

Ned Young—last of the 'Boys of Kilmichael'

THE last of the "Boys of Kilmichael," Captain Ned Young, formerly of Kilbarry Road, Dunmanway, but in latter years resident at Wilton Road in Cork, passed away at his home on Monday. The anniversary of the famous ambush led by Tom Barry will be celebrated on Sunday week, two days before the actual date of the fight, "The twenty-eighth day of November."



The late Ned Young, Dunmanway.

Born into a great Dohenys G.A.A. family in 1892, it was inevitable, as it was for many G.A.A. followers, to become involved in the fight for independence, as a member of the Third West Cork Brigade, Old I.R.A., and as a member of the Flying Column in 1920. For many years, he was a familiar figure at the Kilmichael commemoration. Now with but some days to go to the event, he will be remembered with the other republican dead who have gone before him on Slighe na Firinne.

WAS GREAT

His brother, Jack Young, was a great G.A.A. player in his time, and won a football All-Ireland for Cork against Antrim, and Jack's sons were later to win All-Irelands in hurling and football. Ned and his family contributed much to Dohenys in football and Glen Rovers in hurling. Many is the time we re- member Ned the fiery enthusiast urging on his team, knowing only

that the Dohenys were best, but withal, it was great to chat and reminisce with him after a game.

FOR YEARS

Ned Young played hurling and football with the Dohenys for almost thirty years and was president of the Dohenys Hurling and Football Clubs for many years. His sons, Leo, Edda and John, also played a lot of hurling and football with the Dohenys and Glen Rovers.

His daughter, Finola, played camogie and badminton.

The late Captain Young is also survived by his wife, Catherine (nee O'Hea) of Kilbrittain, grand- children, son-in-law, daughters-in-law, nephews and nieces.

Deceased was Life President of the Ballabuidhe Doheny Home Week Association.

Troubled History

A 10th anniversary critique of Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies*

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and
Niall Meehan

Introduction by
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Cover shows *Southern Star*, November 18, 1989, report of the death of the last surviving participant in the Kilmichael Ambush. *The IRA and its Enemies* (1998) reports an interview with a participant one day later.

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Introduction

Conflict and silence in Irish History

Foundation myths and silences are common in histories of states. Ireland was one of many countries obliged to take the hard road out of empire at the considerable cost of alienating persons who did not subscribe to the majority vision of a shared future in a new entity. Less typical is the extraordinary lapse intervening the attainment of partial independence in the 'South' and scholarly reflection on the nature and meaning of resurrected nationhood. Key levers of the revolutionary process, not least the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Clan na Gael and various incarnations of the Volunteers, have not yet generated an adequate bibliography, let alone mature historiography. The significance of the 1916 Rising remains undetermined but this theme will undoubtedly inspire healthy exchanges as the centenary draws near. The angry spectre of Civil War history looms in the distance and few have ventured opinion as to the probable scale and shape of that controversy. This hiatus may prove beneficial, as a serious reassessment of 1922-23 will draw heavily on the firming up of the knowledge base upon which the arguments must ultimately come to rest.

The War of Independence is remarkably under researched in terms of in-depth studies for such a seminal transition in the history of Ireland. This may reflect hesitancy on the part of academics to offer leadership in the development of the topic. A comprehensive survey would entail a full examination of the impact of 1916, the birth of the Irish Republican Army and the armed struggle between 1919 and 1921. To the detriment of all Irish people and the political relationship between these islands, thirty-two counties entered the fray and only twenty-six emerged. Accounting for this anomaly, in the context of renewed IRA campaigns to resolve the unfinished business of partition was bound to present ideological challenges. Aftershocks of the Civil War divide reverberated during the Arms Trial when it was confirmed that powerful forces believed that nothing had been agreed in the frustrated Republic. In the arena of nations, everything must be agreed or otherwise resolved. The public mind was agitated in 1972 and manifested its will by razing the British Embassy in unusual circumstances.

If the traditional lapse of thirty years is observed before serious academic work is carried out on a given period, the intricacies of partition and the War of Independence should have been thoroughly examined in the 1950s. The field remained fallow, other than a disparate brace of colourful memoirs produced by Anvil Press. Allowing for the lag in the development of free secondary education in the Irish Republic and initially slow rate of growth in the tertiary sector, one might have expected an avalanche of theses and publications on Ireland's emergence from the British Empire by the late 1960s or early 1970s. The re-eruption of the Troubles came in their stead.

Archival access presented a real but by no means insuperable obstacle to pioneering researchers and there may have been more than administrative reasons for the long retention of the rich vein of testimony contained in the Bureau of Military History. The growing appeal of histories written from a social and economic perspective in the late 1970s should also have stimulated vital new analysis of Ireland's two jurisdictions. If anything, the potentially valuable 'revisionist' trend distracted attention from the political character of the quest for equality and self-determination in Ireland. All too often, opportunist bouts of iconoclasm masqueraded as serious comment. Knowledge and understanding of the Irish revolution witnessed few advances at a time when the resurgent IRA featured nightly on the news.

A ‘modern’ secondary level curriculum that, until recently, ignored the Civil War and glossed over the experience of partition for Northern Nationalists was demonstrably unconcerned with informed debate. At least school children in the ‘South’ learned something of their own country while many of their compatriots in the ‘North’ studied genealogies of British monarchs. However flawed as an intellectual exercise, the essentially beneficial pursuit of historical ‘truth’ was discouraged by successive governments that probably feared what could be uncovered. Latent analogies of revolutionary expression were seemingly too close to the bone to be countenanced. This, at least, represented an honest programme of obfuscation, denial and omission, fully in keeping with a vitiated political culture that tolerated the myopic censorship of Section 31 and juryless courts. Irish universities were largely silent on historical matters that were within their purview and, if anything, increasingly relevant.

While Down’s Mountains of Mourne are visible from the foothills of South Dublin, the educational establishment and national media of the capital preferred to discuss the ‘North’ as little as possible and as if it were a place apart. No doubt a sound strategic rationale for this was clear to those who wished to contain the war in that sector at any price, including jeopardizing the final status of the Six Counties. Unfortunately for this tendency, the IRA was not defeated by the British military and the SDLP failed to attain the strength necessary to carry an internal settlement. The 1981 Hunger Strike shattered the delusions of the isolationists whose misguided efforts helped doom the country to a second generation of conflict. Eventually, the tortuous Peace Process advanced to the point of delivering an internationally validated interim settlement in 1998. Much of the architecture of repression has now been dismantled and the unfamiliar boon of political stability has engendered a more progressive and open-minded environment in which historical studies have flourished.

The early ‘Troubles’ are only now starting to produce a critical mass of scholarship from contributors based in Ireland, Britain, North America and beyond. Several factors are driving this output, including unprecedented Irish state investment in postgraduate scholarship, improved archival resources and more liberal access. Public interest sustains the endeavour with sufficient vigour to create bestsellers and to encourage feature length cinema offerings. For many years, non-academic and ‘amateur’ historians operated in something of a void left by the strangely disinterested tenured professionals in the universities. This is no longer the case and the emergent new research matrix encompasses local, regional and biographical work, organizational and military histories, hagiography and character assassination, national and international perspectives and much more. In short, the deficit is finally being addressed.

Unsurprisingly, the highly contentious nature of the revolutionary period has found an echo in the hostile tenor present in some of the debates between scholars. Questions of interpretation are inevitable in such dialogues and important issues have also arisen in relation to the reliability of certain classes of historical evidence. Something of the heat of these clashes stems, in all probability, from proximity to ‘the Long War’. Connections between 1922 and 1998 are obviously more profound than the mere repetition of nomenclature and re-articulation of slogans but contemporary judgements on this issue must, as yet, remain tentative. It is to be hoped that a fuller and more nuanced grasp of Irish history will emerge from the new histories of the new Ireland. This pamphlet is intended to take a small step in that direction.

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Troubles in Irish History

A 10th anniversary critique of
The IRA and its Enemies

by Niall Meehan

'Similar campaigns of what might be termed 'ethnic cleansing' were waged in parts of Kings and Queens Counties, South Tipperary, Leitrim, Mayo, Limerick, Westmeath, Louth and Cork. Worst of all was the massacre of 14 men in West Cork in April [1922], after an IRA officer had been killed breaking into a house.'

Peter Hart, Historian, *The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Ireland*, in Richard English and Graham Walker (ed), *Unionism in Modern Ireland*, 1996: 92. Also, *The IRA at War*, 2003: 237

[Mary] Kenny engages in.... revisionism of mythology, using original research by Newfoundland historian Peter Hart, to point out that in their struggle for independence, the IRA engaged in "ethnic cleansing" of Protestants.

Richard Gwynn, *The Toronto Star*, April 6, 1997

The campaign of terror waged against Protestants in the Bandon valley in County Cork was never in our textbooks, though our classrooms were only a matter of miles away. In fact, I had to wait until a Canadian academic, Peter Hart, produced his exceptional 'The IRA and its Enemies' before I learnt the extent of "ethnic cleansing" in my own home country.

Fergal Keane, OBE, BBC journalist, *The Independent* (London), May 5, 2001

I have never argued that "ethnic cleansing" took place in Cork or elsewhere in the 1920s - in fact, quite the opposite.

Peter Hart, Historian, *The Irish Times* (Dublin), June 28, 2006¹

¹ Letter to *The Irish Times*, written in response to a letter from the author. See author's original, the author's response to Hart and response from John Borgonovo, *The Irish Times*, June 23, July 3, 14, 2006. The correspondence is also reproduced at <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/76966>.

Was the Irish War of Independence from 1919-21, that resulted in independence for 26 of Ireland's 32 counties, a sectarian battle for ethnic supremacy? Taking in the entire island, and the determination of Ulster unionists to assert a specifically Protestant British identity in opposition to even a subsidiary all-Ireland 'Home Rule' parliament within the UK, there is an arguable case. However, what about outside the six county area that became Northern Ireland? What about further south?

Was the conflict in Cork 'a civil war, fought not just between Irish people, but between rival visions of Ireland'? Was the British role marginal in comparison to the emergence of intra-ethnic rivalries? Was republican and rebel Cork a sort of unionist and loyalist Belfast in reverse? The Newfoundland historian, Peter Hart, wrote: 'I argue repeatedly that Ireland must be analysed and explained as a whole, not in two units and that ethnic violence and sectarianism were present throughout Ireland, not just in the black north'.²

The historian argued that during the 1919-21 Irish War of Independence and immediately afterwards, specifically from 'the summer of 1920 onwards', the Irish Republican Army (IRA) targeted Irish Protestants for execution.³ This 'had little or nothing to do with the victims' actual behaviour'. As the conflict escalated, so did 'anti-Protestant violence', aimed at 'soft targets'. Ten years ago Hart's highly influential *The IRA and its Enemies* (1998) stated, 'men were shot because they were Protestants'. Furthermore, 'Protestants were seen as outsiders and enemies, not just by the IRA but by a large segment of the Catholic population as well'. In this landmark work and in other publications Hart asserted that Protestants were 'fair game' to 'angry or covetous' neighbours. In effect, 'sectarianism was embedded in the language and syntax of the Irish revolution'. He asserted that Protestants in parts of southern Ireland were subject to a campaign of 'ethnic cleansing'. When it came to Protestant victimisation Cork in particular was 'worst of all'.⁴

In agreement, the historian Roy Foster noted of *The IRA and its Enemies*, 'Hart reconstructs Cork society 80 years ago, anatomising Black-and-Tan outrages, IRA ambushes and tit-for-tat killings, and registering the sinister pulse of a subdued but implacable intercommunal antagonism'. Foster wrote, 'the small Protestant farmers, drapers, schoolteachers... became *'targets'* for reasons which had less to do with political affiliation than atavistic ethnic conflict'. Foster also pointed to an implicit feature of Hart's study, a link between republican violence then and in Northern Ireland after 1968.⁵

Hart's work had a considerable impact and won plaudits from his peers and from some influential journalists. Foster chaired the prestigious Ewart Biggs Prize that was

² Peter Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies: violence & community in Cork, 1916-1923*, 1998: 18; Peter Hart, Author's response, Institute of Historical Research, November 2004: <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/hartresp.html>.

³ Peter Hart, *Definition, Defining the Irish Revolution*, in Joost Augusteijn, ed., *The Irish Revolution, 1919-23* 2002: 25.

⁴ Peter Hart, *The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Ireland*, in Richard English and Graham Walker (ed), *Unionism in Modern Ireland*, 1996: 89, 90, 92, 93, 94; Peter Hart, *The Geography of Revolution in Ireland, Past and Present*, May 1997: 155; *The IRA and its Enemies*, 1998: 281, 288, 290. *The Protestant Experience and Geography of Revolution* essays were reprinted in Hart's *The IRA at War* 2003: 234, 235, 237, 238, 240. In *The Irish Times* of June 23 2006, Professor Hart contradicted himself, 'I have never argued that "ethnic cleansing" took place in Cork or elsewhere in the 1920s - in fact, quite the opposite'. This is one of a number of curious inconsistencies in Hart's account, with which I take issue.

⁵ *Books of the Year*, by Roy Foster, *New Statesman*, December 4, 1998; *Things change: but not violence*, by Roy Foster, *The Times*, May 21, 1998.

awarded in 1998 to Hart. The historian Paul Bew commented, ‘This is a great book. The first work on the Irish revolution which can stand comparison with the best of the historiography of the French Revolution: brilliantly documented, statistically sophisticated, and superbly written.’⁶ The observation of Cork born BBC journalist, Fergal Keane, cited above, is also typical. Hart’s research was deployed against those who ignored it. For instance, critics of the Ken Loach film, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, set in Cork during the War of Independence, and *Palm d’Or* winner at Cannes in 2006, cited Hart’s research as a basis for their dismissal of its portrayal of the period.⁷

The IRA and its Enemies became a prism through which Irish republican violence during the war of independence could be seen as sectarian. Its influence was pervasive. For example, Justin O’Brien’s finely crafted *The Arms Trial* (2000) relied on Hart in referring to ‘the overt sectarian campaign waged by the IRA in the south-west, which in effect depopulated Protestant communities.’⁸ Hart characterised the war of independence as a ‘dirty war’, an ‘intimate war’, based on a ‘runaway tit-for-tat logic’, in which ‘the victims were unarmed and helpless when shot’. Hart asserted ‘the [IRA’s] main target group was the Protestant minority, followed by ex-soldiers, tinkers and tramps, and others seen as social deviants’.⁹ Hart’s work was controversial and provocative for another reason. It questioned the IRA’s conduct at a pivotal event in that conflict, the Kilmichael ambush of November 28, 1920 in West Cork. Hart used it as a case study to illustrate his thesis that intrinsic ethnic hatreds drove those who prosecuted the conflict against British rule. This was even though the IRA fought seasoned British Army officers with World War One experience at Kilmichael.

Hart’s verdict on Kilmichael has influenced the way in which the event is presented in Irish secondary schools. A ‘support team for history teachers’, constituted by the Irish Minister for Education and Science, states that a project on the Kilmichael ambush ‘for the Higher-Level student’ might question ‘the varying and contradictory accounts [IRA Commander, Tom Barry] wrote about the ambush’. This presentation of Barry originates

⁶ Review, *The IRA & its enemies: violence & community in Cork, 1916-1923*, Canadian Journal of History, August 1999, Vol. 34(2).

⁷ Roy Foster’s negative view, *The Red and the Green*, refers to Hart ‘rais[ing] hell among local historians’ (*Dublin Review* 24, Autumn 2006). Similarly, Eoghan Harris suggested that ‘the facts’ are to be found in Peter Hart’s 1998 book (*Behind the bluster lies a bad conscience*, *The Sunday Independent*, July 9 2006). Kevin Myers used Hart’s research to criticise the film, *Revisionism seeks to hide our very own grim bout of ethnic cleansing*, *The Irish Independent*, June 28, 2006. But see also riposte by Luke Gibbons, July 1, 2006, *The Myth of Ethnic Cleansing in the Irish War of Independence*. Gary Crowder’s extended commentary in *Cineaste*, March 22, 2007, noted ‘Peter Hart, a young historian of the revisionist school’. See also Steven Howe’s *Open Democracy* critique (http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-film/loach_3650.jsp). Harris noted that an RTE documentary on the film, ‘includes an interview with revisionist historian Peter Hart’ (*Loach brings a lost world to life but loses the plot*, *The Sunday Independent*, June 11, 2006; RTE documentary, *Rebel County*, directed by Pat Collins, broadcast June 13, 2006). For a counter view, see my: *Sectarian Wind Up*, *Irish Examiner*, June 26, 2006 (<http://www.indymedia.ie/article/76966>); *The Wind That Shakes the Barley Sends Revisionists Yapping at History’s Heels* in *Counterpunch* (<http://www.counterpunch.org/meehan11112006.html>); and *Ken Loach’s film continues to inflate historical debate* in *Village Magazine*, November 11, 2006.

⁸ See G.K. Peatling, *Unionist Identity, External Perceptions of Northern Ireland and the Problem of Unionist Legitimacy*, *Eire-Ireland* 39, 1&2, Spring/Summer 2004. Justin O’Brien, *Arms Trial* 2000: 6. An intriguing partial exception is Leigh-Ann Coffey’s *The Planters of Luggacurren, County Laois* (2006). It is an instructive examination of Lord Lansdown’s eviction of striking tenants from his land in 1887. Lansdown deliberately replaced protesting Catholic tenants in 1891-92 with Protestants recruited through an Orange Order network. Coffey is careful not to characterise this action as sectarian, though she also judiciously avoids accusing those who struggled to retrieve their tenancies of themselves being sectarian. Coffey refers to ‘religious difference’ being subordinate to ‘specific local grievances’ (2006: 44). Coffey references Hart’s research. But, instead of taking issue with its sweeping and largely un-sourced generalisations, she cites it as a support for the view that sectarianism occurred elsewhere. However, it is done in a manner that indicates, to an extent, a process of going through the motions.

⁹ Hart *Enemies* 1998: 17-18. Peter Hart, *Definition*, in Augusteijn (ed.), *Irish Revolution* 2002: 26.

with Hart. Hart's version quickly entered the historical narrative. Diarmaid Ferriter's widely regarded *The Transformation of Ireland* (2004) cites Hart on 'the infamous Kilmichael ambush' and 'the cowardly massacre which involved the deliberate killing of already surrendered soldiers'. Justin O'Brien's research, published in 2000 and cited earlier, examined the sacking of two senior ministers in Dublin in 1970. They were accused in 1969 of attempting to illegally import arms for northern nationalist defence. O'Brien referred to Hart's 'deconstruction of the nostalgia' surrounding Kilmichael.¹⁰

Military conflict or communal terror

In Chapter Two of *The IRA and its Enemies*, Hart accused the IRA of being involved in a massacre of surrendered British soldiers during the Kilmichael ambush.¹¹ The ambush was the first significant IRA response to the introduction in 1920 of a force of Auxiliaries, former British officers, and, earlier, of the 'Black and Tans'.¹² Both forces were ostensibly part of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). They were paramilitary counterinsurgency bodies, brought in to bolster a demoralised RIC that was adversely affected by infiltration, intimidation and violence, but also by disaffection and mass resignations.¹³ The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries set out to subdue the population through terror, torture and killing.¹⁴ The Kilmichael action against a party of Auxiliaries was militarily devastating and surprising to the British Cabinet precisely for that reason. Tom Jones, Assistant British Cabinet Secretary, recorded Prime Minister Lloyd George as stating: 'The Chief Secretary went to Ireland last night. The last attack of the rebels [at Kilmichael] seemed to him, Bonar Law and myself to partake of a different character from the preceding operations. The others were assassinations. This last was a military operation.'¹⁵

In attempted reversal of this contemporary assessment Hart concluded that the battle was a 'massacre... [that] belonged to [a] world of 'disappearances' and revenge killings'. According to Hart, the IRA commander at Kilmichael, Tom Barry, was 'vain,

¹⁰ *History In-Service Team, Supporting Leaving Certificate History, 2004, Autumn Term (2004 HIST phase 2 Session 1 research study teacher handout.pdf, at <http://www.scoilnet.ie/hist/>)*. The same document misnames Meda Ryan's *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003) as *Tom Barry: Column Commander and Freedom Fighter*. I contacted the team by email (November 15, December 20, 2005), pointing out the bias in presentation and the book title error, without discernable effect; Ferriter, *Transformation* 2004: 208, 227; O'Brien, *Arms Trial* 2000: 262.

¹¹ Hart *Enemies* 1998, Chapter Two, *The Kilmichael Ambush*. Meda Ryan, *History*, Vol. 92, No. 306, 2007: 238.

¹² So named after a pack of hounds in Limerick due to the troops' mismatching uniforms.

¹³ The leader of the Listowel RIC mutiny, Constable Jeremiah Mee, noted that RIC resignations reached a 'peak point during July, August and September 1920'. This was after a speech in Listowel barracks from the new RIC Divisional Commissioner for Munster, Colonel Smyth. In his speech Smyth explained that illegal police violence now had official sanction. The speech was given to *The Freeman's Journal*, which published it on July 10, 1920. Jeremiah Mee, Bureau of Military History (BMH), Witness Statement (WS), No 379 (National Archives duplicate, n.d.). As a result of an Act of the Oireachtas in 1946, an initiative of the then Minister for Defence, Oscar Traynor, War of Independence participants were invited by the newly created Bureau of Military History to contribute a confidential witness statement recounting their activities during the war. The Bureau, under the control of the Military Archives section the Irish Defence Forces, presented witnesses with a signed copy of their account. The accounts were released publicly in 2003 and are available in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin, plus (duplicates) National Archives, Dublin. See Diarmaid Ferriter, 'in such deadly earnest', on the formation of the BMH, *Dublin Review* 12, Autumn 2003. While the witness statements are of varying quality, Mee's is especially well prepared, a highly instructive 50-page account of the RIC revolt and of his later work for republican headquarters, continuing work with those remaining in the RIC, and liaison with British trade unionists. For those with a one-dimensional understanding of Irish history it is an illuminating document.

¹⁴ For a brief account of this and other activities of British forces, including systematic burning of creameries, the burning and wrecking of towns and villages, after the introduction of the Black & Tans and Auxiliaries, see Frank Pakenham (Lord Longford), *Peace by Ordeal* 1972: 48-58.

¹⁵ Lloyd George comment in Tom Jones, *Whitehall Diary* 1969: 41.

angry and ruthless’, pre-eminent as one of a number of ‘political serial killers’, whose ‘*history*’ of Kilmichael... is riddled with lies and evasions’. ‘Kilmichael is attached to Tom Barry, whose fame is grossly exaggerated,’ reported Hart.¹⁶ Clearly, Hart was not a fan.

Barry, a former British soldier, had served as an artillery sergeant during the First World War in Mesopotamia (which later became Iraq). After the 1916 Easter week uprising against British rule in Dublin, and the British execution afterwards of its leaders, Barry came to believe he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, fighting people who were not his enemy on behalf of people who were. He said afterwards, ‘The only war that I can justify to myself is a war of liberation’. Barry documented his role in *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* in 1949 (1989), a book still in print that earned him a worldwide reputation.¹⁷

Tom Barry’s stature is derived from his command at Kilmichael and other significant encounters during the War of Independence. Hart largely ignores the Crossbarry Battle of March 19, 1921, a larger engagement at which British forces lost 35 dead according to Barry, who again was in command.¹⁸ Hart’s attempt to undermine Barry’s reputation enabled him to question a hitherto accepted narrative of the war as a military conflict between Irish and British forces. The portrayal of Barry as a liar implicitly justified Hart’s reluctance to consider evidence from Barry on issues where Hart promoted a different view.

Hart linked his portrayal of Kilmichael to post Anglo Irish Treaty, pre civil war, killings near Dunmanway in late April 1922. In his view the victims were randomly selected Protestant civilians. He argued that this was part of a pattern of ethnic conflict, demonstrating that sectarian hatreds predominated in Ireland’s liberation war. Hart’s 1996 essay on *The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Southern Ireland* concluded, ‘all of the nightmare images of ethnic conflict in the twentieth Century are here: the massacres and anonymous death squads, the burning homes and churches, the mass expulsions and trains filled with refugees, the transformation of lifelong neighbours into enemies, the conspiracy theories and the terminology of hatred’. This was the previously cited ‘ethnic cleansing’ that in Cork was ‘worst of all’.¹⁹

Local and national history

Hart’s views in 1998 were primarily derived from evidence published in his 1992 doctoral thesis and from subsequent research. His primary sources appeared robust. They were IRA veterans and members of the Protestant community in West Cork, cited anonymously, and extensive documentary evidence, woven seamlessly into a compelling narrative. Senia Paseta noted with regard to the anonymous interviews, ‘While gathering evidence and attempting to interview witnesses, Hart was clearly faced by a wall of silence; his greatest achievement is his success in penetrating this wall’. Paseta continued in reference to, ‘this innovative and brilliant work – first class

¹⁶ Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 37, 32, 100, 36. Hart comment on Barry’s ‘fame’ in the *St. John’s Telegram*, (Newfoundland), April 18, 2005.

¹⁷ Barry comment in Meda Ryan’s *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter* 2005: 236.

¹⁸ *Guerrilla Days* 1989: 122-131. Hart cites and supports a British estimate of 10 fatalities at Crossbarry, *Enemies*, 1998: 321. For an account of Crossbarry see relevant chapters in Barry’s *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (1989), Ryan’s *Tom Barry IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003), and also Flor Begley, BMH Witness Statement No. 1771, March 15, 1960, Dennis Lordan BMH Witness Statement No. 602, October 30, 1951.

¹⁹ Hart, *Protestant Experience* 1996: 94. Republished in Hart’s *The IRA art War* 2003: 240. Hart then wrote, ‘We must not exaggerate. Cork was not... Belfast’. We are also informed, ‘the Free State government had no part in persecution’. Who did, according to Hart? Ultimately, in *The IRA and its Enemies*, he does not say, but it does not stem the flow of emotionally charged generalisations.

historical writing – superbly researched, constantly provocative and ultimately persuasive’. Hart told a good story and he told it well.²⁰

However, an undercurrent of criticism questioning the book’s findings challenged the largely celebratory academic and media response to publication. Promotion of Hart’s view by Kevin Myers in *The Irish Times* in May 1998 provoked a letters page debate about Kilmichael lasting six months. The contributors included Hart, Pádraig O’Cuanachain, D.R. O’Connor Lysaght, Meda Ryan and Brian Murphy. The letters were subsequently collected in a booklet published in 1999. This publication also contained Brian Murphy’s critical academic review of *The IRA and its Enemies*, and a commentary by editors, Jack Lane and Brendan Clifford. At the 1998 commemoration of the Kilmichael ambush, the speaker, Hugo Flynn, declared that Hart’s ‘grave charges... have to be answered’.²¹

On the other hand, in *The Irish Times* in January 1995, one year before Hart’s thesis was made available by TCD library on January 29, 1996, Kevin Myers eagerly anticipated publication: ‘Soon - I trust - Peter Hart’s brilliant account of the IRA war in West Cork will be published’.²² Writing again after publication on May 29, 1998, Myers sparked off the six months of letters page responses and an enduring dispute:

‘It is the product of many years’ work - Peter began his investigations just as the last of the veterans of the time were coming to the end of their lives. He spoke to all he could... To understand how mythology has concealed the truth in Irish history, it is obligatory to read Peter Hart’s *The IRA and its Enemies*. It is a masterpiece’.²³

Publication became a political as well as a historical event. The book’s evidential props were questioned. Some of the evidence is surprising. The controversy also, inadvertently, stimulated publication of alternative views of Ireland’s independence struggle that might otherwise have been overlooked.²⁴ Hart and his supporters were increasingly confronted with popular memory and a local history that is also a national history.

²⁰ Paseta, review of *The IRA and its Enemies*, *European Historical Review*, February 2000: 246.

²¹ Lane & Clifford, ed, *Kilmichael, the false surrender*, 1999, giving the dates of and names of contributors to the newspaper debate. Murphy review originally in *The Month*, September-October 1998. Flynn in, *Government is urged to honour those who died for Irish freedom*, *The Irish Times*, December 7, 1998; ‘Honour our war dead’ plea to government, by Des O’Sullivan, *The Irish Independent*, December 7, 1998; *Kilmichael speaker hits out at revisionists*, *The Southern Star*, December 12, 1998. More recently, see Regan review of Meda Ryan’s *Tom Barry IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003), *History*, January 2006; Meda Ryan response, *The Kilmichael Ambush: exploring the ‘Provocative Chapters’*, *History*, April 2007. See also discussion by Andreas Boldt, Peter Hart, Niall Meehan, Sean O’Ceallachoir, Brian Murphy, Manus O’Riordan, Meda Ryan, in *History Ireland* (four issues), March-April, to Sept-Oct 2005. Available at <http://ireland.indymedia.org/article/80362>.

²² *An Irishman’s Diary*, *The Irish Times*, January 12, 1995

²³ In addition to Myers, in the Irish edition of *The Sunday Times* on April 4, 1999, Eoghan Harris reported the work on first reading as ‘the best book ever written on the Irish revolution’. He continued, ‘Now, after months of rereading and reflection, I think it more than that; it is a classic of Irish letters, a book that will stand forever on the short shelf which includes the stories of William Carleton, Joyce’s *Dubliners* and O’Brien’s *States of Ireland*’. The book will stand the test of time with works of the imagination.

²⁴ Had it not been for the generally uncritical academic response to Hart’s work, the following might not have been provoked into publication: Ryan’s *Tom Barry IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003hb, 2005pb), Brian Murphy’s *The origins and organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland in 1920* (2006), John Borgonovo’s (ed) *Florence and Josephine O’Donoghue’s War of Independence* (2006), and Borgonovo’s *Spies, Informers and the ‘Anti Sinn Fein Society* (2007). The latter, a 1997 MA thesis for UCC, was gathering dust until Jack Lane of the *Aubane Historical Society* suggested that it be published. Ryan decided to write when the *Irish Times* debate was eventually concluded by the Editor, Conor Brady. It had run from June 5 to December 10, 1998, with Hart obtaining the last word. Ryan wished to query some anonymous interview dates in Hart’s account.

In 2007 Meda Ryan, who had queried Hart's research in a 2003 biography, *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, responded to a 2006 review by John Regan with new information about Hart's use of her work.²⁵ Ryan had amassed a considerable body of material, much of it prior to Hart's research. She also came into possession of Barry's papers and other important material on the April 1922 killings. While Kilmichael veterans were dead in 1998, there were individuals and family members who had heard them venture opinions on events in which they had participated, opinions that Hart contested. For example, they reportedly spoke of a false surrender by British forces at Kilmichael leading to Irish fatalities. This included Meda Ryan, whose uncle, Pat O'Donovan, had fought at the ambush.

The book's publication also revived a debate about so-called 'revisionism', or allegedly ideological anti-nationalism within Irish historiography, that was thought to have run its course during the early 1990s. The debate began during the early 1970s in tandem with the outbreak of post-1968 violence in Northern Ireland. The trend was to a large extent associated with the views of Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien. Speaking in Trinity College Dublin in 1978, the historian, former diplomat, and 1973-77 Irish government minister, referred to himself as one of the 'ideological revisionists [who] had set out to challenge attitudes... over the past 10 years'. He continued, 'There had not been a total lack of success. The ideological tradition which set [the] 1916 [Rising] on a pivot was in decay'.²⁶ The Easter 1916 Rising against British rule was defeated after one week. Public antagonism toward the British court martial execution of the leaders was the spark that led to a republican revival, to an overwhelming Sinn Fein election victory in 1918, and to the 1919-21 War of Independence against British rule. It is the basis of Irish state formation in 1922. In 2007 Professor Roy Foster concluded approvingly that O'Brien's contribution to questioning the Irish nationalist historical account was 'enormous'.²⁷

Whereas the earlier discussion centred largely on methodology and evaluation of the role of historical remembrance in encouraging contemporary violence, the debate with Hart focussed squarely on the evidence. It gathered pace during the period after publication. It included new historical information, as might be expected, but also unusual questions about Hart's much praised research methodology, which might not. The debate also revived questions about the conduct of historical enquiry, the role of public history and the degree of intellectual freedom within the profession of history and within Irish society. It revived discussions about the influence of the conflict in Northern Ireland post 1968 on Irish society generally, and the attempt to impose a control culture on intellectual enquiry. From 1971 to 1994 strict anti-republican broadcasting censorship had wider ramifications within Irish society. Conor Cruise O'Brien perfected the censorship regime during his 1973-77 ministerial tenure. In 1974 O'Brien, who had developed a radical and liberal reputation during the 1960s, accused 'some academics', of 'raising the level of verbal violence, thereby increasing the momentum towards Civil War'. He was referring specifically and also replying to the poet, novelist and critic, Seamus Deane. Deane had pointed in *The New York Review of Books* to the minister's emerging role as a censor, his opposition to moderate nationalism in Northern Ireland and increasing support for unionism.²⁸ Later that year Dr O'Brien linked then TCD law lecturer and Senator, later President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, to support for killing

²⁵ Regan review of Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003), *History*, January 2006, 91 (301); Meda Ryan, *The Kilmichael Ambush: exploring the 'Provocative Chapters'*, *History* 92 (306), 235-249, April 2007.

²⁶ Pearse's speech a license to kill - O'Brien, *The Irish Times*, November 9, 1978.

²⁷ Foster interviewed in *The Irish Historian*, Directed by Seán Ó Mórdha, RTÉ One Television, November 27, 2007.

²⁸ *Who Began the Killing?*, *New York Review of Books*, Volume 21, No. 9, May 30, 1974.

judges. He defined the first duty of a liberal as defence of the state and opposition to Irish republicanism, to the point of exclusion from public discourse. Soon afterwards, O'Brien openly accused leading Irish journalists of being mouthpieces and stooges of the IRA. *Irish Times* journalist, Dick Walsh, a particular target of the minister, summed up the O'Brien view as, 'Are you in favour of my view of democracy or are you a member, a supporter or stooge of the Provisional IRA'.²⁹ At the same time O'Brien accused the state broadcaster, RTE, of harbouring a 'spiritual occupation' by the IRA. He said so after obliging RTE top management to watch with him a previously broadcast programme he disapproved of, on internment without trial in Northern Ireland. As a result broadcasters, who had previously been defended by station management, were suspended. One in particular, Eoghan Harris, was exiled from television current affairs. Harris was to re-emerge publicly in 1987 as a supporter of censorship and of Dr O'Brien.³⁰ In 1997 Harris wrote 'I was increasingly under the intellectual influence of Conor Cruise O'Brien who was conducting a powerful polemical critique of Irish nationalism... All these issues came to an ideological head in RTE as the North raged on.'³¹ The O'Brien medicine seems to have worked. After 1974 RTE effectively policed itself, though not without some opposition.³² In 1976 O'Brien's gaze shifted again to print media. In September of that year an increasingly alarmed Bernard Nossiter of *The Washington Post* interviewed O'Brien. O'Brien threatened to have the Editor of *The Irish Press*, Tim Pat Coogan, prosecuted for printing pro-republican letters in his newspaper. Nossiter proceeded directly to Coogan's office to warn him.³³

O'Brien's was not a lone or exceptional opinion within government, merely the most articulate and forceful of powerful voices on behalf of the status quo. It was, as Roy Foster noted, an 'enormous' contribution, one that helped to subdue intellectual enquiry and to circumscribe the boundaries of acceptable opinion. It was to have long-lasting and deep rooted effects.

The fact that the initial criticism of Hart's work came from outside of academia, and that these debates and issues had ceased to be part of the mainstream of historical enquiry in Ireland is significant. For mainstream historians this was a sign of the marginality of the discussion. For critics it was a sign of narrow mindedness,

²⁹ Fergus Finlay, *Mary Robinson, A President with a Purpose*, 1990: 29; *Minister and Senator differ on role of liberals*, *The Irish Times*, October 28, 1974; *O'Brien and the witch hunt for liberals in the Media*, by Dick Walsh, *The Irish Times*, October 29, 1974; *Conor Cruise O'Brien and the Media, the decline of an Irish liberal*, *Belfast Bulletin No. 9*, Spring, 1981.

³⁰ Harris was 'set to work on relatively harmless, relatively insignificant 'magazine' type programmes, according to an April 1987 *Irish Times* profile. Reportedly, he became 'a more marginal force from the late 1970s' (*Eoghan Harris: still hoping for a Hollywood hit*, by Howard Kilroy, *The Irish Times*, April 25, 1987). See Betty Purcell, *The Silence in Irish Broadcasting*, in David Miller and Bill Rolston, ed., *War and Words* (1996). The incident is also alluded to in Donald Akenson's very sympathetic biography of O'Brien, *Conor*, 1994: 546, note 46. *O'Brien denies issuing directive on '7 Days'*, by Joe Joyce, *The Irish Times*, October 24, 1974; *Harris removed from '7 Days'*, *The Irish Times*, October 30, 1974.

³¹ *Caught in the free state*, by Eoghan Harris, *The Sunday Times*, October 26, 1997.

³² See Purcell, op. cit.; (*Self Censoring the Talks: How Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act affected RTE's coverage of the John Hume - Gerry Adams talks, From September 13th to October 1st, 1993 On 1pm Radio News and 6.01pm TV News*, by Niall Meehan. Also, see *Section 31 Ban Confusion in RTE a Result of Management Failure*, by Niall Meehan, in *The Sunday Business Post*, August 16, 1992. *How coercion creates consensus*, by Niall Meehan, *Teaglim*, Vol 1 No 1 1993, *How RTE censored its censorship*, by Niall Meehan, *Sunday Business Post*, April 20, 2003. Available at University of Ulster CAIN archive, 'Material Related to 'Section 31' in the Republic of Ireland', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/source.htm#section31>. For an account by Mary McAleese, currently President of Ireland, then an RTE reporter, see Ray Mac Manais, *The Road from Ardoyne: The Making of a President* (2004), Chapter fifteen, *It was the worst of times*, pp 178-191.

³³ *What the 'Washington Post' published*, *The Irish Times*, September 6, 1976. See Tim Pat Coogan's account in *The Irish Voice*, October 27, 1992.

conservatism, intellectual complacency and fear of substantive debate on the part of the profession.

Nationalism or ‘religionism’

After spending most of my adult life largely oblivious of the course of academic Irish historiography I became interested in this debate in 2004. I had recently encountered incessant newspaper promotion of the tale of anti-protestant ethnic cleansing in West Cork in 1922. It seemed to me implausible that such an event could have been deliberately hidden from public view for over 70 years.³⁴ Yet here it was, embraced by professionals and the press alike. Hart’s was cited as the pioneering research demonstrating the evident truth of the proposition. As with many people, the 1998 Kilmichael *Irish Times* debate with Hart passed me by. Though well argued, it was episodic and difficult to grasp. After entering that debate, propelled by curiosity about the April 1922 killings, I came to change my view. The Kilmichael chapter in Hart’s book sets up the basis for making the then IRA seem capable of uninhibited ethnic rather than controlled military violence.

Hart’s strength is in entwining his tale of dark forces with an essentially contemporary tabloid tale of their motivation. It is research that invites curiosity and confirms common sense expectations. But it is contemporary common sense conditioned by reporting of violence in Northern Ireland post 1968. Also implicated is a transposition of conservative features of Irish society after independence on to the pre independence period.

The sectarian state of Northern Ireland produced sectarian violence. Hart suggested that sectarianism warped also southern Irish state formation. An intellectual climate suggesting that dark and irrational forces were motivating Irish republican ideology emerged during the 1970s. Alternative voices dismissed as irredentist, narrow minded, out of touch and out of date or, simply, nationalist, were shuffled off to one side. They were, not to put too fine a point on it, unsophisticated.

But how sophisticated is the newly dominant academic orthodoxy?

Hart’s approach is journalism as applied to history, a search for the unusual presented as general. Crime reporting in modern media often presents an almost chemically pure unrepresentative picture, publicising the most violent, the most sensational and the most gruesome of criminal acts. Hart’s approach to Irish history has some of the same ingredients. It generalises from the exceptions. Crimes reported in the media usually happened, but also, usually, context and sequence is awry. To re-frame Hart’s view of Kilmichael, there is some debate over whether Hart’s History accurately described the actual historical sequence.

But this is just a view. The detail is important and the empirical basis of Hart’s conclusions needs to be interrogated. I have further questions for Hart’s research and for his conclusions. Arising out of the detail, I pose questions about interpretations of Irish history. I look at Hart’s work as one consequence of the tendency to reduce history to an examination of essentially religious culture, and to treat resistance to imperial rule as a manifestation of a sectarian antagonism. Opposition to that resistance is often privileged

³⁴ Hart wrote of the April 1922 killings in his PhD thesis (1992: 372), ‘I did not even know [they] had taken place until a year into my research’. Had he read Dorothy Macardle’s *The Irish Republic* (1999: 704-5, first published 1937), which does not appear in his bibliography, during his literature search he would not have suffered this particular evidential gap. He does not state how he found out. Possibly Tim Pat Coogan’s best selling 1990 biography, *Michael Collins*, may have been the source. Hart noted Coogan’s commentary on ‘events in West Cork in 1922’ (*Thesis*, 1992: 480). Hart’s statement, ‘the massacre is the biggest non-event of the revolution... excluded from nearly every narrative of the Civil War or its origins’, requires revision. Hart under reported the extensive condemnations of the killings and the equally extensive newspaper coverage. Had he read the biggest selling newspaper, *The Irish Independent*, he would have been in a position to report considerable and continuing coverage of this ‘non event’.

as the exercise of responsible and largely secular statecraft. Hart's was not merely another work of 'revisionist' history in this vein. It was an apparently formidable underpinning of the 'revisionist' account of the Irish past. It was a milestone event, promoted as such, and largely unanswerable if its evidential basis was sound. It was also a means of linking the conflict of 1916-23 in Ireland with that of the 1968-1994 period, but in such a way that the unionist sectarian mentality in Northern Ireland pre and post 1968 was inscribed on the motivations of the nationalist majority that fought for Irish independence earlier. They became, to a degree, a reverse image of each other. The comparison is unwelcome from a nationalist, especially from a republican, point of view. Sectarianism as policy is openly disavowed from within that tradition. Unionists, on the other hand, who cannot convincingly deny the evidence, are generally content to displace accusations of sectarianism back on to somewhat disorientated opponents who are accused of systematically hiding the bodies. The search is on for the evidence to match the accusation and for rattling republican skeletons. The 'revisionist' account of Irish history moves the accusation from the plane of polemics to that of professional historiography. Within influential sections of the academy it has been a remarkably successful exercise. However, it is also a political exercise, one whose politics and ideology is unacknowledged in the same way that speakers of Received Pronunciation disclaim having an accent. Accent, like ideology and halitosis, is viewed as what the other fellow has.

Perhaps it is time for a re-think.

At a time when powerful countries are re-asserting a right to invade weaker ones, the narrative of anti-imperialism and the largely forgotten critique of colonial rule is being replaced by concerns about ethnicity, of internecine ethnic conflict and of religious intolerance. Opponents of large power politics are sometimes cast as creatures of sectarian irrationalism whose disputes require the firm but reluctant hand of imperial management. This is in fact an old story and gives the debate about interpretations of Irish history a contemporary relevance.

The dispute over ideological revisionism in Irish history has a fractious history. In a survey of its methodological roots, Elizabeth Malcolm explored the Australian religious historian Patrick O'Farrell's influential rationale in which

'the Anglo-Irish conflict was not fundamentally a political one ...

The differences between the Irish and the English and between Irish Catholic nationalists and Ulster Protestant unionists were fundamentally about identity, culture and values.... shaped over the centuries primarily by religion'.

Talking, it would appear, makes matters worse as it 'emphasises the divisions'.³⁵ Within the 'revisionist' perspective British policy and action is frequently ignored, in preference to problematising the Irish, who are required to disabuse themselves of the notion that their forebears were oppressed by Britain. Malcolm's article contains an illuminating discussion of O'Farrell's differences with a leading critic of Peter Hart's approach, Brian Murphy. In his contribution to *Interpreting Irish History, the Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994*, (1994), Murphy challenged O'Farrell's evidence and his conclusions. Murphy questioned empirical inadequacies underlying Roy Foster's description of organisations such as Conradh na Gaeilge as Catholic sectarian and even racist. He traced serious inaccuracies from O'Farrell's research to subsequent unquestioned citation in the work of Roy Foster and others.³⁶

³⁵ Elizabeth Malcolm, *Patrick O'Farrell and the Irish history Wars, 1971-1993*, *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 31, No.1, March 2007: 35.

³⁶ Brian Murphy, *The Canon of Irish Cultural History: some questions concerning Roy Foster's Modern Ireland*, in Ciaran Brady, ed, *Interpreting Irish History, the Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994*, 1994. See also, *Is revisionism in Irish History built on insecure foundations*, by Brian Murphy, *The Irish*

A survey of the O'Farrell genre of history writing is contained in Charles Townshend's article, *Religion, War and Identity* (2004). In it, 'the vastly influential and fiercely iconoclastic' David Fitzpatrick's conception of history as an essentially polemical exercise is cited with apparent approval. Fitzpatrick wrote, 'Let statistics be used as a hammer for shattering Irish self-deception'.³⁷ Fitzpatrick's statistical hammer blows are presumably designed to effect acceptance of an alternative vision. Peter Hart's research emerges out of TCD's Dublin History Workshop, organised by Dr Fitzpatrick. Alan Gregory noted, 'Fitzpatrick was teacher and inspiration to Hart, whilst Hart in turn provides perspectives on which Fitzpatrick draws. The grand synthesis and the close study are mutually supporting'. Joost Augusteijn observed, 'this detailed local study based on Hart's Ph.D. thesis very much follows in the footsteps of his supervisor, David Fitzpatrick'.³⁸

Hart was relentlessly empirical. Peter Neuman refers to 'Hart's diligence and his (almost obsessive) interest in detail [which] has resulted in an impressive collection of statistics and data'. However, the data itself and the use to which it was sometimes put attracted critical attention. For instance, Hart asserted that the Irish Christian Brothers, 'in teaching patriotism... created gunmen'.³⁹ In a comment, Joost Augusteijn referred to 'a tendency... to focus on conclusions' supporting a particular 'interpretation of the past... while in the research dealing with this many other influential factors are put forward'.⁴⁰ In other words, Hart was accused of 'cherry picking' conclusions that do not necessarily follow from the evidence. But the criticisms went further than that. What about the source material itself (both human and documentary), that the conclusions were based upon? In an important short article, *Peter Hart, the issue of sources*, Brian Murphy suggested that in significant areas of research Hart simply ignored evidence that ran directly counter to and actually contradicted his favoured conclusions.⁴¹ In examining Hart's research on the April 27-29, 1922 killings near Dunmanway I was surprised that Hart failed to cite the *Protestant Convention*, a significant and representative gathering that met two weeks later in Dublin. The Convention resolved that 'apart from this incident [the April killings], hostility to Protestants by reason of their religion, has been almost, if not wholly unknown, in the 26 counties in which they are a minority'.⁴² If anyone should know, they should. A historian researching the issue should have recorded the fact.⁴³

Times, September 24, 1992. Responding, O'Farrell referred to 'Father Murphy' and enquired if 'priest-history practitioners have... nothing better to do' (*The Irish Times*, October 8, 1992). In a response to correspondents who addressed the substance of his argument, Murphy noted, 'with regret, that Professor Patrick O'Farrell... failed to address any of the historical matters under discussion' (*The Irish Times*, October 19, 1992).

³⁷ Townshend, *Religion, War and Identity*, *Journal of Modern History*, 76 (December 2004): 889. For a contemporary iteration of the view that the Anglo-Norman, English and then British presence in Ireland was largely benign, see Richard English's *Irish Freedom* (2007), winner of the 2007 Ewart Biggs prize. For a critique, see Brendan O'Leary's *Cuttlefish Cholesterol and Saoirse*, in *Field Day Review* 3, 2007, Ronan Fanning and John A Murphy's RTE radio discussion on *Off the Shelf*, RTE Radio One, June 2, 2007.

³⁸ Gregory, *Review article: The Boys of Kilmichael*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 3, July, 1999: 489. Augusteijn, review of *The IRA and its Enemies*, *Saothar* 23, 1998.

³⁹ Neumann, review of *The I. R. A. at War: 1916-1923* (2003), *The American Historical Review*, Vol 110, No 2, April 2005. Hart, *The Geography of Revolution in Ireland, Past & Present*, May 1997: 171.

⁴⁰ *Teaching and Researching History in Northern Ireland*, *European Review of History*, Vol 9, No 1, 2002: 110.

⁴¹ Included as an appendix to *The Origin and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920*, 2006. First published in *The Irish Political Review*, Vol 20, No 7, July, 2005. Also included here as Appendix III.

⁴² *The Irish Independent*, *The Irish Times*, May 12, 1922; also, see *The Irish Independent* May 3, 1922.

⁴³ See substantial coverage of the Convention in the May 12, 1922, *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent*. *The Irish Times* was then a unionist and very much pro-British newspaper. It editorialised that the attacks were exceptional and out of character with the nature and politics of southern Irish society. The unionist

In 2007 John Borghonovo queried Hart's statistical evidence with regard to 'defenceless victims' of the IRA in Cork during the War of Independence. Hart cited 131 unnamed victims, while Borghonovo named and dated the demise of 33 in total. Borghonovo states that that is it. He asked pointedly where Hart unearthed the remainder of his victims. Furthermore, Hart's taxonomy appeared to adapt to British definitions of the conflict. For example, one list of combat casualties does not include 12 IRA volunteers 'officially executed', whereas it does include Crown forces suffering IRA execution. Similarly, those identified and executed by the IRA for informing are included simply as civilian victims of the IRA.⁴⁴

Apart from differences over statistics, there have been intriguing questions regarding the practical possibility of some of Hart's claims. In his review (2006) of Ryan's *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, John Regan suggested 'sloppy footnoting' as a possible cause of unexplained anomalies in Hart's reporting of interviews with aged and also anonymous Kilmichael ambush veterans. Ryan had raised the dating anomalies in 2003, anomalies that Hart, so far, has not addressed. I raise further anomalies for his consideration here. Ryan, in *History*, April 2007, revealed Hart to be a less than careful reader of evidence. He misrepresented the account in Ryan's *The Tom Barry Story* (1982) of when and where Kilmichael casualty, Pat Deasy, was killed. There is another example. Hart cited Tom Barry on an account he gave of the false surrender at Kilmichael, where Barry states 'the others [Auxiliaries] opened fire and killed two of them [IRA volunteers]'. Hart summarises this immediately afterwards as 'the *false surrender*', which caused the deaths of three IRA men'.⁴⁵ Barry stated two casualties consistently in his written accounts. But Hart misrepresented both Barry and Ryan in this crucial area, where he should have been paying close attention.

These questions have given this debate a somewhat unusual character, one in which the construction of the historian's history has been questioned alongside the history of the period. The question of selection bias was one area to be addressed.

Setting the agenda

Hart's 1998 book begins with *The killing of [RIC] Sergeant O'Donoghue* by the IRA. O'Donoghue 'loved and served his country'. He was 'well known and respected', 'a good Catholic and a good Irishman'. Hart's treatment of the killing set the tone for the book as a whole, 'The sergeant's death represented a clash between the old loyalties of the policeman and the new certainties embraced by the gunmen'. Hart had already noted in relation to the politics of the situation, 'the [RIC] had to put their faith in their friends and fellows alone... Policemen could not help feeling betrayed and afraid for their lives'. This was due to the effect of 'popular opinion and the vagaries of British policy'. Hart concluded sympathetically, 'It is not surprising that they reacted so violently when attacked'. Their opponents did not benefit from such solicitude. There was a short paragraph on 'the rise of Sinn Fein' and the transition from 'the old political order' pre the 1916 Rising, when Sinn Fein was 'insignificant', to 'confrontation, revolution, and a gradual descent into guerrilla war, with the men of the RIC on the front lines'.⁴⁶ Surprisingly, the reader is not informed that Sinn Fein won an overwhelming election victory in the interim, in 1918. Many of its candidates and then elected representatives were in jail. The newly formed separatist Irish Dáil in 1919 was declared an illegal

Irish Times was a media watchdog that did not bark. Surely it would have. For an account of the peculiar evolution of *The Irish Times*, see John Martin's *The Irish Times, Past and Present* (2008).

⁴⁴ John Borghonovo, *Spies informers and the 'Anti Sinn Fein Society'* 2007: 83-97. Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 87, Tables 7&8. See also Peter Hart review of Borghonovo and Borghonovo reply in *History Ireland*, March April, May-June, 2007.

⁴⁵ Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 22, 23.

⁴⁶ Hart *Enemies* 1998: 3, 11, chapter title for chapter one.

assembly.⁴⁷ Hart's significant oversight results in a one-sided caricature, a reverse of allegedly simple-minded nationalist historiography.

From the vantage point of these observations, Hart described retaliatory RIC raids on the homes of republicans after O'Donoghue's death, in which three were killed and two wounded, one survivor losing an eye and most of his jaw. Hart then described the IRA shooting suspected informers. Hart observed that 'murder was more common than battle'.⁴⁸ Hart suggested that the RIC had correctly targeted those who shot O'Donoghue. Of a policeman telling O'Donoghue's brother, 'We got one of the men who killed your brother', Hart observed, 'He was right'. On the other hand, the IRA 'condemned ex-soldiers and ... military employees on suspicion alone'. Hart controversially asserted, 'A very few were actual informers. Most were innocent victims'. In a revealing comment, Hart reported that two of those shot by the IRA 'may have been guilty only of being loyal ex-soldiers'. Their 'murder' 'demonstrate[d] the plight of war veterans in Cork'. Hart observed that those who carried out IRA armed actions, 'did most of the dirty work'. If there was a 'death squad' within the RIC, then it was merely 'a counterpart of the IRA's *active squad*', who carried out extrajudicial killings'. The cover name for the RIC's activities was the 'Anti-Sinn Fein Society'. It was no more than that, said Hart, a reactive body emerging from within an embittered police force, attacked by its enemies, betrayed by its masters.⁴⁹ For Hart, Protestants and ex-servicemen in the South performed the equivalent function of Catholics in the North of Ireland. They were, reported Hart, potential targets because of who they were, rather than what they did. For his theory to have weight, it had to be shown that any Protestants or ex-service personnel killed by the IRA in the course of the conflict were not active combatants. This he failed to do. He merely assumed that few if any were active in the conflict, and possibly expected that his readers, using common sense, would assume it to be the case also. Initially, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, they did.

Hart also refused to accept that loyalists were recruited by British forces to carry out intelligence and other activities. To have done so would be to accept the possibility that IRA executions of some Protestants had a military rather than a sectarian connotation. A denial of this possibility was to be the major theme of Hart's research.

With these thoughts and observations in the minds his readers, Hart ended his introductory remarks. In chapter two he launched his investigation of an IRA military engagement at Kilmichael on November 28, 1920. Kilmichael occupied two complete chapters, chapter two on the ambush itself and chapter three on the IRA participants. The book effectively ends, as the penultimate chapter title puts it, with the IRA *Taking it out on the Protestants*. Here Hart linked the participants in the Kilmichael ambush with those he reported as the forgotten victims of the April 27-29, 1922, killings in West Cork. The latter were 'the culmination of a long process of social definition that produced both the heroes of Kilmichael and the victims of the April massacre'.⁵⁰ It is an

⁴⁷ J. Anthony Gaughan, *Senator Joseph Connolly, a founder of Modern Ireland* 1996: 154.

⁴⁸ The US military historian, William Kautt, observed, 'Hart misses the concept of pre-emptive or preventative action in guerrilla war, which is a critical omission because much in this type of warfare is preparatory or symbolic. His later description of guerrilla war as "*mass homicide*" (p. 89)—referring to the numerous assassinations and executions—only serves to amplify this point. (In a review, March 2005, of Hart's *The IRA at War* (2003), at www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=94381119466922)

⁴⁹ Hart *Enemies* 1998: 8, 10, 16, 17, 18. Hart referred to one reported confrontation between the IRA and Auxiliaries as a 'a vivid picture of the gangsterish culture of violence... the eager toughs with their matching trench coats, revolvers and Ford Cars' (*Enemies* 1998: 111). This depiction may be a lot of things, but history it is not. In its summation of the life and death struggle between an emerging and an existing state, between imperialism and its enemy, it is inadequate. It is an attempt to impose a particular, anachronistic and irrelevant view of events, rather than allow them to speak for themselves.

⁵⁰ Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 292, chapter titles for chapters, two, three and twelve

episodic and thematic history, with incidents extracted from the surrounding chronology in order to illustrate an argument.

In presenting a differing perspective John Borgonovo (2007) observed that Hart ‘cannot offer any evidence of the IRA’s motivations’ in killing suspected informers ‘other than the victim’s occupations, and does not explain why some of these men were targeted instead of the scores of their co-workers’. Borgonovo observed, ‘While Dr Hart’s conclusions can be suspected, I do not believe they can be sufficiently documented’. Borgonovo’s research in Cork City examined ‘Hart’s theory that the IRA executed civilians as informal reprisals for IRA losses’. After a detailed analysis, Borgonovo disagreed profoundly and termed Hart’s discounting of IRA claims of guilt, without an analysis of IRA intelligence gathering capability, ‘irresponsible’.⁵¹ Borgonovo also questioned and contradicted Hart’s view of relations between Irish forces and military ex-service personnel, a subject on which my research supports Borgonovo’s view.

Besides Tom Barry, there is substantial evidence that ex-service personnel were sympathetic to Sinn Fein. This is not surprising given their radicalisation during the course of the First World War and the fact that, afterwards, large scale attacks on nationalist ex-service personnel came from pro-British forces.⁵²

Irish Parliamentary Party MP Tom Kettle, Conor Cruise O’Brien’s uncle, joined the British Army and was killed on the Western Front in 1916. During the Rising Captain JC Bowen Colthurst ordered the execution of Kettle’s non-combatant cousin, the pacifist Francis Sheehy Skeffington. After the Rising Kettle went to his death disillusioned with the choice he had made: ‘I shall be remembered, if I am remembered at all, as a bloody British officer’.⁵³ The poet Francis Ledwidge left Ireland in 1914 to fight ‘an enemy common to our [Ireland and England’s] civilisation’. However, after the 1916 Rising, ‘he devoted most of his work to the Rising and its leaders’. His best-known work was dedicated to one of the executed leaders, *Thomas McDonagh*. One poem, *O’Connell Street*, where the Rising was headquartered in the General Post Office, was written in June 1917,

*A noble failure is not in vain,
But hath a victory of its own
A bright delectance from the slain
Is down the generations thrown.
And, more than beauty understands,
Has made her lovelier, it seems
I see white ships that crowd her strands,
For mine are all the dead men’s dreams.*

A stray shell killed Ledwidge one month later on July 31, 1917. One of his last poems was entitled, *To a German Officer*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Spies informers and the ‘Anti-Sin Fein Society’, the intelligence war in Cork* 2007: 84, 85, 97.

⁵² As an example either of British or of Irish attitudes, or both, according Gerard Oram, ‘Irish troops were as much as four times more likely to be condemned to death by a British court-martial than were troops from other parts of the British Isles and the Dominions.’ See Oram’s, *Worthless Men: race, eugenics and the death penalty in the British army during the First World War* (1998). (Shot at Dawn Campaign Ireland, <http://www.shotatdawncampaignirl.org/>).

⁵³ In Adrian Gregory, Review article, *The Boys of Kilmichael*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 34 (3), 1999: 493. *The morning a mad captain ordered the death of a pacifist and two journalists*, at <http://www.ireland.com/focus/easterrising/tuesday/article6c.htm>. The killing of Sheehy Skeffington was pursued by his wife, Hannah, later a leading Irish feminist, socialist and republican. Colthurst was prosecuted and declared guilty but insane. Conor Cruise O’Brien said of his aunt, the ‘demon of nationalism’ had ‘the terrible Hannah’ in its grip (Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Memoir* 1998: 28).

⁵⁴ Liam O’Meara, ed., *Francis Ledwidge, The Poems Complete* 1997: *Preface*, 249, 255, 297, 298.

Attempts to tempt more Irish to the colours using family members backfired on one occasion. The recruiting speech of the father of Michael O'Leary, holder of the Victoria Cross, was prevented by the censor from appearing in *The Sunday Independent*. It read, in part, 'Mr O'Leary, senior, father of the famous V.C., speaking in the Inchigeela [Cork] district, urged the young men to join the British Army. "If you don't," he told them, "the Germans will come here and will do to you what the English have been doing for the last seven hundred years"'.⁵⁵

Fedorowich (1999) referred to 700 'Catholic ex-servicemen' expulsions from Belfast's Harland and Wolfe shipyards in July 1920 by unionist mobs.⁵⁶ Borgonovo (2006, 2007) described two days of 'bloody riot between ex-soldiers and British troops from [Cork's] Victoria Barracks' in July 1920. The disturbances ended after British troops 'fired into a crowd of unarmed civilians, killing two and wounding twenty'. The riots were precipitated by troops killing one of the ex-servicemen, James Burke, followed by writing the regiment's name with the victim's blood on a convenient wall. Over 5,000 marched in formation at Burke's funeral. The following March 1921 police raided and wrecked the Cork Federation of Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors branch office, stealing money, wrecking furniture and beating ex-soldiers present. According to Borgonovo, 'at least seven Cork city ex-servicemen died at the hands of British soldiers in 1920-21'. The Ex-service personnel marched in formation in the republican funeral cortège of Cork Sinn Fein Lord Mayors and IRA leaders, Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney, in March and August 1920. MacCurtain was shot down unarmed in his home by the RIC, while MacSwiney died on hunger strike in Brixton Prison.⁵⁷

Fedorowich cited Colonel Edward Saunderson, 'a leading unionist and [British Viceroy Lord] French's private secretary' as follows: 'The men are drifting daily into the Sinn Fein camp... the regular soldiers the other day at Maryboro refused to sing God Save the King...'. Fedorowich noted that in May 1920 Lord French, 'believed that the haemorrhage of ex-servicemen to the ranks of Sinn Fein was well under way'.⁵⁸ Similarly, in Cork the notorious Major Percival⁵⁹ of the Essex Regiment was disconcerted to note that he had 'several interviews' with 'the Secretary of the Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors Federation', as the latter 'offered to help us'. All very fine, except 'he also held the position of Battalion Commandant in the IRA and his visits were designed to gain first-hand information of the interior of our Barracks!'⁶⁰ Simply put, would the ex-service personnel have drifted into an organisation that was allegedly targeting and killing them?

Given the current state of Irish historiography, these are counter intuitive facts of precisely the type the historian should explain and not ignore. Hart ignored them and others like them, systematically. This is an area where interrogation of the record contradicts common sense assumptions and demonstrates the validity of objective

⁵⁵ In David Hogan (pseud., Frank Gallagher), *The Four Glorious Years* 1953: 43.

⁵⁶ Kent Fedorowich, *Reconstruction and Resettlement: the Politicisation of Irish Migration to Australia and Canada, 1919-29*, *English Historical Review*, November 1999. Other sources put the figure higher. Of course, as well as thousands of ordinary Catholics, socialists who opposed this reactionary sectarianism were also expelled from the Belfast shipyards. The expulsions were promoted by unionist leader, Edward Carson, and defended afterwards by Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, James Craig. See Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* 1965: 387; Michael Farrell's *The Orange State* 1976: 28; Austen Morgan in Jim McDermott's *Northern Divisions, the old IRA and the Belfast pogroms 1920-22* 2001: 3; See McDermott also on this point, 2001: 27-29, 35, 37; Also see letter from the author to *History Ireland*, May-June 2008.

⁵⁷ John Borgonovo, *Spies Informers and the 'Anti Sinn Fein Society'* 2007: 79-80, 82, and *Florence and Josephine O'Donoghue's War of Independence*, 2006: 97, 107 (note 15).

⁵⁸ Fedorowich, *Reconstruction and Resettlement*, op. cit..

⁵⁹ Later, General Percival, of the fall of Singapore during World War Two fame.

⁶⁰ In William Sheehan's, ed., *British Voices*, 2005: 140.

historical research. Objectivity in enquiry is a method that informs conclusions. As an outcome it is conditioned by individual preference, breath of vision and institutional pressure.

Within Irish historiography, the institutional preference has been in support of Hart's conclusions. They are supported less by evidence and more by assumptions. The evidence needs to be interrogated, but the argument put forward by Hart should also be questioned. The largely uncritical welcome his argument received is in proportion to the institutional acceptance of the assumptions on which it was based. The assumptions suggest that sectarianism, atavism and xenophobia animated those who did the fighting. The assumptions are a transposition from the dominant view with regard to the conflict in Northern Ireland post 1968. It is an attempt to disrupt a historical continuity based on anti-imperialism by imposing a sectarian continuity. It reduces the 'Irish question' to just that, Irish people and their fractious disputes. It extracts British policy and action from its role and its responsibility for using sectarianism as the instrument of public and of military policy.⁶¹

More fundamentally, it denies a hearing to the republican voice, historically the strongest anti-sectarian voice within the Irish polity. Sometimes that strength was merely relative in comparison to other forces. Within nationalist politics, class forces and the tensions that they engender emerged out of the attempt to superimpose a narrowly sectarian character on political actors. It is the reason why southern Ireland developed a secular mode of political discourse, while Northern Ireland did not. Within unionism the religious character of the pro-union argument is dominant. Within it, also, an explicit and sectarian anti-Catholicism became a consistent refrain. It is here that Hart attempts to be counter-intuitive, suggesting that there is a nationalist sectarian undercurrent to mirror the unionist sectarianism that flowed along the surface of day-to-day politics.

However, there is no tradition of anti-Protestantism within Irish republicanism, in comparison to the anti-Catholicism that has disfigured unionist politics. Some Catholic conservatism, yes, but sectarian policy directed at Protestants per se, no. The period when we might expect to see such a policy, if it existed, is in the period Hart researched, in the place where he did his research, West Cork. That is the place where a substantial Protestant and loyalist population lived. The point is, did Protestants suffer because of their religion or did individual Protestants, as well as individual Catholics, suffer as a result of participation in the conflict.⁶² Did they suffer due to identity or activity? Yes says Hart to the former. No, say his critics, whose evidence has been largely unacknowledged from within mainstream historiography. Actually, the evidence is not hard to find. Southern Protestants consistently and publicly refuted Unionist propaganda to the effect that nationalism was its mirror image in the matter of sectarianism. An oppressed group does not systematically refute their own suppression. Irish Protestants did because they were not oppressed.⁶³ In the face of emphatic statements from southern Protestants from 1920 to 1922, Hart's assertion that 'Southern Protestants... were targeted with rising vigour by the IRA from the summer of 1920 onwards' is difficult to sustain.⁶⁴

Where it is cited, criticism of Hart's view is usually minimally acknowledged, if at all. For instance, Brendan O'Leary observed in a review of Paul Bew's *The Politics of*

⁶¹ British attempts to sectarianise the conflict were noted by Tom Barry, in Ryan, *Barry* 2003: 170, and by Frank Gallagher in *The Four Glorious Years* 1953: 110.

⁶² Leaving aside civilian deaths from crossfire or other unintentional casualties.

⁶³ See Appendix II, letter from the author to *The Irish Times*, November 5, 2007.

⁶⁴ Peter Hart, *Definition: Defining the Irish Revolution*, in Joost Augusteijn (ed), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923*, 2002: 25

Enmity and Bew's reliance on Hart's research, 'To his credit Bew footnotes some of Hart's critics, but does not register the burden of their criticisms'.⁶⁵ Similarly, a combined *Irish Times* review of Meda Ryan's *Tom Barry IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003), and the Hart collection, *The IRA at War* (2003) by Richard English is instructive. The reviewer, like Bew a Queens University Belfast political historian, did not discuss the substantive points of difference between the two authors. Ryan's book was, briefly, 'fascinating' and 'an impressive biography', whereas English's sometime colleague, Hart, was 'brilliant', 'pioneering', 'superb', 'formidable', and 'tremendously impressive'. Hart's research was presented as the academically rigorous view. Ryan's work was inadequately introduced by English and then quickly dismissed in favour of formulations such as, 'as Peter Hart's exhaustively researched figures convincingly show...'.⁶⁶

From an analytical or basic educational point of reference, this approach to criticism of Hart from within the academic mainstream is inadequate.

Current study

It is in the spirit of critical enquiry that I have looked at Hart's earlier 1992 PhD thesis, *The Irish Republican Army and its Enemies*, on which the celebrated 1998 book, *The IRA and its Enemies*, is based. In relation to curious anomalies discovered by Brian Murphy (1998, 2006) and Meda Ryan (2003), 'sloppy footnoting' might be a factor in re-writing and possibly re-formulating, especially if there were wholesale changes. A thesis is expected to have strict referencing standards, especially so in accurately associating anonymous informants with their evidence. In some universities candidates can be asked to provide their examiners with separate lists of anonymous interviewees and dates of interviews, with the examiners held to conditions of confidentiality; in other cases anonymous sources are not welcome unless supported by public domain evidence.⁶⁷

The academic standards set in the History Department in Trinity College Dublin, would be expected to demand no less before awarding a doctorate.

In what follows, I provide a summary examination of relevant sections of Peter Hart's 1992 PhD thesis that became available in Trinity College Dublin Library on January 29 1996. I compare it with his 1998 publication. I attempt to identify some anonymous IRA veterans whom Hart claimed to have interviewed. I summarise significant differences between thesis and book, where they occur, in relation to Hart's account of Kilmichael in November 1920, and to killings in the area surrounding Dunmanway in April 1922.

As part of this analysis I intend in future to examine whether Protestants felt under threat from Irish nationalists during this period. In addition, I will look at evidence of the influence of the more recent troubles in the North intruding on the history of a further past and further south. This is the context within which Hart's research received an initially positive response, and it is the context within which a sustained critique of Irish nationalist historiography was mounted during the 1970s and 1980s. Hart's work was the product of an emerging orthodoxy with regard to Irish history. It was an orthodoxy

⁶⁵ Brendan O'Leary, *A Long March, Paul Bew and Ireland's Nations*, http://www.drb.ie/apr08_issues/a_long_march.htm.

⁶⁶ *The dark colours of patriotism, two books examine the revolutionary escapades of Tom Barry and his IRA comrades*, by Richard English, *The Irish Times*, January 17, 2004. Hart was indeed fortunate in the newspaper's choice of reviewer, as was English previously. Hart's review of *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA* (2003), referred to 'Richard English's superb new book', and 'English writes to the highest scholarly standards'. *Provisional roads to peace*, *The Irish Times*, April 5, 2003. Meda Ryan was not so fortunate.

⁶⁷ It has not been established if any of these stipulations, or others, affected examination of the 1992 Hart thesis. Brian Murphy, review of *The IRA and the Enemies*, *The Month*, September 1998 (republished in Lack Lane, Brendan Clifford, ed., *Kilmichael, the False Surrender*, 1999); Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, 2003.

in which Irish unionists and nationalists conformed to a sectarian stereotype, but in which it was claimed that the sectarian sins of the latter had hitherto been hidden from public scrutiny. It is my intention to challenge the evidential adequacy of this orthodoxy. Peter Hart's work is an important landmark and I use it as a case study. Hart's standards of evidence, the largely unquestioned promotion of his findings, and the role of this history in attempting to re-frame a view of the conflict in 1919-22 and post 1968 in Northern Ireland will be addressed as part of the larger study. Here, I summarise significant differences between Peter Hart's superficially similar accounts in his 1992 thesis and 1998 book entitled, respectively, *The Irish Republican army and its Enemies* and *The IRA and its Enemies*.

Differences

The 1992 thesis and 1998 book chapters on the Kilmichael ambush and on the April 1922 shootings of Protestant loyalists near Dunmanway are similar in presentation. However, the 1998 book contains some additional information obtained between publication of the two texts. Strangely, the new information appears to exercise little effect in expanding the 1992 thesis narrative. Quite the reverse, in fact, in some intriguing instances. However, the evidential contraction has no effect on sweeping generalisations in Hart's conclusions.

There are some significant differences in the presentation of evidence that are worthy of note.

First, interviews with conflict veterans are anonymised in both texts, but differently.

In the 1992 thesis this is done, it would appear, by initialising real names of those Hart termed 'republican activists', sometimes reversing the initials. They are identified as EY, CD, EB, JS, HJ, etc.. The same 1998 book interviewees become truly unidentifiable as AA, AB, AC, AD, etc. Association of the two groups of initials is straightforward, however, as the discussion and associated references usually occur at the same point.⁶⁸

For example:

Note, square brackets below indicate the alternate initials used in either 1992 or 1998, depending on whether book (1998) or thesis (1992) is being cited. Hart generally gives dates of interview on first citation, and ignores the information thereafter in interview citations after the first.

THESIS PAGE 43 FN 39
INTERVIEWS... WITH MC[AD], 28 APRIL 1989, CD[AE], 19 NOVEMBER 1989
AND BM[AC], 6 APRIL 1990

BOOK PAGE 31 FN 43
INTERVIEWS WITH AE[CD], AD[MC], 28 APRIL 1989 AND AC[BM], 6
APRIL 1990⁶⁹

THESIS PAGE 43 FN 40
INTERVIEWS WITH MC[AD] AND JS[AB], 2 APRIL 1988

BOOK PAGE 31 FN 44
INTERVIEWS WITH AD[MC] AND AB[JS], 2 APRIL 1988

THESIS PAGE 44 FN 42
INTERVIEWS WITH CD[AE] AND MC[AD]

BOOK PAGE 31 FN 46

⁶⁸ However, an unfortunate consequence of anonymising the interview accounts is that they do not appear in the book's index.

⁶⁹ There is a discrepancy above for the interview with CD/AE. It is November 19, 1989 in thesis, April 28, 1989 in book. While Hart states that he interviewed CD/AE on both dates, he obtained the information cited on only one of the dates indicated. Therefore, one of the citations is a mistake.

INTERVIEWS WITH AE[CD] AND AD[MC]

THESIS PAGE 45 FN 47

INTERVIEWS WITH MC[AD]

BOOK PAGE 33 FN 53

INTERVIEWS WITH AD[MC]

As a consequence of the use of real initials in the 1992 thesis, identification of interviewees is possible in some cases.⁷⁰ However, it is impossible in one particular instance, in the case of AF/HJ, who was reported by Hart to have been a Kilmichael ambush participant. Hart reported interviewing AF/HJ on November 19, 1989, six days after the last participant in the ambush was recorded as having died on November 13, 1989.⁷¹ The Kilmichael ambush veteran who died on November 13, 1989, Ned, or Edward, Young is Hart's second 1992 thesis Kilmichael interviewee, EY (AA in 1998 book).⁷² John Young, son of the last surviving veteran of the Kilmichael ambush, denied that Peter Hart had interviewed this father. In an affidavit signed on August 21, 2007 and sworn on December 14, 2007, John Young pointed out that his father suffered from a debilitating stroke affecting mobility and speech over a year prior to Hart's claim to have interviewed AA/EY. Young also stated that his father was in home based nursing care, and that he, John Young, controlled access to his father.⁷³ Hart's reported interviews with AA/EY and AF/HJ are therefore problematic because:

- a) Hart reported interviewing two Kilmichael ambush survivors, AA/EY and AF/HJ, when only one, Ned Young, was alive;
- b) Hart reported interviewing one of his two Kilmichael interviewees, AF/HJ, when none were alive;
- c) When one Kilmichael veteran was physically available for interview, Ned Young, he was not capable of submitting to an interview, due to his medical condition.

Second, in some instances, an interview citation used as a source support in the 1992 thesis is dropped for the 1998 book, or else another interviewee is substituted. This is curious, because the text to which it refers does not change and, in the main, new interviews have not been conducted. In one case, the mysterious 1992 thesis interviewee HJ (AF in 1998 book) is dropped as corroboration for a detail about arrival at the Kilmichael ambush site in favour of a citation from CD (AE in 1998 book). However, unlike HJ, Hart does not record CD as participating in the ambush.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ From this point, where they are mentioned, both sets of initials are presented simultaneously.

⁷¹ The November 13, 1989 death of Ned Young was reported prominently in the November 18, 1989 weekly *Southern Star* newspaper, one day before Hart reports his AF/HJ interview, with the headline *Ned Young, last of the 'Boys of Kilmichael'*. Difficult for a researcher on the spot to miss.

⁷² Hart cites AA/EY on his father 'being used by Auxiliaries as a hostage' (*Thesis* 1992: 100, note 178; *Enemies* 1998: 80, note 46). This episode is related by Ned Young about his father in a 'personal statement' that Hart saw. Hart cited it in a separate context – see the seventh point, below. Ned Young and AA/EY were from Dunmanway (*Thesis* 1992: 289, note 135; *Enemies* 1998: 222, note 138 – in this note Hart cites the elderly AA/EY's 'interviews' as enabling him to create some maps).

⁷³ John Young's affidavit is included as an appendix. It is published here for the first time.

⁷⁴ 1998 book, page 24, note 11, cites 'interviews with AA[EY] 3 Apr. 1988, and AE[CD] on 19 Nov. 1989.' The 1992 thesis, page 33, note 11, cites 'interviews with EY[AA] 3 April 1988, and HJ[AF] on 19 Nov. 1989.' In all other citations 1992's HJ=AF, whereas 1992's CD=AE. CD is Dan Cahalane, though a member of Barry's flying column, he did not participate in the Kilmichael ambush.

Third, in the 1992 thesis Hart reports that problematic IRA Kilmichael ambush veteran interviewee, AF/HJ, gave him a tour of the Kilmichael ambush site. Identification of this tour-guide is withdrawn from the 1998 book.⁷⁵

Fourth, in the 1992 thesis the mysterious AF/HJ is presented simply as an IRA veteran of the ambush. In the 1998 book, he became transformed into an unarmed 'scout rather than a rifleman, and therefore further away from the ambush site than the other interviewees'.⁷⁶ This revelation creates further anomalies.

Fifth, in the Kilmichael account there is a clear mistake in the 1998 book (implied in the 1992 thesis) in ascribing statements from two people to one interviewee, again the mysterious AF/HJ. It is not possible for all the quotes to be from AF/HJ because a second citation relating to the execution of Auxiliaries reads: "*Barry made us*", said another [interviewee]. "*He shot one, then we shot one*". This phrasing, the use of 'said another', clearly delineates two separate interviewees. Hart informs us in the 1998 book that AF/HJ is a 'scout', some way away from the battle.⁷⁷ Hart introduces him without explanation into the thick of it. As a scout he would have been, as Hart acknowledged, some distance away and would also (Hart confirms this separately in the 1998 book with regard to scouts) have been unarmed.

Sixth, the 1998 book inaccurately cites a 1971 newspaper reference to an un-named 'survivor' of the War of Independence. The 1992 thesis had accurately cited this source, a newspaper review of a radio programme, as naming a 'veteran of Kilmichael' called Michael O'Sullivan. However, no one of that name is listed in Hart's source for ambush participants, or any extant source, as having fought there. Perhaps Hart had a limited understanding about who fought at Kilmichael in his 1992 thesis, apart from Tom Barry. Presumably, Hart found out who did later, necessitating alteration of the citation. However, Hart's 1998 book camouflages the newspaper error by introducing an inaccurate citation.⁷⁸

Seventh, Though Hart had in his possession two BMH Witness statements from Kilmichael veterans, Edward Young and James Hennessy, he failed to cite them on the course of the ambush.⁷⁹ Hart cited them in a separate and non-Kilmichael context. Young is cited by name in both 1992 thesis and 1998 book, while Hennessy features by name in the 1998 book only. Young was Hart's alleged interviewee, AA/EY. However, leaving aside his problematic status, he contributes very little as an interviewee to Hart's ambush account. As for Jack Hennessy (or 'HJ' if we choose to identify him by his reversed initials), his account of a false surrender episode in the un-cited (by Hart) portion of his BMH Witness Statement bears

⁷⁵ Compare 1992 thesis, page 46, note 50, 'I was also fortunate to be given a tour of the ambush site by the latter [HJ]', with 1998 book, page 33, note 56, 'I was also fortunate to be given a tour of the ambush site by one of my interviewees...'.

⁷⁶ Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 35 note 61. Compare with 1992 thesis, page 49, note 55, where there is no identification of HJ/AF as a scout. However, the thesis note (this is not in the book) does contain 'if anything, this underlines just how difficult it is to reconcile the various accounts and perceptions'. Quite.

⁷⁷ Hart, *Thesis* 1992: 46, note 50; *Enemies* 1998: 33, note 56, above. Kevin Myers cited the passage in *The Irish Times* (May 29, 1998) in a way that elided the error: "*Barry made us*," recollected one volunteer. "*He shot one, then we shot one*". A case of sloppy and sloppier perhaps.

⁷⁸ Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 38, note 74. Hart's 'sociological facts' in his 'Boys of Kilmichael' chapter in the 1992 thesis are amended considerably in the 1998 book chapter of the same name.

⁷⁹ Hart's Young citation reads, 'Edward Young statement (in the possession of Edward Young)'. Hart, *Thesis* 1992: 306, *Enemies* 1998: 232. It is identical to Edward (Ned) Young's BMH Witness Statement 1402, April 17 1956. Hart's Hennessy citation reads 'Jack Hennessy statement (Ballineen/Enniskeane Area Heritage Group)', *Enemies* 1998: 132. It is Jack Hennessy's BMH Witness Statement, No. 1,234, August 23 1955. The 1998 index entry reads, 'Hennessy, Jack, Kilmichael ambush 132'. Ned Young does not have an index entry.

intriguing similarities to part of the AF/HJ interviewee account cited by Hart.⁸⁰ But Hennessy cannot be Hart's mysterious AF/HJ because he died in 1970 and because he was not, unlike AF/HJ became in the 1998 book, an unarmed scout.⁸¹

Eighth, the chapter title for Chapter 12, *Taking it out on the Protestants*, and the use and sourcing of this phrase in the text is problematic. The event it described occurred much later during the Irish Civil War. It has nothing to do with the events Hart described, the April 27-29, 1922 killings. A simple reading of the text from which the phrase was taken, and then used directly and as a paraphrase by Hart, establishes this fact.⁸²

Ninth, in the chapter on the April killings in 1922, significant information in the 1992 thesis is omitted from the 1998 book, including speculation as to a perpetrator of some of the killings. Inclusion of this information in the 1992 thesis potentially undermined Hart's IRA sectarianism thesis.⁸³ Otherwise contradictory source support for a republican admission that 'our fellas' did it is omitted also from the 1998 book. Despite providing less evidence in the 1998 book, as compared to the 1992 thesis, as to perpetrators, Hart retained sourceless generalisations about republican sectarianism.⁸⁴

Tenth, in the chapter on the April 1922 Killings a pattern of significant mis-reporting of source accounts, first encountered in the Kilmichael chapter, is repeated. An examination of some source material, and a comparative analysis, which I have undertaken, clarifies these findings. For instance, in the 1998 book (only) Hart reported that Clarina Buttimer 'seems to have recognised at least one of her husband's attackers'. While un-sourced at the point where Hart makes this observation, a previous reference to this killing cites newspapers on particular dates and also a 1927 Irish Grants Committee statement from this witness. In fact she is reported at the inquest into her husband's death as follows in at least three newspaper reports, 'Though there were a number of men there, she only saw one, whom she did **not** recognise'. The later 1927 Grants Committee statement from Buttimer also does not support Hart's contention about recognition.⁸⁵

Eleventh, in the April killings chapter Hart ignored significant publicly available statements from southern Protestants. They denied emphatically that there was a campaign of anti Protestant violence up to that point and stated that the West Cork events were exceptional. This included *The Irish Times*, at that time a unionist newspaper. In 1994, in *The Irish Times*, a Church of Ireland cleric reported Protestant support for a subsequent Fianna Fail TD in the 1930s. This was because the TD was part of the IRA leadership group that guarded potential loyalist victims in 1922 and took other decisive action to end the killings. The Protestant clergyman

⁸⁰ Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 35, note 61.

⁸¹ The names and year of death of Kilmichael ambush participants is given in the 2005 paperback edition of Meda Ryan's *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, pages 390-391.

⁸² Leon O Broin, *Protestant Nationalists in Revolutionary Ireland: the Stopford Connection*, 1985: 177. See also Brian Murphy's review of *The IRA and its Enemies* in *The Month*, September 1998 and *The Origin and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920* (2006).

⁸³ In that the person identified, Frank Busteed, had a Protestant father and later declared himself an atheist. See note following.

⁸⁴ I deal with this in more detail in *After the War of Independence, some further questions about West Cork, April 27-29 1922*, *The Irish Political Review*, Vol. 23, No. 3, March 2008. Copy available at <http://www.atholbooks.org/>, http://www.atholbooks.org/hart_and_west_cork.pdf.

⁸⁵ *The Irish Independent*, May 1, 1922, *The Southern Star*, April 29, 1922, *The Cork County Eagle*, May 6, 1922, emphasis added. Hart's earlier citation on page 273 read 'the *Belfast Newsletter*, 1 May 1922, *The Eagle* 6 May 1922 and in her statement to the Irish Grants Committee (CO 762/142)'. Hart's un-sourced comment about Buttimer and recognition is on page 282 of the 1998 book.

was refuting the claims of Kevin Myers.⁸⁶ While Hart noted the debate with this *Irish Times* journalist who consistently promoted Hart's research, he failed to note this and other important testimony undermining his claims and his conclusions.

Twelfth, Hart also, though this was common to both the 1992 thesis and the 1998 book, ignored aspects of British Army documentation he cited, pointing to the existence of active loyalism in league with British forces in the area where the April Killings took place. If the killings, which violated an IRA amnesty for spies and informers, were carried out for revenge or other political or military purposes it undermines Hart's sectarianism conclusion. He chose not to weigh this and other unpalatable, from his point of view, evidence for the reader.⁸⁷

From the foregoing, in relation to Kilmichael, it can be seen that while both of Hart's Kilmichael interviewees are problematic, one, AF/HJ, is particularly so. He is difficult if not impossible to identify, principally because he was interviewed after he, to all intents and purposes, died. The anonymity of the interviewees prevents the possibility of verification of Hart's claims. Academic research without verifiable sources is journalism. Journalism has an essential place in a democratic society, but it is not subject to social science rules. The use of anonymous sources in journalism requires justification internally to editors and externally to the public. Hart claims to have extracted anonymous information from aged veterans at a time when verification after publication of the research was impossible. At that time they were, like AF/HJ, dead.⁸⁸

Anonymous interviews

Why anonymous interviewees?

It is not a method other Irish historians felt required to adopt in examining this period of Irish history? It has never been satisfactorily explained why Hart in particular felt the need to adopt this practice. Hart also confusingly reports the number interviewed anonymously. In 1992 Hart wrote, 'Between 1988 and 1990 I interviewed twelve IRA veterans, two women activists (one of whom had been a member of Cumann na mBan) and approximately the same number of contemporaries and relatives'. He reported that 'as a large number of these interviewees requested that part or all of their testimony be quoted anonymously, I refer to them using initials only'. In other words, all became anonymous, though this evidently included those who did not seek anonymity and statements not requiring anonymity. Only twelve sets of initials can be found in the 1992 thesis. Hart wrote similarly in his 1998 book, 'Between 1988 and 1994 I interviewed thirteen Cork IRA veterans, two women activists (one of whom had been a member of Cumann na mBan) and approximately the same number of contemporaries and relatives'. Here, thirteen sets of anonymous initials can be traced in the text. Presumably Hart intended to mean that only the IRA veterans were bestowed with initials.⁸⁹ Strictly speaking, if we include the women activists, there should be fourteen sets of initials in 1992, fifteen in 1998.⁹⁰ Had Hart listed the anonymous interviewees and dates of interviews in a table, this seeming confusion might have been clarified. But perhaps this is nit picking. We shall move on.

Hart reported that his interviewees spoke on the basis of anonymity because the elderly combat veterans were 'extremely nervous'. He also said the two Kilmichael

⁸⁶ J.L.B. Deane, *Letters to the Editor, The Irish Times*, November 10, 1994.

⁸⁷ See Brian Murphy's *Peter Hart, the issue of sources*, Appendix III.

⁸⁸ Accurate investigative journalism and informed commentary are the point at which social science disciplines and journalism sometimes intersect or complement each other. A journalist may be required to reveal sources to an editor. Whether Hart revealed his to his examiners has not been established.

⁸⁹ Hart *Thesis* 1992: 478; *Enemies* 1998 330. In his acknowledgements, Hart refers to 12 anonymous veterans in the 1992 thesis, 13 in the 1998 book.

⁹⁰ *Thesis* 1992: 12 men + 2 women = 14; *Enemies* 1998: 13 men + 2 women = 15.

veterans spoke to him in the presence of ‘their children’. On Radio Kerry in September 1998 Hart said, ‘Certainly the two men who I talked to who were there [at the Kilmichael ambush] were rather concerned and actually their children were rather concerned about what they were saying’.⁹¹ Once the work was published no veteran, infirm or otherwise, was alive and in a position to either confirm or contradict these claims. No ‘children’ have emerged to confirm them.⁹² However, one, in the previously cited affidavit of John Young, has emphatically contradicted Hart’s claim.

Hart first brought his anonymous interview approach to public attention in May 1990, in his contribution to *Revolution? 1917-1923*, a book edited by David Fitzpatrick and published as part of the *Dublin History Workshop* series. In his essay on *IRA Youth Culture*, Hart gives real initials of interviewees, as in the later 1992 thesis. For instance, on pages 11 and 21 he cites an interview with ‘C.D., [‘AE’ in Hart’s 1998 book] 19 November 1989’, ‘17 November 1989’.⁹³ Also, on page 12, an ‘Interview with E. B. [‘AJ’ in 1998 book]... 9 May 1989’ is cited. In the 1990 article Hart also, and this is puzzling, claimed to have interviewed ‘eleven Cork I.R.A. veterans’.⁹⁴ Hart appears to have completed his veteran interviews at that stage, but reported subsequently in the 1992 thesis that he had interviewed 12 IRA veterans in total. Hart’s last reported (in the 1992 thesis) interviews were with two veterans on April 6, 1990, in time to report the fact in his 1990 essay in *Revolution? 1917-1923*.⁹⁵

This dating by Hart brings with it a mathematical anomaly. Hart reported interviewing two veterans on April 6 1990, and therefore (logically) had reportedly interviewed 10 veterans before that date, 12 after it.⁹⁶ The last date given in the 1992 thesis for IRA veteran interviews is the same April 6, 1990. The report by Hart in 1990 that he interviewed 11 is therefore curious and appears mathematically improbable.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Hart, *Enemies* 1998: 33. Ryan, *Barry* 2005: 69. Audiotape of Hart on Radio Kerry in author’s possession. AF/HJ’s children might have been particularly concerned, perhaps even delighted, at their father’s resurrection.

⁹² The veterans were in their 80s and 90s, their offspring past the point where the term ‘children’ might usually be applied to them.

⁹³ CD is Dan Cahalane, with the initials of his first and second name reversed.

⁹⁴ Hart, in Fitzpatrick, ed., 1990: 13. Hart also refers in the same sentence to interviewing ‘other relatives of veterans’, but these are separate individuals presumably. Otherwise it would render Hart’s subsequent IRA veteran interview dating in both thesis (1992) and book (1998) incomprehensible (ibid). *Irish Times* journalist, Kevin Myers (Hart’s regular amanuensis) stated on May 23 1990 that ‘Peter’ had interviewed 11 IRA veterans. The ‘17 November 1989’ dating of an interview with ‘C.D.’, on page 21 of the 1990 publication, is curious. In the 1992 thesis and 1998 book CD/AE was reportedly interviewed on April 28 and November 19, 1989. No mention of November 17. Possibly a sloppy footnote.

⁹⁵ David Fitzpatrick’s editorial preface is dated April 18, 1990.

⁹⁶ Hart states that he interviewed AC/BM and AH/BA on April 6, 1990 (*Thesis* 1990: 43, 377). The AH/BA citation is not in the 1998 book at the same point, p. 282, note 67. His interview appears, therefore, to be undated in the 1998 book. In the 1992 thesis AH/BA served to contradict Kevin Myers’ highly controversial and contested public identification of republicans that Myers alleged were the April killers (*An Irishman’s Diary*, *The Irish Times*, December 19, 1989, January 9, 1990). Hart placed more reliance on Myers in the 1992 thesis than in the subsequent 1998 book. In the 1992 thesis Myers is referred to in the main text twice (on pages 377 and 379) and once in a footnote (page 377). In the second reference ‘the men named by Myers’ are assumed to have been responsible for the April killings. In the 1998 book the newspaper diarist receives one footnoted reference (on page 282, note 67), in which his evidence is downgraded. Hart also withdrew speculation with regard to Frank Busted in the 1998 book (note 84, 85, above). Instead, as has been noted, an unreliable citation of Clarina Buttimer is presented for the reader’s attention. It is a mess.

⁹⁷ In other words, Hart had completed twelve IRA veteran interviews when he finished, with two completed in one day in the final interview session on April 6 1990. Therefore, he had conducted ten interviews the day before the final interview session, twelve the day afterwards. For the mathematically inclined (or challenged), $12-2=10$. There is a possible explanation. An interviewee, OS/AM, contributes one comment to Hart’s thesis and book. The date on which the interview with OS/AM was conducted is not readily apparent in either publication, Hart, *Thesis* 1992: 355; *Enemies* 1998: 265. At least, I have been

Intriguingly, the same 1990 book, *Revolution? 1917-23*, includes an essay from the historian Joost Augusteijn, in which he also reported interviewing a number of IRA veterans, but in which Augusteijn has no difficulty naming his. For example, 'Jack Gardiner ... 28 February, 1990 ... Matt Morrissey.... 14 March, 1990'.⁹⁸ The juxtaposition of the two articles, in which one author names his veteran IRA interviewees, while the other does not, throws Hart's preference for shrouding his interviewees in anonymity into sharp relief. Hart may argue that his interviewees are reporting contentious information, though it should be noted that most of their reported comments are innocuous. Nothing much earth shattering, historically speaking, by and large.⁹⁹

Where comments are controversial, as in anonymous Kilmichael veteran allegations, it can be argued that it is more important that identities are revealed, so that allegations can be checked. Pointedly, where is the possibility of verification? Anonymous statements are problematic at any level, more so in the case of Hart's presentation of evidence, since it is accompanied by other anomalies and contradictions. What is most puzzling, though, is the fact that Hart's interviewees contribute little by way of direct citation to his central allegations, either against Tom Barry at the Kilmichael ambush or in relation to the April 1922 killings. In fact, in relation to the latter event, problematic interviewee allegations in the 1992 thesis are withdrawn from the 1998 book.

In his contribution to English and Walker's *Unionism and Modern Ireland* (1996), Hart reports what appear to be the real initials of Cork Protestant interviewees. He interviewed them in 1993 and 1994, after completion of the 1992 thesis, and included their views in *The IRA and its Enemies* (1998).¹⁰⁰ In the latter 1998 publication they are more thoroughly anonymised, however, with the initials BA, BB, BC, etc..¹⁰¹

The decision to further anonymise his interviewees was therefore taken rather late, soon before publication of the landmark 1998 book. In retrospect a strange decision given that three publications, in 1990, 1992 and 1996, had adopted the less obscuring method of using the real initials of informants. Even more so, in that Hart's 1996 survey of Protestant opinion was also reprinted without much alteration in 2003.¹⁰²

The aged IRA interviewees were the one group otherwise in a position to definitively confirm the veracity of Hart's account of their views. It seems odd that the final gift to posterity of these normally outspoken veterans was to shroud their observations in anonymity. One of the veteran interviewees, JS/AB, John L. Sullivan, was an outspoken Fine Gael TD with a colourful past.¹⁰³ He is referred to by Hart as 'the lone Free Stater

unable to spot one. Sloppiness perhaps, either mine or Hart's. It is therefore open to Hart to claim, should he wish, as a result of this anomaly, that this particular interview was conducted later than April 6, 1990.

⁹⁸ Footnote to page 32, similarly, see also page 26.

⁹⁹ The citation from OS/AM, op cit, is representative of the type of information Hart obtained from interviewees. It is to the effect that members of an IRA battalion supporting the Anglo Irish Treaty of December 1920, had 'gone Free State', because their 'republican captain had been "knocking them about"'

¹⁰⁰ *The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Southern Ireland*, in Richard English and Graham Walker, ed., *Unionism and Modern Ireland*, 1996.

¹⁰¹ The 1996 article was republished by Hart in his *The IRA at War* (2003). In the *Note on Contributors* in English and Walker (ed.), *The IRA and its Enemies* is reported as being published in 1996, though it did not appear for a further two years.

¹⁰² *The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Ireland*, in Richard English and Graham Walker (ed), *Unionism in Modern Ireland*, 1996. Also in Hart's *The IRA at War*, 2003.

¹⁰³ A *Southern Star* editorial on the 1937 General Election noted, 'Mr. John L. Sullivan has been, owing to circumstances beyond his control, unable personally to forward his claims on the electorate. He is undergoing a sentence of five years imprisonment, imposed by the military tribunal in Dublin, of which two years and three months have been served, and at present is incarcerated in "The Glasshouse" at the Curragh, Co Kildare' (*The Election Campaign*, June 26, 1937). Sullivan was convicted of burning the home of Cork Fianna Fail TD, PS Murphy, in May 1935, while a member of the Army Comrades Association, otherwise known as the Blueshirts (Maurice Manning, *James Dillon, a Biography* 2000: 114). In noting the absence of

among my interviewees'.¹⁰⁴ A former member of Tom Barry's flying column, Sullivan had not, up to that point, been noted for his reticence.

Conclusion

This is a necessarily truncated account of some of the problems with Peter Hart's research. They should have been picked up and pursued from within the academy soon after publication. The only historian to do so initially in an academic context was Brian Murphy in his review in *The Month* (September-October 1998). Murphy pointed to the phrase 'took it out on the Protestants' that Hart used in his text and in paraphrase in a chapter heading. It had, contrary to what Hart had asserted, nothing whatever to do with the April 27-29, 1922, killings near Dunmanway. The phrase referred to a non-sectarian episode later in the civil war. This was clear from the published source from which Hart extracted it. Murphy also pointed out that Hart misrepresented a passage from the *British Record of the Rebellion* to give the impression that loyalists in the Bandon area did not engage in active and organised informing, whereas the British source, in a passage not cited by Hart, stated precisely the opposite.¹⁰⁵ Apart from a review in *Saothar*, Journal of the Irish Labour History Society by Joost Augusteijn, most of the remaining initial reviews were simply celebratory.¹⁰⁶ I cited some of the latter variety earlier. They were uncritical because Hart's conclusions were welcomed to the extent that flaws in the research were overlooked. While research should be applauded, and Hart conducted much, it needs also to be interrogated. The Irish historical profession, by and large, failed to engage. By and large, that failure continues. Irish historians tend to be narrowly focussed on their own research and tend to avoid consideration of critical shortcomings within the profession. Career enhancement is one factor in the equation. Politics is the other. Safeguarding the first, while avoiding the second has led to acceptance of research because it reinforces or is part of a dominant paradigm, rather than because of its intrinsic merits. As a consequence politics is written all over a profession that ostensibly set out to avoid the taint of partisanship in the 1970s, during the height of the modern Irish Troubles. Modern Irish history, instead of engaging with the Irish Question has become part of it. The Irish Troubles have produced a troubled history that is fractious, timid and cowed by an instructed historical conscience. It dominates the field of public history and the politics of Irish history. It needs to be challenged, from within.

a jury trial the newspaper editorial asserted, 'his enforced absence from election platforms would be a serious handicap were it not that the reason for it is thoroughly appreciated as are the mode and manner by which it was brought about.' Sullivan was unsuccessful on that occasion, obtaining 3,675 votes for Fine Gael. He persevered and, having been elected a local councillor in the 1950s, was finally elected to the Dáil for Fine Gael in 1973, topping the poll with 6,420 votes (Vincent Browne, Michael Farrell, *The Magill Book of Irish Politics*, 1981: 80, 81).

¹⁰⁴ *Enemies*, 1998: 265, *Thesis*, 1992: 354.

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix III

¹⁰⁶ Review of *The IRA and its Enemies*, *Saothar* 23, 1998.

Poisoning the Well or Publishing the Truth?

**From Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies*
to
RTE's *Hidden History* film on Coolacree**

by Brian P Murphy osb

Introduction: David Leeson on poisoning the well of the National Archives at Kew

At the end of last year, November 2007 to be precise, I became aware that David Leeson, Laurentian University, Canada, had made an extended critical reference about myself in his review of John Borgonovo's book, *Spies, Informers and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society': the Intelligence War in Cork, 1920-1921*.¹ This review was written for 'Reviews in History,' the Institute of Historical Research's electronic reviews journal.² At the same time, it was drawn to my attention that, in September 2005, Leeson had also commented critically on the Indymedia website about my use of sources. To address Leeson's review of Borgonovo's book first. In fact, in a review of some seventeen double-spaced pages that was supposedly devoted to Borgonovo's book, some two and half pages of footnote space had been devoted to a recent publication of mine, *The Origins and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920* (Aubane, 2006). The comment in Leeson's text, which had served to introduce this footnote, was as follows:

'In fact, the UK's National Archive have preserved an enormous number of documents relating to the Irish War of Independence: and despite a recent effort by Brian Murphy and the Aubane Historical Society to poison this well, no historian can afford to ignore its contents.'

Faced by remarks of this nature, I informed Dr Jane Winters (Head of Publications, Institute of Historical Research, University of London) that they raised many questions: firstly, I stated,

'I am not a member of the Aubane Historical Society, although my book was published under its auspices; and, secondly, I have used the National Archives at Kew for over twenty years and have always acknowledged, with thanks, the value of the documents that are deposited there.'

Time, and space, prevented me from stating that the Aubane Historical Society, through the medium of Athol Books with which it is associated, has frequently reprinted original source material that is directly related to personalities whose names figure prominently in the records of the National Archives. For example, Major C.J.C .Street, *The Administration of Ireland 1920* (Athol, 2001); Lionel Curtis, *Ireland* (Athol, 2002); and General F.P.Crozier, *The Men I Killed* (Athol, 2002)

The publication of these works, all with important introductions, indicate a willingness to restore original source material into the historical narrative. Moreover, the publication by the Aubane Historical Society, itself, of Witness Statements for the years 1916-1921 that are held in the Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin, confirms the Society's commitment to making original records available. Indeed, *Sean Moylan in his own Words* (Aubane, 2004) was the first Witness Statement to be published and the book contained the first published list of all available Witness Statements, an invaluable facility for research students and the general public alike which is not available in any government publication.

Aware of my own, and the Aubane Society's, respect for the National Archives, both English and Irish, I concluded my observations to Dr Winters with the comment that the views expressed by David Leeson 'raise questions as to his credibility as a reviewer. Clearly anyone,' I continued, 'who makes remarks of that nature is not approaching the task at hand with the open mind that is the necessary prerequisite of a fair and objective review.' Dr Winters responded to my concerns in an appropriate manner and the comments of

¹ Irish Academic Press, 2007.

² See David Leeson's review of *Spies, Informers, and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society': The Intelligence War in Cork City, 1920-1921* at <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/leeson.html>, and response by John Borgonovo at <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/leesonresp.html>.

Leeson were withdrawn from the review. However, the contents of his remarks about myself not only confirm a lack of objectivity but also betray a failure to read accurately the source material contained in the written text. At the centre of his error is his attribution to me of words and judgements that are essentially those of another, namely, Basil Clarke, Head of Publicity at Dublin Castle.

Leeson, having focussed on some letters and memoranda published in my book,³ affirmed that 'the quality of Murphy's analysis can be fairly judged from his use of a memorandum on propaganda written by the Head of Dublin Castle's Department of Publicity, Basil Clarke. In this memorandum, Clarke defends the need for official press releases as part of a strategy of 'propaganda by news.' Murphy argues that by this, Clarke meant propaganda by false news - false official versions to combat the inconvenient truths of Irish Republican Propaganda: "Verisimilitude, a statement having the air of truth, while not, in fact, being so, was used by Clarke in order to deceive the assembled press correspondents.'" Leeson concluded that 'this argument is hard to sustain in the face of other passages from Clarke's own draft memoranda, such as 'propaganda then in my view should entail concentration on facts. Nor should one exclude even the unfavourable fact.'

If Leeson's analysis of Basil Clarke's memoranda was accurate and correct, then, indeed, my argument would be 'hard to sustain.' However, the sentence about Clarke, for which I am taken to task, and beginning, 'verisimilitude, a statement having the air of truth, while not, in fact, being so ...' was purely a summary of Clarke's own memorandum. Even the word 'verisimilitude' was Basil Clarke's and not mine! Immediately above my paraphrased conclusion one can read Clarke's own statement made to Andy Cope on 10 March 1921. It stated that

'about 20 Pressmen, Irish, British and foreign, visit the Castle twice daily, take our version of the facts - which I take care are as favourable to us as may be, in accordance with truth and verisimilitude - and they believe all I tell them. And they cannot afford to stay away. That is an advantage which no system of Press propaganda other than the news propaganda system, could win.'

In short, while it is correct to say that Clarke did include 'the unfavourable fact,' he did so when it suited him. At other times he promulgated 'our version of the facts' and, in particular, he made a very strong case for labelling this version of fact as 'official.' He informed Cope, 'I would say that the labelling of the news in some way as official ("Dublin Castle," "GHQ," etc.) is the essence of the whole thing: the whole system of propaganda by news hangs on it.' Indeed, these extracts from the letter of Clarke to Cope, all of which are contained in my book, reveal a detailed, yet complex, system of propaganda by official news in which the facts of a case are either used or manipulated to achieve a specific purpose. For Leeson to argue otherwise is to misrepresent the contents of Clarke's letter.

Moreover, if Leeson had read the next page of my book, he would have found a letter of Major Street, Head of the Irish Office in London, which leaves no doubt that 'official' news was designed, when the occasion demanded, to deceive for propaganda purposes. Street wrote to Clarke on 12 March 1921 and declared that 'it seems to me that your critic (Andy Cope) does not understand the first principle of propaganda. In order that propaganda may be disseminated, in order that it may be rendered capable of being swallowed, it must be dissolved in some fluid which the patient will readily assimilate. Regarding the press as the patient, I know of only two solvents, advertisement and news, of which the latter is by far the most convincing and most economical.'⁴

From these words it is evident that the process to which Clarke and Street were committed was not simply the presentation of factual veracity: it was factual

³ Murphy, *British Propaganda in Ireland*, 2006: 28.

⁴ *Ibid*: 29

'verisimilitude,' Clarke's word, not mine, designed to serve a propaganda purpose. Far from poisoning the well of the National Archives, as Leeson claims, my reproduction of the material contained in their collections has, as far as humanly possible, faithfully attempted to let the contents speak for themselves. In this context many questions of academic capacity are raised in regard to Leeson's failure to read the contents of the National Archives with the diligence that they deserve. The same failure has manifested itself in his treatment of original documents that are central to the Indymedia debate about Peter Hart's, *The IRA and its Enemies* (Oxford, 1998)

David Leeson, Peter Hart and original source material relating to the Kilmichael ambush, 28 November 1920

In this debate Leeson stated that 'one reason I am not yet convinced that Hart is mistaken concerns the captured 1920 report to which his work refers.' This captured report relates to the Kilmichael ambush, 28 November 1920, in which the Flying Column of the Third West Cork Brigade, under the command of Tom Barry, killed 17 members of the British Crown Forces. As the report is so central to the debate, it seems fitting to reproduce it here from the published account given by Peter Hart.⁵ Hart introduced the report by stating that it was Barry's 'original after-action report written for his superiors.'

The report reads:

'the column paraded at 3.15 a.m. on Sunday morning. It comprised 32 men armed with rifles, bayonets, five revolvers, and 100 rounds of ammunition per man. We marched for five hours, and reached a position on the Macroom-Dunmanway road ... We camped in that position until 4.15 p.m., and then decided that as the enemy searches were completed, that it would be safe to return to our camp. Accordingly, we started the return journey. About five minutes after the start we sighted two enemy lorries moving at a distance of about 1,900 yards from us. The country in that particular district is of a hilly and rocky nature, and, although suitable to fighting, it is not at all suitable to retiring without being seen. I decided to attack the lorries ... The action was carried out successfully. Sixteen of the enemy who were belonging to the Auxiliary Police from Macroom Castle being killed, one wounded and escaped, and is now missing ...

P.S. I attribute our casualties to the fact that those three men were too anxious to get into close quarters with the enemy. They were our best men, and did not know danger in this or any previous action. They discarded their cover, and it was not until the finish of the action that P.Deasy was killed by a revolver bullet from one of the enemy whom he thought dead.' This post-script concluded Peter Hart's published account of the 'captured report.'

It was in relation to this report that Leeson noted that 'Meda Ryan and Brian Murphy have suggested that this report is not genuine' and stated that 'the report in question was reproduced in a printed document preserved in the Strickland Papers in the Imperial War Museum, entitled *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*.⁶ While these remarks of Leeson are correct, it is not correct to claim, that Peter Hart was referring to this source! The reference source to which Hart attributed the captured report was *The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area from after 1916 Rebellion to December 1921*. This source is also to be found in the Strickland Papers, P.362, pp 63, 64. I believe that I, myself, writing to the *Irish Times*, 10 August, 1998, was the first person to stress the significance of the contents of *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents*

⁵ Hart, *The IRA* 1998: 25, 26.

⁶ At http://www.indymedia.ie/article/71352?&condense_comments=false#comment120817.

Only), to which Leeson now, late in the day, makes reference. Clearly it is of some academic significance that David Leeson incorrectly identified the source to which Hart made reference in his initial findings. Although the distinction may appear to be a fine one, it is, as will be clarified later, of some considerable moment in relation to the many claims that Peter Hart made about 'the captured 1920 report.'

The claims that Peter Hart has made about this report and his damning conclusion are to be found in the second chapter of his book, which is entitled, 'The Kilmichael Ambush.' To take the conclusion first: Hart stated that 'British information seems to have been remarkably accurate. Barry's history of Kilmichael on the other hand, is riddled with lies and evasions. There was no false surrender as he described it.' The 'false surrender' of the Auxiliaries, to which Hart makes mention here, formed an integral part of Tom Barry's accounts of the ambush. Basically, Hart is arguing from the presumption that the 'captured report' is definitely Barry's; that silence in this report about a surrender of any sort proves that there was no 'false surrender;' and, therefore, Barry's later accounts are 'riddled with lies and evasions' by relating the 'false surrender' story.

On these negative foundations Hart maintains that the traditional Irish nationalist version of the ambush cannot be maintained: the acclaimed heroic victory of a body of IRA freedom fighters, against the most feared opponents in the Crown Forces, is tarnished by the fact that they killed some of their opponents, in cold blood, after they had genuinely surrendered. Such is the argument of Peter Hart and it is made, it should be stressed, despite the fact that there is no mention of a surrender of any sort in the 'captured document.'

This conclusion of Hart is based on 'the captured 1920 report' and the evidence of some anonymous witnesses, about whom a debate as to their reliability is ongoing.⁷ Hart maintained that the report was Barry's 'original after action report written for his superiors;' that it was 'an authentic captured document;' and that it 'was only printed in an unpublished and confidential history.' Several observations may be made about these statements: firstly, the report was not 'written.' As recorded in *The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area*, it is a typed document; it is undated; and it is not signed. These facts would have been clear, if Hart had published the entire contents of the report. By omitting the final sentences, he has obscured the fact that the author is given, in typed format, as 'O.C. Flying Column, 3rd Cork Brigade.' Secondly, and here the significance of Leeson's misreading of Hart's primary source becomes apparent, the report was not confined, as Hart claimed, to 'an unpublished and confidential history.' It was published in *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*. Although the circulation may have been limited, it was certainly published, clearly not confidential, and, presumably, used among military sources at the very least. I have, for example, found some pages of it in the files of the Dublin Castle civil administration.

Peter Hart, in reply to my letter of 10 August, was reluctant to accept the relevance of these points. Writing to the *Irish Times*, 1 September 1998, he still referred to the document as 'the first written account of the ambush' and, in regard to *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*, he maintained that it was 'a confidential printed (but not published) pamphlet issued to units by the Irish Command in 1921.' All I can say is that the copy of *The Irish Republican Army* that I saw in the Imperial War Museum was a published document and that David Leeson viewed it in the same light, describing it as 'an official War Office publication.' Refusing to acknowledge the points that I had made about the 'captured report,' Hart stated, in his letter of 1 September 1998, that 'we must therefore ask the following questions: why would the British army forge a document which does not

⁷ See *Troubles in Irish History*, by Níall Meehan. Meda Ryan's *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003) first brought these concerns to public attention.

agree with its version of events, and then keep it secret except to mislead its own officers as to IRA methods?

At that time I did not reply to these questions for two reasons: firstly, it seemed to me that, having shown that the report lacked the authenticity of a signed, dated and hand-written document, it could not safely be used to justify the all-embracing conclusion that Hart had drawn; and, secondly, the contents of the 'captured report' were so at variance with several known details of the ambush that it could not have been written by Tom Barry. Meda Ryan, in particular, drew attention to several issues over the contents of the 'captured report': firstly, the number of men in the Flying Column was 36 not 32; the time of the ambush was closer to 4 p.m. than to 4.20 p.m.; thirdly, the Flying Column did not, at any time, retire from its planned ambush positions prior to the actual engagement; and, fourthly, P. Deasy was wounded, but not killed, during the action.

The views of Meda Ryan are of special importance because she interviewed, and recorded, several of those who had participated in the Kilmichael ambush in the early 1970's.⁸ Among these men were Ned Young (d.1989), the last survivor, and Paddy O'Brien (d.1979) both of whom spoke of a surrender call by the Auxiliaries. She also interviewed Pat O'Donovan and Tim O'Connell, both of whom fought in the same section of the ambush as Pat Deasy, one of the three members of the IRA who died as a result of the action. Indeed, the death of Deasy, and the manner of its recording by the 'captured report' proves conclusively that it could not have been written by Tom Barry. It also provides a critical insight into Peter Hart's use of documents.

Three times, during the re-production of the report, Hart omits some of its contents. At the very end of the report, immediately prior to the post-script, one reads that a member of the Auxiliaries 'is now missing ...' Among the sentences then omitted is the statement that 'our casualties were: one killed, and two who have subsequently died of wounds.' In drawing attention to this selective omission, Meda Ryan observed that 'in reality it was the other way around: two Volunteers, Jim O'Sullivan and Michael McCarthy were killed and Pat Deasy died some hours later.' Tom Barry, she concluded, 'would not have committed so glaring an error.' Ryan's conclusion appears convincing and compelling. It is simply not credible that a commanding officer would have been unaware of the deaths under his command, especially as the wounded Pat Deasy was carried from the ambush site for several hours until his death and the Flying Column paid their respects to the two dead men on the field of battle. The real question that demands attention, after this brief consideration of the 'captured report' is this: why did Peter Hart omit the significant sentence, 'our casualties were: one killed, and two who have subsequently died of wounds?'

The issue of forgery and Peter Hart's 'honest mistakes.'

It was against this background that the question of forgery seemed secondary to the principal fact that the document, itself, could not be attributed to Tom Barry. Leeson, however, in his contribution to Indymedia, paid little attention to the considerations presented above, and repeated Hart's questions verbatim. He concluded that 'neither Murphy nor Ryan gave a satisfactory answer to that question.' One cannot claim to have a definitive answer to this question, which, at this stage in the debate, would appear to be of only a speculative interest, but a possible response is to be found in the pages of the two British source documents. Ironically Hart, himself, in the very posing of the question, has indicated an answer to it by remarking that 'the pamphlet's British author even comments that the Kilmichael report does not support the official version of the ambush, which claimed that the IRA mutilated the Auxiliaries bodies.'

⁸ See Ryan, *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, Mercier/Cork, 2003; and her earlier book, *The Tom Barry Story*, Cork, 1982.

The pamphlet that Hart refers to here is *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*. In other words, if I understand Peter Hart correctly, he is claiming that, if a forger was at work, he would have added the mutilation of the Auxiliaries to the forged report in order to blacken the reputation of the IRA. This argument might have some merit if both of the source documents that contain the Kilmichael 'captured report,' *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)* and *The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area*, had printed it without making any additional comments. However, both documents printed the 'captured report' with comments that were taken, in large part, from the 'official version' of the Kilmichael ambush. In other words the 'captured report' was used as a peg on which to hang the 'official' verdict on the ambush; and, with the word 'official,' we are back in the world of Basil Clarke, 'verisimilitude,' and distortion.

The effect is most clearly seen in the way in which the 'captured report' is presented in *The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area*, the document that Peter Hart cited originally. In that source, immediately following the 'captured report,' it is stated that 'the true facts are as follows.' The 'true facts' recorded that the Auxiliaries were 'confronted by a man in British soldier's uniform, and wearing a steel helmet;' that many of the IRA ambush party 'were dressed as British soldiers and wore steel helmets;' that the dead and wounded Auxiliaries 'were indiscriminately hacked with axes and bayonets; shotguns were fired into their bodies, and many were mutilated after death.' Similar 'true facts,' although the list is not so comprehensive, were used to preface the 'captured report' in *The Irish Republican Army (From Captured Documents Only)*

The 'true facts' were, in fact, composed by Basil Clarke, Head of Publicity, and his colleagues Captain H.B.C. Pollard of the Police Authority and Major Cecil Street of the Irish Office. Following the findings of the Military Court of Inquiry, held at Macroom on 30 November 1920, 'official' press releases were made available, in early December, with such headlines as 'Mutilated Bodies' and 'Mutilation with Axes.'⁹ Although one Auxiliary, who had visited the ambush site, did inform the Court of Inquiry that 'all bodies were badly mutilated,' the findings of Dr Jeremiah Kelleher, while gruesome, did not endorse that finding. The only slight connection between the doctor's report and the 'official' story was his evidence that a wound on one Auxiliary had been 'inflicted after death by an axe or some similar weapon.' In reality there were no IRA men in British uniforms and wearing steel helmets; there were no axes used in the ambush; and no bodies were mutilated.

At the time the *Irish Bulletin*, the organ of the Publicity Department of Dáil Éireann, attempted to correct the British version of the ambush. On 23 December 1920, under the heading, *Converting Acts of Warfare into Atrocities*, it stated that 'the English authorities prevented the examination of the bodies by any independent witnesses and spread broadcast the reports that hatchets had been used to mutilate them.' The *Irish Bulletin* then explained, with remarkable accuracy, the propaganda methods of Basil Clarke, even using the word 'verisimilitude.' It stated that 'these false reports are given a certain verisimilitude by the suppression of essential facts: by the gross misstatements of certain details and by the deliberate addition of falsehoods known to be falsehoods by those who issue the reports.'

In this context, the juxtaposition of the 'captured report' with the so-called 'true facts' of the ambush, we have, I would suggest, a reasonable answer to Peter Hart's question regarding forgery: a 'captured report' accompanied by the 'true facts' would not only damn the IRA but also convey a positive image of the British Crown Forces in their struggle against superior numbers. Moreover, British officials, both civil and military, and those sympathetic to the British war aims, began, almost immediately, to record an account of the Kilmichael ambush that was based on the true facts of the 'official' report. In February

⁹ Murphy, *Propaganda* 2006: 65-67.

1921 Major Street's *The Administration of Ireland 1920* was published in which the Flying Column at Kilmichael was described as wearing 'khaki trench-coats and steel helmets' and the bodies of the Auxiliaries were said to be 'hacked with axes and bayoneted.' In 1923 W. Alison Phillips, Lecky Professor of History at Trinity College, Dublin, writing as he claimed with access to secret British documents, recounted how 'a hundred Sinn Feiners disguised as British soldiers' attacked the Auxiliaries, leaving the dead 'savagely mutilated with axes.'¹⁰ In 1924 General Macready, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in Ireland in 1920, wrote in the second volume of his *Annals of an Active Life* (London, 1924) that the wounded at Kilmichael 'were deliberately murdered on the road, being mutilated with axes.'

It is significant, and relevant to Peter Hart's question about a forgery, that none of these accounts make reference to a surrender of any sort. If they had done so, it would have reflected badly on the integrity and bravery of the British Crown Forces. For the same reason, it would be expected that any forgery of a 'captured document' relevant to the Kilmichael ambush would also remain silent about a 'false surrender' and that is what we find. Indeed, on a purely speculative level, the argument of Peter Hart may, quite logically, be turned on its head: the silence about a 'false surrender' in the 'captured report,' far from indicating that Tom Barry was its author, suggests that sources, other than Barry, were responsible for the document. To state the matter quite simply: Barry would have wanted the 'false surrender' version in any report of his; British sources would not.

One of the first accounts, British or Irish, to mention a 'false surrender' at Kilmichael was that of Lionel Curtis, a prominent adviser to the British government, who visited Ireland secretly in early 1921. His version of events is of great interest because it was made after he had met Erskine Childers, then acting head of Publicity for Dáil Éireann, and was influenced by Irish source material. They met in March 1921 and Curtis published his article on Ireland in the *Round Table* in the following June. Curtis reported that

'an account of one notorious episode, which was obtained from a trustworthy source in the district, may enable the reader to see the truth in relation to some of the stories to which it gives rise. Last autumn a party of police was ambushed at Kilmichael, near Cork. Every member of the party but one was killed, and the bodies were shamefully mutilated. It is alleged by Sinn Fein that a white flag was put up by the police, and that when the attacking party approached to accept the surrender fire was opened upon them.'

While the account by Curtis does perpetuate the British story of mutilation, it also provides an early mention of Tom Barry's 'false surrender' version of events. In this regard it should be noted that Peter Hart's claim that General Crozier, writing in *Ireland for Ever* (1932), was 'the first writer' to recount the false surrender is, therefore, not correct. Some ten years ago, in a review article in *The Month* (September/October, 1998), I had pointed out that the 'false surrender' account is also to be found in the life of *Michael Collins* (1926) by Piaras Beaslai but this account by Curtis is far more significant. Coming from a British source and coming within months of the Kilmichael ambush, it undermines Hart's claim to place 'the first writer' of the 'false surrender' story at some considerable distance from the actual event.

One final point needs to be made in relation to Leeson's contribution to the debate. He stated in his Indymedia article that if Peter Hart has 'made mistakes, they were honest mistakes' and concluded that some of his critics 'should be a little more circumspect in what they say about Peter Hart and his work.' As Meda Ryan and myself were identified as critics in the preceding sentence, I presume that the remark about circumspection refers to

¹⁰ Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland, 1906-1923*, London, 1923.

myself. Faced by such comments, I can only respond by citing the opening sentence of my review of Peter Hart's book, as it appeared in *The Month*: 'this is a well researched book, an important book, a controversial book.' This sentence was considered so 'circumspect' that it was selected to appear on the back cover of subsequent editions of Peter Hart's book as a form of recommendation. The last sentence of my review, although raising some doubts, was, I would suggest, equally fair. 'Hart's findings on this important issue of sectarianism,' I wrote, 'are open to question, but his book is to be welcomed as providing much new and indispensable information on the IRA.'

The issue of Peter Hart's 'honest mistakes' and the manner in which he has responded to the critiques of his book will now be addressed. Interviewed by Brian Hanley in *History Ireland* (March/April 2005), it was put to Peter Hart that 'Meda Ryan and Brian Murphy have raised quite specific criticisms. How do you respond to these?' In regard to Meda Ryan, Hart replied that her work was marked by 'ignorance and prejudice,' a remark that reflects more upon himself than upon Ryan, who answered his particular charges comprehensively in *History Ireland* (September/October 2005). In regard to myself, Hart replied that 'Brian Murphy has recently done some research on British propaganda but it isn't published yet so I can't really comment.' This reply, with particular reference to propaganda, was correct. My book, already referred to, was not published until February 2006, although an appendix in that book on 'Peter Hart and the Issue of Sources' had been published earlier in the *Irish Political Review* of July 2005.¹¹ However, in my review article in *The Month* (1998) and in my letters to the *Irish Times* I had raised several questions that might have been addressed by Hart in 2005.¹²

There is no need to rehearse here the arguments about the 'captured report' of the Kilmichael ambush except to stress again two of the fundamental questions that remain to be answered by Peter Hart: firstly, why persist in calling it the 'original' report 'written' for his superiors?; and, secondly, why omit from his published version of the 'captured report' the sentences regarding the dead and the wounded that prove that Tom Barry could not have been the author? These unanswered questions are important. Equally important are the questions that I raised about sectarianism in my review article. In many ways these questions relating to religious issues and the IRA have become increasingly significant, especially after the showing last year by RTE of the film on the shooting of two young Protestants at Coolacrease on 30 June 1921. This film was part of their *Hidden History* series.

Peter Hart, Eoghan Harris and the RTE *Hidden History* film on *The Pearsons of Coolacrease*.

The film was based on the book by Alan Stanley, *I met Murder on the way. The Story of the Pearsons of Coolacrease*. (Carlow, 2005) There is a direct connection between Peter Hart's findings on sectarianism and this film: firstly, Alan Stanley, the author of the book on which the film was based, acknowledged the help that he had received from the 'excellent history' of Peter Hart; secondly, he made several particular references to Peter Hart's work in the course of his narrative; and, thirdly, the back cover of the book advertises the verdict of Eoghan Harris that 'like Hart's classic, *The IRA and its Enemies*, this book opens new pages in the hidden history of southern Protestants in the period 1916-1923, and is a welcome addition to its slim historiography.' The conclusion of Hart, to which both Stanley and Harris subscribe, may be summed up in his assertion that 'nationalism veered towards sectarianism in late 1920 and guerrilla war became, in some places, a kind of tribal war.' In

¹¹ The Irish Political Review, Vol 20, No 7, July 2005. Republished as an appendix to *The Origin and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland 1920* (Aubane 2006)

¹² The Entire *History Ireland* debate with Peter Hart is available at, <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/80362>.

this context the reliability of Hart's findings on sectarianism are clearly all important and yet the questions that I raised about them, as long ago as 1998, have still not been answered.

The single most important issue that I raised was made in regard to Peter Hart's use of the source material that is contained in the *Record of the Rebellion in Ireland*. This important document, containing the British Army's account of the Irish War, is preserved in the Imperial War Museum. Hart affirmed, citing the *Record*, that 'the truth was that, as British intelligence officers recognised, "in the south the Protestants and those who supported the Government rarely gave much information because, except by chance, they had not got it to give."' By maintaining that Protestants did not have sufficient knowledge to act as informers, Hart heightens the suspicion that they were killed for religious motives. However, the very next sentences of the *Record*, which Hart has chosen not to re-produce, read as follows: 'an exception to this rule was in the Bandon area where there were many Protestant farmers who gave information. Although the Intelligence Officer of this area was exceptionally experienced and although the troops were most active it proved almost impossible to protect those brave men, many of whom were murdered while almost all the remainder suffered grave material loss.'

The evidence from this important source confirms, therefore, that the IRA killings in the Bandon area were motivated by military rather than sectarian considerations. Moreover, the Bandon area was not only a central focus of Hart's work but also it was for his information on that area that he was particularly thanked by Alan Stanley. Inevitably questions arise over the findings of both authors for failing to be guided by the *Record of the Rebellion*, a source which Peter Hart, himself, has described as 'the most trustworthy.' This description by Hart was made in his introduction to a published edition of the *Record* in a book entitled *British Intelligence on Ireland, 1920-1921* (2002). In that publication the two missing sentences, in relation to Bandon, are included. However, instead of providing an explanation for, or even an acknowledgement of, their omission from his first book, there is a lengthy footnote that serves only to blur the issue. One would have hoped that an 'honest mistake' would have resulted in an honest admission.

The basic question for Peter Hart, therefore, remains: why did he choose to omit from the *Record of the Rebellion*, 'the most trustworthy' source, the two sentences that make his sectarian thesis impossible to sustain? Significantly, he chose not to address that question when interviewed by *History Ireland* in 2005. It is also worthy of note that in the edited version of the *Record of the Rebellion*, neither Peter Hart, nor the series editor, David Fitzpatrick, saw fit to advise readers that they had omitted a section of the *Record* on *The People*. There one reads, among other things, that

'judged by English standards the Irish are a difficult and unsatisfactory people ... many were of a degenerate type and their methods of waging war were in most cases barbarous, influenced by hatred and devoid of courage.'

In the midst of these manifestly racist sentiments on the part of the British Army, when all sorts of vicious charges were made against the Irish people, there is, significantly, no allegation that Irish republicans were motivated by sectarian feelings.

Another important issue that I raised in 1998 also related to source material. Having noted that Peter Hart had made reference to the private papers of Erskine Childers and his unpublished account of *The Irish Revolution*, I asked why he had failed to advert to the contents of that account by Childers which dealt specifically with the matter of sectarianism. The words of Childers that I cited were as follows:

'it is worth noting once more that the violence evoked in this year (1919) was slight. Nor was it indiscriminate or undisciplined. At no time, neither then nor subsequently, have civilians - Protestant Unionists living scattered and isolated in the South and West, been

victimised by the republicans on account of their religion or religious opinion.'

Childers was, of course, a Protestant, and his views, and, indeed, his work for Dáil Éireann, present a compelling case against the thesis of sectarian strife proposed by Hart. Moreover, I added that during the summer of 1920, when the pogroms against Catholics were taking place in the north of Ireland, many Protestants wrote letters to the press stating that there was no religious persecution in the south. The words and actions of Childers and others, who assisted in the constructive work of Dáil Éireann, clearly raised questions about Hart's sectarian thesis but he failed to address these questions in his *History Ireland* interview of March/April 2005. Despite this failure on the part of Peter Hart to provide any answer to these questions about sectarianism, his views have been adopted uncritically by Eoghan Harris and, through the medium of Harris, they have been widely publicised by RTE and the television programme on Coolacrease.

Eoghan Harris not only endorsed the original book on Coolacrease by Alan Stanley but also he played a prominent part in the subsequent RTE film that was based on the book. His views on Peter Hart's history are, therefore, important. Writing in the *Sunday Independent* (17 December 2006), in relation to an RTE *Hidden History* programme on Frank Aiken, Harris made his views known. He stated that

'contrary to some Southern assumptions, as Peter Hart has shown in his classic work, *The IRA and its Enemies*, sectarianism was not confined to Northern Ireland ... Hart's account of atrocities in the Bandon Valley reminds us that we in the Republic have no right to feel superior to Northern sectarians.'

Harris concluded that,

'Hart's book hit hard at the most basic myths of modern Irish republicans - that unlike the lowlife loyalists of the North, our noble IRA did not kill for sectarian reasons, and if perchance Protestants had been shot we could be sure they had been shot for political and not religious reasons. Hart showed all this to be a fantasy.'

The article by Harris was entitled, *At the very Hart of our Sectarian History*. In the course of the article, Harris, like Hart, provided no answer either to the selective omissions from the British source on the Bandon area, or to the significant number of Protestants who supported Dáil Éireann. Emotive sound-bites about sectarianism, rather than a serious study of the source material, was the message that Harris delivered to his readers. He delivered the same message to the viewers of the *Hidden History* programme on Coolacrease: *The Four Glorious Years*, the name given by Frank Gallagher to what he termed the noble struggle for Irish freedom, were tarnished, according to Harris, by sectarian killings.¹³ Following the showing of the Coolacrease film, Harris defended it in his *Sunday Independent* column (11 November 2007) by stating that it presented an historical reality that had been buried 'until Canadian historian Peter Hart published *The IRA and its Enemies*.'

The film did exactly that: it presented the story of the Pearson family of Coolacrease through the medium of interview and re-enactment; it told how the Pearson boys engaged in armed action against the local IRA, how the IRA responded by an attack on the family home, and how two of the boys were executed in appalling circumstances; it also portrayed the clash between the Pearsons and the IRA as part of a campaign by Irish republicans to drive Protestants from the land. During the course of the film and subsequently, most recently in a contribution by Philip McConway to *History Ireland* (May/June 2008), the

¹³ *The Four Glorious years*, by David Hogan (pseud.), first published 1953, *The Irish Press*, republished 2005, Blackwater Press, *The Four Glorious years*, by Frank Gallagher. See also by Frank Gallagher, *The Indivisible Island*, first published 1956 by Victor Gollancz, republished 1974 by Greenwood Press.

details of the Pearson story and general thrust of the sectarian argument have been contested.¹⁴ However, the over-all impact of the film was accurately summed up by Eoghan Harris: it projected an historical reality that had been buried until Peter Hart's book on the IRA was published. Irish republicans could no longer claim, as Harris put it, that 'our noble IRA did not kill for sectarian reasons.'

The contribution to the film by Harris, himself, played no small part in promoting Hart's thesis that the IRA were sectarian killers. Not only did Harris give the impression that the Pearson brothers were shot 'very deliberately in the genitals, in their sexual parts,' (a claim that is not substantiated by documents relating to the deaths), but also he constantly repeated the sectarian line taken by Peter Hart on the killing of Protestants. In a sense this was to be expected from Harris, a self-professed member of the Reform group, which, in his own words, 'for the past ten years, have been trying to put Southern attacks against Protestants in 1921/1922 on the public agenda.'¹⁵

Questions clearly arise as to how the director of the film, Niamh Sammon, could allow any member of an organisation with a political/historical agenda a privileged position on her programme. There can be no question, however, as to the influence of Peter Hart's writings on the shaping of the RTE's *Hidden History*. Hart's influence, through the medium of Eoghan Harris, was truly immense. Like recurring links in a chain the connections are clear to see: Peter Hart/Eoghan Harris for the promotion of Hart's book; Alan Stanley/Peter Hart/Eoghan Harris for the promotion of Stanley's book; Alan Stanley/Peter Hart/Eoghan Harris (Reform Group) for the promotion of the RTE *Hidden History* programme on Coolacrease.

Any questioning of the vital link in the chain, the historical writing of Peter Hart, had to be contested and Harris has always done that: not by engaging in academic debate but by the use of powerful and polemical prose. All opposition has had to be crushed. In his *Sunday Independent* article (11 November 2007), Harris dismissed the criticisms of Peter Hart's work by the Aubane Society as 'violent verbal polemics',¹⁶ and he suggested, among other things, that a letter of mine to the *Irish Examiner* (3 November 2007) should have considered the events in the Coolacrease film from 'a Protestant perspective.' As my letter had dealt exclusively with the views of Protestants, I replied to his criticisms in a letter to the *Sunday Independent* (9 December 2007). The purpose of the letter was to allow the voices of Protestants to enter not only the debate on the Coolacrease film but also the debate on Peter Hart's sectarian version of Irish history. It was also intended to raise questions about a statement of Dr Terence Dooley, which was made in the course of the film, that 'the revolutionary period was essentially used as a pretext to run many of these Protestant farmers and landlords out of a local community for locals to take up their lands.'

Protestant voices that reveal an alternative hidden history to that of RTE and Peter Hart

In my letter to the *Sunday Independent*, I listed several Protestant voices and asked Eoghan Harris to respond. These voices are listed below:

First, the voice of Matilda Pearson, sister of the two victims of the Coolacrease killings in 1921, who asked the IRA men taking part in the attack on her home, why they were doing it and received the reply, as recorded by herself: 'Don't think we are

¹⁴ McConway was a credited researcher on the RTE *Hidden History* programme on the Pearson killings. See PDF reproduction of two part *Tullamore Tribune* series on The Pearsons of Coolacrease at Offaly History Website, http://www.offalyhistory.com/articles/130/1/The-Pearsons-of-Coolacrease/_Page1.html (also at, http://www.indymedia.ie/attachments/mar2008/mcconwaytullamore_trib714_nov07.pdf). See also Indymedia resource page on this issue, at <http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Main/CoolaCrease>.

¹⁵ *The Sunday Independent*, December 17, 2006)

¹⁶ He used more extreme language on the RTE Radio One Joe Duffy *Liveline* programme, November 5, 2007.

doing this because you are Protestants. It is not being done on that account.' Is this evidence compatible with a sectarian interpretation of the killing of her brothers?

Second, the voices of Robert Barton (head of Dáil Éireann's department of agriculture), Erskine Childers and Lionel Smith Gordon, all Protestants and all appointed by Dáil Éireann in December 1919 to direct the fortunes of the National Land Bank. Is it credible that Dáil Éireann would have placed Protestants, such as these, in charge of land reform, if they had wished to drive Protestants from the land?

Third, the voices of Sir Horace Plunkett and George Russell (AE), both Protestants, who continued to support the work of the Co-operative Society throughout the War? Is it possible that they would have co-operated with native Irish farmers, if the farmers, themselves, and their families had been associated in sectarian warfare?

Fourth, the voices of the Church of Ireland Bishops of Meath and Killaloe, Dr Kathleen Lynn, Alice Stopford Green, Alibinia Brodrick, James Douglas and several other Protestants, as well as the distinctive voice of Dr Herzog, the Chief Rabbi, who joined with many Catholics in January 1921 to assist the work of the Irish White Cross Society. Is it credible that so many Protestants would have joined in this charitable enterprise to redress the damages of war, if that war had been sectarian?

Fifth, the voices of the Protestant members of the first Irish Free State Senate, which ought to have some special significance for Mr Harris, unless he is prepared to reject the heritage of the body of which he is a member. Among these voices are to be found those of Alice Stopford Green, Sir John Griffith, James Douglas (the first three persons to be elected to the Senate by the Dáil in December 1922), W.B. Yeats and Douglas Hyde. Is the election of such distinguished Protestants to the Senate in any way compatible with a sectarian war against the Protestant community?

One could have presented other examples of Protestant voices: for example that of Lionel Curtis, whose views on Kilmichael were reported above, who stated in June 1921, the very month of the attack on the Pearson home, that

'to conceive the struggle as religious in character is in any case misleading. Protestants in the South do not complain of persecution on sectarian grounds. If Protestant farmers are murdered, it is not by reason of their religion, but rather because they are under suspicion as loyalists. The distinction is a fine, but a real one.'

These measured words by Curtis, coming as they do from an experienced British official, fresh from the corridors of power at the Paris Peace Conference, should alone be sufficient to send Peter Hart and Terence Dooley back to the historical drawing board. And yet even more Protestant voices, speaking the same language of religious toleration and understanding, are to be heard.

For example, other distinguished Protestant voices were provided by Lord Henry Cavendish Bentinck, Basil Williams, John Annan Bryce and many others, who joined the Peace with Ireland Council, formed in England in October 1920, to campaign for an end to war in Ireland. One might also have presented some of the Protestant voices who expressed their views publicly to the American Commission on Irish Independence in late 1920 and early 1921: for example, that of the socialist, Louie Bennett, the Dublin born secretary of the Irish Branch of the Women's International League; or that of Caroline Mary Townshend, the Gaelic organiser for Bandon, county Cork (an area that was central to Peter Hart's thesis), both of whom testified that they had not experienced any sectarianism in their work or in their organisations.

One could have selected many other Protestant voices who expressed their views to the press in the summer of 1920, while pogroms were taking place in the north of Ireland and whose views, as mentioned above, have, without explanation, been ignored by Peter Hart. For example the voice of the Reverend I.C. Trotter, a Protestant rector at Ardahan, county Galway, who wrote (*Irish Times*, 23 July 1920) that 'during my experience of over thirty years in the County of Galway, I have not only never had the slightest disrespect shown to me or to those belonging to me as Protestants, but from the priests and people, gentle and simple, have received the utmost consideration and friendship.' The next day, 24 July 1920, a letter from G.W. Biggs appeared in the *Irish Times* declaring that 'I have been resident in Bantry for 43 years, during 33 of which I have been engaged in business, and I have received the greatest kindness, courtesy, and support from all classes and creeds in this country.' When Niall Meehan reproduced this letter (*Irish Times*, 5 November 2007), during the debate on the RTE film on Coolacrease, he contrasted it with two leading articles in the paper by Niamh Sammon (20 October), director of the RTE film on Coolacrease, and Ann Marie Hourihane (25 October), both of which had conveyed the idea of sectarian conflict during the War of Independence.

Meehan concluded that given a choice between the views of, the Protestant, Biggs, who was on the spot, 'and Hourihane and Sammon, who were not, and the reporting of the *Irish Times* then, and now, I take the Protestant view.' His conclusion is compelling and revealing: compelling because it presents an authentic Protestant voice of the past; revealing because it provides an interesting glimpse into the policy of the *Irish Times* in the present. Writing as one whose letter (6 November 2007) presenting Protestant voices of the period was rejected for publication, one is forced to conclude, surprisingly but significantly, that while the *Irish Times* in 1920, at the height of the war, was willing to publish Protestant voices that spoke of toleration, the *Irish Times* of to-day resists the publication of letters that tell the same story.¹⁷ It has firmly committed itself to the views of Niamh Sammon and to the sectarian view of the period as presented in the RTE *Hidden History* programme. To their credit the *Irish Examiner* and the *Sunday Independent* have given open access in their letters pages to all points of view.

The omission of these Protestant voices from the thesis of Hart and the RTE *Hidden History* (and one must include the pages of the *Irish Times*) has been compounded by the failure to acknowledge the many ways in which the Dublin Castle administration and the British Crown Forces, often using the martial law legislation of the Defence of the Realm Act (1914) and the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act (1920), directly attempted to prevent Catholics and Protestants from working together. For example, the arrest of Robert Barton, the most prominent Protestant member of the Dáil administration, in early January 1920 and his confinement in England until the end of the war; the regular raids on those involved in administering the funds of the National Land Bank; the destruction of many Co-operative creameries; the closure of the Dáil Éireann courts which were recognised by Protestants, themselves, as dealing fairly with land disputes.

Any historical narrative that neglects these actions by the British administration in Ireland and refuses to acknowledge the many examples of Protestant and Catholic accord is open to many questions. Peter Hart has failed to produce answers to those questions; Eoghan Harris has failed to produce answers to those questions. Two conclusions may be drawn: firstly, the historical writing of Peter Hart, and the championing of it by Eoghan Harris, has introduced a sectarian dimension into Irish history that is not merited by the source material; and, secondly, the RTE *Hidden History* programme, by aligning itself with

¹⁷ [Note from Niall Meehan: my letter, referred to by Brian Murphy above, was initially rejected for publication. However, the letter, attached as an appendix, was published after it was circulated to editorial personnel, past and present, and to Anne-Marie Hourihane. I am grateful to whoever changed the original decision.]

the Hart/Harris ideology, has failed to provide the 'truthful, honest and correct' interpretation of the events at Coolacrease that was so sincerely sought by one of the surviving Pearson family. The manner of the killings was unforgivable but, in order to respond honestly to the questions of the surviving Pearson family, the film should have been set in the context of an historical narrative that reflected accurately the non-religious character of the war. Protestant voices of the time, be they Irish or British, do not speak of that war as sectarian.

As for the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, which I am told has upheld the impartiality of the film, one can only presume that it was unaware of the many issues that have been raised above. Was it aware that Eoghan Harris represented an organisation, the Reform Group, with a specific public agenda? Was it aware that this agenda was only made tenable by the selective use of source material by Peter Hart in his book on *The IRA and its Enemies*? Was it aware that this same source material inspired Alan Stanley to write his book on Coolacrease on which the RTE film was based? Was it aware that Niamh Sammon, the film's director, in selecting the story for film purposes, opted for the opinion of Eoghan Harris that the story was about an 'atrociousness against a harmless dissenting Protestant family' and rejected the contemporary evidence of Matilda Pearson, a member of that family, that the attack was not carried out because the Pearsons were Protestants? A response to these questions would be welcomed. In the meantime, with so many questions unanswered, it seems reasonable to ask the ultimate question: is the RTE film on Coolacrease revealing a hidden history or is it concealing a hidden agenda?



IRISH ACADEMIC PRESS

The Impact of the 1916 Rising

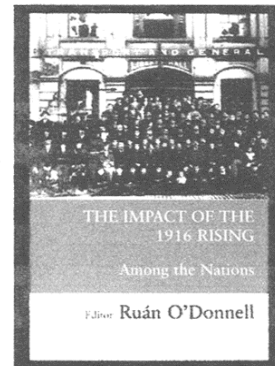
Among the Nations

Ruan O'Donnell

This book is a collection of fresh research on neglected aspects of the 1916 Rising by established and new scholars. It examines the impact of the Rising within the United Kingdom, the British Empire, North America and Australasia and provides a fresh context to recently published work on key figures such as James Connolly and Padraig Pearse.

Contents:

Introduction *Ruan O'Donnell*. The Limerick Volunteers and 1916 *John O'Callaghan*. Vanguard of the Revolution? The Irish Citizen Army, 1916 *Ann Matthews*. 'A Land Beyond the Sea': Irish and Scottish Republicans in Dublin, 1916' *Mairtin Sean O Cathain*. The British Labour and Socialist Movement and the 1916 Rising *David Granville*. Antipodean Irish Catholic Responses to the 1916 Rising *Rory Sweetman*. 'The Wilson Administration and the 1916 Rising' *Bernadette Whelan*. Journees Sanglantes/ Days of Blood: The French Press and the Easter Rising *Ian McKeane*. James Connolly, Easter 1916 and the First World War. A contextual study by *Priscilla Metscher*. 'A People That Did Not Exist?: Reflections on Some Sources and Contexts for Patrick Pearse's Militant Nationalism' *Roisin Ni Ghairbhi*. 1916: Insurrection or Rebellion? Making Judgements *Peter Berresford Ellis*. 'The Wind that Shakes the Barley': Reflections on the Writing of Irish History in the Period of the Easter Rising and the Irish War of Independence *Brian P Murphy*. Rethinking the Republic: The Republican Movement and 1966 *Matt Treacy*. Appendices: The 1916 Proclamation. Introduction to C. Desmond Greaves, 1916 as History, The Myth of Blood Sacrifice *Anthony Coughlan*. Nominal Roll of the Irish Citizen's Army.



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AFFIDAVIT OF JOHN YOUNG

I, John Young of West Green and Kilbarry Road, Dunmanway in the County of Cork aged eighteen years and upwards make Oath and say as follows:

1. My name is John Young of West Green and Kilbarry Road, Dunmanway, Co. Cork.
2. I am the son of Ned Young, who was the last survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush which occurred on 28th November, 1920 and I make this Affidavit from facts within my own knowledge save where otherwise appearing and whereso appearing I believe the same to be true.
3. I beg to refer to a copy of the Statement of me, John Young dated the 21st day of August, 2007, upon which marked with the letter "A" I have signed my name prior to the swearing hereof
4. I say and believe that the said copy of the Statement of me, the said John Young, and marked with the letter "A" and attached hereto is a full, accurate and true copy of the original Statement made and signed by me and dated the 21st day of August, 2007 wherein my signature is witnessed by:
 - a. Monsignor Kevin O'Callaghan, Catholic Parish Priest, Bandon, Cork Diocesan Vicar General.
 - b. Michael Malone, Solicitor, Blarney co. Cork.
 - c. James O'Driscoll, Senior Counsel, Orwell Road, Dublin.

and reflects the true and accurate account of the events set out therein.

SWORN this ¹⁴th day of December 2007 by the said John Young at 30 South Terrace in the County of City of Cork and before me a Commissioner-for-Oaths/Practising Solicitor and I know the Deponent.

Seuchlain S. O' Cathain
Commissioner-for-Oaths/Practising Solicitor

Seuchlain S. O' Cathain.
Atumae.
Corcaigh.

John Young

Seuchlain S. O' Cathain
O' CATHAIN SOLICITORS.
30 South Terrace,
Cork.

Statement by John Young, son of Ned Young, West Green and Kilbarry Road, Dunmanway, Co. Cork.

Statement and emphatic denial by myself, John Young, of the claim by historian Peter Hart in his book entitled "The IRA and its Enemies (Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923)", that, in 1988, Peter Hart personally, on two occasions, interviewed a Kilmichael Ambush veteran described by him as "A.A.", the identity of whom I, John Young, am now aware, on convincing demonstrable evidence, was that of my father, Ned Young.

Ned Young (A.A.) was the last survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush, Co. Cork, which took place on November 28th 1920 (the ambush was under the command of Tom Barry, in which thirty six I.R.A. volunteers took part). My father, Ned Young, was the only veteran of the Kilmichael Ambush alive when Hart claims that he conducted his interviews with ambush survivors.

I came to Cork City, in 1957, from Dunmanway and, sometime afterwards, formed a friendship with Tom Barry. I used to meet with him, on a regular basis, in Paddy Crowley's on Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork. Most of the discussions would centre on the Black and Tans and the troubled times. On leaving Paddy Crowley's, I would accompany Tom Barry to his apartment in Patrick Street, Cork, where the conversation about history, including Kilmichael, would continue in the presence of Tom's long-time home help, Christy Barrett. Tom would relate to me about the British Auxiliaries' "False Surrender" at the Kilmichael Ambush and the acceptance of the surrender by his column. Tom would repeat to me, saying, "They fooled us once only and we lost three of our men". After that, it had to be a "Fight to the End".

In page 33 of Peter Hart's book entitled "The IRA and its Enemies (Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923)", a footnote by Hart states that "the following reconstruction (of the Kilmichael Ambush) is based on six detailed interviews carried out with Kilmichael veterans, three of them conducted by Dr. John Chisholm, two by myself (interviews with A.A. 3 April, 25 June 1988; A.F. 19 November 1989) and one by the Ballineen/Enniskeane Area Heritage Group".

Hart also states in this same footnote that one of the two unidentified survivors of the ambush, encoded by Peter Hart as "A.A." or "A.F.", whom he allegedly interviewed, gave him a tour of the ambush site.

It is a fact that my father, Ned Young, born on March 3rd 1892, was the last survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush, a fact that can be verified by numerous attached newspaper references during his declining years, as well as public announcements of his death, which occurred in Cork City on 13th November 1989, at the age of 97 years and 8 months.

If Peter Hart is referring to my father, Ned Young, with his *made-up* reference (of "A.A."), his claim, that he interviewed my father in April and June of 1988, is totally untrue as, at that stage, Ned Young was wheelchair-bound, having had suffered a stroke sometime previously (circa late 1986). As a consequence, it made him incapable of giving an interview, having virtually lost the faculty of speech. He was constantly attended day and night by family members and full-time professional carers. On my instructions to my mother and the carers, the only people allowed into my parents home were family members, i.e., his nephews and nieces, grandchildren, his doctor, Dr. Jim Young (his nephew) and the priests of the parish.

Hart's claim that he was given a tour of the ambush site by "one of the two interviewees" (i.e. "A.A" or "A.F.") is a total nonsense and raises the question, since my father was wheelchair-bound, what mode of transport was used and by whom to get to the ambush site? In any case, my father, Ned Young, would not have been allowed by myself, or my mother, or his carers, to speak to or travel to the site with an unknown person.

Most certainly, my father could not have taken Peter Hart on a tour of the Kilmichael Ambush site in 1988/89, nor could Hart's other alleged unidentified "veteran survivor" of the ambush, "A.F.", have done so on 19th November 1989 (as Hart infers), **six days after the death on 13th November 1989 of Ned Young, the undisputed last survivor of the ambush.** Hart's claim to have done so is as demonstrably false, as is his claim to have interviewed my father, Ned Young.

I repeat, unequivocally, that Peter Hart never had an interview, discussions, or contact, with my father, "A.A.", which is Hart's encoded reference to my father, Ned Young. Whence, then, the alleged voluble quotations attributed in Hart's book to my father, who was then in his 98th year, quotations the vigour of which obviously are that of a man of much, much younger years? And thereby hangs an inscrutable tale that calls for further investigation of the integrity of Peter Hart's presentation of questionable historical research, much of which cannot be examined by historians because the alleged witnesses continue to be veiled in anonymity.

At a later stage, I will address Peter Hart's treatment of the Kilmichael Ambush in his writings, but that is for another day.







This statement is a statement of fact, written and signed by me, John Young.

 Date 21st August 2007

John Young, son of I.R.A. Volunteer, Ned Young, last survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush.

Witness to signature of John Young, son of I.R.A. Veteran, Ned Young.

I, the undersigned, severally bear witness that the signature of the author of the foregoing statement, appended in my presence in Column 1 below, on the date specified in Column 5 below, is the signature of John Young, who is known to me as son of the later I.R.A. Veteran, Ned Young, last survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush of 28th November, 1920.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
John Young's Signature	Name of Witness	Profession	Signature of Witness	Date of Signature
	<u>Miss Patricia O'Connell</u>	<u>Cherryman</u>		<u>21st Aug. 2007</u>
	<u>Michael Moran</u>	<u>Solicitor</u>		<u>23-8-07</u>
	<u>James O'Donnell</u>	<u>Senior Counsel</u>		<u>29/8/07</u>

'The Killings at Coolacree'

The Irish Times, Monday, November 5, 2007

Madam, - On July 24th, 1920, *The Irish Times* published a letter from a Mr GW Biggs: "I feel it is my duty to protest very strongly against this unfounded slander [of intolerance on the part of] of our Catholic neighbours, and, in so doing, I am expressing the feelings of very many Protestant traders in West Cork. I have been resident in Bantry for 43 years, during 33 of which I have been engaged in business, and I have received the greatest kindness, courtesy, and support from all classes and creeds in this country." Five days later Mr Biggs's substantial business was burned down in an act of deliberate arson.

In September of that year, in the course of a series of letters to the *Times* of London, J Annan Bryce, brother of a former chief secretary to Ireland, commented on a British military notice threatening to burn the houses of republicans if those of loyalists were targeted.

He wrote: "There is no justification for the issue of such a notice in this district, where the only damage to loyalists' premises has been done by the police. In July they burned the stores of Mr. G.W. Biggs, the principal merchant in Bantry, a man highly respected, a Protestant, and a lifelong Unionist, with a damage of over £25,000, and the estate office of the late Mr. Leigh-White, also a Unionist. Subsequently, in August, the police fired into Mr. Biggs's office, while his residence has since been commandeered for police barracks. He has had to send his family to Dublin and to live himself in a hotel. Only two reasons can be assigned for the outrages on Mr. Biggs, one that he employed Sinn Feiners - he could not work his large business without them, there being no Unionist workmen in Bantry - the other a recently published statement of his protesting - on his own 40 years' experience - against Orange allegations of Catholic intolerance. The July burning was part of a general pogrom, in which a cripple, named Crowley, was deliberately shot by the police while in bed and several houses were set on fire while the people were asleep."

Statements such as those from Bryce and Biggs, were a consistent feature of public life in Ireland right up to and beyond the Truce in 1921. On May 11th 1922, a Protestant Convention in the Mansion House reiterated these points *ad nauseam*. They may be read in *The Irish Time* and *Irish Independent* of May 12th.

On October 20th and 25th in your newspaper, an alternative picture was painted, concerning an event in Offaly in July 1921, in articles by Niamh Sammon and by Ann Marie Hourihane. Essentially, the same story of anti-Protestant violence was broadcast by RTE on October 23rd in its "*Hidden History*" series. Had it occurred as depicted, it would have been reported in that way at the time.

Given a choice between Biggs and Bryce, who were on the spot, and Hourihane and Sammon, who were not, and the reporting of *The Irish Times* then and now, I take the Protestant view.

- Yours, etc,

NIALL MEEHAN

Peter Hart

the Issue of Sources

Irish Political Review Vol 20 No 7 July 2005 (ISSN 0790-7672), pages 10-11

When Peter Hart's book *The IRA and its Enemies, Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* was first published in 1998, I reviewed it in *The Month*, a *Review of Christian Thought and World Affairs* (September-October 1998).

That particular issue of *The Month* was devoted to Ireland and contained many excellent articles, including one by Brendan Bradshaw on *Irish Nationalism: an Historical Perspective*. At that time I was of the opinion that, as well as the question of oral sources, there were three written sources, in particular, that merited detailed attention in relation to the ambush at Kilmichael and the IRA's treatment of Protestants. These may be listed as follows:

Firstly, the 'official' account of the Kilmichael ambush that was released to the press by Dublin Castle at the time;

Secondly, the account of the ambush which is recorded in a captured IRA document that is contained in *The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Division Area* (Strickland Papers, P 362, Imperial War Museum); and,

Thirdly, the official report into Army Intelligence in Ireland which is recorded in *A Record of the Rebellion In Ireland In 1920-1921* (Jeudwine Papers, 72/82/2, Imperial War Museum).

New Information

All of these three sources, and, indeed, the oral sources, have been debated extensively and minutely in the years since the publication of Peter Hart's book. Meda Ryan in her recent book, *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003), has summarised much of the discussion and added important new information of her own. Here I wish simply to say a few words about the third written source, the official report of Army Intelligence, and Peter Hart's response to the comments that I made in the review article.

In that article I wrote: "*moreover, by maintaining that Protestants did not have sufficient knowledge to act as informers, Hart heightens the suspicion that they were killed for religious motives. Citing the official Record of the Rebellion in Ireland, Hart writes "the truth was that, as British intelligence officers recognised "in the south the Protestants and those who supported the Government rarely gave much information because, except by chance, they had not got it to give."*" (Hart, pp305, 306).

Missing Sentences

Hart does not give the next two sentences from the official Record which read: "*an exception to this rule was in the Bandon area where there were many Protestant farmers who gave information. Although the Intelligence Officer of the area was exceptionally experienced and although the troops were most active it proved almost impossible to protect those brave men, many of whom were murdered while almost all the remainder suffered grave material loss.*"

I concluded by observing that, "*in short, evidence from this British source confirms that the IRA killings in the Bandon area were motivated by political and not sectarian considerations*". Possibly, military considerations, rather than political, would have been a more fitting way to describe the reason for the IRA response to those who informed. At that time Peter Hart gave no reason for the omission of these two significant sentences. When I heard, in 2002, that he had edited *A Record of the Rebellion in Ireland*, I awaited his treatment of the two missing sentences with great interest (see Peter Hart, ed., *British Intelligence in Ireland, 1920-1921. The Final Reports*).

Footnote

The missing sentences were included in the text of the *Record* but attached to them was a footnote, footnote 28. It read: "*in The IRA and its Enemies* (pp 293-315) *I argue that the great majority of those shot as informers in Cork were not British agents, and that many actual informers were spared because they were protected by their social position and connections. Some condemned West Cork Protestants did give, or try to give, information but there is no evidence that they acted en masse despite this statement.*"

Nowhere does Peter Hart give an explanation for, or an acknowledgement of, the fact that in *The IRA And Its Enemies* the two sentences had been omitted. The evidence from the *Record*, a source which Hart

accepts as "*the most trustworthy*" that we have, on this particular issue is deemed not to be reliable (Hart, *British Intelligence*, p6). By suppressing, and then dismissing, this important source evidence, Hart was encouraged to republish in 2003, without any qualification, his essay on *The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Southern Ireland* (see Peter Hart, *The IRA at War 1916-1923*, 2003).

The essay concluded that "*all of the nightmare images of ethnic conflict in the twentieth century are here.... sectarianism was embedded in the vocabulary and the syntax of the Irish revolution, north and south*" (Hart, *IRA at War*, p240).

Extreme Conclusions

One might have hoped that mature reflection on the evidence from the *Record of the Rebellion*, let alone other contrary evidence adduced by myself and others, might have led Hart to temper his extreme conclusions on the sectarian nature of the Irish war. It was not to be and one can draw one's own conclusion. In forming that conclusion it may be important to note that in Hart's edition of the *Record of the Rebellion* there are other significant omissions.

An "*editorial note*", presumably by Peter Hart, but possibly by David Fitzpatrick, the Series Editor, states that "*for reasons of space and relevance I have omitted the introduction dealing with events prior to 1920, portions of chapter 2 dealing with censorship, publicity and the structure of the IRA, part of chapter 3 on topography and the 1921 Truce, and an appendix dealing with the Irish Republican Brotherhood*" (Hart, ed., *British Intelligence*, p16).

More Omissions

At first glance, leaving aside for the moment any caveats one may have about not publishing a document in full, everything seems openly transparent. There are omissions; and we have been told about them. However, we have not been informed of all the omissions! In Chapter Three, prior to the omitted section on *Topography*, there is a section on *The People*. This section tells us what the British Army thought of Sinn Fein, the IRA and the Irish people in general.

There one reads that: "*practically all commanders and intelligence officers considered that 90% of the people were Sinn Feiners or sympathisers with Sinn Fein, and that all Sinn Feiners were murderers or sympathised with murder. Judged by English standards the Irish are a difficult and unsatisfactory people. Their civilisation is different and in many ways lower than that of the English. They are entirely lacking in the Englishman's distinctive respect for the truth and their answers are usually coloured by a desire to say what their questioner wishes. This often leads well-meaning people to act on their answers.*"

Many were of a degenerate type and their methods of waging war were in most cases barbarous, influenced by hatred and devoid of courage. It is, however, notorious that guerrilla war is almost invariably barbarous and that had the IRA fought on more regular lines and in formed bodies they would have suffered far heavier casualties and achieved far less success than they did"

(*Record of the Rebellion*, pp 31, 32 from original copy).

Inferior Race

Much more on the same lines is contained in this survey of the people. Underlying the presumption that the Irish were an inferior race, there was the assumption that they should be content to live under a British Government and British law.

For anyone wishing to gain knowledge about the enemies of the IRA, one of the principal aims of Hart's original study, this section on *The People* is of compelling interest and relevance. It tells us, in no uncertain terms, that the British Army, especially that branch of it engaged in Intelligence, viewed the Irish in racist terms. However, while damning the Catholic Irish at every opportunity, and being fully aware of the killings of informers by the IRA, the *Record* does not accuse them of sectarianism. Questions, therefore, remain:

why, it has to be asked, has Peter Hart omitted this section of the *Record* from the published version?

why did he fail to notify his readers that it had been omitted? and

what of the two missing sentences in relation to informers?

In the meantime it seems safe to conclude, from the evidence of "*the most trustworthy source*" that we have, that the British Army was inspired by racist sentiments and that the IRA, while attacking loyalists, did not engage in sectarian activities.