



Propaganda, espionage and frenzied bloodshed

Archbishop of Perth pursued peace talks after his nephew was killed in Bloody Sunday atrocities but the conflict rumbled on, writes **Eilis O'Brien**

On Bloody Sunday, 12 British intelligence agents and two auxiliary police were assassinated by Michael Collins's Squad in the morning, followed by the killing of 14 civilians by British forces in Croke Park in the afternoon. The third atrocity of that day was the killing of three prisoners at Dublin Castle. On this incident, the historian Marie Coleman concluded that "an official British report stated that they were shot while trying to escape, but it is more likely that they were tortured and killed as a reprisal for the British losses earlier that day". Alongside Dick McKee, IRA director of training, and Peadar Clancy, vice-commandant of the IRA Dublin Brigade, was Conor Clune, an entirely innocent civilian who had been arrested the evening before.

Clune's uncle was Archbishop Patrick Joseph Clune of Perth, Australia. He appealed to British prime minister David Lloyd George to intervene and pursue peace talks following his nephew's killing. Clune was allowed to interview Arthur Griffith and Eoin MacNeill who were being held in Mountjoy Prison. He also had a secret meeting with Michael Collins. Although Clune's initiative foundered on the question of IRA disarmament, peace lines were kept open. Ronan Fanning notes that Lloyd George issued an instruction on



January 2, 1921 that Éamon de Valera should not be arrested so as to leave open that avenue for negotiation.

On the ground, attacks and reprisals continued apace. Despite the blow dealt to Dublin Castle's intelligence operation on Bloody Sunday, the Crown's wider network of surveillance remained intact. Outside Dublin, the IRA's intelligence networks were generally weak. Later in November 1920, Collins instructed officers commanding district areas to appoint brigade directors of intelligence. This aimed to formalise structures of intelligence-gathering "to discover the intention of the enemy".

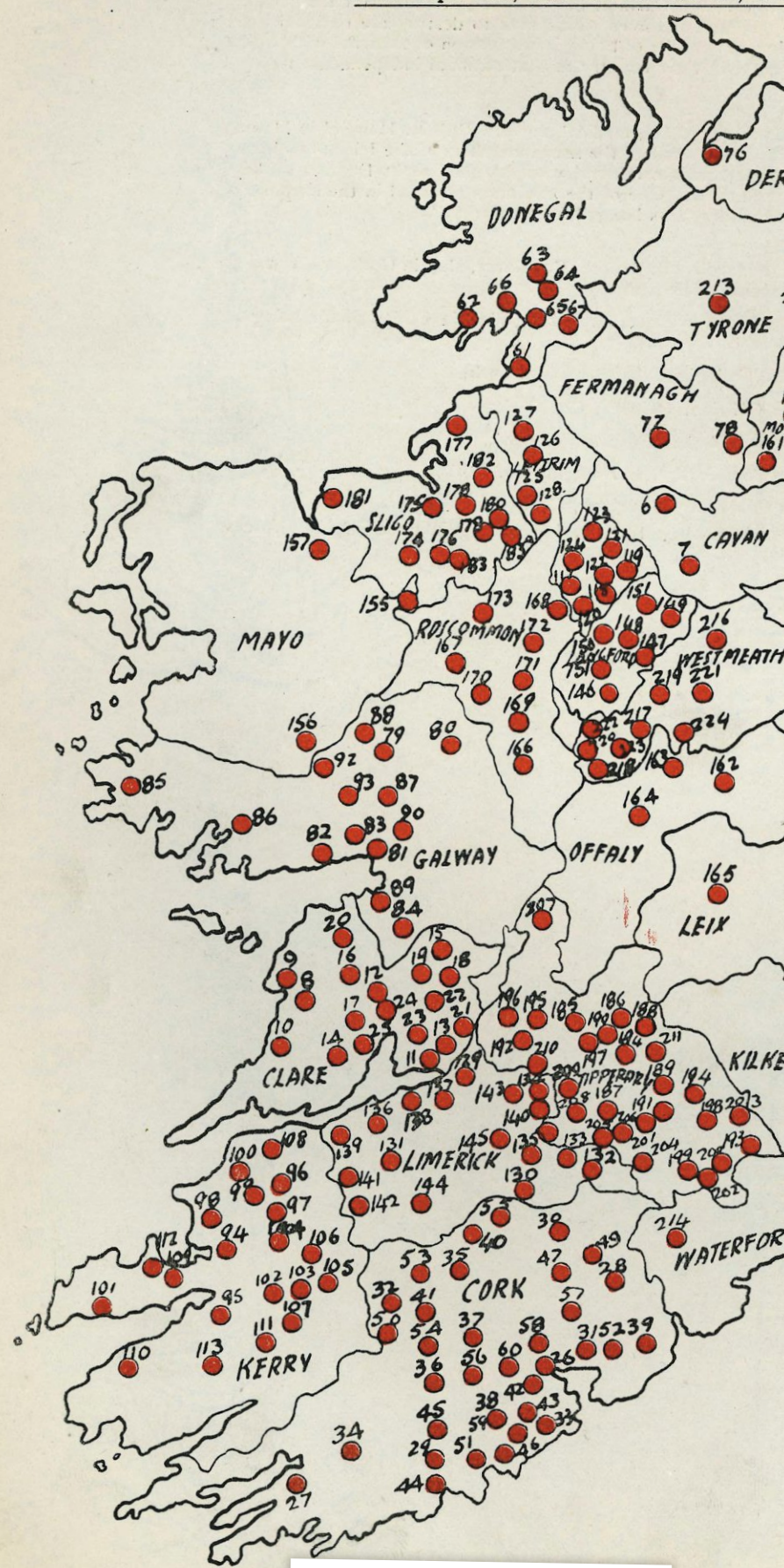
The propaganda war also escalated, with both sides feeding international media. The Dáil Éireann publicity department produced and widely published a map showing over 300 "Irish towns and villages wholly or partly wrecked by English forces from September 9, 1919 to March 1, 1921". This was part of an attempt to counter reports in English newspapers following attacks such as the Kilmichael ambush. The Royal Irish Constabulary published a counteracting "Weekly outrages against police, March 1920 to July 1921" report with their list of attacks by the IRA.

The depths of violence witnessed in the closing months of 1920 brought hope that cooler heads might prevail and that peace might come. However, the conflict rumbled on.

MAP showing Irish Towns and Villages

partly wrecked by English Forces

from Sept. 9th, 1919 to March 1st, 1921



IRA's pursuit of British spies included the highly decorated, much-hated Hoppy Hardy

Jocelyn Lee (JL) Hardy was one of the most hated British intelligence figures during the War of Independence.

He was known as Hoppy Hardy, having lost a leg on the western front in World War I. Following a highly decorated wartime career, he was despatched to Dublin and seconded to the Royal Irish Constabulary's Auxiliary Division as an intelligence officer. Although he had a wooden leg, he was known for the speed at which he moved.

Hardy was targeted on Bloody

Sunday but was not at the address when the IRA came calling.

The Collins Papers files in the Military Archives show how the pursuit of British spies was redoubled after Bloody Sunday. A week later, on November 27, a directive went out to all IRA brigades requiring them to appoint a director of intelligence if they did not already have one. Advice included keeping an eye on local newspapers for items about the "future destinations of departing spies" and their photographs. There was also an

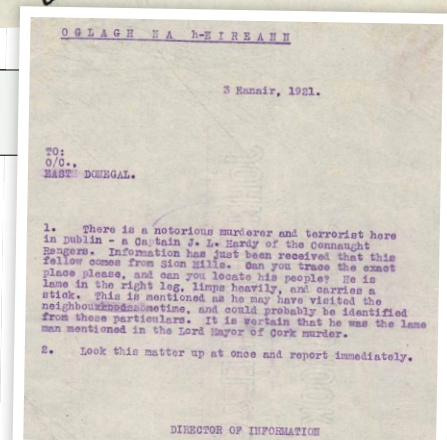
instruction to report back to IRA GHQ from December 10.

Another letter, dated December 18, 1920, points to the value of using post office staff and the communications that they handled to keep track of the activities of the British.

The files include a letter sent on January 3, 1921 to the IRA commanding officer in east Donegal referring to Hardy and his family roots in the Sion Mills area of neighbouring Co Tyrone and asking that they "locate the exact place and locate his

people". It adds: "It is certain he was the lame man mentioned in the Lord Mayor of Cork [Tomás Mac Curtain] murder."

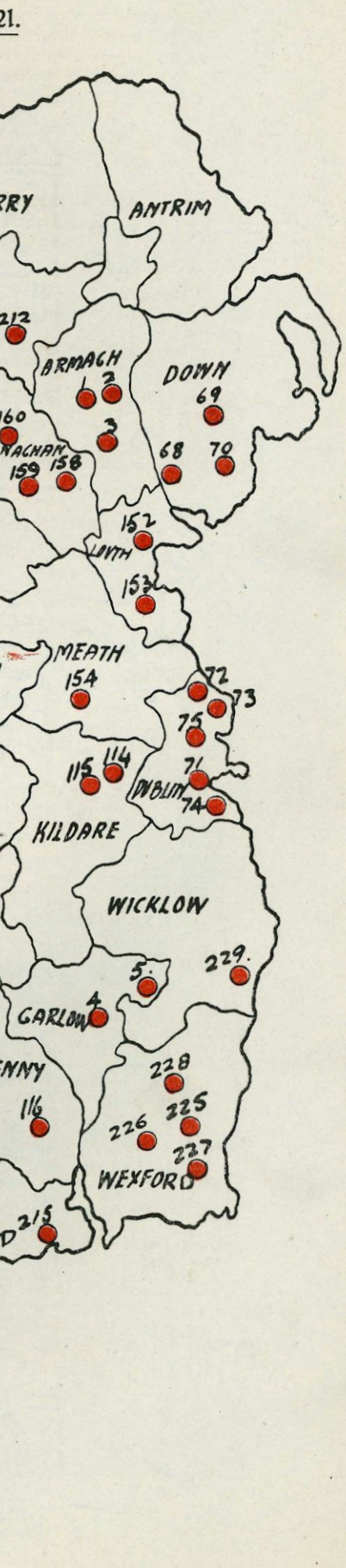
Hardy, who made some notable escapes from German prisoner of war camps during World War I, continued to evade the IRA and retired from the army in 1925 on health grounds. He went on to become a writer and his works include book called *I Escape!*, about his World War I exploits, and a play, *The Key*, a love triangle set against the background of the British-Irish conflict in 1920.



A letter sent from IRA headquarters regarding 'notorious murderer' Hardy asking members in east Donegal to 'locate his people'

PHOTO: MICHAEL COLLINS PAPERS, MILITARY ARCHIVES, SEE MILITARYARCHIVES.IE

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Left: a map of Irish towns and villages 'wrecked' by English forces, taken from the printed booklet *An Address to the Representatives of Foreign Nations*. Adopted at the January Session of Dáil Éireann, 1921

PHOTO: ÉAMON DE VALERA PAPERS, UCD ARCHIVES

Right: an early convention of Cumann na mBan, an organisation which counted Shelia O'Neill (see panel, bottom right) among its members

PHOTO COURTESY: MILITARY ARCHIVES
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Daniel McCarthy: Applied for military pension after his son Michael's death in Kilmichael ambush

The father of one of the IRA volunteers killed in the Kilmichael Ambush applied for a military pension over the loss of his son.

Michael McCarthy had been a captain in the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd West Cork Brigade and also worked with his father, Daniel.

Four years after Michael's death, Daniel, a cooper, made the pension claim under the Army Pensions Act. Initially, it was rejected on the basis that he was not dependent on him, according to a file in the Military Pensions Collection.

As part of his application, Daniel McCarthy said that his son had been engaged on work in England for the IRA at the request of Michael Collins.

His pension claim was based on having lost the use of his right leg "almost entirely" and having

A page from Daniel McCarthy's application to receive a military pension

PHOTO: MILITARY SERVICE PENSIONS COLLECTION, MILITARY ARCHIVES
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a family of eight children. He said five of his children were in America and not sending home any money; a daughter and a son, a typist and a district court clerk respectively, could barely support themselves; and the youngest had just left school.

A Garda report said Daniel McCarthy's circumstances and level of dependency referred to one of his legs being "somewhat deformed" but added that it "did not seem to interfere with the pursuit of his usual work". It added: "Claimant seems to have been in some measure dependent upon the deceased before his death, but he seems to be in comfortable circumstances at present."

In July 1924, the Army Pensions Board rejected the claim on the basis of "no dependency" but later that year a gratuity of £150 was approved by the Minister for Defence.

Michael McCarthy's sister Margaret O'Toole was unsuccessful in a separate application for an award.



Shelia O'Neill: Pension claim cited she was 'essential to the carrying out of all operations'

Six men stayed and prepared for the Kilmichael ambush in the Dunmanway home of Shelia O'Neill (born Julia Hurley, also referred to as Shelia), she said in her subsequent claim for a military pension.

Hers is one of 49 files where Kilmichael is mentioned in the Military Service Pensions Collection in the Military Archives.

O'Neill said she gave the men food and supplied volunteer Michael McCarthy — who died in the attack — with 100 rounds of ammunition. According to O'Neill, from 1917 she had an arms dump, given to her by Dick (Richard) O'Neill, at her property.

A staunch republican, she joined the Togher Branch of the Cumann na mBan 1919, where she was treasurer. As well as regularly providing food and shelter to Volunteers, she also did some intelligence work and scouting for them.

She said that on the day of the attack, she carried documents 12 miles into town, where she picked up first aid supplies and took

them back to the wounded.

"I have a clear recollection that she was continually active and always reliable and available and gave very good held to the ASU [brigade]," Timothy Hurley, a local IRA company captain, wrote in support of her pension claim. "Her home was always open to them to my knowledge."

Another made the point that the area where she lived was one that "the column had to visit regularly for food and rest" and that her work was "essential to the carrying out of all operations in her area" during the War of Independence.

From June 1923, pensions were payable to recognise and compensate wounded veterans, their widows, children and other dependants and those who were proven to have had active service during Easter Week 1916, in the War of Independence and the Civil War.

Membership of organisations such as the Irish Volunteers had to be proven. Over time, eligibility was extended to other groups, including Cumann na mBan.

Need for ongoing military activity stressed as leaders scented victory

Six months after Bloody Sunday, republican leaders were scenting victory, but there was to be no let-up in their efforts.

A circular issued by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in April, 1921 struck an optimistic note.

"It is now fully realised that Ireland can win out through physical force methods. In the past this was only seen by the minority who formed the IRB," it said.

"Now it is a general and well-justified belief and the final

ending in complete freedom of Ireland's struggle is now rapidly approaching."

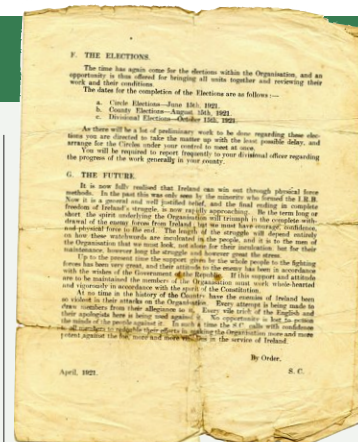
The circular from the Supreme Council did not offer any prediction as to how long their campaign would take to succeed, but it stated: "Be the term long or short, the spirit underlying the organisation will triumph for the complete withdrawal of enemy forces from Ireland."

Nor did it underestimate the scale of the continuing challenge. It urged members to redouble their efforts in making the

organisation "more and more potent against the foe".

It refers to co-ordinating military activity with the Irish Volunteers, stating that it had been "very successful" and noting that the "military functions of both bodies are similar to each other; the success or failure of one is the success or failure of both".

The need for ongoing military activity is stressed. "Fighting has been carried out more vigorously where the organisation has been efficient," it said, "adding that



A page from the circular issued by the IRB in April 1921

PHOTO: ERNIE O'MALLEY PAPERS, UCD ARCHIVES

the Supreme Council "desires to see the fight waged everywhere".

It adds that "it must be obvious that in order to maintain or create efficiency, organising work must not be neglected".

There is a warning for those who were not living up to expectations: "In view of the prevailing conditions, any form of negligence on the part of the officers or men of the IRB is unpardonable and will henceforth be dealt with severely."

Three months later, in July 1921, a truce was called.