sup>91</sup> By the autumn of 1941 Goertz was finding his mission very troublesome as co-operation from the IRA was not forthcoming. Although he collected information on British forces in Northern Ireland, his informants had no idea of military organisation and produced a lot of meaningless reports which were intercepted in transit by both G2 and the British. Following Stephen Hayes confessions, Hempel tried to distance himself from Goertz since if he was implicated it would give the Allies an

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<sup>86</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 181.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.* p. 192.

<sup>89</sup> See Eunan O’Halpin, *Aspects of Intelligence*, in *The Irish Sword*, The Emergency 1939–45 p. 62.

<sup>90</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 188.

<sup>91</sup> A point which Duggan suggested he protested too much and that for an intelligence officer all sources must be protected at all costs, *ibid.* p. 267.



excuse to remove the legation. Hempel recommended that the German High command repatriate the agent, to which they had no objection since they believed that both Irish and British Intelligence had him under surveillance. Goertz was eventually captured in Dublin in October 1941, after eluding the authorities for a year and a half. He was questioned and sent to Athlone where Butler and Hayes tricked Goertz into revealing the cipher to his code. Bryan passed this information to MI5 who gratefully accepted it.

With the exception of Goertz, G2 generally picked up German agents within days. Walter Simon alias Karl Anderson who had a previous conviction was picked up at once. Willy Preetz alias Paddy Mitchell who like Anderson had been inserted by U-Boat survived three weeks before he was found with a transmitter in the loft of a shop in Westland Row. Three German agents landed from a French yacht off the south coast in July 1940 were quickly picked up when one of them asked a bus conductor a question in Irish! By 1941 the Germans were enlisting native Irish recruits for spying missions since almost all their previous attempts failed to blend in. One man Joseph Lenihan a relation of the prominent Fianna Fáil family, was recruited by the Germans while a farm labourer on the Channel Islands. He volunteered to spy for the Germans and was dropped in the Dublin-Meath area on 18 July 1941. Lenihan decided to make his way to the North and turned himself in to the British. He was questioned and gave information on German intelligence activities in Holland and Paris.<sup>92</sup> MI5 who codenamed him "Basket" sought to use him as a double agent to feed the Abwehr false information. The Abwehr planned that Lenihan would set up a weather station in Sligo. In an effort to persuade the Irish to collaborate with British intelligence, they sent Lenihan's surrendered transmission set to Bryan and flew Lenihan to England. They released him with the stipulation that he keep in touch. However, Lenihan vanished and Joe Walshe from External Affairs would not entertain using the radio in a British double cross operation. G2 thought that Lenihan

might be involved with the criminal underworld of wartime Europe. However another theory suggests that he was siphoned back over the border and integrated into the double-cross system<sup>93</sup>.

G2's security and counterespionage success during the war was, as O'Halpin has pointed out, largely due to the men who successively ran the organisation, Liam Archer and Dan Bryan. Running on a tight budget with inexperienced staff they managed to safeguard the State policy of neutrality albeit "Friendly Neutrality". The Counterespionage, Censorship, Code and Signals, Coastwatching and the other Sections established G2 as the premiere security organisation in the state.

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<sup>92</sup> Part II, Joseph Lenihan, p. 53, MIS 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

<sup>93</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 156.

## CONCLUSION

Dan Bryan's career coincides with a series of important turning points in Irish history which saw the birth and development of the Irish state. His career spanned a war of independence, a civil war, a world war and many potential revolutions in between. The high's and lows of a military career dedicated to intelligence, reflects the early development of the Irish military intelligence organisation. He saw Irish intelligence develop from the famously effective but ad-hoc organisation under Collins, to the highly structured and organised machine it became under his guidance during the Emergency.

Although always appearing in the background, Bryan played a major role in upholding the security of the state. The most characteristic element of Bryan's career is that at a time when today's security staff were continually becoming tomorrow's subversives, Bryan remained the one constant star. Despite political fluctuations and a series of new managers and controllers of the state intelligence system, Bryan remained to the fore. He had a useful knack of backing the winning side.

Between 1922-1945, Irish military intelligence was involved in many of the state threatening incidents in Irish history. Bryan plays a part in most of these incidents, and due to his influence over the Department, its presence usually exerted a stabilising effect returning power to the status quo, ensuring that the security of the elected power was guaranteed. Although Bryan was a military officer, he was first and foremost a democrat. He continually protects and secures the elected political authorities, despite his own personal feelings or reservations about them. This professionalism which characterised Bryan's career was alien to many sections of the Army, including the Intelligence Department. However his presence had a major effect in ensuring the Department and the Army remained loyal to the political authorities of the day.

Bryan took the pro-Treaty side during the Civil War. From a democratic stance this was the elected choice. However, Bryan's inclination was as much due to his own family political background which became ardent Cumann na nGaedhael supporters and the influence of GHQ officers such as Mulcahy and Collins as his own democratic principals.<sup>1</sup> His work during the Civil War period saw him establish a network of informants and agents around Dublin, which helped the Free State army capture and puncture Republican resistance within the capital. Although this work by Free State military intelligence proved highly successful in safeguarding the political majority of the day, Bryan arrested and interrogated former friends and colleagues from the Dublin Brigade.

Bryan's resolve at maintaining democratic state security did not stop there. When an internal espionage war broke out from within the Intelligence Department and the Army, loyalty to the state was in doubt. Bryan and his Second Bureau's Ex-Army section were responsible for unmasking and tracking down the mutineers long before and after the coup was supposed to have finished.

The Mutiny was followed by a politically motivated purge of the Army Council and despite Bryan's close affiliation with some of its members he managed to survive.

At another key moment in 1932, when Fianna Fáil were about to take power, in the midst of rumour of victimisation and army pension cuts, Bryan and Chief of Staff Michael Brennan uncovered and prevented another coup by a strong Cumann na nGaedhael section of the Army, this time aimed at overthrowing the new Fianna Fáil government. Just as Bryan had compromised friendly relations with former comrades in

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan's father canvassed as a local Cumann na nGaedhael councillor in Kilkenny in the 1920's. Bartley Bryan, Interview with author 20-09-98, Dunbell Co. Kilkenny.

pursuing Republicans, he would not turn a blind eye to this new threat to democracy by his fellow officers.

Bryan and the Intelligence Department were now under the control of Fianna Fáil, members of which he had personally tracked, harried, arrested and interned. However as is characteristic of his career, his democratic principals and respect for the Army's position within the State maintained a smooth working relationship. He worked for the Irish government whatever party was in power, under orders his allegiance lay nowhere else and his professionalism influenced the rest of the Intelligence Department.

Bryan and military intelligence moved into a new period of active operations during the Emergency. G2's work was paramount in protecting and safeguarding the state. It is unequivocal that it was largely G2's actions that saved the State from invasion or incursion.

Bryan's career illustrates the continuous conflict between the military and political elites. During the War of Independence while Bryan served in the Dublin Brigade there was feint regard by the volunteer military organisation for the political authority and orders of the Dáil. GHQ, the soldiers on the ground in the Brigades and the Flying Columns resented political control of the IRA. Despite attempts during the truce of July to December 1921 to impose Dáil authority, IRA GHQ continued to resist. When Bryan officially enlisted in the Provisional Army in July 1922, political forces had made some progress at securing loyalty. The IRA was split and new recruits without the War of Independence mindset were being taken into the Provisional Government Army. Despite this many officers were kept in check by the dual Dáil and GHQ membership of leaders such as Mulcahy and Collins. Following the Civil War, political forces (then Cumann na nGaedhael) made an effort to take control and Minister for Defence Mulcahy scaled down and re-organised the Army to make it suitable for a peacetime existence. This

caused animosity within the ranks and culminated in the Army Mutiny of 1924. The outcome of the Mutiny ended any doubt over army loyalty and ensured political dominance.

Although there was the popular support for a democratic state, the success of democracy was due more to the political skill of its proponents than it was to idealism. The army officers involved in the 1924 Mutiny were completely out of their depth when pitted with O'Higgins, Cosgrave, Mulcahy or even McGrath. Unknowingly they were used as pawns in an internal political squabble. As the military bowed to the democratically elected government in 1924, the Intelligence Department did likewise in 1926. Bryan complained about the loss of Intelligence Department power over internal affairs, but not on a political level. He upheld the right of political authority over the army and his complaint was professional, targeted at the tactics and poor intelligence work of Nelligan's Special Branch. The 1932 plot to overthrow Fianna Fáil, the last attempt at military supremacy over political authority failed miserably.

During the Emergency, after Bryan regained political confidence and was running G2, much of his reporting and work was directly ordered by and given to Mr. de Valera, Joseph Walshe and Frederick Boland within the Department of External Affairs. This ordering, reporting and co-operation between the political controllers and military intelligence did not exist in previous years.

Another feature of Bryan's career mentioned by other commentators is his alleged pro-British stance. With increasing analysis of Irish neutrality policy during the Emergency, the popular view held after the war that Ireland was sympathetic to the Axis cause or even impartial has been dismissed. The policy which has been called "friendly neutrality" best describes the co-operation which the Irish authorities gave the Allied forces. However as this policy has been uncovered, Bryan and his personal convictions

have been described as strongly pro-British by many commentators. It has to be stated that this is a fair assumption. His relationship with his British counterparts in MI5 reached such a level that he kept in contact with many of its operatives informally long after the war had ended. His relations with Cecil and Guy Liddell were extremely good. Bryan's friendly relationship was most pleasing to MI5 and as one MI5 commentator exclaimed:

Colonel Archer though at all times friendly and absolutely fair in his dealings, was a strong Irish nationalist and inclined to limit his co-operation rather strictly. He was a conscientious, but not enthusiastic Intelligence officer. Colonel Bryan while just as mindful of his duty to his country, was wrapped up in intelligence work for its own sake.<sup>2</sup>

As is evident the professionalism which Bryan brought to the intelligence department impressed the British, however it did not impress some Irish officers. An example of which was Bryan's conflict with de Buitleár his second in command during the Emergency over releasing codes to the British. According to Duggan, Bryan viewed de Buitleár as "a dyed in the wood Gaelic Leaguer".<sup>3</sup> Bryan's stance also came into conflict with fellow officer Hugo MacNeill over his proposed plan to attack Britain during the Economic War. Bryan poured scorn on MacNeill's plan while MacNeill had been highly critical of Bryan's intelligence work during the Emergency.

There is no doubt that during the Emergency Bryan strongly favoured the British and Allied side. However being pro-British is not the same as being anti-Irish or unpatriotic. In his defence, Bryan realised that good relations with Britain were essential to any Defence policy for Ireland. The British superior naval and military capabilities, control of the North East and geographical proximity meant that it would be unrealistic to ignore them when drafting defence plans. Bryan's friendly relations with MI5 played a

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<sup>2</sup> Part II, *The Development of the Security Service Link with Dublin*, p. 54, MI5 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Files (PRO, London KV4/9).

<sup>3</sup> John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin, 1985), p. 230.

major role in both impressing Irish desires and in allaying British fears. It prevented conscription in Northern Ireland, defused misunderstanding over Kearney's talks with the Germans in Spain, allayed British fears about the German Legation transmitter, Hermann Goertz and advance warning and co-operation in the event of an Axis invasion. Without Bryan's "Friendly Neutrality" the outcome of the Emergency may have been significantly different.

Although Bryan's co-operation and personal support for the allied side was evident, that is not to say that he was unwilling to contemplate war against a British invasion. He had fought the British before and despite compromising his own powers, his loyalty to the state had been displayed on numerous occasions in his career. Writing after the Emergency he said:

In October 1939 the British government asked Ireland for the ports but the request was refused by the Taoiseach, Mr. de Valera. The existence of this problem and the fear that it might lead to a major crisis in Anglo-Irish relations led to one situation which the defence forces had to visualise and be prepared to cope with.<sup>4</sup>

Although he was willing to contemplate all out war against the British, Bryan could be criticised for the lack of precautions he took to prepare for it. Although G2 plans especially work of the SIS and mention of co-operation with B.T.N.I. against a German invasion have been uncovered, similar measures for a British invasion appear absent. Although their absence could be due to G2's incompetence, it could also be due to the sensitive nature of the files which may still be restricted or even destroyed. Despite Bryan being pursued by a number of researchers, he never detailed contingency plans for a British invasion. However Bryan was aware of its sensitivity and the Official Secrets Act.

Bryan and the Military Intelligence Department were a testament to a new state born in turbulent times. Much of the rocky negotiation of the state in its infancy and well into its later childhood was negotiated and steered by Bryan, though very much from the

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<sup>4</sup> Dan Bryan, "The Days of Emergency" in *Irish Times* 3 September, 1979.



background. His professionalism and dedication to intelligence and state security matters played a major role in shaping the development of the Intelligence Department. He with others such as Liam Archer, Michael Costello and even the early foundations which Mulcahy and General Seán MacMahon applied, transformed it from the Dublin focused non-specific operation under Collins, to the national and specialised organisation it became in the early 1920's and during the G2 period of the Emergency. Bryan's influence throughout the Department in Parkgate Street was felt long after he left. Many younger officers such as Douglas Gageby who came under his influence in wartime showed a particular regard for his expertise.<sup>5</sup>

Bryan completed much work for the Military History society and contributed to other various historical journals after the Emergency. He continued in Parkgate Street until 1952. Following the war he played a substantial role in preparing the department for a peace time existence. During the Cold war he organised studies into preparing for a nuclear and Global conflict. Although Bryan never complained he felt a little aggrieved at being passed over for promotion. Ironically he believed this to have been a political decision, made by the very institution which he had for so long secured.<sup>6</sup> although it has been suggested it was due to his specialisation in intelligence.<sup>7</sup>

Bryan's intriguing career and life mirrors the success and plight of a new state emerging in uncertain times. It is hoped that this study has helped to enlighten the situation somewhat and has given the reader a fuller grasp of Irish military intelligence in the period.

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas Gaegby, "Colonel Dan Bryan, An Appreciation" in *Irish Times* 18 June, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Suggestion that it was given to "A Fianna Fáil" supporter. Bartley Bryan, Interview with author 20-09-98, Dunbell Co. Kilkenny.

<sup>7</sup>. Confidential Source.

## Appendix 1

### Directors of Military Intelligence

NAME	DATE
Duggan	Mar 1918 - Feb 1919
Collins	Feb 1919 - June 1922
McGrath	July 1922 - Oct 1922
Tobin	Oct 1922 - Dec 1922
O'Hegarty	Dec 1922 - Apr 1923
Hogan	Apr 1923 - Sept 1923
Nelligan	Sept 1923 - Oct 1923
Costello	Oct 1923 - Mar 1926
O'Carroll	Mar 1926 - July 1927
Henry	July 1927 - Mar 1928
Morkan	Mar 1928 - May 1928
Cotter	May 1928 - May 1929
O'Connell	May 1929 - Mar 1932
Archer	Mar 1932 - June 1941
Bryan	June 1941 - Mar 1952

Source: Director Roll Board, Military Archives.

Dates for Duggan's appointment are based on Séan Kavanagh, one of Collins' agents, "About the time Collins became Adjutant General an intelligence Department was set up". Collins became Adjutant General in March 1918. Sean Kavanagh, "The Irish Volunteers' Intelligence Organisation" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, p. 354.

Date for Collins' appointment estimated as early in 1919, referred to in Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919" in *Capuchin Annual 1969*, pp 343-344.

## **Appendix 2**

### **List of those killed by Dublin murder gang.**

John Stephens, found in Inchicore, 2 September 1922

Michael Neville, found in Killester, 24 September 1922

Edwin Hughes,  
Brendan Holohan and  
Joseph Rogers found in Clondalkin, 10 October 1922.

Francis Lawlor, found in Milltown, 28 December 1922

Thomas O'Leary, found in Rathmines, 23 March 1923

Robert Blondfield, found in Clondalkin, 30 March 1923

Charles Breslin and Joseph Kearnan, found separately in Cabra 3 April 1923

Martin Hogan, found in Milltown, 23 April 1923

Source: Based on John P. Hanley, *Truce, Treaty and Civil war in Dublin city 1921-23*, M.A. Maynooth 1995, p. 130.

### Appendix 3

#### Staff Levels at B1H, MI5's Irish Section during World War II.

<u>Staff.</u>	<u>Officers.</u>	<u>Secretaries.</u>
September 1939-May 1940	1	1
May 1940-November 1940	2	2
November 1940-February 1941	3	3
February 1941 -March 1941	4	4
March 1941-July 1941	5	6
July 1941-March 1943	6	8
March 1943-November 1943	4	4
November 1943-November 1944	3	3
November 1944-December 1945	2	2

Source: Table taken from MI5 Second World War Files, B1H Irish Sectional report, PRO, London KV4/9

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