

**The
Dunmanway
killings -
curiouser
and
curiouser**

**Aubane
Historical
Society**

**The
Dunmanway
killings-
curiouser
and
curiouser...**

**ISBN 978-1-903497-71-5
Aubane Historical Society
Aubane
Millstreet
Co. Cork
April 2012**

“There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – there are things we do not know we don't know.”

Donald Rumsfeld ”

A known unknown?

I am always reminded of Rumsfeld's aphorism when thinking about the Dunmanway killings of April 1922. Reading John Borgonovo's recent book, *“The Battle for Cork, July-August 1922”* (Mercier 2011), I was intrigued by his reference to the *“unknown IRA gunmen”* who carried out the 10 killings in Dunmanway in late April 1922. Unknown to whom, I wondered? Mr. Borgonovo goes on to say that the killings only stopped when Brigade Commandant, Tom Hales *“threatened publicly to execute any IRA man involved in any new attacks”* (p37). This is a misleading summary of the Hales statement. It gives the impression that he, Hales, was confirming that IRA members were responsible. But that is not what Hales said. He clearly did not know who had carried out the killings. The whole point of his statement was to lay down the law for all, military and civilian, and how they would each be dealt with if found guilty. This is abundantly clear when the statement is read in full. Here it is:

"On Friday, 28th April, I issued a definite military order to all Battalion Commandants in this Brigade for transmission to all men under their command that any soldier in the area was neither to interfere with nor insult any person.

If said order will not be rigidly adhered to by all units, those concerned will be dealt with in a manner not alone upholding the rigid discipline of a military force, but in justice to the glorious traditions of the officers and men of the Brigade. Even capital punishment will be meted out if found necessary.

In the case of civilians all such offenders will be vigorously hunted up, and handed over to the constituted tribunals acting under Dáil Eireann.

I promise to give all citizens in this area, irrespective of creed or class every protection within my power. In furtherance of an order already issued to the IRA to hand in any arms in their possession I now order all citizens holding [sic], without a licence, to hand them into the O.C.'s Barracks, at Bandon, Clonakilty, Ballineen, Dunmanway and Kinsale.

Anybody found in possession of arms in this area after this date will be severely dealt with.

(Signed)

BRIGADE COMMANDANT TOM HALES."

The statement does not specifically target the IRA, as suggested by Mr. Borgonovo: it applies to everyone.

Mr. Borgonovo suggests that Tom Hales made some kind of distinction between the treatment he would mete out to killers of victims who were hardly cold—some killed that very day—and the killers involved in *“new attacks”*. He did not do so and it is despicable on Borgonovo's part to suggest he did. This is reminiscent of the Peter Hart methodology of innuendo which Borgonovo has hitherto done a lot to expose and discredit.

The Unionist *Cork Constitution* on May 1st commended Hales' statement unreservedly—and they would have been more than willing to find any shortcomings in it

if any could be found. And that paper did not suggest that IRA members had done the killings. If it had done so, or if anyone had—no doubt Hales would have demanded to see their evidence. Moreover, the statement makes clear what could happen to anyone if found guilty.

I am sure Hales knew all his IRA members and could easily confirm the identity of many others outside his area of responsibility if necessary. I think the combined knowledge of Barry, O'Donoghue, O'Hegarty and plenty of others would know every single member who could be relevant. Local Commanders of Armies usually know their soldiers and the IRA Volunteer Army was at the time a more intimate army than most. There was not likely to be any unknown—or unknowable—members to its leaders.

Mr. Borgonovo could not have written as he did, if he had quoted the Tom Hales order, in whole or in part.

In checking out the Tom Hales order, I happened to look at the Inquest reports on the victims. As far as I know these reports still provide the most immediate and direct evidence we have about these killings. And in one case we are given a specific reason for the killings, a reason given by one of the killers on the spot. Surely that should be the end of the matter—should it not?

Giving evidence on the killing of her husband it is reported that: "Mrs. Alice Gray, widow of the deceased presented a most pitiable spectacle, and completely broke down in giving her evidence in response to queries by the Coroner and Mr. O'Mahony, Co. Inspector. Shortly, her evidence was that in response to repeated knocking her husband came down and the door was burst in. She heard three or four shots fired, and voices saying loudly "Take that you Free Stater, you Free Stater, you Free Stater; take that, you Free Stater" repeating the words "Take that you Free Stater" several times. Then they left and there seemed to be a good number of them, judging by the noise they made" (Cork Examiner, 1 May, 1922).

If this is all as it seems, and we cannot assume that Mrs. Gray had any reason to make up a pack of lies within a few days of the atrocity, it means, for a start, that the history of Ireland should really be re-written somewhat. Certainly, there were conflicts and tensions due to accidents and misunderstandings over the 'Treaty', usually relating to the evacuation of barracks but these were usually sorted out. But I would suggest that the organised shooting of civilians who were, allegedly, Free State sympathisers was something that was qualitatively different from anything else that was happening at the time. Indeed, they should be looked on as the first killings of what is called the 'civil war'. In other words the time the 'civil war' started really needs to be brought forward by about two months. Although a failed attempt to set off the War proper, it was a real deliberate attempt to precipitate a shooting war between the two sides by a marauding gang of murderous anti-Treatyites! Who would want that to happen at this point? In other words, who would wanted to precipitate a civil war at this juncture?

It must be remembered that this killing was done, despite all the non-stop contemporaneous efforts by *both sides* to avoid war, *before* the agreed Election Pact between both sides, *before* the agreed Constitution between both sides, and two months *before* the attack on the Four Courts. This 'Civil War' motive does not therefore seem credible in the circumstances. But it is curious that our academic historians have not paid close attention to this very curious aspect of the killings. It is taken as a fact and left at that.

Why would a known Unionist/Loyalist be shot for being a Free Stater by a republican in April 1922? That would not be his defining characteristic to any anti-Treaty Republican, or to any kind of Republican, by any stretch of the imagination. It would be about the most irrelevant fact about him.

And why are the killers so vocal about their motive? Ensuring their political beliefs were well known to the world? It looks distinctly likely that the killers were protesting too much about their motives. In other words it is more than suspiciously like an attempt to 'set up' anti-Treatyites. And who would want to do that? Hardly the governing pro-Treatyite IRA at the time and hardly the neutral IRA. So who?

As this Inquest report was public knowledge at the time, it would certainly have limited the suspects for the anti-Treatyite Tom Hales. If he had taken it at face value, it would have focussed his inquiries on the type of anti-Treatyites who would go on a killing spree against those who tended to support the Treaty within a relatively small area within his command in West Cork. Such people would surely have stuck out like the proverbial 'sore thumb'—being on Commandant Hales' own side of the 'Treaty' division! He must have been very inefficient or indifferent to his responsibilities in not being able to trace such culprits, given these very pointed leads. But those characteristics do not fit the man. So why no arrests?

There was a personal issue here for the anti-Treatyite Tom Hales. His brother, Sean, who was one of the governing pro-Treatyite TDs, would no doubt have been concerned for his own safety if Treatyites were being assassinated, and he would also have taken a very keen interest in identifying the perpetrators who were out to kill people like him. The Hales were the classic case of brothers taking opposing sides on the 'Treaty'—but they would have been at one on finding these killers. Combined they were a formidable force and yet nobody was apprehended, or identifiably suspected!

Consider again the scenario: there was a murderous marauding gang prepared to kill Free Staters and roaming around a small rural area, one which had a tried and tested Army, Police and Court system, but which could not identify or locate them? If this was really so, one might ask—as the German character did in *Fawlty Towers* —'how *did* they vin the var?'

There is another Inquest report on the truly callous killing of young Nagle, one that might give some clues. Mrs. Nagle said that "*The door was burst in and two men entered. One had a mask.*" (Cork Constitution, 1st May, 1922). This in itself is significant. One was evidently not masked and probably confident that he would not be recognised. She went on to explain that the killers had asked him "*was he going to school and where he was employed*". She is also reported as saying: "*She did not know either of them and did not think they were from Clonakilty or district*" (ibid.) This was after a discussion/conversation with them. This evidence is significant in that these killers did not seem to know much about their victim and were not local. The killing of Nagle gives a distinct feeling that suggests the behaviour of professional killers.

Borgonovo mentions Jasper Ungood-Thomas who wrote on the killings in his biography of his grandfather, Jasper Wolfe, the State Prosecutor at the time and therefore a prime public enemy of the IRA—who attempted to assassinate him three times and also to burn him out. Borgonovo says that Jasper Ungood-Thomas "*argues that the killings were political rather than sectarian*". But what was the political purpose? And that assessment does not exactly convey the full story of either Jasper Wolfe or Jasper Ungood-Thomas's

views on the matter. What both noted about the killings was that "*they had few, if any, of the signs of a planned IRA operation*". They also noted that the killings occurred across *three* Battalion areas and were clearly in defiance of the "*alpha males*" (their descriptions) who commanded these areas. That is also a highly significant point. Army commanders do not easily tolerate any such unauthorised actions 'on their patch', as they represent a distinct challenge to their authority. This suggests that they were not likely to accept such action without finding out—at least—who was responsible.

(Readers should be reminded that Wolfe, the State Prosecuting terror of the IRA, went on to be a noted defender of IRA members in the 1920s and was later elected to the Dail for West Cork on a number of occasions. His life and career is a standing rebuttal of the sectarian thesis about the War of Independence.)

There can be all kinds of assumptions and speculations about these killings, based on the few facts available: but two things are indisputable and always need to be borne in mind: none of the killers have been identified, then or since, and the only definite and indisputable fact about IRA involvement is that it helped stop the killings.

"Taking it out on the Protestants"

This is a notorious quotation, which Peter Hart used in *The IRA And Its Enemies* (1998) to head his Chapter on the Dunmanway killings: it deserves a revisit. Consideration of the context for that quotation has not entered the current discourse on the period. Using this remark as a Chapter heading was designed to set the tone of the whole debate on the issue, and this has succeeded. Since Hart used it, every thought on the matter has been coloured by that Chapter heading. It is appropriate therefore to look again at this.

Back in 1998, Brian P. Murphy, with his great knowledge of sources, for the first time showed that the use of the quotation, "*Taking it out on the Protestants*" was spurious, as the incident it referred to could have had no connection with the Dunmanway killings. The event and the words used in connection with it happened later, during the 'civil war'.

The quotation is taken from Leon O Broin's *Protestant Nationalists In Revolutionary Ireland—The Stopford Connection* (1985). It is useful to look at it and the context for a number of reasons. But the most important of them is that it provides a perfect example of Hart's chicanery in his use of sources and in this connection we must note that this academic malpractice was allowed stand by his supervisors, Professors Fitzpatrick and Townshend.

Here is how the matter appears in O Broin's book. He is reporting on an event recounted by a well-respected IRA leader in the War of Independence, Denis Lordan:

"One particular incident that occurred during the Civil War positively distressed her {Dorothy Stopford, JL}. The 'boys' went to a Protestant house to seize a motor car, were fired on, and one of them killed. Then "our fellows took it out on the Protestants" Denis Lordan told me ruefully."

How did Hart connect this killing, which occurred in an unspecified place in West Cork, in connection with an attempted seizure of a car, with a completely different event in which no car was at issue some months earlier?

Answer: firstly, by doctoring the original he was quoting from, thereby omitting the 'civil war' reference; and, secondly, by manufacturing a reference to a car at Ballygroman. The way this is done is to introduce two anonymous sources, "A.G." and "A.E." who allow

him to speculate that a need for a car or for petrol was the reason for the visit to the Hornibrooks at Ballygroman—just as in the event quoted above. QED.

On this scenario, the Hornibrooks and their friend, Woods, were so crazy as to kill the leader of the local IRA group over this trivial issue. And then the IRA was even crazier still in executing them all—all on account of a car, or maybe just a gallon of petrol. And then the craziness went crazier still to the killing of other Dunmanway Protestants. It was all one sectarian binge. Whatever about the facts, this scenario fits Hart's overall theme that the whole revolution was sectarian and ridiculous. And it is the impression he succeeded in creating. Jeff Dudgeon and Eoghan Harris express this regularly.

Another scenario that accepts the same narrative is to see the events connected, caused and explained by the elimination of spies. I don't find either convincing on the available evidence and there is a teleological aspect to both that is unsatisfactory. This is an attempt to explain the events on their own merits.

There are some more immediate problems with Hart's Ballygroman story. One of Hart's anonymous sources suggests that it was a car that was required; another that it was petrol. To begin with, if the IRA simply needed petrol, then presumably they had a car to put it in—which would contradict the claim that they needed a car. That is borne out by the fact that Charlie O'Donoghue did leave in a car to get help after Commandant O'Neill was killed. As there is no evidence that he stole either the car or any petrol, he most likely arrived in it as well.

Hart has further anonymous sources that appear at crucial times to fill out his narrative on Ballygroman: "B.B", "B.V." and "B.Y.", and all these are very helpful to him for the rest of his story.

There is another problem with all this. It is quite explicable why the IRA would need to commandeer a car during the 'Civil War' as the original reference made clear. But the Ballygroman incident occurred on 26th April 1922, during what is called the 'Truce.' Active operations which might require the commandeering of transport had ceased so why such a pressing need for a car?

Information from contemporary sources does not bear any relation to the detail provided by Hart. And I am talking about eye-witness reports and evidence given at the official Inquest—as opposed to the anonymous, hearsay speculation used by Hart.

At the inquest on Commandant O'Neill's death, Tadhg O'Sullivan—who organised and sanctioned the visit to the Hornibrook house—explained that "*in compliance with orders received from the staff of the 3rd West Cork Brigade, the deceased was ordered to go on special duty with others (Charlie O'Donoghue, Stephen O'Neill, Michael Hurley) to Mr. Hornibrook's*" (*Cork County Eagle*, 6 May 1922). The Inquest report says nothing about the specific purpose of the visit to the Hornibrook house. Moreover, neither at the time nor since, as far as I know, have any of these four IRA men who were given that assignment said anything that would confirm the car/petrol story. Evidence for this scenario is second-hand, even third hand, i.e., hearsay—at best—and at worst anonymous hearsay with Hart. And no one has explained the pressing need for a car at a time when no active operations were in progress.

The Inquest also heard statements by other participants and nothing remotely connected with transport was reported. Witnesses stated they went to the Hornibrooks' on "*business*", and sought to speak to the family but they refused to respond, even after half an hour of trying, knocking on the door several times.

The *'business'* no doubt meant Government business, as O'Neill was described in some of the press as a Free State policeman – and demanding people's cars was not very likely by such a person in this non-war situation. Duties performed for the Free State and IRA membership could still be compatible at local level at the time, April 1922. We don't know the details of the *'business'* but it must have been important to be ordered by the Brigade staff. One thing is clear, however, the IRA did not visit the house to kill the Hornibrooks. That is shown by the fact that they did not return fire when the leader of their party was killed.

It is most probable that the object of the visit was to assert the authority of the new Irish Government and to get this well-known loyalist family grouping to accept it and behave accordingly which they had not been doing. That could have taken many forms—a warning, a disarming, an arrest, or an expulsion order. The Hornibrooks knew this and were not willing to comply in any way—hence their reaction: the killing of the Volunteer. But, as the IRA did not return fire, it is clear that the new authority had not planned for such a confrontation and of course did not initiate killing.

It is all perfectly explicable. It is a very typical event in the establishing of any new State power. Who rules? Every state depends ultimately on its physical power to establish and maintain itself against the power of its enemies. This was an example of it and both sides knew that perfectly well—car or no car, petrol or no petrol.

At the Inquest, if the IRA witnesses had been intent on making the Hornibrooks appear crazy, they might have mentioned that they had shot O'Neill over a car or a gallon of petrol. But they made no such assertion—they insisted the visit was about *'business'*, i.e., something serious.

There is one other contemporary account by *"one who was there"* (someone who was not with the IRA party). This says that *"About 2 pm an IRA 'policeman' claimed to be 'on duty' came to a house in the street and demanded entrance"* and it goes on to say that *"the 'policeman' was shot by a Protestant named Woods"* (*Reminiscences And Reflections* by H. Kingsmill Moore, DD. 1930, p278-9).

Again, we find that there is no reference to cars etc., but we find confirmed the official *'business'* or *'duty'* nature of the visit.

The book this appears in was by a prominent Church of Ireland figure and loyalist who saw matters from the Protestant and Loyalist perspective. It might be noted that, though horrified by the whole revolution, Kingsmill Moore made the point that Protestant clergymen were never, ever, interfered with in carrying out their religious duties during the whole period. That is a rather important point to have come from a loyalist and Protestant source.

Hart mentions this book as a source but does not quote any account from it. I wonder why?

Raids and raids!

Kingsmill Moore has an account of another official visit/raid which showed how benign these events could be and how the outcome depended on the reaction of those visited. It is worth quoting to put these types of events in their real perspective and in the context of official business of the time and which is so often leavened with more natural business. The story of a raid on a Protestant house was told to him in the drawing-room which was:

"...the scene of the adventure—by a dainty little lady. There came loud knocking at the door one stormy night. She and an elderly connexion were alone in the house. The

second lady was tall, strongly built and formidable. The raiders seemed awed as they entered. They demanded arms. 'There are none in the house.' 'We must search.' 'Certainly.' They searched everywhere and found nothing. But the leader, a fine-looking young farmer, tried to capture another spoil before he left. Deferentially approaching the younger lady he inquired: 'Would ye be married?' and hearing she was single, he blurted out shyly 'Don't ye think I'd be a likely boy?' The whole (story) was told with peals of ringing laughter. 'Did you ever hear of an adventure like that, commencing with a raid and ending with a proposal?'..." (p.285).

Hart did not see any need to include this very human story in his book but a staunch and fair-minded loyalist did, because it rang true for him and spoke volumes about the reality of these out-of-the-ordinary situations that ordinary people found themselves in.

Did Ballygroman spark the Dunmanway killings?

It is also worth pointing out that the idea the incident at the Hornibrooks initiated or sparked the Dunmanway killings was suggested at the time and vehemently denied by the members of the Cork County Council when it discussed a resolution from Cork Corporation about the events:

"Mr. Murphy said that there seemed to be an insinuation in the Cork Corporation resolution that the shootings of the Protestants were a reprisal for Commandant O'Neill's death. The Chairman said if such an insinuation were in the resolution, and it looked like it, it should not be in it... Mr. Ahearn said if there was any insinuation in the Corporation's resolution he would not agree to it. He believed the enemy had something to do with the shootings in West Cork, and that it was part of the old game" (*Cork County Eagle*, 6 May 1922).

I assume the then Chairman of the Cork County Council and other members were likely to be representative of opinion and knowledgeable about the events. It is significant that they were clearly outraged at the suggestion the events at Ballygroman and Dunmanway were connected. They, on the spot, did not see the narrative that Hart created with the help of his anonymous sources and others at several steps removed and over six decades later.

The Bandon Rural District Council also discussed the events and its members, who included Commandant O'Neill's brother, went out of their way to pay tribute to Protestants who "*had sheltered our brave men and had sympathy with us in our trouble*" and one member said of the Dunmanway events: "*This was a legacy left to them by the Black and Tans*" (*Cork Constitution*, 9 May 1922).

So, far from it being assumed that the IRA had anything to do with the killings, it was regarded as something like what the Black and Tans would do. There could not be a more contrary interpretation of the killings than that given by Peter Hart.

Another hole in the narrative

Hart's simple narrative of one killing at Ballygroman leading to the other at Dunmanway has now been seriously challenged from another perspective by Niall Meehan in his ongoing forensic analysis of Hart's work and in this case by his highlighting of the significance of the capture of the three British under-cover Intelligence Officers in Macroom, who were on active service in a revived Intelligence service. These were discovered on the afternoon of 26th April 1922, *after* the Ballygroman executions (which had taken place

earlier that morning). That was *before* the Dunmanway killings, which began early on the next morning of 27th April (*Irish Political Review*, Feb. 2011).

As Niall points out, Hart knew that the capture of the Intelligence Officers in Macroom ruined his narrative, so he simply ignored this uncomfortable fact and spread as much disinformation as possible about the event. Niall shows that the work of these agents was sanctioned at the highest level on the British side and correspondingly their execution was carried out on the highest authority on the Republican side (*ibid*). No maverick activity this—on either side.

It has been suggested that the Intelligence Officers revealed the names of local agents. But, if it was the case that they divulged the names of the people subsequently killed in Dunmanway as spies, it still remains a mystery why the resultant killings were carried out in a manner so distinctly different from what happened at Ballygroman and outside the pattern of other republican executions of spies—which were always acknowledged and explained. And it is curious that no Catholic spies seem to have been included in the agents' plans though there were plenty of them in the area.

It is worth bearing in mind that, if these three agents had not been captured, it would undoubtedly be considered a crazy conspiracy theory to suggest not only that they and the revived intelligence service existed but that they went so far as to do their work in front of the IRA headquarters in Macroom Castle, of all places, at that particular time. It was so daring and brazen it still seems unbelievable.

There's much more in O Broin's book

It is even more useful to look at the full context of Hart's 'taking it out' quotation in O Broin's book, as a fuller extract throws light on more important things than Hart's chicanery and abuse of sources.

In the book, as the title suggests, O Broin dealt at length with the role of a number of Protestants in the Irish Revolution and explains in some detail the role of Dorothy Stopford in West Cork. He shows her very close relationship with IRA members, and particularly with Denis Lordan: their exchanges are the basis of the relevant part of his book. The issue of informing by some Protestant farmers arises and is discussed in a very matter of fact way as another topic between close friends:

"This matter of 'telling on them' had painful consequences. 'One day', Denis Lordan told me, 'some of the column was going up for tea to a Protestant house. One of them, we called him Peter, was a deserter from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. They met a local farmer on the way driving his pony and trap, an 'old fellow' and a Protestant. He got talking to Peter and thought from his accent that he was an Auxie. He started to blow the gaffe. 'Is it safe for me to be talking to you, sir', he asked, and was assured that it was. He then told Peter that he had been out walking his land and came across a passage and a dug-out in the middle of the brake. Then, to Peter, he said: 'I'm not like the rest of them round here at all. The Reverend Mr. Lord is my man, and I give him the information. You fellows should come round at night, I'd show you round.' Peter told his pals and, while Lordan was consulting Tom Barry and Charlie Hurley, the leaders of the column, who were staying with another Protestant nearby, the lads 'made a football of the old fellow on the floor'. He was shot that night; and a cousin of his who had also been giving information died four or five nights later. The clergyman in Bandon, Mr Lord, went unharmed.

"That there was a Protestant reaction in the area to the activity of the Volunteers, a sort of anti-independence movement, appears to have been the case; and local Protestant farmers were believed to have been responsible for the shooting of two boys named Coffey. Dorothy was upset by these happenings, and was afraid they might lead to a religious war. "One particular incident that occurred during the Civil War positively distressed her. The 'boys' went to a Protestant house to seize a motor car, were fired on, and one of them killed. Then 'our fellows took it out on the Protestants', Denis Lordan told me ruefully. Dorothy's own position was clear enough. She was a religious person, Denis thought, and went regularly to the Church of Ireland in Rathclaren. If she was late for the Service there, she came to Mass in Kilbritten. Lordan asked her one day about her church-going in Dublin. 'I hardly ever go in Dublin', she said, 'because I don't see why the Minister should ask for prayers for the King and not for this ...' (p176-7)

This extract is interesting for a number of reasons, quite apart from the fact that the 'taking it out' could not refer to Ballygroman.

It is clear from this that using the word *Protestant* in this context is clearly descriptive and adjectival for identification purposes, in the same way as it is used in going to a *Protestant* house for tea or to stay the night. It is also clear that there were Protestant safe houses, as the members of the Bandon Rural District Council indicated when rejecting the sectarian explanation for the Dunmanway killings. And 'the taking it out' was clearly done to the Protestants who not only refused to have their car commandeered by the Army, but killed a volunteer. 'Taking it out' is a vague phrase: it could mean a beating; it cannot be assumed they were killed. After all, in the instances when opponents were killed, that was made clear in the other cases described above. It cannot simply be assumed to have happened in this case.

Another point to be borne in mind is that Lordan is explaining these events to a Protestant as a simple fact and his report was accepted as such. There was no sectarian overtone intended, nor was that a meaning taken out of the story by the person hearing it.

The extract is also revealing in that it clearly establishes there was shooting of a number of Protestant farmers for giving information—along with *not* shooting the Protestants who received it! If there was a sectarian element to all this here was a perfect excuse to kill the Rev. Lord.

But most significantly, the information provided in the extract above complements the description of informers who were executed in the area during the War of Independence, as described in the British *A Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1921 and the part played by the Army in Dealing with it (Intelligence)*, when it said that "...in the Bandon area... there were many Protestant farmers who gave information". It also complements the claim by Frank Busted to Ernie O'Malley that "*we shot 5 to 6 loyalist Protestant Farmers as reprisals*". It is somewhat amazing that the British record and Busted appear at one on this and, together with Lordan, what we have therefore is *three* separate independent sources complementing each other so specifically as to which Protestants, i.e. farmers, were killed when, where and why.

By contrast, in Dunmanway, those killed on 27th- 29th April 1922 were clearly urban and professional people—solicitor, shopkeeper, chemist, draper, estate agent, clergyman, post office clerk, etc. This together with a host of other very different characteristics means

that it is not very convincing to link the two sets of killings and treat them as simply two of a kind.

Briefly, the Dunmanway killings also differed from these other killings in the type of execution: there is no proven rationale for it; no identification of the perpetrators; no admission and acceptance by anyone as to who did it; and in the timing in a non-war situation. Added up, it is clear that the killings in Dunmanway were of a unique and remarkable kind. Linking them is a bit like Hart's linking of the Ballygroman killings with the Dunmanway killings. The connection made depends essentially on the timing of the killings, but it cannot be assumed that they were connected simply because they followed chronologically. All this indicates that the Dunmanway killings and these other executions were discrete events, as indeed were the Ballygroman killings and the Macroom killings.

There is not even *one* source so specific and confirmed, which enables us to identify the Dunmanway killers, in contrast with the *three* sources I have mentioned for the execution of the Protestant farmers and for the many sources for Ballygroman as well as the Macroom executions. Such information may very well exist for the Dunmanway killings but it is not in the public domain and there is no point indulging in nods and winks, accusing alleged mavericks, alleged unknown IRA members, etc., about such an issue. In the absence of actual, available, evidence, this type of approach does not explain who conducted the Dunmanway killings or why—rather, such an approach merely explains them away. This approach helped to create the vacuum that enabled Hart and others to fill it with their chicanery. In this vacuum also Eoghan Harris and Jeff Dudgeon—who admits to knowing nothing about the subject—can indulge themselves to their hearts' content with any variety of speculation about who and why it happened.

For instance, the last time I spoke with John Borgonovo he said he believed the killings were caused by drunkenness. In his book on the *Battle For Cork* he claims it was done by "*unknown IRA gunmen*"—but there is at least some actual evidence to claim that there was some drunkenness among those responsible. So, pardon the pun, but it can, and has, become a case of whatever you're having yourself.

The Sherlock Holmes' test

Any numbers of theories about the killings are plausible but they all run into the ground at a certain point. That point is when we come to the proverbial dog famously noted by Sherlock Holmes—the one that does not bark. Except in this case there is a whole kennel of dogs that did not bark.

If it was a sectarian pogrom, why did it begin and end so suddenly and why has nobody ever spilt the beans despite all the subsequent political and personal divisions and conflicts in the area? And if it was such surely someone or a relation of someone, involved would have had a crisis of conscience?

A single killing in rural Ireland used to be discussed and analysed in the greatest detail across generations as they were so unusual. I have listened to endless stories and songs about such events. Famous plays like *The Field* have been written about one such event. The community is the jury. And who else could be? Yet here we have a spectacular killing event and nothing firm is established about who did it. The Jury is still out— exactly 90 years later!

At an official level, why did the then Free State Government not investigate to find out who had killed 10 people apparently because of their pro-Free State sympathies? The

Free State summarily killed people who were totally and absolutely innocent with no evidence against them except that they opposed the 'Treaty'. Here was an opportunity for the Government to tar its opponents with a sectarian brush by conducting an investigation into a 'hate-crime' allegedly committed by people opposed to the Treaty. Here we had a witnessed fact that 10 people were allegedly killed because they were Free Staters, killed in cold blood by anti-Treatyites and it seems that the Free State Government did nothing about it! The great law and order party stood idly by, then and since, in the face of this blatant lawlessness? Why did Britain not insist they take action as they did two months later over the 4 Courts?

During the later 'civil war', anti-Treatyite Republicans were regarded as roughly the equivalent of Al Qaeda today (also with an odd-looking leader and an odder-sounding name) and they could almost be shot on sight. They had allegedly committed this terrorist crime and yet.....

It has to be stressed that the IRA failed to identify and apprehend anyone for this alleged sectarian crime that was supposedly done in its name—despite its efforts to do so. And it must be remembered that it stepped in to prevent further killings.

In fact both Free State and the IRA could have common ground on identifying the killers if it was sectarian atrocity but that did not happen!

If the victims were known spies, why was this not stated by the IRA to counter any sectarian accusations then or since? Even if they were maverick members, the IRA surely knew all its members, mavericks and otherwise, and yet was helpless in identifying who did it. As with any army, at a purely military level, it could not and was unlikely to tolerate mavericks who are a most dangerous element in any army. And therefore, with a clear conscience, could be dealt with by an army by army methods. Mavericks who get away with this sort of thing are not likely to just give up so quickly after about two and a half days of successful activity. And yet.....

There was another spectacular crime committed a couple of years earlier when two banks in Millstreet were robbed of about £17,000 – about half a million Euro in today's money. The RIC encouraged everyone to believe it was the work of the IRA and most people believed them. Who else could possibly have done it? It was almost the equivalent of the Northern Bank Robbery in the context of the time. But, again to note another of Mr. Holmes' conclusions – there can be nothing as misleading as an obvious fact.

After some months the IRA decided to find the culprits. Liam Lynch moved into the area, set up a court, made clear his determination to find them and within days the community provided all the necessary evidence. The money was recovered and returned to the banks, the culprits tried and sentenced and the standing of the IRA was enchanted nationally and internationally. The whole story with the names and addresses of the robbers was published immediately in the Irish Bulletin. The 'mavericks' naturally enough had bigger plans in mind but 'an end was put to their gallop.'. There was an unusual twist in that the banks did not want the money back as they had drawn the insurance money on it in the intervening period. Is it not curious that nothing like this was done in the case of the Dunmanway crimes?

None of the many books and memoirs, posthumous or prehumous, identify anybody as being responsible for the Dunmanway killings. None of the revisionists have done so. Even the revisionists from West Cork itself like Emeritus Professor John A. Murphy and Eoghan Harris have not done so. And it all happened almost literally in their own backyard.

Murphy had decades of professorial patronage in University College Cork to utilise in establishing some facts—any facts—about the episode but did not do so though he bemoaned the lack of this research on an RTE programme on the matter. His father was active in the IRA at the time in West Cork and he never seems to have asked him about it. Or is he not saying? Ditto for Harris and his grandfather. The over 1,700 Bureau of Military History *Witness Statements* appear to be of no help.

But most intriguingly and most curious of all, none of Hart's many anonymous sources (about 60) used this safe cover, which was alleged to be necessary for them, to tell him who did it and he surely asked them – more than once. And they were very knowledgeable and forthcoming on much more trivial matters. But not at all knowledgeable about this major event? How curious. And surely this would have been the real sensation of his work as well as bringing some real added value to the history of the period. And surely if he was told he was safe and secure enough in the groves of academe in Canada to say so and not fear any repercussions?

(And the people he interviewed who had passed over to The West Cork Happy Hunting Ground did not use their very privileged position for this type of knowledge to inform him – even his omniscient interviewees did not know who did it!)

The silence on who did the killings becomes deafening and becomes thereby the *single most significant fact* about who carried out the killings. Did they disappear into thin air?

Enter Frank Busted

Frank Busted has re-entered the picture (or is it the frame) as a suspect. Niall Meehan pointed out some time ago that the IRA leader had entered Hart's frame initially but was dropped because of his mixed Protestant/Catholic ancestry and his declared atheism. He clearly did not fit the sectarian picture so dear to Hart. Busted has reappeared as a very likely participant in the execution of the Intelligence Agents captured in Macroom. He admitted this but his description conflicts with other accounts about it. It is suggested that they divulged the names of the spies they were reorganising and Frank 'did the business'.

He was Vice-Commandant of the 6th Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade and it is great pity there is no biography of him. He had to leave the country after the 'civil war' and did well in business in the US in a venture which meant competing with the Mafia where he gave as good as he got: he appears to have always 'given' before he 'got'. He had the Willie John McBride approach of getting his retaliation in first. He came back to Ireland when Fianna Fail came to power and acted as an unofficial bodyguard for de Valera. He served in the Irish Army during the Emergency. Please note - this is not the behaviour of a maverick.

There is no doubt whatever he could have done the deed if what was required was the elimination of a spy ring—either an old one or a new one being reactivated. He had the necessary 'iron in the soul' to do so. He is blamed for the way the Dripsey ambush was handled and because of that and he has been regarded as something of a 'maverick' and when people in Cork talk of mavericks in the IRA at the time it is their code for Frank. But I think he has been given the maverick tag because his steely disposition made him quite different to the majority of IRA men of the time who had to acquire this quality and many found it impossible to do so—or, when they did, afterwards to live with what they had been forced to do. Tom Barry had this military disposition in buckets from his

experiences in the brutality and barbarity of WWI. But Busted's overall career belies the maverick description.

By the way, it's amazing how none of our revisionists hold anything against Barry for his four years of killing across two continents, and how he might have done it in every case, but castigates him for his success in a relatively minor skirmish at Kilmichael. It's worth noting therefore that our revisionists are certainly not pacifists or anti-war. It seems they are just against little Irish wars that succeed.

Frank seems to have had this stern quality naturally and he always remained something of a man apart from other Republicans because of this. He is not buried in Cork's Republican Plot. Maybe it was his Cromwellian heritage that gave him this quality. There is no Irish Clan Busted.

But there is one big flaw in the suggestion that Busted was responsible for Dunmanway: he would hardly have kept quiet about the operation all his life: he spoke of other executions he carried out – in detail - and gilded the lily somewhat. But one consistent element that appears in his execution accounts is that he made clear to those he executed, and others, why he was doing it – as befitted his personality - being frank by nature as well by name. If he executed the Dunmanway Protestants as spies he was very likely to have told them so in no uncertain terms rather than shouting at them about being Free Staters – which was about the most irrelevant fact about them in the circumstances. He would have justified the action, as he would have seen it as similar to what Collins had done to the Cairo Gang of British Intelligence operatives. Busted was not the kind of guy to hide his light under a bushel and he would have probably gloried in the exploit if it was a spy elimination exploit. But he never barked either.

Or have I gone deaf?

Sources and Professors

Of course, all this begs the question, again, about Hart's sources and omissions. Why did 'A.G.', 'A.E.', "B.B", "B.V." and "B.Y." among the approximately 60—no less—anonymous people interviewed for his book all feel the need to remain anonymous, over six decades after the events? As Hart cannot help us further with this, then surely the eminent Professors should help us now, nearly three decades later again. The book is based on a doctoral thesis. When supervising him, did they not enquire as to who any or all of these people were and verify their existence and evidence? After all, these anonymous sources were, from their numbers alone, crucial to his work and conclusions?

Were his informants involved in the events or were they providing him with just more hearsay? Let's hope Professors Fitzpatrick and Townshend help us while still 'in harness' and before they become Emeritus Professors or go to the Great History Department in the sky. Otherwise this debate comes to a dead end, unresolved, and they surely have some sense of responsibility in not allowing that to happen.

After rereading some of Hart again I now find that hardly a sentence or note in his book is trustworthy when put in its actual, original context and sources checked. And all of it was passed as gospel by our eminent Professors.

John Regan in his recent writings on this subject has highlighted the situation where these supervisors ignored their own published, contradictory, views on the issues raised by Hart and allowed him to indulge in what can only be described as a grotesque caricature of history writing – and of which they must have been aware. Regan is concerned that this has

disgraced Irish academic history writing. No doubt it has and he attributes it to the influence of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. He is being generous. What had Irish academic history writing ever contributed to the writing of modern Irish history by which this debacle of theirs could be compared and judged? Was there a period of worthwhile Irish academic history writing? There was nothing of the kind. The history of the Irish revolution was written by the participants. It did not come out of the Universities. We were fortunate to have so many 'historians by accident' to write it and make it real – and not, thank goodness - just another academic subject, and long may it remain free of that dead hand. They lived it and they made it live for their readers and it will outlast all academic work on the subject. The modern revisionists looked down their noses at these writings and assured us that they in their brave new world they would produce the proper history which they would get from ferreting around in the archives. And what we got was Peter Hart and his like! And neither did the critique and refutation of Hart come from where it originated in Irish universities. Those institutions defended him – and continue to defend him - to the bitter end.

Insofar as Irish academia produced anything on history it was the Free State view that predominated and that, at best, could only be a truncated version of the revolution. After them we had the dominance of T.D. Williams and Nicholas Mansergh who with their MI5 backgrounds continued to emasculate the history writing of the country. Williams must hold a world record for a non-publishing Professor. His successor, Mr. Ferriter, supplies historical tit-bits to the media on request.

I should probably declare an interest. I, like many others, trusted the undergraduate Hart and assisted him, glad that somebody new was taking an interest in the subjects he was dealing with. He betrayed this trust with his preconceived agenda and blatant abuse of facts. His supervisors by their silence are endorsing this betrayal.

Jack Lane

REVIEW: John Borgonovo—*The Battle For Cork, July-August 1922* (Mercier 2011)

An Academic Views The Treaty War In Cork

About half of this book is about responses to the 'Treaty' of December 1921, and the other half is about the short battle for Cork City in early August 1922. The battle for the City was short and bloodless because the military leader in the War of Independence decided not to contest the conquest by the Treatyite leaders of the part of the country allocated to them by the 'Treaty', despite the fact that the 'Treaty' was granted on the condition of disestablishing the Republic of 1919-21 and replacing it with a new State under the authority of the Crown.

That military leader was Sean O'Hegarty. O'Hegarty was closely associated in war and politics with Florrie O'Donoghue, who handled Intelligence during the War of Independence. O'Hegarty and O'Donoghue, who both rejected the 'Treaty', tried during the first half of 1922 to negotiate a compromise with the Treatyites by which the Republican Army would remain intact under a political arrangement which left the Treatyites free to go ahead with the amendment of the Dail Eireann Government into a Government which acknowledged the sovereignty of the Crown. The Treatyite Defence Minister, Richard Mulcahy, also said that it was his intention to maintain the unity of the IRA as the 'Treaty' was implemented, but at critical points he did not follow through on agreements.

O'Hegarty said he did not care what name the state had, as long as the substance of independence was maintained. He worked industriously and imaginatively on arrangements which enabled the Treatyites to go ahead with implementation of the 'Treaty', while preserving the Army whose proven fighting power was the only reason why Britain had offered the 'Treaty' terms.

When it became evident that the Treatyite leadership was driven by a will to war, and that no political expedient would divert it from the object of crushing the Republican Army, O'Hegarty and O'Donoghue resigned from the IRA. The replacement leadership then offered no effective resistance to the Treatyite invasion of early August.

The real story of the *Battle for Cork* is why there was nothing deserving the name of a battle. And that is the story of O'Hegarty and O'Donoghue, of which the reader could get no adequate idea from Borgonovo's cursory remarks.

There is a biography of O'Hegarty which goes into his actions in those crucial six or seven months after the 'Treaty'—Kevin Girvin's *Sean O'Hegarty, O/C First Cork Brigade, Irish Republican Army*, published by *Aubane*. Borgonovo does not refer to it, or even list it in his Bibliography, even though it is the only book on O'Hegarty, and O'Hegarty was indisputably the central figure in the Battle for Cork.

Borgonovo quotes a paragraph from O'Donoghue on the position of the Army in the State established in accordance with the electoral mandate of 1918:

"IRA officers in Munster remained incredulous that they were not consulted before the Treaty was submitted for ratification. Writing in 1929, Florrie O'Donoghue expressed this militarist view:

"The Army created Sinn Fein in the country: the Army created and controlled every national activity from 1916 to the truce of 1921. The Army was the deciding factor in the 1918 elections; it made and largely manned the Dail and the Government of the Republic. The Army put the Dail in power and kept it there; it directed and controlled every department of that government. The Army policy was the policy of the government. Everything else was subservient to it; it was the driving force of the whole movement for independence. To misunderstand this would be to misunderstand the whole position of the Army"..." (p28).

The reference for this is "*notes... on The American Commission..., papers of Terence MacSwiney's biographers, UCD*"—private notes written seven years after 1922, and therefore not a militarist view expressed in 1922 and influencing developments then.

But, (leaving aside the time warp), in what way is this view militarist? All I can see in it is a factual description of the part played by the military element in the development of the Independence movement as a consequence of the well-established British position that it would never concede Irish independence to a mere vote.

The Army was formed late in 1913, in support of Home Rule, in response to the formation of a Unionist Army to prevent the implementation of Home Rule, even if enacted by Parliament. It was in the first instance a Home Rule Army. It was formed independently of Redmond, but he demanded, and gained, control of it in 1914. When he urged enlistment in the British Army in September 1914, a small group split off and began to prepare for insurrection. The bulk of the Volunteers stayed with Redmond, and he held a great Review of them in 1915, at which belligerent speeches were made against the Unionist Volunteers, even though they were allies in the war on Germany and Turkey. (See Pat Walsh: *The Rise And Fall Of Imperial Ireland*.)

The Government, perhaps realistically, did not treat the split in the Volunteers as a substantial fact, and did not suppress the Volunteers who were preparing an insurrection, lest this should upset the Volunteers who were supporting it in the War. Thus Redmond's Volunteers provided cover for the 1916 Rising. After the Rising, it was around the survivals of the insurrectionary Volunteers that Sinn Fein was constructed into a viable political party as the Home Rule Party was undermined by the Conscription Act.

The new Sinn Fein party then won the Election and sent delegates to Paris to get Irish Independence recognised by the Powers that had just won the Great War for democracy and the rights of small nations. Britain vetoed Irish Independence at the Peace Conference and continued governing the country in defiance of the Election. And that, of course, made everything depend on the Volunteers once more.

That is the situation described by O'Donoghue seven years after he retired from the Army rather than engage in a war of resistance to the new Army authorised, financed and armed by Britain.

Neither that description, nor O'Donoghue's actions in 1922, could be described as "*militarist*" without a gross perversion of language. Perhaps Borgonovo has evidence which he does not present that O'Donoghue was militarist, but to the best of my knowledge O'Donoghue's attitude, especially in 1922, was the opposite of militarist. It was not even military.

Militarism—a preference for military action as a means of dealing with a problem when other means are available—was, however, strongly present in the Treatyite approach. (I use the term "*militarism*" as I have seen it used over many decades, but I looked up some dictionaries to assure myself that I had not picked it up wrong. (I am uneducated after all.) Here is what I found. *Shorter Oxford*: "the attachment of (undue) importance to military values and military strength". *New Oxford*: "the belief or desire of a government or people that a country should maintain a strong military capability and be prepared to use it aggressively to defend or promote national interests". *New Penguin*: "a policy of aggressive military preparedness; the glorification of military virtues and ideals".)

A better case might be made that O'Hegarty sometimes tended towards militarism. It would be superficial, but the case with regard to O'Donoghue is not even that. O'Hegarty made his views on the 'Treaty' known to Cork TDs during the weeks between the signing of the document at the orders of Lloyd George and Dail discussion of it. Cathal Brugha, who was still Minister for Defence at the time, instructed the Chief of Staff, Mulcahy, to censure him:

"This officer requires some enlightening as to the scope of his duties. You will now kindly define those duties for him and inform him that sending reminders to public representatives pointing out what he, or those under him, consider those representatives should do in crises like the present in not one of them..."

But O'Hegarty would not accept censure on the point. He wrote to the Divisional Adjutant on 19 December 1921:

"The circumstances cannot be judged as the ordinary political variations of a settled country. Here is no ordinary change. What is contemplated in these proposals is more than that. It is the upsetting of the constitution—the betrayal of the Republic. Who better than those who fought to maintain it have a right in this crisis to uphold the Republic; to make clear to those who have the decisions in this matter what their duty is..." (see Kevin Girvin, *Sean O'Hegarty*, p92-3).

Girvin comments:

"In the past, the IRA had distanced itself from... politics in general. However, the signing of the Treaty saw the Volunteers becoming actively involved in the issue... There was military interference on behalf of both sides with resolutions—either pro- or anti-Treaty—being passed throughout the country..." (p95).

In May 1922 this was O'Hegarty's view of the conduct of the Dail:

"For six months they have indulged themselves in bitter verbal attacks against each other, while failing to achieve anything constructive... The country was heading towards war and, if a solution was to be found, it would come from the Army and not from the politicians..." (p95).

This was said while O'Hegarty was engaged in an Army initiative that almost brought the Dail together in defence of its Constitution, but which failed because the will to war prevailed in the Treatyite leadership.

Can all this be reasonably described as "*militarism*" on O'Hegarty's part—a preference for military action over political action? Is it not the duty of the soldier, as Brugha said, to be an obedient instrument of the Government of the day, and to act in response to orders without questioning the reason why?

That is certainly what is said in *kindergarten* textbooks on Constitutional government, but it is not the way of the world. And it is not the way of the actual British Constitution, even though the *kindergarten* textbooks are usually drawn from propagandist ideological versions of that Constitution.

Nine years before O'Hegarty asserted the right of the Army to play an active part in the Constitutional crisis precipitated by the signing of the dictated 'Treaty' by the negotiating team without the authority of the Government and in defiance of Government instructions, the British Army killed Home Rule by indicating that it would not obey Government orders in the implementation of a Home Rule Act. That was the Curragh Mutiny. Open mutiny was warded off by negotiation behind the scenes. The War Minister sacrificed his political career by giving the Army officers an undertaking that was at variance with declared Government policy and then he resigned. The guarantee he gave the Army averted an Army crisis, and his resignation excused the Government from formal responsibility for the guarantee though nobody doubted that the guarantee would hold. The appearance of mutiny was averted by pre-emptive appeasement, but everybody knew that there had been a successful mutiny by means of which the Army exerted a critical influence on the Constitution.

The matter was debated in Parliament. The Liberal (Government) backbenches were outraged and recited the *kindergarten* view of the soldiers' duty of blind obedience. The Opposition (Unionist) upheld the citizen rights of the soldier in matters which affected the Constitutional integrity of the State. And the foremost Constitutional authority of the era, Dicey (whose writings are not yet obsolete), published a pamphlet upholding a right of rebellion against a Government which, on the basis of its fleeting authority, was subverting the Constitution.

A little over two years later the Unionist rebels became the Government under stress of the war on Germany launched by the Liberal Government with active Home Rule support, and the Liberal Party began to disintegrate. In 1918 a Home Rule MP, J.J. Horgan, published a selection of statements made by Unionist leaders in the course of this 1914 rebellion calling it *The Grammar Of Anarchy*. (I reprinted it as an issue of *A Belfast*

Magazine some years ago.) The *Grammar* was suppressed by the Government which was led by the 1914 rebels. Home Rule MPs asked why Government Ministers were now suppressing a collection of their own words as seditious. The question was treated as a pettifogging debating point.

The Unionist case in 1914 for raising an extra-Parliamentary force to defy the will of Parliament was that the Parliamentary majority that was changing the Constitution was not a majority based within the Constitution. The Government Party was equal in size to the Opposition. It got the Parliamentary majority, that enabled it to enact drastic Constitutional changes, from the 80 MPs of the Home Rule Party, which was not a Constitutional Party—a party which participated in the politics of the Constitution with the aim of governing the state. The aim of the Home Rule Party lay outside the British Constitution, and it was manipulating the Parliamentary situation for that purpose. The changes which Parliament made to the Constitution at the behest of, or with the support of, that force from outside the Constitution, were therefore unconstitutional and should be opposed by extra-Parliamentary force. (The main changes were the Parliament Act and the Home Rule Bill.)

When I wrote about that affair in the 1970s I concluded that, within the terms of the British Constitution, the Unionists had made their case. British opinion shifted towards them in the course of the conflict (1912-14). And William O'Brien, who had broken the Home Rule Party in Cork (City and County) in the 1910 Elections had a realistic (as distinct from a debating-point) understanding of the British Constitution, and warned that playing the British parties against each other by an Irish party would not succeed, and he refused to take part in it.

Since I concluded that the Unionists had a Constitutional case for anti-Parliamentary action in the matter of the Curragh Mutiny, I can hardly deny that O'Hegarty had a case when he asserted the right of the Army to have a say in the matter of the 'Treaty' and the Dail Constitution.

The Army is the basic institution of the state—of any state, other than pretend states like Liechtenstein. And, because of what the Army does, it is necessary that it should feel secure of its position in the State, and know what State it is that it serves.

The Army crisis in Britain in 1914—taking the Army to refer only to land forces—was something very unusual, because the main military force of the British State was the Navy. Navy personnel were over many generations closely interwoven with the functioning of the State. A conflict between the Government and the Navy could scarcely be imagined. (I have tried, without success, to interest what there is of an Irish intelligentsia in Maurice Hankey, the Navy man who had spied out the Ottoman Empire for war before becoming Secretary of the most sensitive Government committee, the Committee of Imperial Defence, through which preparations for the Great War were made. He then became Secretary of the War Cabinet. And, after the War, he became the first ever Cabinet Secretary.)

The Army had exceptional importance in 1914 because of the detailed preparations that had been made in secret to place it alongside the French Army for war with Germany. The officers at the Curragh were indispensable to the war plans of the Government. When the apparent determination of the minority Liberal Government to press ahead with Irish Home Rule made them feel uncertain about the State they served, there was nothing for it but to appease them so that they might become happy Jingoese once again.

The existence of the British state was not at stake in 1914. All that was at stake was further expansion of the Empire. If the Army had not been appeased, and the Government

was unable to launch the war that it had planned, Britain would still have remained one of the most powerful states in the world—in fact the most powerful—and it would possibly have had a longer innings as a Great Power if it had been unable to launch the Great War. What was at stake in Ireland following the signing of the Treaty by Collins was the existence of the State which the Republican Army served, and which could not have been established, when the British democracy decided to take no heed of the Irish vote, but for the prior existence of the Republican Army.

When Brugha ordered O'Hegarty to be censured he acted within a structure of formal authority whose basis had been put under question by the 'Treaty'. Six months later he died fighting the 'Treaty' authorities, while O'Hegarty, having seen those six months wasted by the politicians, declared neutrality in the Treaty War in order to preserve something Republican from destruction.

Mulcahy, who replaced Brugha as Defence Minister, said it was his object to keep the Republican Army in being. At first he supported the calling of an Army Convention for this purpose, but then he banned the Convention. The Convention was held regardless (late March). Borgonovo comments: "*In defying the government ban, they had essentially repudiated their fealty to the civilian authority*" (p17).

"*Civilian authority*" was in utter confusion at that juncture. The elected Government of a Republic, whose actual existence had been made possible by the Republican Army, had been replaced by a "*Provisional Government*", functioning on British authority within the sovereignty of the Crown. British authority was conferred when the small majority which supported the 'Treaty' in the Dail met under Crown authority as the *Parliament of Southern Ireland*, which was also attended by a number of Unionists elected by the elite electorate of Trinity College.

The Provisional Government claimed a kind of double mandate, Irish as well as British. It had got its small majority in the Dail before meeting, along with others, as the Parliament of Southern Ireland, to ratify the 'Treaty'. (The Dail, not being recognised by Britain, could not have ratified the "*Treaty*", although Borgonovo says that it did, page 34.)

While saying that the Army repudiated "*fealty*" to the civilian authority by meeting without the approval of that authority, Borgonovo also concedes that "*the state's constitutional status was open to question*" (p34). So what the Army refused "*fealty*" to was a questionable civilian authority.

Now the 'Treaty' leaders did gain a majority in the Dail before going on to have British authority conferred on them in another assembly, and that fact has been presented as the founding act of democratic legitimacy by many recent writers, headed by Professor Garvin. On the other hand, Professor Garvin had ridiculed the idea that the Dail elected in 1918 was a democratic assembly at all. As far as I recall, he described it as a facade on the Army, largely constructed by election rigging. It had no democratic legitimacy from January 1919 to December 1921, when it acted by consensus in the construction of Republican government, but it acquired morally binding legitimacy in January 1922 when a small majority agreed, under threat of British reconquest, to replace the Republic with a new Government under the authority of the Crown. (And this suddenly legitimised democratic assembly had been renewed in the 1921 Election without a single vote having been cast for it, none of the seats having been contested against the Republicans.)

Going beyond Constitutional formalities to Constitutional substance: this Crown Government—with which a Dail majority agreed to replace the Republic—did not have the

means of governing by its own resources. It did not have an Army. The Army which had made it possible to give effect to the electoral decision to establish a Republic was not available for the replacement of the Republic by a Crown Government.

We are told that Collins was the practical man of action who saw the substance of things. He had taken the affairs of state into his own hands in early December 1921 with his decision to sign the 'Treaty' without submitting it to his Government, and to browbeat his colleagues in London to do likewise. It has been suggested that he was right to do this as the Irish Government was only make-believe. And yet it turned out very quickly that Collins, the strong leader who had no patience with constitutional quibbles, had lost the Army—because the Army took itself in earnest as the servant and protector of the Republican Constitution. All Collins could retrieve from the Volunteer Army was a cadre around which to construct a paid Army (with British support), whose only obvious purpose was to break the Volunteer Army that had fought the war against Britain. And he gained that cadre by persuading some Volunteers that he was accepting the Treaty only in order to acquire the means of breaking it before too long.

And so, in the Summer of 1922, Collins had to use the Army, that Britain enabled him to form, to conquer the country from the Army that had fought Britain and obliged it to negotiate. In June Britain insisted that he should do this, and he was in no position to refuse.

Midway through the development from the "*Treaty of Peace*" to "*Civil War*", De Valera said that the majority has no right to be wrong, and "*there are rights which a minority may justly uphold, even by arms, against a majority*". In recent times this has been held to be a disgraceful statement, despite the many instances in which the truth of it is not questioned. The British Unionist Party acted on that principle and was proved right in the only way in which such a thing is ever proved. Within three years it had got the better of the majority that it said was doing wrong.

France declared war on Germany in 1939 and lost it in 1940. When it lost, it made a settlement with Germany and the Parliament elected a new Government to operate this settlement. This was done by a Parliament whose electoral credentials are unquestionable, and there is no serious doubt that it accorded with the will of the populace. Britain took no account of the will of the French in the matter. It denounced it as wrong, scorning the notion that head counting determined right and wrong.

As the Treaty dispute dragged on, and as Free State power was built up, there is little doubt that the majority became willing to settle for the Treaty. But it never became an overwhelming majority, a consensus majority, such as the majority for the Republic had been in 1919-21. And De Valera proved himself right by overturning the Treaty majority within ten years, and challenging it from a position of equality within five, causing Treatyism to undermine itself by the means to which it clung to office in the last five years.

Borgonovo finds it necessary to speculate about the killing of a number of Protestants in Dunmanway in April 1922:

"Though Cork Protestants largely escaped the 1920-21 conflict intact, the spectre of religious war hovered over Munster in 1922. In the first half of that year, savage sectarian violence struck Ulster, and it seemed possible that the province's Catholic population might be expelled. This left Cork Protestants vulnerable to possible IRA retaliation. In April, Cork's leading Protestant merchants publicly denounced anti-Catholic violence in Northern Ireland, but were careful to point out,

“We have not been subjected to any form of oppression or injustice by our Catholic fellow citizens...” [*Cork Constitution*, 5 April 1922.]

"Fear increased at the end of April, following the brutal assassination of ten Protestants in the Bandon Valley. Over three consecutive nights, unknown IRA gunmen visited at least a dozen homes on their own list of Unionist enemies. The unauthorised killings drove out at least 100 Cork Protestants... Public bodies... condemned the killings, as did Catholic and Protestant clerics. The situation eased only after IRA leaders vowed to protect local Protestants... Tom Hales... threatened publicly to execute any IRA Volunteers involved in new attacks. City Unionists were further frightened in June, when a delegation of homeless Belfast Catholics asked Cork Corporation to seize Protestant homes to provide accommodation for the scores of refugees in the city. In these months, sectarian anxiety peaked in Cork, as the county peered into the abyss of religious warfare before slowly backing away.

"Gerard Murphy's recent book... argues that Cork Protestants were the target of an IRA killing spree in March, April and May 1922. Murphy's charges of IRA mass murder are unproven and unconvincing. It should be emphasised that these supposed killings are not mentioned in British government, Irish government, Northern Ireland government, IRA, Free State Army, Catholic or Protestant records; the families of those so-called 'disappeared' did not protest or make inquiries..., nor did they apply for compensation for their deaths. Dozens of people do not disappear without any mention in the public record. As such, Murphy's claims must be discounted without written proof..." (p36-7).

The notion conveyed by these paragraphs is that the mass killing of Protestants was contemplated by Cork Republicans or Nationalists or Catholics during the Spring and early Summer of 1922, but the thought was not put into effect, except for the killing of ten Protestants by IRA men in Dunmanway. After that initial action, the campaign of killing was stopped in its tracks when the leader of Cork No. 3 Brigade, Tom Hales, threatened to execute IRA men "*involved in new attacks*". Gerard Murphy's contention, in *The Year Of Disappearances*, that many more Protestants were killed during those months of "*sectarian anxiety*", on the verge of "*the abyss of religious warfare*", must be discounted because of the lack of bodies or written proof. The thought of genocide was not followed by the deed—or at least the deed did not continue after Tom Hales threatened to kill any future killers. (Hales is not quoted, and I don't know if Borghonovo's paraphrase, which suggests that Hales took it that the killing already done was by the IRA, is accurate.)

Now, if that actually was the situation in Cork between the Treaty and the 'Civil War', I think Murphy should be congratulated for focussing attention on it, even if he exaggerated by assuming that the impulse to genocide led to actual genocide and was not careful enough in his search for bodies. A genocidal impulse that generated a public atmosphere of sectarian anxiety on the brink of an abyss of action would have been a serious element in the situation, even though there were only ten killings.

But I did not gather, either from what I heard when I was young or from what I could find out later, that the situation in Cork in 1922 was characterised by a suppressed genocidal impulse. The Protestants who remained, the residue of the ruling caste of three centuries, were certainly anxious. When they were courted ten years earlier (after the Land Act) by the All-For-Ireland League, and it was put to them that there was a place for them as country gentlemen in the national movement, they did not respond. A couple of years later they were confronted with the raw Redmondism of the Home Rule Party that had gained the balance-

of-power at Westminster, but were saved by the Unionist Party and the Great War. They came home from the Great War, only to be confronted by Sinn Fein. But, with the experience of centuries to guide them, they were confident that England would find a way of seeing off Sinn Fein—as it had seen off many threatening movements in the past. When the Republican movement held firm and the Irish showed an unprecedented capacity for sustained warfare, they went into shock.

But, in the end, England did save them from a fate worse than death. The terms of the Treaty, which would have appalled them two years earlier, came as a relief to them. The *Church Of Ireland Gazette*, a very political publication, became an ardent supporter of the Dail the moment it subordinated itself to the 'Treaty' and it became a player in the Irish game on the basis of the aspect of the Treaty that seemed to guarantee a British future. But I do not know that this fact generated anti-Protestantism amongst the Irish. The Treaty split was very much a split amongst the Irish, with the Protestants who remained Unionist becoming a small, though wealthy, attachment to the Treatyite cause. And Moylan's fearsome threat, grossly misrepresented by Peter Hart, was a threat that no mercy would be shown towards Loyalists who supported a British attempt at re-conquest. It was not directed at Protestants, many of whom were onside with Moylan.

The Protestants who remained Unionists, even as they seized upon the Treaty as a lifeline, were faced with the end of their world, and that was naturally a matter of great anxiety for one of the great historic ruling classes of the Western world. And, if they anticipated genocidal action against themselves by the natives, that would have been a reasonable expectation on the assumption that the natives would act as they themselves had acted during the centuries since the Williamite Conquest and the enactment of the Penal Laws.

It is not an easy thing to have been bred to rule, with a lineage stretching back over three centuries, only to be subjected to the rule of those whom it was your destiny to rule over and guide into the ways of civilisation. And for this to happen while Bolshevism was showing the masses how they should deal with the classes naturally gave rise to dire anticipations. (The *Church Of Ireland Gazette* was predisposed by its own mode of understanding to see Sinn Fein as a kind of Bolshevism.) But that there was something in the political conduct of the native population, as it shrugged off this distinguished ruling caste, which gave positive grounds for the sectarian anxiety of that caste, is something that remains to be shown. Borgonovo does not show it.

The ten killings in Dunmanway, which he asserts as evidence of it, is mere assertion—as unsupported by "*written proof*" as anything asserted by Murphy.

He says that the killings were done by "*unknown IRA gunmen*". So this is an unknown known in Donald Rumsfeld's categories—or is it a known unknown? He gives no clue as to how he knows that it was *unknown IRA gunmen* that did it. In a reference note he says that there are "*two different interpretations*" of the killings but does not say what they are—he just mentions publications by Peter Hart, Meda Ryan and Jasper Ungood-Thomas, telling us that the latter "*argues that the killings were political rather than sectarian*". Does this imply that Hart and Ryan were in agreement that they were sectarian - and that all three agree that "*unknown IRA men*" were responsible and present evidence that proves it?

Then there is the list that the 'unknown IRA gunmen' had—a known list held by unknown gunmen.

Consider these three sentences:

"Fear increased at the end of April, following the brutal assassination of ten Protestants in the Bandon Valley. Over three consecutive nights, unknown IRA gunmen visited at least a dozen homes on their own list of Unionist enemies. The unauthorised killings drove out at least 100 Cork Protestants..."

Do all three sentences refer to the same event? Not necessarily so according to the grammar, but they will be read as doing so.

Was it Protestants or Unionists who were killed? It is no answer to say that they were both. If they were killed as Protestants, that is one thing, if as Unionists that is another. In the War of Independence a great many Catholics were killed by the IRA. They were not killed because they were Catholics. They were killed because they acted as agents of the Union state, after that state had been democratically delegitimised. They were not exempted on sectarian grounds from punishment as armed enemies of the democratic Government, nor were Protestant agents of the Union state killed because they were Protestants. Catholics and Protestants were required to observe the democratic legitimacy of the Irish Government and were punished indiscriminately if they made war on it.

The appalling thing about the party elected to govern Ireland in 1918, from the viewpoint of the British Protestant caste which had ruled in Ireland for three centuries, was not that it killed Protestants, but that it took itself seriously as a state and punished those who acted against it in the service of the British state, whether they were Protestants or Catholics; and that the best efforts of the British State during three years of intense effort failed to break it down into a Catholic *Jacquerie*.

Sectarian propaganda during those years came from the British side. The sectarian fact that so many of the police who were being killed as active enemies of the Republic were Catholics was stressed as if it was relevant to the political issue, and that fact has also been given currency in the revisionist propaganda of recent years. That sectarian approach, which had little effect on the course of politics then, has had more effect in the debasement of history in its revival. The War of Independence is now widely depicted as a Catholic *Jacquerie* by historians trained in Professor Fitzpatrick's Trinity Workshop, and there is a desperate search for facts, or at least something remotely like facts, to support it. But, if it had been a Catholic *Jacquerie* it would have been the kind of thing that Britain knew how to handle—and it would not have targeted that solid body of good Catholics that Britain had shaped to its service in Ireland: the RIC.

Borgonovo's statement that unknown IRA gunmen with a known list of Unionist enemies brutally assassinated ten Protestants in the Bandon Valley is made in the same paragraph in which he says that Cork, in a condition of sectarian anxiety, peered into the abyss of religious warfare.

The "*Bandon Valley*" is an imprecise location, suggesting that the killings were dispersed over an area. In fact they were done within a small radius, more informatively described as Dunmanway.

These killings were done on April 27th-28th. On April 26th three British officers on Intelligence duty were arrested in Macroom which, like Dunmanway, is in West Cork. They were taken to Macroom Castle and shot. A British Army company, commanded by the future General Montgomery, came to Macroom Castle, demanding their release. There was a stand-off between the British Army and the IRA, which ended with Montgomery backing off. There were heated exchanges in the House of Commons about the affair but the Government cooled it down.

In the course of describing some of this, Borgonovo makes that statement, which I find puzzling, that the arrest of the British spies—soldiers not in uniform gathering information—was "*a clear violation of the Truce*" (p38). I would have thought that the Truce had been superseded by the 'Treaty'. Britain made an Agreement with a section of Sinn Fein—which up to that point it had never regarded as anything but a bunch of rebels—and was actively building it up to be an Irish Government under the Crown. The purpose of the Truce was to suspend hostilities while negotiations were undertaken. After the Dail complied with the 'Treaty' in January, the British concern was to establish a new Army in Ireland which was dependent on it and whose only practical purpose was to break up the Republican Army. But, whatever may have been the formality of the matter, the section of the IRA which was forming a new Army under the terms of the 'Treaty' was no longer in a relationship of Truce with Britain, but was in active political and military collaboration with it. And, in this context, it is surely a matter of relevance to the Dunmanway affair that on the day before the night/early morning the killings started the British Intelligence Service and the British army were active not many miles away in Macroom?

Borgonovo's reference note says there were "*two different interpretations*" of the Dunmanway killings. He does not say what they are, but apparently suggests that they were put by Peter Hart and Meda Ryan on the one hand and Jasper Ungoed-Thomas on the other. But surely he must know that there is a third "*interpretation*": the suggestion put by Owen Sheridan that the killings might have been the work of British Intelligence, with the purpose of provoking religious war and justifying a revocation of the 'Treaty' concessions, which certain elements—*militarists*—saw as a first retreat from Imperial power which could only encourage disintegration.

However "*interpretation*" is not the word for suggestions about responsibility for the Dunmanway killings. "*Speculation*" is the word. There is no evidence to interpret. In fact the distinctive thing about that event, as compared with any other event, is the entire absence of evidence. All that is known is the bare fact of the killings. And the speculation that they were the work of British Intelligence is, with regard to the entire absence of evidence, even the evidence of local rumour, certainly not less plausible than Borgonovo's speculation (which he presents as a known fact) that the killings were done by unknown IRA men with a known list of Protestants—or was it Unionists?

The British presence is missing from Borgonovo's account of the War, apart from an incidental reference to action by the Royal Navy (which continued to be based in Cobh) in support of the Treatyites. But the development from "*Treaty*" to "*Civil War*" is not comprehensible if the conflict is taken to have come about through disagreement between Irish parties acting autonomously.

A couple of years ago I commented on a statement by Borgonovo that the 'Treaty' conflict was foreshadowed by divisions within Sinn Fein during the War of Independence. I had been able to find no such divisions in 1919-21 and concluded that the 1922 division as brought about by the partial British concession backed by a ferocious ultimatum. I looked in this book for some argument that the 'Treaty' division was the working out of a division that had been suppressed in 1919-21, but there isn't any.

If independence had been achieved, differences would no doubt have arisen over how the State should be conducted, but independence had not been achieved, and the difference that arose had to do entirely with the British threat of barbaric war on the lines of the war in South Africa twenty years earlier. Redmondite and West British remnants attached

themselves to the Treatyites. But these elements, though wealthy, had little or no influence on Sinn Fein politics before the 'Treaty'. They jumped on the 'Treaty' bandwagon, but they had not set it rolling.

Borgonovo writes that, in the Spring of 1922:

"Only three options lay open to Cork Republicans: to secure a compromise with their pro-Treaty opponents that satisfied their principles; to re-launch the war with the British to unify the country; or to physically resist the Free State" (p33).

But it was not on the issue of unification that the British ultimatum was active. It was on the issue of the relationship of the 26 Counties with Britain. Partition figured marginally in the Treaty Debates. It was an accomplished fact, which all accepted with a degree of *de facto* resignation. And the ending of it was not something that might simply be conceded by Westminster. British policy over the centuries had brought about a situation which the British Government could not simply conjure away in the early 20th century.

And Partition was not the issue on which the 26 Counties was driven to 'Civil War'. Lest we forget, the issue was the Oath to the Crown. And that was something that Britain might have abolished with the stroke of a pen.

The Cork Republicans tried their best to "*secure a compromise with their pro-Treaty opponents that satisfied their principles*". And their pro-Treaty opponents tried their best to arrange that compromise. But every compromise initiative was thwarted by the inflexible will to war in Whitehall, which at every critical juncture determined the action of the Treatyites in Dublin. And when Collins fired the first shot, it was under threat that, if he did not do so, the British Army—which had not gone away—would take command of Dublin immediately. Such was our 'Civil War'.

Britain was not going to have in the Irish State, however Oath-bound, the Army that had fought it and driven it to the negotiating table.

Brendan Clifford

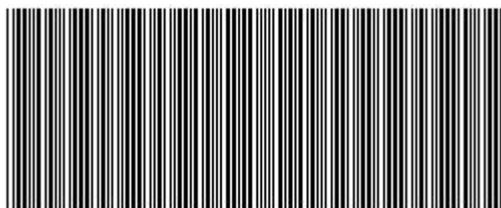
Seán O'Hegarty, O/C First Cork Brigade, Irish Republican Army by *Kevin Girvin*. Index. 248pp. ISBN 978-1-903497-30-2. Aubane Historical Society. 2007. **€20, £15**

Propaganda as Anti-History: Peter Hart's 'The IRA and its enemies' examined. *Owen Sheridan*. 100pp. ISBN 978-1-903497-41-8. AHS, 2008. **€15, £10**.

Troubled History: A 10th Anniversary Critique Of *The IRA & Its Enemies* by Brian Murphy, OSB and Niall Meehan. Introduction Ruan O'Donnell. 48pp. ISBN 978-1-903497-46-3. AHS. May 2008. **€10, £7**.

The Rise And Fall Of Imperial Ireland. Redmondism In The Context Of Britain's War Of Conquest Of South Africa And Its Great War On Germany, 1899-1916 by *Pat Walsh*. 594pp. Index. ISBN 1 0 85034 105 1. AB, 2003. **€24, £18.99**.

Northern Ireland What Is It? Professor Mansergh Changes His Mind by *Brendan Clifford*. 278pp. Index. ISBN 978-1-874157-25-0. A Belfast Magazine No. 38. 2011. **€18, £15**



ISBN 978-1-903497-71-5
Aubane Historical Society
April 2012