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**Magill, Christopher**

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# East Ulster and the Irish Revolution, 1920-22

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Christopher Magill, B.A. (Hons), M.A.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of the Irish revolution on the communities of east Ulster between the years 1920 and 1922. It focuses on the mainly Protestant counties of Antrim and Down where loyalist violence was more intense and frequent than that of republicans. The aim is to explore the nature of loyalist violence and its relationship with the wider conflict in Ireland. Historians have focused their efforts on republican and state violence. By utilising hitherto unused sources, this thesis sheds light on the factors that shaped loyalist violence. It explores the importance of how events in southern Ireland influenced conflict in the north-east. Other factors are considered, such as the role of crowd psychology and territoriality. Loyalist rioters believed they acted on behalf of the unionist community, but the attitudes of ordinary unionists to this violence were wide-ranging. This thesis explores these attitudes alongside the dynamics of popular unionist politics. It discovers that the unionist community harboured a diverse range of views on violence, the Unionist party leadership, nationalists and the British government. Many unionists took an active part in the revolution, most clearly by enrolling in the Ulster Special Constabulary. Questions are asked of this force, such as who joined and why. It is argued that ordinary people enrolled and in terms of occupational background the B Specials largely reflected east Ulster society. The assumption that the U.S.C. was recruited from more extreme unionists is challenged and structural explanations are offered for acts of unauthorised violence from special constables. The place of the nationalist community within the context of revolution and unionist militancy receives detailed attention. Nationalists were deeply divided, split between Sinn Féin



and constitutionalists. This thesis offers insight on how this division manifested itself in east Ulster and how nationalists reacted to the revolution.

## Acknowledgements

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## Abbreviations

C. I.	County Inspector
D. I.	District Inspector
I. G.	Inspector-General
I.R.A.	Irish Republican Army
L.O.L.	Loyal Orange Lodge
N.A.I.	National Archives of Ireland
P.R.O.N.I.	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
Q.U.B.	Queen's University, Belfast
R.I.C.	Royal Irish Constabulary
R.U.C.	Royal Ulster Constabulary
T.N.A.	The National Archives (U.K.)
U.C.D.A.	University College Dublin Archives
U.I.G.	Ulster Imperial Guards
U.P.A.	Ulster Protestant Association
U.S.C.	Ulster Special Constabulary
U.U.L.A.	Ulster Unionist Labour Association
U.V.F.	Ulster Volunteer Force

### **A note on terminology**

Throughout this thesis the term ‘unionist’ refers to members of the unionist community, while the capitalised form – ‘Unionist’ – refers to the political party or members of that party. The term ‘loyalist’ refers to the more militant and violent elements within the unionist community. The term ‘nationalist’ is used as an umbrella term to refer to all constitutional nationalists and republicans who constituted the wider nationalist community. The term ‘nationalist’ may include Protestants. Only in the use of demographic data are religious professions preferred as a crude indication of political affiliations.

## Introduction

This thesis is an examination of political violence and its impact on society in east Ulster during the Irish revolution. This period witnessed a struggle between several forces seeking to either overthrow or uphold the British administration. It also saw the partition of Ireland, the onset of Unionist rule in Northern Ireland and the aggravation of nationalist grievances. As this introduction will demonstrate, however, historical work on Ulster during the revolutionary period has been limited, lagging behind advances in research on the dynamics of republicanism and state agency in southern Ireland. While Ulster saw limited guerrilla warfare, its role in the revolution was important in two key ways. Firstly, it was the focus of the Home Rule crisis which led to the arming of volunteer armies. Secondly, the establishment of Northern Ireland in 1921 facilitated a settlement between Britain and Sinn Féin. Arguably the most important legacy of the revolution was partition, which resulted from the steadfast agency of a large constituency of unionist Irish men and women rather than from British imperial designs.

The area selected for analysis is east Ulster – counties Antrim and Down with the exception of Belfast and Newry. These counties were the two most Protestant in Ireland and have been selected as a counterweight to the studies of revolutionary activity in largely Catholic counties. Belfast and Newry have been excluded for the following reasons. Firstly, this thesis focuses on political violence in two largely rural counties with several small towns. Belfast is the largest urban area in Ulster and would therefore require a separate study.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Newry's exclusion is due to its

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<sup>1</sup> For studies of Belfast during the Irish revolution, see Alan F. Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war: the troubles of the 1920s* (Dublin, 2004), Jim McDermott, *Northern divisions: the old IRA and the Belfast pogroms 1920-22* (Belfast, 2001) and Robert Lynch, *The Northern I.R.A. and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006).

location on the Armagh-Down county border which made it a town important to the southern portions of both these counties. Much of the republican violence in Newry was initiated by the Armagh I.R.A. Any study incorporating Newry would need to include Armagh.

Local studies have been conducted in counties such as Clare and Cork, resulting in significant advances in historical understanding of the relationship between revolutionary violence and minority religious groups.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this thesis will investigate the relationship between loyalist violence and both the unionist and nationalist communities, while also assessing Ulster's place within the wider revolution. As studies of the revolution indicate that relatively little violence occurred in east Ulster, it may be questioned why a study should focus on this area. To date, most historians of revolutionary violence have tended to exclude loyalist activities from consideration. For example, Erhard Rumpf attempted to map I.R.A. activities by using the number of British military reprisals as an indirect indicator of I.R.A. operations.<sup>3</sup> In a more comprehensive study Peter Hart compared levels of I.R.A. violence in different localities and time periods.<sup>4</sup> However, the parameters of these studies exclude analysis of loyalist violence during the revolution. Rumpf aimed to map 'the centres of military activity' and establish the 'extent of national resistance'.<sup>5</sup> Hart, similarly, circumscribed his focus on revolutionary violence, going as far to measure it in terms of the number of people killed or wounded by

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<sup>2</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Cork, 1998), pp 40-71 (originally published in 1977); Peter Hart *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), pp 273-292.

<sup>3</sup> E. Rumpf and A. C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and socialism in twentieth-century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977), p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Hart, 'The Geography of revolution in Ireland 1917-1923', in *Past and Present*, no. 155 (May, 1997), pp 144-155. Also see David Fitzpatrick, 'The geography of Irish nationalism 1910-1921', in *Past & Present*, no. 78 (Feb., 1978), pp 113-144.

<sup>5</sup> Rumpf and Hepburn, *Nationalism and socialism in twentieth-century Ireland*, p. 38.

bombs or bullets.<sup>6</sup> These attempts to map revolutionary violence or the 'extent of national resistance' focus on republican activities.

The type of violence that occurred in the north was qualitatively different to that in large parts of southern Ireland. For instance, while the primarily southern-based I.R.A. embarked upon an offensive campaign that involved the killing of police, soldiers and political enemies, northern loyalists engaged in violence aimed to maintain the current political system rather than overthrow it. Therefore, loyalists often attacked property and persons in order to re-impose dominance over what they perceived to be a rebellious nationalist community.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, areas such as east Ulster were not necessarily free from violence even if there was an absence of I.R.A. operations. For example, Hart notes that Belfast experienced the most intense levels of violence throughout the revolutionary period after 1917.<sup>8</sup>

#### Demographic and political background to east Ulster

Since the seventeenth-century plantations Antrim and Down have maintained a more Protestant character than any other region of Ireland. Census returns from the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries illustrate the prominence of Protestant denominations. In 1861 Presbyterians composed a higher proportion in Antrim and Down than in any other Ulster county or city, while Catholics comprised a lower proportion of the population in Antrim than anywhere else in Ireland.<sup>9</sup> Yet, concentrated communities of Catholics survived in the Antrim glens and south Down

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<sup>6</sup> Hart, 'The Geography of revolution in Ireland 1917-1923', p. 144.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Two for analysis of the dynamics of loyalist violence.

<sup>8</sup> Hart, 'The Geography of revolution in Ireland 1917-1923', pp 147-8.

<sup>9</sup> By 1911 Catholics comprised a lower proportion of Belfast than they did of County Down: 24 and 31 per cent respectively: W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds), *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp 52-73.

as Maps 3 and 4 illustrate. Due to the strong Catholic majorities of the glens and south Down, Gaelic culture thrived during the late nineteenth-century Irish-Ireland revival. The Gaelic Athletic Association had taken root in south Down in the late nineteenth-century, while annual *feis* were held in the glens from 1904.<sup>10</sup>

Politically east Ulster was dominated by unionism. Since the onset of Home Rule campaigns, Ulster politics centred on the single issue of the Union. Home Rule, organised as it was on an all-Ireland basis, attracted the support of the Catholic Church, which helped solidify Protestant opposition to what was perceived as ‘Rome rule’. In north-east Ulster, where Protestants were concentrated in their largest numbers, unionism gathered strength. In Antrim official Unionist candidates won each election between 1886 and 1918 with only one exception: Robert Glendinning, a Russellite, won the North Antrim seat in 1906.<sup>11</sup> Nationalists in Antrim had little choice when it came to voting, only being offered a non-unionist candidate in 1918. Revealingly Joseph Connolly, the Sinn Féin candidate for Mid-Antrim in the general election of that year, felt he was operating in hostile territory ‘in contrast to other districts throughout the country where every house had an open door and welcome protection’.<sup>12</sup> County Down was similarly a unionist stronghold. Only in the south of that county did nationalists succeed in winning an election, something they did consistently from the 1880s. Unionist domination elsewhere in the county was

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<sup>10</sup> Dónal McAnallen, ‘Michael Cusack and the revival of Gaelic games in Ulster’, in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxvii, no. 145 (May, 2010), p. 33; Pádraic Ó Cléireacháin, ‘Feis na nGleann 1904-2004’, in Éamon Phoenix, Pádraic Ó Cléirreacháin, Eileen McAuley and Nuala McSparran (eds), *Feis na nGleann: a century of Gaelic culture in the Antrim glens* (Ulster, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> T. W. Russell (1841-1920) was a Unionist M.P. for South Tyrone from 1886. He was a radical and fervent advocate of compulsory land purchase. This led him and his supporters – Russellites – to challenge Unionist candidates in elections from 1900 on the issue of land reform. See Alvin Jackson, ‘Irish unionism and the Russellite threat, 1894-1906’, in *I.H.S.*, xxv, no. 100 (Nov., 1987), p. 396.

<sup>12</sup> J. Anthony Gaughan (ed.), *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly: a founder of modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1996), p. 186.



challenged successfully only once, again by another Russellite candidate who defeated the official Unionist in East Down in a by-election in 1902.<sup>13</sup>

East Ulster therefore offered the Unionist party a secure political base. The relatively weak position of nationalism meant that land reform and class politics represented greater threats to unionist unity. Land reform became a major issue in the early 1900s, but the Wyndham Land Act of 1903 heralded the decline of Russellism.<sup>14</sup> After the First World War class politics again threatened unionist unity which was based on a pan-Protestant, cross-class alliance.<sup>15</sup> Besides Belfast and Londonderry, the two major urban centres of the north, east Ulster offered the greatest potential for labour politics. The region was relatively urbanised. In Antrim alone there were six urban districts with more than 3,000 inhabitants in 1911, including Ballymena and Lisburn with over 11,000 each. The growth of these towns was driven by industry in the second half of the nineteenth-century. In east Ulster, including Belfast, linen became a staple industry with an impressive £10,250,000 worth of exports in 1864.<sup>16</sup> By the outbreak of war in 1914 the linen industry was still in a strong position and each town was known to have its own industrial speciality.<sup>17</sup> The consequent impact of labour politics in east Ulster towns is discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

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<sup>13</sup> Brian M. Walker (ed.), *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> Graham Walker, *A history of the Ulster Unionist Party: protest, pragmatism and pessimism* (Manchester, 2004), pp 15-6. The Irish (Wyndham) Land Act of 1903 allowed tenant farmers to purchase their farms from landlords at favourable annual repayment rates. It transformed the system of land ownership in Ireland.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>16</sup> J. C. Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland, 1603-1923* (London, 1981), p. 362.

<sup>17</sup> F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1973), p. 63; R. J. Morris, 'Urban Ulster since 1600', in Liam Kennedy and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds), *Ulster since 1600: politics, economy, and society* (Oxford, 2013), p. 129.

## Local studies

This thesis takes the form of a local study, following in the path of much research on the revolutionary period. David Fitzpatrick pioneered this approach in a study of County Clare in which he ‘sought to relate the intentions of national leaders to the realities of local execution.’<sup>18</sup> Irish society was fragmented into diverse groups, each of which consisted of individuals of various dispositions. The political aspirations, interests and actions of these individuals and groups determined the outcome of the ‘national struggle’. As Fergus Campbell stated succinctly of his local study of a thirty-year period in the west of Ireland, it was ‘a deliberate attempt to record the experiences of the thousands of local political and military activists without whom there would have been no revolution in Ireland.’<sup>19</sup>

This approach has reaped rewards for historical understanding of the revolutionary period. Fitzpatrick illuminated the relationship between the national revolution and local interests. Thus, he investigated the misfortunes of the Protestant minority, unionists, the R.I.C. and constitutional nationalists, all of whom he considered the ‘old order’, while charting the rise of the new political ascendancy – Sinn Féin and the I.R.A.

Other local studies are more narrowly focused than *Politics and Irish life*. Joost Augusteijn, for instance, departed from Fitzpatrick’s approach by comparing several counties with the goal of explaining varying levels of republican activity.<sup>20</sup> He therefore combined a wider geographical framework with a narrower thematic focus by centring his analysis on guerrilla warfare. Yet, like Fitzpatrick he

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<sup>18</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. xii.

<sup>19</sup> Fergus Campbell, *Land and revolution: nationalist politics in the west of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experience of ordinary Volunteers in the Irish war of independence 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), p. 23.

maintained that the fundamental rationale behind local studies was to understand the motivations and experiences of 'ordinary people'.<sup>21</sup> Marie Coleman similarly sought to investigate the local manifestations of revolution, but broadened her analysis to incorporate not just republicanism but Irish nationalism as a whole. While useful, what many local studies shared in common was a tendency to focus on republican and nationalist politics and violence with little or no attention paid to unionism. Coleman, for example, excluded non-nationalist groups from analysis.<sup>22</sup> Campbell, similarly, limited his study to those organisations concerned with land reform, agrarian conflict and nationalism, while a study of Limerick during the revolutionary period focused solely on republicanism.<sup>23</sup>

The standard for local studies of the Irish revolution was set by Peter Hart's *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, which vividly explored the relationship between I.R.A. violence and the communities of County Cork. Hart set out to break beyond the anonymity of local and individual experiences resulting from politically imposed labels.<sup>24</sup> For example, he began his study with the I.R.A. killing of an unarmed R.I.C. officer who, incidentally, was widely respected by local Irish Volunteers. Hart raised several questions, chief among them being why such an officer was targeted. Killings of this nature do not fit the national story depicted often as an uncomplicated war between republicans and state forces. Rather, Hart brought to light the inconsistencies and localised nature of the revolution. *The I.R.A. and its enemies* offered a more intimate insight into the motivations of Irish Volunteers by exploring who they were, why they joined the I.R.A., who they targeted and why. For instance, Hart's research on Cork provoked debate concerning the extent to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p. 2; John O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick: the republican campaign for independence in Limerick, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 17.

which the I.R.A. engaged in sectarian activity. His research suggested that, although many Protestants were targeted by republicans as spies or informers, in some cases I.R.A. members were motivated by sectarianism, a claim which continues to be strenuously contested.<sup>25</sup>

This thesis departs from previous local studies in one major way: by focusing on two Ulster counties with large Protestant and unionist majorities. Many of the questions asked by Hart, Augusteijn and Coleman about the I.R.A. are posed here for loyalists. Why did they riot and attack Catholic-owned property on a large scale in the summer of 1920? Why did thousands of men volunteer for the Ulster Special Constabulary? Were loyalist combatants and rioters the same people? How did ordinary unionists experience the revolutionary period? And finally, what was the experience of the nationalist minority in east Ulster during this period?

### Historiography

Ulster is commonly depicted as important in the early years of the revolutionary decade. It was in 1912-14 that the Ulster Volunteer Force began the process of militarising Irish politics. Many studies have been dedicated to the role played by Ulster unionists in their successful resistance to Home Rule legislation.<sup>26</sup> Yet, during the latter years of the revolution greater focus is given to the forces of republicanism to the extent that unionist agency in resisting a republic is often overlooked or

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<sup>25</sup> For more on this debate, see Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp 273-292; idem, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), pp 223-258; Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, pp 155-157; John Borgonovo, *Spies, informers and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society': the intelligence war in Cork city, 1919-1921* (Dublin, 2006); Alan Stanley, *I met murder on the way: the story of the Pearsons of Coolecrease* (Carlow, 2007); Gerard Murphy, *The year of disappearances: political killings in Cork, 1921-1922* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Ulster crisis* (London, 1967); Timothy Bowman, *Carson's army: the Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22* (Manchester, 2007). Bowman does include the later period of revolution, but his study remains heavily skewed to the early stages.

ignored.<sup>27</sup> It must be recognised that Ulster unionist resistance did not end in 1914 and that partition in the form that it emerged in 1920 was not inevitable. Furthermore, the British Conservatives were less inclined to avidly support Ulster unionists in the post-war period.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, resistance from the unionist community in 1920-22 was as determined, if not more so, as it was in 1912-14, embracing violence rather than the mere threat of it. For many unionists this was necessary, as these years were filled with uncertainty regarding the future of the Union in the north-east.<sup>29</sup>

The renewal of sectarian violence in Ulster in 1920 has sometimes been viewed as a sideshow to, rather than a part of, the revolution. Although J. C. Beckett acknowledged the link between the conflict in southern Ireland and the outbreak of sectarian conflict in Belfast, there have been few detailed examinations of the dynamics of northern developments and their relationship with the wider revolution.<sup>30</sup> Discussion of Ulster often focuses on its importance in explaining southern developments, such as how it affected the Treaty negotiations. General surveys of this period frequently focus on Northern Ireland after 1921 within a separate chapter, thus isolating it somewhat from the revolution.<sup>31</sup> Presumably the reason for separately delineating events in the north was because of a perception that, due to the Government of Ireland Act, Ulster was 'separately catered for'.<sup>32</sup> However, it should be emphasised that the revolution did not end in Northern Ireland with the opening of its parliament in June 1921. Violence after this point intensified,

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<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, the treatment of Ulster in Desmond Williams (ed.), *The Irish struggle 1916-1926* (London, 1966) and Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish question 1840-1921: a commentary on Anglo-Irish relations and on social and political forces in Ireland in the age of reform and revolution* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Toronto, 1975).

<sup>28</sup> D. G. Boyce, 'British Conservative opinion, the Ulster question, and the partition of Ireland, 1912-21', in *I.H.S.*, xvii, no. 65 (Mar., 1970), pp 89-112.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>30</sup> Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland*, p. 449.

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, pp 695-705.

<sup>32</sup> R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989), p. 503.

particularly during the first six months of 1922. For Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. a thirty-two county republic remained the objective, and it was not until the spring of 1922 that they launched their most ambitious military campaign in the north-east. However, due to the failure of republicans in the north-east there has been a tendency to exclude northern divisions of the I.R.A. from the national narrative.<sup>33</sup> Not until relatively recently have historians turned their attention to the misfortunes of the northern I.R.A.<sup>34</sup>

The creation of two Irish states in 1921-22 also facilitated the development of 'partitionist history'.<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon's chronicling of the revolution's turning points focused on the major events affecting the south, where the revolution had a large degree of success. However, there is little, if any, effort to establish how events in Ulster – such as partition or the establishment of the U.S.C. – provided turning points in the wider revolution.<sup>36</sup> There has long been recognition of the need to develop a more inclusive narrative of events. Fitzpatrick, for instance, noted that loyalists and nationalists throughout Ireland 'conducted their revolutions along remarkably similar lines, imitating each other to the point of parody.'<sup>37</sup> It was only through this imitation that two opposing armed camps emerged. The U.V.F., replaced largely (but by no means entirely) by the U.S.C. in late 1920, represented unionism's response to republicanism. Activities by the I.R.A. or U.V.F./U.S.C. inevitably affected the other. Despite this, little research has been conducted into the

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<sup>33</sup> Lynch, *The Northern I.R.A.*, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid; also see McDermott, *Northern divisions*.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish question: Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism* (Oxford, 1994), pp x-xi. For an example of this, see Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth century Ireland: nation and state* (Dublin, 1994) which omits discussion of the north-east.

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Turning points of the Irish revolution: the British government, intelligence, and the cost of indifference, 1912-1921* (Basingstoke, 2007). Much importance is placed on Ulster between 1912-14.

<sup>37</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 114.

nature of the U.S.C., apart from two partisan studies.<sup>38</sup> Revealingly, a recent collection of essays on terror in revolutionary Ireland omitted analysis of the U.S.C. or loyalist paramilitaries which engaged in some of the most overt acts of political violence.<sup>39</sup>

Those historians who have eschewed a partitionist framework have begun to provide answers. Michael Laffan, for instance, illustrated the Sinn Féin leadership's poor understanding of, and ambiguous attitudes regarding, Ulster unionism.<sup>40</sup> Eamon Phoenix and A. C. Hepburn have produced studies focusing on the experiences of the northern nationalist minority, asking such questions as why constitutionalism survived more strongly in parts of Ulster than the south.<sup>41</sup> Republican politics and violence in Ulster also received detailed attention in local studies and biographies of northern I.R.A. leaders.<sup>42</sup> The importance of Ulster in determining British policy regarding the rest of Ireland is vividly conveyed by Ronan Fanning in a recent study.<sup>43</sup>

Alvin Jackson's overview of unionism in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries revealed how important the movement remained in wider Irish politics. The movement was complex, involving cross-class collaboration and significant levels of engagement from women. It also underwent considerable change, shedding its

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<sup>38</sup> Arthur Hezlet, , *The B Specials: a history of the Ulster Special Constabulary* (London, 1972) and Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920-7* (London, 1983).

<sup>39</sup> David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 225-32.

<sup>41</sup> Eamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: nationalist politics, partition and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994); A. C. Hepburn, *A past apart: studies in the history of Catholic Belfast 1850-1950* (Belfast, 1996); idem, *Catholic Belfast and nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin* (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>42</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005); Fergal McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen: the development of republican politics in east Tyrone, 1898-1918* (Manchester, 2011); Matthew Lewis, 'Frank Aiken and the Fourth Northern Division: a personal and provincial experience of the Irish revolution, 1916-1923' (PhD thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Ronan Fanning, *Fatal path: British government and Irish revolution 1910-1922* (London, 2013).

southern membership for a narrower northern composition.<sup>44</sup> Despite the complexity of unionism and its political importance, the experiences of the northern unionist community have been explored to a much lesser extent than that of the nationalist community. Timothy Bowman's research on the U.V.F. offered much insight into popular politics and motivations regarding volunteering. He recognised that Ulster unionism was 'a broad church' and that political views varied amongst members of the U.V.F.<sup>45</sup> Bowman focused on the pre-war movement, although he briefly surveyed its decline during the First World War and the emergence of the U.S.C. in 1920-22. More in-depth analysis of northern violence during the revolution was produced by Timothy Wilson in his comparative study of inter-communal conflict in Ulster and Upper Silesia. Wilson shifted the focus away from the struggle between the I.R.A. and the state to emphasise the plebeian nature of much of the violence. Although communal divisions were demonstrated to be greater in Ulster, violence was more intense and brutal in Upper Silesia. Wilson's comparative study therefore asked why this was the case and explored the reciprocal nature of the communal conflict in Ulster.<sup>46</sup>

There is no doubt that a northern perspective allows one to view events differently: Hart has observed how the periodisation of the revolution into neat sections – the Easter Rising, the 1918 general election, the war of independence and the civil war – did not reflect events or patterns of violence in Ulster. In fact, the early 1920s were often referred to as 'the Troubles' by northern unionists, rather than a war of independence or civil war.<sup>47</sup> The period between 1919 and 1923 was viewed by many unionists as one of prolonged criminality in the south and west. Unionists

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<sup>44</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: war, peace and beyond* (Malden, 2010), pp 212-241.

<sup>45</sup> Bowman, *Carson's army*, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 4.



usually perceived the truce as a surrender to the ‘murder gang’ and the Treaty as a sell-out.<sup>48</sup>

### Research questions, structure and methodology

Considering the limited research on Ulster, this thesis sets out to examine some aspects of the northern experience during the period of revolution. The focus on east Ulster will bring to light the impact of the I.R.A. campaign on predominantly Protestant counties, yet it will fall short of plugging the wider historiographical gap on this subject. Rather, this thesis aims to provide analysis of a northern region and its conclusions may only be applicable to that area. As such, it is hoped that it will encourage more historical examination of the state of Ulster during this period.

The unionist community, while united by a desire to maintain the constitutional link with Britain, was far from homogenous in social background, thought or practise.<sup>49</sup> The northern state’s formative years were among the most uncertain in its history. Consequently, Chapter One seeks to contextualise the period of study by outlining the internal dynamics of the unionist community. It will ask how the party leadership and followership responded to many of the key political events of the period and what threats, internal and external, were posed to unionism. The next challenge of this study seeks to illustrate the interconnectedness of northern and southern violence. Chapter Two therefore will explore some of the causal effects that southern events had on northern unrest. It will also consider how the riots that erupted in some east Ulster towns fitted into the context of the catalogue of reprisals

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<sup>48</sup> For unionist opinions on the I.R.A. campaign, see Chapter One.

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, Colin Reid, ‘Protestant challenges to the “Protestant state”: Ulster unionism and independent unionism in Northern Ireland, 1921-1939’, in *Twentieth century British history*, xix, no. 4 (2008), pp 419-445.

committed against nationalist communities by members of the state forces. To understand these riots a cross-disciplinary methodological approach will be adopted, amalgamating studies of crowd psychology with sociological and historical research on rioting.<sup>50</sup> Chapter Three, following on from previous research on communal conflict in Ulster, will ask how loyalist violence can best be interpreted.<sup>51</sup> Viewed by nationalists as ethnic-cleansing or a state-sponsored pogrom, and by unionists as self-defence against the threat of republicanism, a more objective interpretation of such violence is required.

A key aspect of Ulster loyalism concerned the issue of security. Many ordinary unionists volunteered for the U.S.C. to protect their interests as fervently as republicans joined the I.R.A. to assert their political aspirations. Nevertheless, the approaches of Peter Hart and others on the nature of I.R.A. composition and activities have yet to be applied to unionism's volunteer army.<sup>52</sup> Chapters Four and Five therefore seek to redress this issue by asking who joined the U.S.C. and why. Similarly, the actions of some special constables, a force notorious for its heavy-handedness and antipathy towards Catholics, are investigated. Drawing on the findings of psychological research on unauthorised violence in conflict settings, Chapter Five aims not only to describe the actions of some special constables, but also to provide an explanation for unauthorised violence. The final chapter will explore the experiences of nationalists in east Ulster, thus contributing to a key focus of research into minority communities in revolutionary Ireland.

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<sup>50</sup> For historical studies on crowds, see George Rudé, *The crowd in history: a study of popular disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (London, 2005). For crowd analysis in Irish history, see Mark Doyle, *Fighting like the devil for the sake of God: Protestants, Catholics and the origins of violence in Victorian Belfast* (Manchester, 2009); Peter Jupp and Eoin Magennis (eds), *Crowds in Ireland c.1720-1920* (Basingstoke, 2000). Sean Farrell, *Rituals and riots: sectarian violence and political culture in Ulster 1784-1886* (Lexington, 2000).

<sup>51</sup> See T. K. Wilson's comparative study, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Timothy Bowman has researched the U.V.F., but the focus of his study is on its formative years and war-time decline: see Bowman, *Carson's army*.

## Sources

In order to address these research questions, the following sources have been consulted. The most useful sources are those that offer the greatest insight into the local (and sometimes personal) experiences of the revolution. R.I.C. county inspector reports provide commentary on whom or what the police deemed important enough to inform the inspector-general about. Also of importance are local newspapers. Often neglected by historians in favour of the national press, local newspapers reported on court cases, crimes, political meetings and other incidents of note which had an immediately local, rather than national, significance.<sup>53</sup> Political bias within the press, however, offers the same problems of interpretation as with many other sources. The local newspapers utilised in this thesis were predominantly unionist in outlook, but in many ways this imbalance helps to address a historiographical gap: chronicling the unionist experience of revolution. Nevertheless, it creates problems for investigating the nationalist minority of east Ulster. Their experiences are often detailed in local newspapers through unionist eyes. In part this problem is allayed by the regional nationalist outlet, the *Irish News*, which commented on many of the significant incidents in east Ulster from the minority perspective. For instance, the anti-Catholic riots in Lisburn in July and August 1920 were covered widely in this newspaper.

The nationalist minority's experiences are important as recent historiographical debates have focused much on the Protestant minority in Cork and other southern counties. In lieu of local newspapers, police reports detail the popularity of political organisations such as the Irish and National Volunteers, the

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<sup>53</sup> For the value of local newspapers, see Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish party: provincial Ireland 1910-1916* (Oxford, 2005).

Ancient Order of Hibernians and Sinn Féin clubs. Similarly, the R.I.C. paid much attention to republican meetings, detailing their tone and level of attendance. There is, in addition, a rich reservoir of personal accounts by nationalists.<sup>54</sup> The largest collection of such sources is the Bureau of Military History which provides firsthand perspectives mainly of republicans during the revolutionary period. Although this collection lends disproportionate attention to republicans in an area where constitutionalism remained dominant among nationalists, it provides insight on why Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. failed to secure more general support from the Catholic community. Memoirs and biographies, in addition to the private correspondence of prominent members of the Catholic community, supplement the Bureau of Military History to offer a more nuanced picture of the nationalist experience during the revolutionary period in east Ulster.

Official records, especially those in the Ministry of Home Affairs, contain a wealth of correspondence, internal inquiries, internment files and recruitment information for the security forces. Individual members of the public often wrote to James Craig, the first prime minister of Northern Ireland, and Richard Dawson Bates, the minister of home affairs. The latter in particular received occasional complaints from Catholics who alleged victimisation by special constables or loyalists, while Craig received many appeals from ordinary unionists offering their thoughts on political developments. Of particular value to this thesis are the personnel files and recruitment figures for the U.S.C. Many insights into this force are offered by the views of local commandants who provided evidence and

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<sup>54</sup> Only a small number of witness statements were given by northern members of the I.R.A. This thesis refers to only seven statements given by Volunteers from east Ulster.

testimony to several inquiries into policing in Northern Ireland.<sup>55</sup> The level of discipline within this force, an issue that has shaped the historical reputation of the U.S.C., can be investigated via home affairs reports on individual cases and official inquiries, such as the British inquiry into the killing of three Catholics by A Specials in Cushendall in June 1922.

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<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, the Ministry of Home Affairs police reorganisation committee, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2) and S. G. Tallents inquiry, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

## Chapter One

### East Ulster during the Irish revolution

#### Introduction

The Irish revolution was made possible by Ulster unionist resistance to Home Rule from 1912 onwards. During earlier attempts by Irish nationalists to gain a form of independence, Ulster was less central to the unionist cause. Armed resistance was negated by the constitutional blocking of two bills, one by the Commons in 1886 and the other by the Lords in 1893. Although drilling and riots accompanied the rejection of the first bill, large scale arming and resistance was not required to defeat it. However, by the new century it was clear that Ulster would form the basis of future opposition as southern unionists lacked numerical strength due to the democratisation of electoral politics.<sup>1</sup> Although by 1911 large sections of Protestant Ulster saw little formal unionist activity, by the end of 1912 the province was the centre of organised opposition to Home Rule.<sup>2</sup> Unionists believed that devolution in any form would harm their place within the United Kingdom, eventuating in their removal from the British Empire entirely. Not only was Home Rule a threat to citizenship, it was deemed detrimental to industry and civil and religious liberties. Furthermore, many unionists believed themselves to be best fitted to rule, with Catholic-nationalist domination presenting ‘a perversion of nature.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-1925* (Dundalk, 1983), pp 9-14.

<sup>2</sup> K. T. Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity*, (2nd ed., London, 1999), p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, pp 16-21; J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 3. Lee applies the concept of racial superiority to explain the hierarchical society favoured by many Ulster Protestants. See Graham Walker, ‘Old history: Protestant Ulster in Lee’s “Ireland”’, in *The Irish Review*, 12 (1992), pp 65-71 for a critique of Lee.

Ulster unionists, therefore, organised themselves into a mass movement, facilitated by the Ulster Unionist Council which brought together disparate groups – tenant farmers, landlords, industrial workers, business leaders and social elites – into a formidable political machine. The movement was augmented by support from leading Conservative party figures, notably Andrew Bonar Law, whose menacing rhetoric – evidenced by his declaration that ‘there are things stronger than parliamentary majorities’ – inflamed passions in Ulster.<sup>4</sup> The formation of volunteer groups and drilling had commenced on an ad-hoc basis, before the launching of the Ulster Volunteer Force in January 1913.<sup>5</sup> This acted as the potential military wing of a civil movement committed to the establishment of a provisional government for Ulster if Home Rule was enacted. In September 1912 over 450,000 men and women signed the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant or accompanying declaration to express their willingness to rebel against the British government in the event of the bill passing. It was the understanding of the U.U.C. that such tactics might pressure the government into abandoning Home Rule, but its determination extended to importing 25,000 rifles in April 1914.<sup>6</sup>

The years 1912-14 laid the foundations for the Irish revolution. Ulster unionist militancy, demonstrated by the formation and arming of the U.V.F., inspired nationalists to establish the Irish Volunteers. Although the outbreak of hostilities in Europe shelved the Irish question and averted possible civil conflict, events during the war would devastate the constitutional Irish Parliamentary Party and facilitate the way for republican extremists to launch a rebellion.<sup>7</sup> By 1918 Sinn Féin, which aimed to establish a republic, had risen to dominate the Irish political landscape. If

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster* (Belfast, 2001), p. 436.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Bowman, “‘The North began’...but when? The formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force’, in *History Ireland*, vol. 21, no. 2 (March/April, 2013), pp 28-31.

<sup>6</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), pp 45-7.

<sup>7</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: war, peace and beyond* (Malden, 2010), pp 195-206.

Ulster unionists were averse to a Home Rule settlement directed by the I.P.P., they were comprehensively aghast by the thought of complete severance from the Crown and Empire. Sinn Féin's electoral victory in December 1918 was followed one month later by the establishment of Dáil Éireann and what became recognised as the first shots of the war of independence.

Ireland's descent into conflict, along with the large numbers of men and woman who volunteered in the various participating organisations, was not unique in post-war Europe as emerging nations asserted their claims for autonomy from the former colonial powers.<sup>8</sup> However, there was nothing inevitable about the transition from political activity to violent revolution after the emergence of Sinn Féin in 1917-18. Several alternatives existed: what if, as Michael Hopkinson posited, the British government had purged Dublin Castle of hard-liners in 1919 when violent republicanism lacked commitment to comprehensive armed conflict?<sup>9</sup> As for Ulster's role in the violence of 1919-1922, it must be asked what would have occurred if I.R.A. violence had not penetrated into Ulster, or avoided offending unionist sensibilities by carrying out less provocative operations (such as the killing of highly-regarded Ulster-born police officers), thereby preventing the inevitable sectarian violence anticipated by the leading rebels of Easter 1916?<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the Irish revolution engulfed the entire island, attracting people from all regions to propagate revolution or resist it.

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<sup>8</sup> John Horne, 'Ireland and the wars after the war, 1917-1923', in idem and Edward Madigan (eds), *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2013), pp 55-6. Also see Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 2002), pp 28-9.

<sup>10</sup> There were no plans for a rising in Ulster in 1916, as the chief organisers believed it would arouse sectarian passions and undermine Irish unity. Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, 1916* (Oxford, 2010), p. 220.



These events preceded the scope of this thesis. Between 1920 and 1922 east Ulster experienced conflict that was shaped by the events of the previous decade. In order to provide a context for this thesis, this chapter seeks to construct a narrative of this three year period by investigating the dynamics of popular politics within the unionist community. Intense political energy was exerted by ordinary people through local forums such as unionist clubs and constitutional (unionist) associations. These met on a regular basis to discuss current affairs, as too did Orange lodges, although the personnel of these various groups often overlapped. The opinions expressed at meetings sometimes deviated from the Unionist party line, either in more moderate or extreme form. Nevertheless, they can afford insight to the range of attitudes existing in the unionist community.

#### Resistance to revolution: 1920

The Irish revolution developed slowly and without a clear agenda in 1919.<sup>11</sup> In Ulster the R.I.C. consistently noted a lack of political activity, either from the unionist or nationalist communities.<sup>12</sup> Some speeches were made by republican figures, with unionist clubs being revived at a moderate pace from September, but there was no Ulster Volunteer activity and the unionist clubs were rendered dormant by the beginning of the following year.<sup>13</sup> Unionists in Ulster felt little threat from republicanism during 1919, as proponents of the latter were few in number and lacking in organisation. Several I.R.A. veterans would recall the difficulties faced in east Ulster, partly due to the dominance of unionism amongst the majority Protestant

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<sup>11</sup> Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> R.I.C. county inspector report, Antrim, Mar. 1919 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/27).

<sup>13</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Sept. 1919 and Jan. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/110-111).

population, but also as a result of the sustained strength of constitutionalism amongst nationalists.<sup>14</sup>

The I.R.A. had only become active in the region around the early months of 1920. Assaults and raids on R.I.C. barracks, many of which were remote and unoccupied, provoked isolated loyalist attacks on individual nationalists.<sup>15</sup> However, the first major outbreak of violence in Ulster occurred in Londonderry in April 1920 after rival nationalist and unionist crowds clashed in the city. On 14 May trouble resumed, with rioting lasting four days, before a short-lived peace was again interrupted on 13 June. Troops intervened ten days later, by which time the I.R.A. and the U.V.F. had engaged in gun battles.<sup>16</sup> By this stage the unionist community was increasingly concerned by the threat of republicanism. In January 1920 Sinn Féin and constitutional nationalists had performed well in local urban elections, gaining overall control of the Londonderry city council. There was also a withdrawal of police from outlying barracks, making unionists in rural areas feel more vulnerable to attack.<sup>17</sup> However, by mid-1920 it had been made clear to unionists of north-east Ulster that their concerns for long-term security would soon be settled by an act of parliament.

The Government of Ireland Bill received its first reading in the House of Commons on 25 February 1920. For several months prior to this, the government had been developing a new Home Rule initiative in Ireland with the aim of satisfying nationalists while safeguarding the interests of northern unionists. Walter Long, former chief secretary for Ireland and leader of the unionist parliamentary faction before the third Home Rule crisis, chaired the government's Irish Situation

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>15</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Feb. and 10 Apr. 1920; *Ballymena Observer*, 21 May, 4 and 25 June 1920; R.I.C. C. I. report, Down, June 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/112).

<sup>16</sup> Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, pp 467-469.

<sup>17</sup> David W. Miller, *Queen's rebels: Ulster loyalism in historical perspective* (Dublin, 1978), p. 125.

Committee in 1919. This committee recommended in early 1920 the establishment of two Irish parliaments along with executives, one of which would have jurisdiction over the six north-eastern Ulster counties. Long had toyed with the concept of a nine-county northern state but under pressure from Ulster Unionist representatives who felt their majority in the province was too precarious to guarantee long-term control he proposed a six-county state.<sup>18</sup> As a possible vehicle for eventual unity, Long's committee included provision for dialogue between northern and southern representatives in the Council of Ireland.<sup>19</sup> It has been stated that the bill 'amounted to little more than an appeasement of Northern Unionism.'<sup>20</sup> However, as will be shown, although Ulster Unionists did help shape the final outcome of the bill – by securing a six, rather than nine, county state – it represented a compromise. It should be recognised that between 1912 and 1920, Ulster Unionists had retracted their opposition to Home Rule for twenty-six counties, and in doing so, broke a covenant with their allies in Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.

The Long committee recommendations provided the basis for the Government of Ireland Bill. However, it would be wrong to suggest that partition was always inevitable along these lines. Some form of exclusion for Ulster had first been suggested as early as 1912 by a Liberal minister. However, while Unionists began paying greater attention to Ulster, it was as much in the hope of preventing Home Rule for all of Ireland as establishing a northern Irish state.<sup>21</sup> Before the Great War, John Redmond, leader of the I.P.P., reluctantly accepted a compromise that provided for any Ulster county to vote itself out of a Home Rule settlement for a

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<sup>18</sup> Patrick Buckland, *James Craig: Lord Craigavon* (Dublin, 1980), p. 43; Ronan Fanning, *Fatal path: British government and Irish revolution 1910-1922* (London, 2013), p. 217.

<sup>19</sup> Graham Walker, *A history of the Ulster Unionist Party: protest, pragmatism and pessimism* (Manchester, 2004), p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish question: Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism 1912-1916* (Oxford, 1994), p. 22.

period of six years, only to have this rejected by Carson. While it was widely acknowledged that some form of provision was required for Ulster when war broke out in 1914, it was not until after the Easter Rising two years later that partition became a more definite concept. Both Unionist and I.P.P. leaders had accepted partition for six-counties, although uncertainty remained regarding the permanency of such an arrangement.<sup>22</sup> When the Government of Ireland Bill came before the Commons, it remained to be seen whether Ulster Unionists would accept it. A potential obstacle existed: the U.U.C. would have to desert three Ulster counties.

Some unionists in the six-counties felt acceptance of the bill contravened the Ulster Covenant in betraying their allies in Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.<sup>23</sup> A prominent north Antrim Orangeman, J. G. Leslie, told his brethren at Armoy that he 'could not disguise how much he regretted it was not a nine county parliament.'<sup>24</sup> Capt. Charles Craig, M.P. for South Antrim and brother of the Ulster Unionist leader James, defended this stipulation of the bill as 'a technical breach' that was necessary to save the majority of Ulster unionists from a Dublin parliament.<sup>25</sup> He also argued that Unionists could easily defeat the bill, but in doing so would risk a future Labour government introducing another piece of legislation with scant regard for Ulster unionism.<sup>26</sup> Regardless, the desire for a strong majority in a northern parliament was potent enough to win over the U.U.C. when it voted on the bill in May 1920, although 80 members out of 390 dissented.<sup>27</sup> As for the introduction of a northern Home Rule parliament, Unionist leaders were quick to see its advantages. The establishment of an administration in Belfast would place local affairs in their hands,

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Bew, *Ireland: the politics of enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford, 2007), p. 381.

<sup>23</sup> Buckland, *James Craig*, pp 45-6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ballymoney Free Press*, 18 Nov. 1920.

<sup>25</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 16 Apr. 1920.

<sup>26</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 16 July 1920.

<sup>27</sup> Walker, *A history of the Ulster Unionist Party*, p. 46.

effectively diminishing the capacity of their perceived political enemies in the Liberal and Labour parties to interfere. James Craig described it as a 'sacrifice' that was 'reluctantly accepted' in light of prolonged difficulties faced by consecutive British governments in dealing with Ireland.<sup>28</sup>

The news of another Home Rule Bill brought trepidation to unionists in east Ulster. On 22 January the president of the North Down Women's Association advocated 'raising the strongest possible opposition' to the bill.<sup>29</sup> However, as the details of the legislation became known the unionist community generally accepted it as 'the lesser of two evils', with Thomas Watters Brown, M.P. for North Down, claiming that it did not represent a retreat from the traditional unionist stance.<sup>30</sup> Yet, this did not signal a universal acceptance of the Government of Ireland Bill by unionists. Levels of popular discontent were not insignificant, so much so that Craig expressed his exasperation to Edward Carson:

The Orange leaders are decidedly flabby and disinclined to be courageous. The consequence is they follow the most minute complaints of the rank and file instead of attempting to remove the causes of discontent. Few of them can be got to take a broad view of the situation or to realise the immense advantages which the Bill place in their hands.<sup>31</sup>

Attitudes eventually eased and by the time of the first elections to the Northern Ireland parliament in May 1921 there was strong support from unionists for

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<sup>28</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 22 Oct. 1921.

<sup>29</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 31 Jan. 1920.

<sup>30</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 10 Apr. 1920.

<sup>31</sup> James Craig to Edward Carson, 18 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/70/3).

the establishment of a six-county state. Nationalists, by contrast, were appalled by the Government of Ireland Bill. Joseph Devlin, the northern leader of constitutional nationalism, complained bitterly about it, rejecting the Council of Ireland's capacity to deliver Irish unity in the future.<sup>32</sup> For Devlin, the Bill promised nothing other than Unionist domination, permanent partition and 'tyranny'.<sup>33</sup>

The Government of Ireland Bill, then, ostensibly offered 'a position of absolute security' to Ulster unionists in the north-east, while providing a bleak future for the nationalist minority.<sup>34</sup> Yet, this failed to alleviate unionist anxieties, for in 1920 the threat posed by the I.R.A. was compounded by other factors, namely a potentially fatal schism within the Protestant-unionist complex.

### Unionism and labour

In 1919 Ulster Unionism was faced with a real possibility of losing much of its grassroots support. Labour politics and trade union activity had expanded throughout the industrial centres of north-east Ulster, with a series of strikes projecting potential working-class unity at the expense of the pan-Protestant alliance that was central to the success of Ulster unionism.<sup>35</sup> Edward Carson and his colleagues had foreseen this threat, initiating 'social Toryism' by establishing the Ulster Unionist Labour Association in 1918.<sup>36</sup> This was, however, largely a failure, having failed to stave off

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<sup>32</sup> Buckland, *James Craig*, p. 42; Bew, *Ireland*, p. 396.

<sup>33</sup> Eamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: nationalist politics, partition and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994), p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> Fanning, *Fatal path*, p. 220.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-1996: political forces and social classes* (London, 1996), pp 24-5.

<sup>36</sup> Austen Morgan, *Labour and partition: the Belfast working class 1905-23* (London, 1991), p. 215.

the political appeal of independent labour candidates in the January 1920 urban elections.<sup>37</sup>

The U.U.L.A.'s failure to fully incorporate working-class interests in the Unionist party machine was demonstrated clearly in the East Antrim by-election in June 1919. George Boyle Hanna, an Orangeman and self-professed 'labour unionist', had been nominated to stand for parliament by the Larne branch of the East Antrim Trade Unionist Parliamentary Association.<sup>38</sup> Hanna had threatened to stand in December 1918, but backed down after pleas from Carson for Unionist unity. The official Unionist candidate duly won the seat in the general election but resigned a few months later after being appointed in command of the Irish Guards. In the by-election Hanna was determined to challenge the party's candidate. He held great sway with voters, having been an active and popular figure within the local Orange Order. He used this to his advantage, especially as his opponent, Major W. A. Moore, was not native to the constituency. Hanna accordingly asked electors if they would 'elect a stranger or elect plain Brother Hanna'.<sup>39</sup> More important, however, was Hanna's ability to tap into the political aspirations of working-class and tenant farmer unionists while maintaining his own stance on the Union. He supported labour issues and land purchase legislation, but denied he wanted class conflict. His aim was merely to 'prevent one small class, which was represented by the men at the top of the East Antrim Unionist Association...pulling them by the nose any longer.'<sup>40</sup>

Moore, by contrast, focused almost exclusively on his opposition to Home Rule. After a cold reception in some towns during the early stages of his campaign, during which he was heckled for his lack of interest in labour issues and his non-

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<sup>37</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>38</sup> *Irish Times*, 27 Feb. 1919.

<sup>39</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 21 Mar. 1919.

<sup>40</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 11 Apr. 1919.

membership of the Orange Order, Moore added token references to 'progressive legislation', his father's Orangeism and his own military experience.<sup>41</sup> Hanna's local popularity, his appeal to labour issues, his commitment to improved representation for less-privileged unionists on local branches of the official party and his unshaken opposition to Home Rule combined to secure him the seat and he defeated Moore by 8,714 votes to 7,549.<sup>42</sup> Hanna's victory was significant, as it demonstrated the political potential of the populist unionist vote. Consequently, reforms were initiated by the East Antrim Unionist Association to take more notice of all sections of the unionist community.<sup>43</sup>

Hanna's objections to the Unionist party, which he stated 'did not strike at the root of their cause', opened the way for him joining the party once he became convinced that the issues surrounding the East Antrim Unionist Association were resolved.<sup>44</sup> Hanna's relationship with the Unionist party improved between his victory in 1919 and preparations for the first elections for the Northern Ireland parliament in 1921. This was not a smooth transition. In early 1921 the secretary of the East Antrim Unionist Association made 'ill advised speeches' against Hanna. Willie Young of Galgorm Castle, son of the linen magnate John Young, told Edward Carson that such rhetoric could 'jeopardize our chances of unanimity' for the election in Antrim.<sup>45</sup> The East Antrim Women's Unionist Association also refused to recognise Hanna.<sup>46</sup> Despite resentment from members of the official unionist fold in east Antrim, Hanna was encouraged to accept a party candidacy for election to the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 21 Mar. and 4 Apr. 1919.

<sup>42</sup> *Irish Times*, 10 June 1919.

<sup>43</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *'Solitary and wild': Frederick MacNeice and the salvation of Ireland* (Dublin, 2012), pp 160-1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 18 Feb. 1921.

<sup>45</sup> Willie Young to Edward Carson, 5 Feb. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB/5/4).

<sup>46</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 28 Jan. 1921.



Northern Ireland parliament. He was duly selected as a Unionist candidate for County Antrim in April 1921.<sup>47</sup>

Whereas unionist labour was accommodated, independent labour was ruthlessly confronted. The U.U.L.A. injected a sectarian dimension to the labour issue by stoking resentment within the Protestant working class towards unemployment. The U.U.L.A., for instance, instilled ex-servicemen associations with a belief that southern Catholics had taken jobs formerly occupied by northern Protestants who had volunteered in the Great War. In concurrence with increased I.R.A. activity in parts of Ulster, this helped create hostility towards the Catholic workforce in the industrial north-east, culminating in the shipyard expulsions in July 1920.<sup>48</sup> Riots also erupted in some towns of east Ulster in which all Catholic workers were forced to take oaths of allegiance or face expulsion from industrial employment.<sup>49</sup>

The cause of labour was a genuine threat to Unionists in its capacity to erode its working-class support. In addition, sections of the Irish labour movement gained a reputation as pro-separatist, having ‘played a wholehearted supporting role in the national struggle.’<sup>50</sup> Unionists were quick to exaggerate the link between labour and Sinn Féin, with one memo stating that republicans were ‘working in conjunction with Bolshevik Forces elsewhere towards [the establishment of a republic]’.<sup>51</sup> Throughout east Ulster local unionist leaders denounced the left. George C. G. Young, secretary of the County Antrim Grand Orange Lodge, warned Orangemen

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<sup>47</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 22 Apr. 1921.

<sup>48</sup> Bew et al, *Northern Ireland*, pp 25-6.

<sup>49</sup> *Irish News*, 28 July 1920.

<sup>50</sup> E. Rumpf and A. C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and socialism in twentieth-century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977), p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> James Craig memo, 1 Sept. 1920, (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance files, FIN/18/1/11).

that labour leaders 'were nothing else but wolves in lambs' clothing.'<sup>52</sup> Hugh O'Neill, M.P. for mid-Antrim, made the threat of labour the focus of his 12 July speech.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, at the initiation of a Banbridge branch of the Ulster Workers' Trade Union in August 1920, opposition was expressed to 'disloyal' workers, reflecting the divisions within the working-class and reaffirming the pan-Protestant alliance.<sup>54</sup>

Based as it was on inter-class collaboration, unionism could not ignore labour issues. The U.U.L.A. reflected the party's attitude that labour politics was tolerable only within the confines of unionism. For example, G. B. Hanna's assimilation to the official party ensured his working-class politics were acceptable. George C. G. Young described Hanna as 'an honest representative of labour, who was not ashamed to be one of the principal supporters of Sir James Craig and the Ulster Parliament, and he did not associate himself with rebels and assassins.'<sup>55</sup> The Unionist, J. F. Gordon, before his election to the Northern Ireland parliament for County Antrim in May 1921, was comfortable speaking at a U.U.L.A. meeting in Comber about the need for improvement of housing, raising the social status of working people, and the need to guard against 'capitalistic oppression'. However, his was a paternal form of labour politics, one in which deference to the industrial and commercial classes was evident. For instance, Gordon insisted on the need to maintain unionist unity, while asserting that in order to achieve the goals he set forth, workers must avoid confrontations with employers.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ballymoney Free Press*, 18 Nov. 1920.

<sup>53</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 16 July 1920.

<sup>54</sup> *Belfast Telegraph*, 18 Aug. 1920.

<sup>55</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 15 July 1921.

<sup>56</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 5 Mar. 1921.

While the decline of labour diminished working class unity in mid-1920, it gave way to a new threat to the Unionist party. Militant loyalism, if left unmanaged, could result in actions that would discredit the Unionist leaders. Basil Brooke, a prominent Unionist, created a vigilante force in Fermanagh as he was concerned that 'hotheads will take matters into their own hands and threaten retaliation.'<sup>57</sup> Attempts were accordingly made to impose some form of restraint on loyalists, the most obvious being through a revived U.V.F. in July under the control of Wilfred Spender.<sup>58</sup> This proved inadequate as violence intensified in Belfast and east Ulster in August. Spender's letters to James Craig during this time became increasingly menacing, culminating in a warning that 'the Sinn Féiners have goaded our men into a state of absolute desperation, & the men feel they are being let down by the Government & by their leaders.' He concluded with the assertion that loyalists 'intend to take matters into their own hands.'<sup>59</sup> Loyalists had already acted on their threats by forming independent paramilitary groups in Belfast and some towns in east Ulster.<sup>60</sup>

Craig met with members of the British cabinet on 2 September. He posed two main demands: the appointment of an assistant under-secretary for north-east Ulster and the establishment of an armed special constabulary to consist of 'law-abiding citizens'. The cabinet, in the absence of the prime minister, agreed before securing the premier's approval a few days later.<sup>61</sup> Just as the Unionist leadership had used the threat of violence to block Home Rule in 1912 to 1914 they had exploited the

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<sup>57</sup> Basil Brooke, leader of a vigilante group in Fermanagh, quoted in Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, p. 470.

<sup>58</sup> Bew, Gibbon & Patterson, *Northern Ireland*, p. 27.

<sup>59</sup> Wilfred Spender to James Craig, c. late Aug. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/70/2).

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>61</sup> Fanning, *Fatal path*, pp 233-6.

ominous prospects of civil war in September 1920 to hasten the implementation of devolved government apparatus in the six counties.

The government acquiesced with Craig's demands by immediately appointing Sir Ernest Clark as the new assistant under-secretary. Clark's responsibilities covered the north-east only, as he was expected to institute the administrative framework for Northern Ireland. Unionist leaders had hoped that the appointee 'should be in touch with local conditions', with Spender offering his own services for the role on a temporary basis.<sup>62</sup> Clark had worked as an inspector at the Inland Revenue under the reforming Sir John Anderson before the latter's appointment as under-secretary for Ireland in May 1920. Clark had gained Anderson's admiration for his administrative capabilities, but lacked the salient unionist credentials sought by Craig and his colleagues.<sup>63</sup> In early September 1920 Clark met Craig, Fred Crawford (a leading U.V.F. gun-runner) and Richard Dawson Bates in the London office of the chief secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood. Clark recalled this meeting:

They were full of grievances, and painted to Sir Hamar Greenwood a picture of the deathly peril which threatened all loyalists (including themselves), in the North of Ireland. At the time I failed to sympathise with them and indeed hardly understood what they were talking [about, so] widely did the conditions they described differ

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<sup>62</sup> Wilfred Spender to James Craig, 30 Aug. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/70/2).

<sup>63</sup> Bryan Follis, *A state under siege: the establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920-1925* (Oxford, 1995), p. 7.

from my notions, and previous experience of an ordered government.<sup>64</sup>

Although Clark was to adopt a more sympathetic attitude to the concerns of Ulster Unionists, his acceptance by party leaders was not immediate. In 1921 Craig asked Andy Cope, Clark's counterpart in Dublin, if he would like to become the head of the Northern Ireland civil service as Clark, while being appreciated for his efforts in establishing Northern Ireland, was disliked by some Unionist ministers.<sup>65</sup> Clark's efforts to reinstate expelled workers were met with resentment, particularly from Bates who bemoaned him for 'still harping on the subject of blaming the Unionist Labour Association for the troubles in the Shipyards.'<sup>66</sup>

The appointment of Clark and the establishment of the special constabulary in November 1920 were deemed necessary to placate demands for greater autonomy and security by Ulster Unionists in the north-east. The party leadership was aware that grassroots opinion was fearful of a capitulation to republicanism. As Craig wrote to party colleagues, prior to meeting the British cabinet in early September, 'it must frankly be admitted that the rank and file are suspicious of being betrayed by the Government.'<sup>67</sup> However, this view was not exclusive to the unionist grassroots. Craig and his party colleagues regarded with contempt the personnel of Dublin Castle, suspecting key figures of being antipathetic to their interests.<sup>68</sup> As a result it had been hoped that Clark would be directly answerable to Greenwood, therefore

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<sup>64</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Bew, *Ireland*, p. 413; Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 333.

<sup>66</sup> Richard Dawson Bates to James Craig, 24 Feb. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/70/3).

<sup>67</sup> James Craig memo, 1 Sept. 1920, (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance files, FIN/18/1/11).

<sup>68</sup> Philip McKivicker, 'Law and order in Northern Ireland, 1920-1936' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Ulster, 1985), pp 29-30.

bypassing the authority of Dublin Castle, but this was not the case.<sup>69</sup> As for the special constabulary, this proved advantageous to Craig as it provided as a means of control over militant loyalists while maintaining credibility with the party's followers. In addition, by channelling and lending a degree of legitimacy to loyalist violence, control of the special constabulary increased Craig's ability to influence Irish policy.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, while the Unionist leadership accepted the Government of Ireland Bill for providing them with a degree of autonomy, they simultaneously maintained a populist agenda. This necessitated the acceptance of a degree of loyalist violence. James Craig and Edward Carson were unwilling to openly condemn the violent actions of their followers, preferring to express support for the shipyard expulsions.<sup>71</sup> While they could become exasperated with grassroots discontent when it was blatantly irrational, Carson and Craig remained unwilling to publicly condemn loyalist violence.

### Ulster unionism and the British government

While Craig secured concessions, notably the U.S.C., from the government, these and the Government of Ireland Bill failed to reassure Ulster Unionists. Central to their dissatisfaction was an inherent distrust of the British government. The post-war coalition consisted of Liberal and Conservative factions, the former being regarded with derision by unionists for introducing successive Home Rule bills. Although Unionists had traditionally been allied to the Conservative party, elements of distrust

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<sup>69</sup> Follis, *A state under siege*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> T. K. Wilson, *Frontier of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010), pp 91-2.

<sup>71</sup> Wilson, *Frontier of violence*, p. 92.

existed as far back as the 1880s when there existed the possibility of a Tory alliance with Charles Stuart Parnell.<sup>72</sup> In 1886 the support unionism received in Britain was largely motivated by imperial concerns: that unity between Ireland and Britain would safeguard the Empire. The Conservative defence of Ulster unionist interests in the period between 1912 and 1922 was based more on wider national and imperial considerations. While support was strong in the pre-war period, it began waning during the European conflict, coming to resemble 'a stoical determination to honour a debt rather than a burning desire to reward their Ulster friends.'<sup>73</sup> In 1921 some Conservatives became more concerned with imperial matters, believing Unionist leaders should compromise on Irish unity as the price for keeping Ireland within the Empire. Intransigence by Craig was therefore deemed by some Tories as harmful to the future of the Empire.

Edward Carson, reacting to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, told the House of Lords that he felt the Conservatives had used Irish Unionists for the attainment of their own political goals: 'I was in earnest. What a fool I was! I was only a puppet, and so was Ulster, and so was Ireland, in the political game that was to get the Conservative Party into power.'<sup>74</sup> A similar distrust of the Tories was found in the unionist clubs throughout east Ulster. Mrs MacGregor Greer of the North Down Women's Unionist Association said that 'Ulster Unionists could not rely on the same amount of sympathy from the so-called Unionist party of England as they had received in the past.'<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> D. G. Boyce, 'British Conservative opinion, the Ulster question, and the partition of Ireland, 1912-21', in *Irish Historical Studies*, xvii, no. 65 (Mar., 1970), pp 98-107.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Buckland, 'Carson, Craig and the partition of Ireland, 1912-21', in Peter Collins (ed.), *Nationalism and Unionism: conflict in Ireland, 1885-1921* (Belfast, 1994), p. 88.

<sup>75</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 31 Jan. 1920.

If unionists failed to trust the Conservative party between 1920 and 1922, they had even less reason to believe that Lloyd George's Liberal faction within the coalition would safeguard their interests. J. M. Andrews, the Northern Ireland minister for labour and future prime minister, told an audience in Down that 'it was perfectly true that a British Cabinet led by a Welshman wanted to betray them', but that the only thing preventing this was their lack of popular mandate.<sup>76</sup> As will be discussed, unionists throughout east Ulster were fearful that negotiations with Sinn Féin would lead to the surrender of the north-east, and although the Treaty maintained partition, it was still viewed as a betrayal of British interests.

### Truce to Treaty

The Government of Ireland Act established the legislative basis for two Irish parliaments. Elections were held in May 1921, but only in the north-east did a contest arise. The Unionist party, despite its dissatisfaction with proportional representation, won 40 out of 52 seats.<sup>77</sup> Candidates had widely canvassed their supporters, with warnings that failure to vote could spell the end of Northern Ireland even before it had begun.<sup>78</sup> Complacency was avoided, as the turnout was an impressive 88 per cent. Nevertheless, due to their distrust of British government intentions, Ulster unionists were fearful that the Government of Ireland Act would be supplanted to accommodate republicans.<sup>79</sup> A settlement with Sinn Féin still had to materialise, and although James Craig met Éamon de Valera in May 1921 in an

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<sup>76</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 26 Nov. 1921.

<sup>77</sup> The Unionist party had not forgotten the erosion of their support base in the January 1920 urban council election, which were also carried out under proportional representation: Laflin, *The partition of Ireland*, p. 69.

<sup>78</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 13 May 1921.

<sup>79</sup> Fanning, *Fatal path*, pp 163-4.



effort to facilitate peace, leading Unionists remained cautious on the announcement of a truce in July.<sup>80</sup> Unionist M.P. for Antrim, Hugh O'Neill, told constituents in Ballymena that, conditional upon the status of Northern Ireland remaining unchanged, he was hopeful that a peace settlement with Sinn Féin would be reached.<sup>81</sup>

Ordinary unionists were generally more hostile to the truce. Its application to Northern Ireland, which stipulated that the B Specials be temporarily suspended, inflamed passions. Open I.R.A. re-organisation occurred under the terms of the truce, further provoking unionists. For the latter suspended B Specials had represented the only barrier between themselves and republican forces.<sup>82</sup> Speaking on 12 July ~~speech~~ at Ballymena, George C. G. Young declared that Lloyd George 'had no right to sign a truce for Ulster with Ulster's enemies, and they refused to recognise any truce.'<sup>83</sup> In Belfast passions spilled over into renewed communal violence, leading to 20 deaths in only a week.<sup>84</sup> Loyalists, whose support of the government was reliant on the provision of security, threatened to organise vigilante groups.<sup>85</sup> Sir Hamar Greenwood largely ignored the pleas of Unionists for greater security measures, fearing that to comply would jeopardise the prospects of a settlement with Sinn Féin.<sup>86</sup> By November, however, Lloyd George was forced to devolve security responsibilities to the Northern Irish government to prevent the security situation worsening.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Bew, *Ireland*, pp 412-3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 16 Sept. 1921.

<sup>82</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Sept. 1921 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/116).

<sup>83</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 15 July 1921.

<sup>84</sup> Alan F. Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war: the troubles of the 1920s* (Dublin, 2004), pp 142-5.

<sup>85</sup> Cabinet conclusions, 16 Aug. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Cabinet conclusion files, CAB/4/14); McVicker,

'Law and order in Northern Ireland', p. 74.

<sup>86</sup> McVicker, 'Law and order in Northern Ireland', pp 47-8.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-5.

Discontent at the truce was also caused by what appeared to unionists to be a shameful surrender to Sinn Féin. Most commentators failed to understand why state forces could not simply crush the I.R.A. in the south and west, concluding that the truce represented unwillingness on behalf of the British government to deal with the problem. Unionists' logical progression from this point provoked fears that Northern Ireland would just as easily be dispensed with to placate republicans. W. H. H. Lyons, the Sovereign Grand Master of the County Antrim Royal Black Chapter, a Protestant fraternal society, said that 'no civilised or uncivilised country' would talk to 'murderers and rebels'. A resolution was passed at this meeting in Antrim 'condemn[ing] in the strongest possible manner the negotiations' with Sinn Féin.<sup>88</sup> As Sir Henry Wilson put it to unionists in north Down on his acceptance of their nomination as M.P. in April 1922, the government in London could not identify the difference between friends and enemies, or 'between murderers of the South of Ireland and the loyal subjects of the North.'<sup>89</sup> Unionists believed that republicans had engaged in criminality of the highest degree and by negotiating with them the British government was bestowing a degree of legitimacy upon their tactics. Some unionists also felt that in the event that a settlement was reached without affecting Northern Ireland, they could not trust Sinn Féin to honour its terms.<sup>90</sup>

Ulster unionists' distrust of the British government intensified during the Treaty negotiations.<sup>91</sup> Craig's response was to fortify the administrative framework of Northern Ireland, creating 'a kind of bureaucratic Derry's walls' which eventuated in the devolution of security powers in November.<sup>92</sup> Throughout the turbulent truce period, unionists consistently expressed their confidence in their own leader, James

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<sup>88</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 26 Aug. 1921.

<sup>89</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 22 Apr. 1922.

<sup>90</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 3 Sept. 1921.

<sup>91</sup> David Harkness, *Northern Ireland since 1920* (Dublin, 1983), p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 336.

Craig, who was posited as the main obstacle to Lloyd George's intention of uniting Ireland.<sup>93</sup> In reaffirming their support for Craig, speakers at a unionist rally in Dromore conveyed their resentment of 'so-called Unionist members of the Coalition Cabinet.'<sup>94</sup> On 10 November 1921 Lloyd George tried in vain to persuade Craig to accept an all-Ireland parliament in which Northern Ireland would retain its provincial parliament with the powers granted to it by the Government of Ireland Act.<sup>95</sup> The Unionist leader's rejection of these proposals made reference to the Council of Ireland as a possible starting point for unity based on mutual agreement of both Irish states.<sup>96</sup> Despite the concerns of the unionist community, it has been argued that the British government never expected Irish unity in 1921. Lloyd George's negotiating team had prepared for their talks with Sinn Féin without expecting to concede on Northern Ireland, while the Irish plenipotentiaries arrived in London without a clear agenda and lacking experience in high-level political negotiations. The British government was therefore able to secure the Treaty by exploiting the weaknesses of the Irish negotiators while Craig's administration in Belfast was never likely to be sacrificed for peace.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the partition of Ireland was subordinate to the oath of allegiance in republican objections to the British government proposals.<sup>98</sup>

### Treaty, pacts and peace

The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921, establishing a twenty-six county dominion. What would become the Irish Free State was granted full

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<sup>93</sup> See, for instance, *Newtownards Chronicle*, 3 Dec. 1921.

<sup>94</sup> *Dromore Leader*, 3 Dec. 1921.

<sup>95</sup> Cornelius O'Leary and Patrick Maume, *Controversial issues in Anglo-Irish relations, 1910-1921* (Dublin, 2004), pp 130-1.

<sup>96</sup> Bew, *Ireland*, p. 420.

<sup>97</sup> Fanning, *Fatal path*, pp 271-2; Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, p. 80.

<sup>98</sup> Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, p. 86.

autonomy on domestic affairs, including finance, but little influence over external matters. As for partition, it provided for a vaguely phrased boundary commission, promising to consider territorial alterations according to the wishes of inhabitants and subject to 'economic and geographic considerations'.<sup>99</sup> It was anticipated by the Irish delegates in London that the commission would sufficiently diminish the territory of the northern state to render it unviable.<sup>100</sup> However, a large faction of republicans, led by Éamon de Valera, rejected the Treaty for another reason. To them dominion status was insufficient return for the sacrifice made during the conflict with the British state. The Treaty was, nevertheless, ratified by a majority of seven votes in the Dáil on 7 January 1922, signalling deep divisions within newly independent Ireland.<sup>101</sup>

The primacy given to the constitutional status of the Free State by republicans did not erase Ulster unionist fears that partition was under threat. Although Britain had made peace with Sinn Féin without granting a republic, unionists viewed the Treaty with scorn. They viewed it as a capitulation to violent republicanism, while regarding the boundary commission as an infringement on the rights of the inhabitants of Northern Ireland.<sup>102</sup> Northern unionists had conceded virtually nothing but, as Michael Hopkinson has observed, the Treaty 'aroused the fear of northern loyalists even more than it raised the expectations of southern nationalists.'<sup>103</sup>

James Craig, exasperated at the boundary commission stipulations in the Treaty, attempted to deal directly with Michael Collins on the border issue. They met

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<sup>99</sup> Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 308.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>101</sup> Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, pp 506-8.

<sup>102</sup> Fanning, *Fatal path*, p. 317. Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, p. 89.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins pacts of 1922: two attempted reforms of the Northern Ireland government', in *I.H.S.*, vol. xxvii, no. 106 (Nov., 1990), pp 145-6.

on 21 January, successfully producing an agreement on several issues. Firstly, representatives would be nominated by both Irish leaders to report on the boundary question, therefore removing British involvement. Secondly, Collins committed himself to ending an economic boycott of northern goods, while Craig reciprocated with promises to gain employment for expelled Catholic workers. Finally, they agreed to replace the Council of Ireland with a more suitable body, although the details of this were not established.<sup>104</sup>

Unionists were against the idea of boundary changes, or the ‘cutting and carving of the Ulster six-counties.’<sup>105</sup> While this pact sustained uncertainty about the Irish border, it somewhat alleviated fears as many unionists were more confident now that the issue was being managed by Craig. The Unionist M.P. Ronald McNeill approved of Britain’s diminished role as the imperial government had hitherto been ‘so untrustworthy towards Ulster’. Under Craig’s direction, McNeill predicted ‘small local adjustments’ at most.<sup>106</sup>

The January pact was to prove a failure, primarily because of unfavourable economic conditions and a lack of political will on Craig’s part to reinstall expelled workers, and because anti-Treaty forces ensured the continuation of the economic boycott.<sup>107</sup> Violence resumed, with unionist anxieties peaking after the I.R.A. kidnapped forty-two loyalists from Fermanagh and Tyrone in cross-border raids on 7-8 February. Soon afterwards four special constables were killed in Clones, Co. Monaghan, as they travelled through the town by train to Enniskillen.<sup>108</sup> As a result,

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>105</sup> Quote by the chairman of the Mid-Down Unionist Association: *Newtownards Chronicle*, 4 Feb. 1922.

<sup>106</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 27 Jan. 1922.

<sup>107</sup> Hopkinson, ‘The Craig-Collins pacts’, p. 148.

<sup>108</sup> See Robert Lynch, *The Northern I.R.A. and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006), pp 107-115.

communal conflict re-emerged in Belfast.<sup>109</sup> Some of the most horrific incidents of the period took place in March, notably the McMahon family murders led by members of the police. The reaction from all sections of society was one of a belief that the violence had exceeded acceptability.<sup>110</sup> Efforts for peace were increased, leading to a second meeting between Craig and Collins.

On 30 March the two Irish leaders produced an agreement, the opening statement of which began with misguided optimism: 'Peace is today declared.' The main terms of the pact included a commitment by Craig to reform the special constabulary in terms of its membership and discipline. Catholics would be encouraged to join, allowing them to patrol their own neighbourhoods and carry out searches, while off duty B Specials were obliged to return their arms to military possession. In addition, a conciliation committee was to establish dialogue between representatives of the nationalist community and the Unionist government. Craig also reiterated his determination to aid expelled workers back into employment. In reciprocation, Collins committed himself to ending I.R.A. assaults on Northern Ireland. It was accepted by both signatories that they should jointly pursue peace.<sup>111</sup>

Craig faced limited criticism from the unionist community for the pact, but Winston Churchill defended it as a service to the wellbeing of the Empire.<sup>112</sup> However, the pact failed to deliver peace as sectarian violence once again erupted. In addition, Craig's government, although initiating a committee to reform the special constabulary, failed to enrol any Catholics. Similarly, Collins was unable to fulfil his commitment to ending I.R.A. operations in Northern Ireland.<sup>113</sup> The reality was that

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<sup>109</sup> Bew, *Ireland*, pp 427-8.

<sup>110</sup> For instance, see Timothy Wilson, 'The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast': the McMahon murders in context', in *I.H.S.*, xxxvii, no. 145 (May 2010), pp 83-106.

<sup>111</sup> Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins pacts', p. 151.

<sup>112</sup> Bew, *Ireland*, p. 431.

<sup>113</sup> Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins pacts', pp 152-4.

he had no control over anti-Treaty forces, a contingent of which had occupied the Four Courts in Dublin in defiance of the Provisional Government's authority.

April saw an increase in communal tensions in Northern Ireland. Richard Dawson Bates, the populist minister of home affairs, introduced draconian legislation designed to cripple the I.R.A. The Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act conferred upon the government of Northern Ireland all the powers of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act. Curfews could be imposed, while Bates, or any police officer acting on his behalf, was granted the power to search and seize property and detain anyone suspected of subversive behaviour.<sup>114</sup> The Special Powers Act was primarily used against the nationalist community, with only a few loyalist miscreants ever being punished under its provisions. Facilitating the introduction of internment, the Act resulted in the arrest of over 500 suspected republicans and a dramatic decrease in violence.<sup>115</sup> However, such policies had an enduring and alienating effect on the nationalist community.

On 19 May the I.R.A. launched a joint-offensive against the Northern Irish state. This, as discussed later in this thesis, was a disastrous failure. It also marked the end of collaborative efforts between anti- and pro-Treaty factions. On 28 June the Four Courts, occupied since 14 April, was attacked by Provisional Government forces, thus marking the beginning of the Irish civil war. Consequently, large sections of the northern I.R.A. moved south to take part in that conflict, bringing relative peace back to the north-east. Southern policy towards the north also changed direction, especially after the death of Michael Collins allowed for more conciliatory policies to be pursued.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Laura K. Donohue, 'Regulating Northern Ireland: the Special Powers Acts, 1922-1972', *The Historical Journal*, xli, no. 4 (1998), pp 1090-1091.

<sup>115</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, pp 334-5.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

## Conclusion

The unionist community was united in its determination to remain part of the United Kingdom, but it also embodied a diverse range of opinions and attitudes spanning from law-abiding moderates to obstreperous militants. Class tensions also posed a threat to unity, forcing Edward Carson and his colleagues to acknowledge working-class interests with the formation of the U.U.L.A. How the Unionist leadership responded to these pressures would directly shape the Northern Ireland government's policies and its relationship with its inhabitants. For instance, relations between the government of James Craig, a more flexible figure than is sometimes allowed, and the northern minority could have been better, but the need to placate militant loyalism ensured the more obstinate members of the government shaped security measures that in turn further alienated nationalists.<sup>117</sup>

A populist agenda was employed in which the interests of the unionist community were prioritised to the neglect of the concerns of the nationalist minority. The Unionist government was generally disinclined to punish loyalist miscreants involved in communal violence. Andy Cope, the assistant under-secretary in Dublin Castle, advocated the internment of both Catholics and Protestants involved in riots in Belfast in mid-1921, only to be rebuffed by the northern executive which refused to sanction widespread arrests of Protestants.<sup>118</sup> A more salient example of differential treatment was the application of the Special Powers Act. This was widely used against the nationalist community, but loyalist paramilitary forces were largely excluded from its stipulations, as demonstrated by the toleration of the Ulster

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<sup>117</sup> Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins pacts', p. 155.

<sup>118</sup> Patrick Buckland, *The factory of grievances: devolved government in Northern Ireland, 1921-39* (Dublin, 1979), pp 188-9.



Protestant Association until as late as October 1922 when only four of its members were interned. Another twelve loyalists, including one B Special, were imprisoned by the end of the year, but these figures were in sharp contrast to the hundreds of nationalists who were interned.<sup>119</sup> That Unionist leaders believed that loyalists should not be greatly affected by repressive legislation was made clear in October 1921 when Samuel Watts, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs, questioned whether 'extraordinary powers should be used against those who are loyal to the Crown.'<sup>120</sup>

S. G. Tallents, a British official sent to investigate the Northern Irish government in June 1922, gave an unfavourable assessment of Craig's administration: 'Ministers are too close to their followers and cannot treat their supporters as from a distance.' Tallents thought that the situation would be vastly improved with the relegation of Bates to a more junior role.<sup>121</sup> By the time Tallents filed his report the situation in Northern Ireland had changed dramatically: the civil war in the south had taken the focus away from Ulster, making alterations to the northern administration of less immediate importance to the British government. Without pressure to reform from London, the Belfast government prioritised unionist solidarity over the establishment of fair administration and the possibility of accommodating nationalists in the new state. Their paranoia, moulded over the years by a distrust of Britain, was supplemented by a lack of incentive to improve relations with the northern minority, many of which were deemed untrustworthy. The removal of Arthur Solly-Flood as military advisor in September 1922 after his criticisms of the flogging of prisoners and indiscipline within the B Specials, exemplified the

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<sup>119</sup> Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920-7* (London, 1983), pp 177-9.

<sup>120</sup> Samuel Watt memo, 5 Oct. 1921, quoted in Buckland, *The factory of grievances*, p. 193.

<sup>121</sup> Bew, Gibbon & Patterson, *Northern Ireland*, p. 34.

northern government's desire for autonomy and the preservation of their 'special relationship' with the unionist working-class.<sup>122</sup>

The result of this was a strong antipathy towards the nationalist community, whose position the Unionist government failed to fully understand. For some unionists all Catholics were disloyal. Any criticism of the Northern government or the British security forces by constitutional nationalists was often interpreted as support for the violent overthrow of the Belfast administration. For instance, Joseph Devlin's rebuke of the six county parliament led one Orange leader in north Down to associate him with those who 'preferred to shoot from behind hedges and ditches.'<sup>123</sup> Assertions similar to this resonated in official circles. The Antrim Unionist, Robert Megaw, felt that all Catholics were implicated in the I.R.A. campaign. He felt that the 1918 and 1921 electoral pacts between the I.P.P. and Sinn Féin demonstrated that 'practically all Roman Catholics in the six counties threw themselves into the movement.' Megaw, whose comments were in reference to a Catholic advisory board concerned with ascertaining the possible loyalty of some internees in June 1922, raised concerns that such a scheme would expose 'information which the disloyal and semi-disloyal are very anxious to obtain.'<sup>124</sup> When a distinction between constitutional nationalists and republicans was made, it was often by viewing the aspirations of the former as a stepping stone to the achievement of a republic.<sup>125</sup>

The close relationship between Unionists and militant loyalists forced the party leadership to address the violent actions of its followers. However, the application of terms such as 'disloyal', 'rebels' or 'Sinn Féiners' to all nationalists arguably legitimised their victimisation. When the shipyard expulsions occurred in

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>123</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 2 Apr. 1921.

<sup>124</sup> Robert Megaw memo, 2 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/32/1/178).

<sup>125</sup> Ronald McNeill, *Ulster's stand for Union* (London, 1922), pp 4-6.

July 1920, Richard Dawson Bates referred to the victims as 'Sinn Féiners'.<sup>126</sup> Bates's prejudice would later shape his security policies when he became the minister of home affairs for Northern Ireland.<sup>127</sup> Unionist M.P., Ronald McNeill, also placed the blame for the industrial expulsions at the door of the victims, who he stated were targeted for their disloyalty and 'have now probably learnt a lesson'.<sup>128</sup> Sir Ernest Clark, on becoming assistant under-secretary, was exposed to Ulster Protestant prejudices when he received a map of Antrim which clearly labelled all predominantly Catholic regions as 'disloyal'. However, there were some rare exceptions to this stereotype. Catholics known personally to leading Unionists had less trouble proving their loyal credentials and consequently a distinction was sometimes made on an individual basis between their religion and politics. The appointment of a Catholic as the head of staff in the Ministry of Agriculture aroused contempt from the 'Ulster Ex-service Association', but it was hoped that his twenty-year acquaintance with the minister of agriculture, Edward Archdale, would mollify critics.<sup>129</sup>

In short, between 1920 and 1922 in response to the wider polarisation of politics and society brought about by revolutionary violence, unionist prejudices towards Catholics and nationalists hardened. This developed in concurrence to increased unionist distrust of the British state and hostility to independent labour. These years therefore represented the perpetuation of the unionist siege mentality in which anyone who was not overtly unionist was deemed a potential threat. Yet, even within unionism a range of opinions existed on several issues, forcing the party leadership to strike a balance between moderates and extremists in order to maintain

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<sup>126</sup> Richard Dawson Bates to James Craig, 21 July 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister. PM/1/70/3). For more on perceptions of Catholic victims, see Chapter Two.

<sup>127</sup> Buckland, *The factory of grievances*, pp 21-2.

<sup>128</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 27 Jan. 1922.

<sup>129</sup> Cabinet conclusions, 4 Aug. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Cabinet conclusion files, CAB/4/12).

its inter-class alliance. At times the Unionist party would find itself faced with peremptory demands from militant loyalists which would often be met. One instance, as described above, was the formation of the special constabulary. This assuaged grassroots concerns regarding security, but it had a detrimental effect on communal tensions and the Unionist party's relationship with northern nationalists. Therefore, it is only within the context of hardening prejudices and heightened tensions that the violence and political developments of this period can be understood. The rest of this thesis explores aspects of the communal divide in east Ulster and references to the events discussed in this chapter will be referred to throughout.

## Chapter Two

### The east Ulster riots

#### Introduction

In July 1920 sectarian violence erupted in Belfast, enduring intermittently for approximately two years. With an ever intensifying conflict in Ireland between the state and the I.R.A., security resources were concentrated in southern and western regions of the country, leaving many northern unionists feeling vulnerable. Anxieties were manifested in two particular ways: rioting and the establishment of civilian-led protective patrols.<sup>1</sup> This trend was evident throughout north-east Ulster, although the most comprehensive studies of the northern conflict focus on Belfast.<sup>2</sup> In the eastern portion of the province towns such as Banbridge, Dromore, Lisburn and Newtownards experienced similar bouts of rioting and civilian initiatives designed to fill the perceived security void.

Although communal disturbances erupted in Londonderry in May 1920, it was the east Ulster riots in July and August that stimulated sustained violence in Belfast. The shipyard expulsions, the first major outbreak in the city, occurred on the 21 July, the same day as the funeral of R.I.C. Divisional Commissioner Gerald B. Smyth in Banbridge. Further trouble arose a month later, when the I.R.A. assassinated a district inspector in Lisburn, triggering a renewal of anti-Catholic attacks in east Ulster and widespread violence in Belfast. This suggests that

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<sup>1</sup> David W. Miller, *Queen's rebels: Ulster loyalism in historical perspective* (Dublin, 1978), p.125.

<sup>2</sup> Austen Morgan, *Labour and partition: the Belfast working class 1905-1923* (London, 1991), pp 265-284; Jim McDermott, *Northern divisions: the old IRA and the Belfast pogroms, 1920-22* (Belfast, 2001), pp 50-58; Alan F. Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war: the troubles of the 1920s* (Dublin, 2004).

'Belfast's unholy war' cannot be properly understood or contextualised without reference to the east Ulster riots of the summer of 1920.

These disturbances demonstrated loyalist anxieties concerning the threat of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A., reinforcing the political efforts of Ulster unionism to resist independent rule from Dublin. For these reasons the east Ulster riots played a role in shaping British government and unionist attitudes to the prevailing circumstances in Ireland. Loyalist violence convinced key government figures to establish the Ulster Special Constabulary, which in turn afforded the Unionist party its own armed force when security policy was devolved to Belfast in November 1921. In addition, southern republican attitudes to partition and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 were affected by these developments.

The east Ulster riots form the basis of this chapter which aims to contextualise this violence within the wider Irish revolution. Events in Lisburn and other county towns have received limited attention from historians: a local history of the Lisburn riots remains the only in-depth study of communal violence in east Ulster.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this chapter seeks to outline the riots in Banbridge, Dromore, Lisburn and Newtownards, before placing them within the wider framework of similar anti-nationalist reprisals in other parts of Ireland. It will discuss the financial and communal significance of the riots before examining local and national reactions to the outbreaks. Finally, the traditional republican view that the early 1920s was characterised by a state-sponsored pogrom against northern nationalists will be assessed.

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<sup>3</sup> For the Lisburn riots, see Pearse Lawlor, *The burnings 1920* (Cork, 2009); Jonathan Bardon discusses the riots in minor detail in *A history of Ulster* (Belfast, 2005), pp 470-474.

## Cork and Lisburn: revolution and reprisal

More coercive methods were adopted by the police in response to continued I.R.A. violence throughout Ireland in early 1920. Some local R.I.C. officers encouraged the use of unofficial reprisals, particularly in Cork where much of the conflict was focused. The development of controversial police tactics, combined with the increasing determination of the I.R.A., accentuated political and communal rivalries throughout Ireland. Two events in Cork in particular played a leading role in fracturing the relative calm that persisted in north-east Ulster for the first year and a half of the Irish war of independence. At the centre of these events were R.I.C. District Inspector Oswald Swanzy and Divisional Commissioner Gerald B. Smyth.

The intensification of a cycle of violence in Cork city in the first months of 1920 eventuated in the killing of Tomás Mac Curtain, the Lord Mayor of Cork and commandant of the Cork No. 1 Brigade of the I.R.A. He was shot in his home on 20 March during a late night raid, most likely by members of the R.I.C. in response to the shooting of their colleagues by republicans, although Mac Curtain had been personally opposed to the indiscriminate targeting of policemen. A month later a coroner's inquest into Mac Curtain's death reported:

We find that the late Alderman MacCurtain, Lord Mayor of Cork, died from shock and haemorrhage caused by bullet wounds, and that he was wilfully murdered under circumstances of the most callous brutality, and that the murder was organised and carried out by the Royal Irish Constabulary, officially directed by the British Government, and we return a verdict of wilful murder against David

Lloyd George, Prime Minister of England; Lord French, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Ian McPherson [sic], late Chief Secretary of Ireland; Acting Inspector General Smith, of the Royal Irish Constabulary; Divisional Inspector Clayton of the Royal Irish Constabulary; DI Swanzy and some unknown members of the Royal Irish Constabulary.<sup>4</sup>

The naming of those indicted by virtue of their high government office – Lloyd George, Lord French and Macpherson – was unsurprising as they oversaw British policy in Ireland. However, the coroner's report was unique in that it named individual members of the R.I.C. Swanzy's role in Mac Curtain's death remains unproven as one leading member of the Cork I.R.A. subsequently admitted doubt as to his responsibility.<sup>5</sup> However, Swanzy immediately became a key target for republicans after being publicly named in MacCurtain's inquest report, leading his superiors to relocate him to another part of the country. In May he was transferred to Lisburn, a strongly unionist town on the southern border of County Antrim.

Meanwhile, the *Irish Bulletin*, a republican newspaper, claimed that on 19 June in Listowel, County Kerry, the R.I.C. Divisional Commissioner of Munster, Gerald B. Smyth, gave a speech to his officers implying that they were free to shoot anyone suspected of being in the I.R.A. He was reported to have stated: 'You may make mistakes and innocent persons may be shot but that cannot be helped and you are bound to get the right parties some time. The more you shoot, the better I will

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Hart *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), pp 78-9.



like you, and I assure you no policeman will get into trouble for shooting any man.’<sup>6</sup> Several of Smyth’s officers resigned in response to this ruthless policy. This incident subsequently became known as the ‘Listowel Mutiny’.<sup>7</sup> Smyth became a prime target for the local I.R.A., who assassinated him on 17 July in the Cork city’s County Club.<sup>8</sup>

Gerald Bryce Ferguson Smyth, born in 1885 on the outskirts of Banbridge, was a former British army officer. He was recognised as a war-hero to northern unionists after he lost an arm in the First World War. In May 1920 he was recommended by Sir Henry Tudor, police advisor in Ireland, for the role of R.I.C. divisional commissioner for Munster.<sup>9</sup> Smyth’s death was reported widely in the unionist press, alongside menacing letters warning of the threat of Sinn Féin in Ulster.<sup>10</sup> Tensions had heightened in Belfast and the counties of eastern Ulster following a speech by Sir Edward Carson on 12 July at Finaghy. In his address to Orangemen, Carson stated that if the government in London refused to provide adequate protection against the I.R.A. then ‘we [unionists] would take matters into our own hands. We will reorganise.’<sup>11</sup> Smyth’s funeral in Banbridge on 21 July coincided with the return to work of industrial workers after the ‘Twelfth’ holidays. Violence erupted in the Belfast shipyards and several towns in east Ulster. In the shipyards Catholics and Protestant socialists (colloquially known as ‘rotten Prods’) were violently expelled, while in Banbridge businesses and homes belonging to local

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in John Borgonovo and Gabriel Doherty, ‘Smoking gun? RIC reprisals, summer 1920’, in *History Ireland*, xvii, no. 2 (Mar./Apr., 2009), p. 39. Whether Smyth definitely said this was unproven, but it was widely reported that he did.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 39; Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 2002), p. 85; Francis Costello, *The Irish revolution and its aftermath 1916-1923: years of revolt* (Dublin, 2003), pp 73-4.

<sup>8</sup> Statement of Sean Culhane (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 746).

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Long, ‘Smyth, Gerald Bryce Ferguson’, in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Morgan, *Labour and partition*, p. 268.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, pp 470-1.

Catholics were attacked. Disturbances also spread to Dromore, Lisburn and Newtownards.

On 21 July the violence began in Banbridge, according to the unionist press, after local Catholic business-owners refused to comply with a council order that all shops be closed for the duration of the Smyth's funeral.<sup>12</sup> After the procession loyalists, angered by this alleged provocation, attacked and burned premises owned by Mary McMahon on Bridge Street.<sup>13</sup> The following day unrest resumed, taking the form of industrial expulsions as Catholics were expelled from their jobs in the Banbridge Weaving Company and other local workplaces. Later that day a crowd gathered outside the home of Daniel Monaghan, a republican whose son Seamus was a member of the I.R.A., on Scarva Street. Shots were fired from the Monaghan property and a fifteen year-old boy, William John Sterritt, was fatally wounded. The violence ceased when the army intervened, arresting Monaghan and his sons.<sup>14</sup> On the night of 24 July, arsonists destroyed Monaghan's home and business premises.

A day after Smyth's funeral violence erupted in nearby Dromore where Catholic-owned property was attacked. Of note was the assault on the Catholic Club and Parochial House, two prominent symbols of local Catholicism. The latter was the home of Father O'Hare who was bundled out of his house at gunpoint.<sup>15</sup> The turmoil was brought to an end that night when the R.I.C. fired warning shots into the air.<sup>16</sup> However, on Monday 26 July Protestant female mill employees refused to

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<sup>12</sup> *Dromore Leader and Newtownards Chronicle*, 24 July 1920.

<sup>13</sup> *Irish News*, 23 July 1920.

<sup>14</sup> *Newsletter*, 23 July 1920.

<sup>15</sup> *Belfast Telegraph*, 24 July 1920; *Irish News*, 26 July 1920.

<sup>16</sup> *Dromore Leader*, 31 July 1920.

work alongside Catholics.<sup>17</sup> This forced the closure of all factories in Dromore, with work resuming the following day.<sup>18</sup>

Rioting spread to Lisburn on 23 July, allegedly when youths arrived from Belfast, ‘openly boast[ing] that if Lisburn people did not do something to show their resentment of the brutal murder in Cork of Colonel Smyth, they would come and do it for them’.<sup>19</sup> A crowd formed at Market Square where they sang Dolly’s Brae – a loyalist song commemorating a nineteenth-century sectarian riot – before attacking Catholic homes and businesses. Only fourteen R.I.C. officers were on duty in the town and, although they were vastly outnumbered by rioters, the trouble trailed off.<sup>20</sup> Two further outbreaks occurred in Newtownards and Antrim on 24 July. Both were relatively low-key, ending after military and police intervention.<sup>21</sup>

The rioting that occurred in east Ulster towns was overshadowed by the violence in Belfast. The expulsion of vast numbers of Catholics from the shipyards was followed by attacks on Protestant workers on their return home after work. Communal violence subsequently intensified, resulting in sporadic outbreaks of conflict over the next two years.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, east Ulster remained relatively peaceful throughout these years, with the salient exception of the 1920 anti-Catholic riots. The July disturbances came as a shock to commentators, who stressed the calmness of towns like Lisburn until that point.<sup>23</sup>

The anti-Catholic riots of 1920 consisted of two major outbreaks. The first on 21 July was followed by short peace before more disturbances on 22 August. While

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<sup>17</sup> *Irish News*, 27 July 1920.

<sup>18</sup> *Dromore Leader*, 31 July 1920. Reports do not detail whether Catholics also resumed work.

<sup>19</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 30 July 1920. It was occasionally the case in Ulster that trouble-makers travelled to cause disorder in other areas during the revolutionary period. See Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 187.

<sup>20</sup> *Irish News*, 26 July 1920.

<sup>21</sup> *Irish News*, 26 July 1920.

<sup>22</sup> For an in-depth account of the beginning of the Belfast violence, see Parkinson, *Belfast’s unholy war*, pp 29-50.

<sup>23</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920.

this second outbreak was not connected with the Smyth riots, both episodes were triggered by violence in Cork. After District Inspector Swanzy had been transferred to Lisburn, having been publically accused of the killing of Tomás Mac Curtain, I.R.A. intelligence units set about finding him. Several accounts exist as to how the I.R.A. discovered Swanzy's location. Sean Culhane, one of Colonel Smyth's assassins, claimed that a Sinn Féin railway clerk noticed Swanzy's baggage, addressed to Lisburn, at the rail station after the latter's disappearance from Cork.<sup>24</sup> Sean Cusack, an I.R.A. organiser and intelligence officer in Antrim and east Down, alleged that he was alerted by a contact in the R.I.C. station in Lisburn.<sup>25</sup> Whatever the truth, plans were made for Swanzy's death.<sup>26</sup>

Culhane, who had been personally acquainted with Mac Curtain, sought to lead the operation. Michael Collins had been sceptical due to his age and inexperience but after questioning by Cathal Brugha, Dáil Éireann's minister of defence, Culhane was ordered to 'Go and get him.'<sup>27</sup> A joint effort saw the collaboration of Culhane's men from Cork with Belfast Volunteers. Swanzy's assassination was planned for 15 August but the attempt failed when the taxi carrying the gunmen from Belfast to Lisburn broke down due to overcrowding.<sup>28</sup> Some of the prospective assassins were ordered back to Cork, leaving a smaller squad to make a second attempt on Swanzy's life on 22 August.

Those involved were Culhane and Dick Murphy, both from Cork, along with Thomas Fox and Roger McCorley from Belfast. Another republican, Sean Leonard from Sligo, working in Belfast at the time, was delegated to taxi Culhane and Murphy to Lisburn on the morning of 22 August. Fox and McCorley, who were

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<sup>24</sup> Statement of Sean Culhane (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 746).

<sup>25</sup> Statement of Sean Cusack (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 402).

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed account of these preparations see Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, pp. 102-110.

<sup>27</sup> Statement of Sean Culhane (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 746).

<sup>28</sup> Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006), p. 32.

already in Lisburn operating as scouts, were to meet them across from Christ Church Cathedral where Swanzy would be attending a Sunday service. They were to wait there until Swanzy left. Leonard kept the taxi running on Castle Street which ran parallel to the Church and led back to Belfast.<sup>29</sup> Halfway between Lisburn and Belfast, Joe McKelvey, leader of the Belfast I.R.A., would meet the taxi at which point the gunmen would alight to make their way into the city via the countryside. Leonard would then report to police that he had been forced at gunpoint to drive a number of unknown men to Lisburn.<sup>30</sup>

In the words of one participant, 'Everything went like clockwork.'<sup>31</sup> Eyewitness accounts from assassins and churchgoers reveal few discrepancies. As Swanzy left Christ Church Cathedral at around 1 p.m. he was accompanied by two locals, Major Gerald Valentine Ewart and his father Frederick William Ewart. As they approached Railway Street, where Swanzy resided, they engaged in conversation amid the crowd of churchgoers. Culhane, Fox, McCorley and Murphy, standing on the corner of Railway Street, identified Swanzy as he passed. The group approached him from behind, pushed Major Ewart and his father aside, before Culhane fired into the back of Swanzy's skull. The others followed up with a volley of shots into Swanzy's body as he fell, dying instantly.<sup>32</sup>

By entering an overwhelming unionist town to shoot a police officer, these I.R.A. gunmen displayed considerable courage. The killing of Swanzy would be recalled as 'a classical job' by one Volunteer, reflecting its place as the most

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<sup>29</sup> See Map 8.

<sup>30</sup> Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, p. 33; statement of Sean Culhane (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 746); statement of Roger McCorley (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 389); statement of Thomas Fox (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 365). Sean Leonard was later arrested and charged with Swanzy's murder. His death sentence was later commuted to penal servitude. The other assassins evaded capture.

<sup>31</sup> Statement of Thomas Fox (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 365).

<sup>32</sup> <sup>32</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 111; statement of Sean Culhane, (N.A.I. Bureau of Military History, WS 746). Also see Major Ewart's account in *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920.

spectacular I.R.A. operation in east Ulster.<sup>33</sup> However, more conscientious republicans viewed it as dangerous given the sectarian divide in Ulster. Ernest Blythe, a Protestant republican from Lisburn, later rebuked the fondness with which other republicans recalled the Swanzy shooting, claiming that the operation was 'a deed of lunatic recklessness'. For Blythe republican violence in the north sparked sectarian divisions, making the ideal of unity more improbable.<sup>34</sup>

Such concerns were well founded. As people left church on 22 August 1920, the centre of Lisburn appeared ordinarily peaceful. The shattering of this harmony with such force sent shockwaves throughout the local community. The immediate reaction to Swanzy's killing was the attempt to apprehend the gunmen. Culhane stated that people appeared 'hostile and threatening' as he and his companions ran towards the getaway car on Castle Street.<sup>35</sup> McCorley recalled that shots were fired back at the crowd:

I halted and fired back into the mob which then cleared off. This left me a considerable way behind the others. I was then attacked by an ex-British Officer called Woods who seemed to have plenty of courage. Although I was carrying a revolver in my hand he attacked me with a blackthorn stick and by a fluke shot I shot the stick out of his hand.<sup>36</sup>

The man he referred to was Captain Alex Woods who had left the Cathedral via the side exit leading directly onto Castle Street. Woods later recalled four men running

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<sup>33</sup> Statement of Thomas McNally (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 410).

<sup>34</sup> *Irish Times*, 4 Jan. 1975. For nationalist views regarding the communal impact of I.R.A. violence in Ulster, see Chapter Six.

<sup>35</sup> Statement of Sean Culhane (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 746).

<sup>36</sup> Statement of Roger McCorley (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 389).

towards an awaiting vehicle. Given his courage in attempting to obstruct McCorley's escape, Woods was lucky to avoid injury, as was a lady whose dress was pierced by a bullet.<sup>37</sup>

Although Swanzy was an Ulsterman, born in Castleblayney, County Monaghan, in 1881, he was not a local war-hero like Smyth. Nevertheless, the audacity of Swanzy's assassination – described as 'one of the most flagrant yet' – provoked another outbreak of anti-Catholic rioting.<sup>38</sup> It began with a gathering of loyalists at Market Square, before an attack on a shop owned by Isabella Gilmore on Cross Row (at the top of Bridge Street). Gilmore's sons were believed to be members of Sinn Féin, but they could not be found at these premises. Instead, the crowd broke into the shop, taking Gilmore's furniture and burning it on the street.<sup>39</sup> A public house on Bridge Street was targeted next. The proprietor, Peter McKeever, was a Catholic who had recently returned from the United States. McKeever hid in the upper stories of the premises but was discovered and shot. A range of reactions to the shooting of McKeever swept the crowd. Some called for a doctor, while others left in shock. However, most remained as an ambulance soon arrived. One person allegedly shouted, 'Colonel Smyth did not get an ambulance, and he [McKeever] will not,' as members of the crowd pushed the ambulance back down a steep slope on Bridge Street.<sup>40</sup> McKeever was nonetheless granted medical attention which saved his life. William Shaw, Lisburn's only Sinn Féin councillor, was targeted after McKeever. He was badly beaten outside his home on Haslem's Lane (on Bow

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<sup>37</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920.

<sup>38</sup> Quote from *The Times*, 24 Aug. 1920.

<sup>39</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920; Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 116.

<sup>40</sup> *Belfast Telegraph*, 23 Aug. 1920.

Street) before being left to walk to the local infirmary. His possessions were then taken onto the street and burned.<sup>41</sup>

The destruction continued throughout the night. Attacks against Catholic-owned property focused on Bow Street, the main thoroughfare, and Chapel Lane, the residential focal point for the town's Catholics. On Monday 23 August disturbances resumed, with peace not returning until two days later.<sup>42</sup> In addition to Lisburn, violence flared in Dromore and Newtownards, but on a lesser scale.<sup>43</sup>

### The cost of reprisal

By 25 August large parts of the centre of Lisburn lay in ruins. Colonel Fred Crawford, a former U.V.F. gunrunner and future commandant of the south Belfast B Specials, visited the town shortly afterwards:

It reminded me of a French town after it had been bombarded by the Germans as I saw in France in 1916. We visited the ruins of the Priests' house on Chapel Hill; it was burned and gutted, and the furniture all destroyed... It had been stated that there are only four or five R[oman] C[atholic] families left in Lisburn; others say that this is wrong, that there are far more. Be that as it may, there certainly are practically no shops or places of business left to the R.C.s.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Irish News*, 23 Aug. 1920.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed account of the riots, see Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, pp 115-151.

<sup>43</sup> *Irish News*, 27 Aug. 1920; *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Aug. 1920.

<sup>44</sup> Crawford's diary, 11 Sept. 1920, (P.R.O.N.I., Fred Crawford papers, D640/11/1).



This description by Crawford, who had a knack for exaggeration, was confirmed by a London newspaper reporter who wrote that ‘it was not until we visited Lisburn...that we began to understand how fierce the violence had been.’<sup>45</sup> A representative of the Women’s International League visiting Lisburn made another comparison with war-stricken Europe: ‘The picture was one of absolute devastation. It reminded me of pictures I had seen of the northern district of France after the German invasion.’<sup>46</sup> No exact figure of the number of displaced persons can be ascertained. Bishop MacRory of Down and Connor estimated that 600 families were forced out, a journalist guessed that the figure was closer to 150 families, while one historian of Catholicism recorded 232 displaced families.<sup>47</sup> Whichever figure is most accurate, there can be little doubt as to the severity of the disturbances for the Catholic population, considering that it accounted for only 2,979 people in 1911.

The extent of destruction was also evident in the malicious injury claims filed after the August riots, which amounted to £806,538 for Lisburn alone.<sup>48</sup> In pursuit of a claim, riot victims faced scrutiny in court by representatives of the various responsible councils. Solicitors were successful in significantly reducing the cost to ratepayers. In doing so, they often ridiculed claimants by questioning the veracity of their claims or by suggesting that they were partly responsible for the extent of the damage. T. W. Brown K.C., representing Antrim County Council, and Judge Matheson argued that some of the Lisburn riot victims should have been more ‘prudent’ by packing their valuables and leaving the town once trouble arose. In

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<sup>45</sup> *The Times*, 5 Oct. 1920.

<sup>46</sup> Testimony of Mrs Annot Erskine Robinson in Albert Coyle (ed.), *Evidence of conditions in Ireland comprising the complete testimony, affidavits and exhibits before the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland* (Washington, 1921), pp 570-1.

<sup>47</sup> Bishop Joseph MacRory to the Committee of the Belfast Expelled Workers’ Fund, 20 Nov. 1920 (O’Fiaich Library, Joseph MacRory papers, ARCH/11/5/14); Hugh Martin, *Ireland in insurrection: an Englishman’s record of fact* (London, 1921), pp 170-1; Ambrose Macauley, *Convent of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Lisburn, 1870-1970* (Lisburn, 1977), p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 208. By 2009 standards, these claims amounted to approximately £24 million ([www.measuringworth.com](http://www.measuringworth.com)) (11 May 2011).

response, a solicitor for one claimant stated that 'an Irishman's home was his castle' and he had the right to remain there.<sup>49</sup> In some of the worst cases of destruction people were awarded only a fraction of what they felt entitled to. John Maguire, who owned property at 11, 13 and 15 Chapel Lane, received £4,165 from a claim of £20,300. Bishop Joseph MacRory of Down and Connor lodged a claim of £10,000 for the gutting of the Parochial House and the destruction of its contents. He was asked, rather sarcastically, by Brown if parts of the house had been made from gold. He was then awarded £4,500. A Catholic publican, William Connolly, claimed £35,000 for the burning of his business premises. His sister, who attended court in his absence, was ridiculed, being asked whether she knew that 'even the coal scuttles were supposed to be mahogany?' The largest claim was for £80,000 from Edward Donaghy and Sons, a major boot manufacturer and prominent employer in the town. They received just under half their claim despite the complete destruction of their factory.<sup>50</sup> The outcome of these claims was a reduction in the amount of awards by almost three-quarters to £213,488.<sup>51</sup>

The burden of payment for these claims initially fell to the local ratepayers, who organised themselves into the Ratepayers Association to advocate spreading the cost to a wider geographical area.<sup>52</sup> Other urban councils in County Antrim unsurprisingly expressed their opposition to this. In Ballymoney, in north Antrim, councillors argued that it would be wrong for the ratepayers of the entire county to pay for disturbances that occurred in Lisburn which lay on the southern border with Down. Larne Urban Council proposed that the government should foot the bill,

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<sup>49</sup> *Irish News*, 10 Dec. 1920.

<sup>50</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 11 Feb. 1921.

<sup>51</sup> *Irish News*, 28 Feb. 1921.

<sup>52</sup> Hugh Bass, *Boyd's of Castle Buildings Lisburn: a short history of an old family firm* (Lisburn, 1977), p. 29.

thereby relieving local authorities of the cost.<sup>53</sup> The Ratepayers' Association was successful in bringing the matter to court. A ruling in August 1921 stated that the riots had involved agitators from the rural areas surrounding Lisburn, therefore making ratepayers in those areas partly responsible. It was decided that one third of the cost be levied from the Lisburn Urban Council, an equal amount from the Lisburn Rural Council, the electoral divisions of Crumlin and Dundesert (Antrim Rural Council) and Ballygomartin (Belfast Rural Council), and the remainder from Hillsborough and Moira Rural Councils. The judge had agreed with representatives from councils in north Antrim and south Down that spreading the cost across the two counties would be unfair on ratepayers in Dunseverick (on the north Antrim coast) and Kilkeel (in south Down).<sup>54</sup> On appeal, representatives of Hillsborough and Moira rural councils argued that the judge had exceeded his authority by affixing the area of charge to neighbouring council districts, something he could only do if he incorporated the entire county area. This was rebuked by the Newry No. 1 District Council, with the court ruling that the area of charge could be affixed to parts of a county.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, after a prolonged legal struggle, it was decided that the government of Northern Ireland would pay the compensation bill.<sup>56</sup>

The legal challenges put forward by the Ratepayers' Association and the final decision of the government to pay for the cost of the riots not only reflected the inability of local authorities to afford such costs, but also revealed a belief that the disturbances were symptoms of a wider societal problem. The east Ulster riots were not a local issue, but were manifestations of rising tensions throughout the north-east. Many people felt British government policy in Ireland was largely to blame.

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<sup>53</sup> *Irish News*, 5 Oct. 1920.

<sup>54</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 5 Aug. 1921.

<sup>55</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Jan. 1922; *Dromore Leader*, 11 Feb. 1922.

<sup>56</sup> Lawlor, *The burning 1920*, p. 212.

Lisburn urban councillors were 'convinced that His Majesty's Government is mainly responsible for the extensive damage done'.<sup>57</sup> Outbursts against the nationalist community were not only occurring in east Ulster, but also in southern Ireland where there were several attacks on private property. The latter reprisals were different in that the perpetrators were members of the security forces.

Placing the Lisburn riots in the context of other major reprisals in Ireland illustrates the scale of the outbreak. A military reprisal in Mallow, County Cork, on 28 September 1920 cost approximately £300,000, half of which was claimed by the owners of a large factory that was destroyed.<sup>58</sup> This was a much larger reprisal than in Lisburn, not only in actual cost, but also in proportion to population size. Mallow had 4,500 inhabitants, just exceeding a quarter of Lisburn's population, meaning there was £66 and £17 of damage to every inhabitant in these towns respectively. However, in comparison to other reprisals, Lisburn ranks as one of the most significant in Ireland. In Balbriggan, County Dublin, there was £19 of damage for each inhabitant, while in Bandon and Fermoy, both in County Cork, the figures were £16 and £2 respectively.<sup>59</sup>

### Reactions to riots

Although the August riots in Lisburn reflected a fear that Swanzy's killers were local inhabitants or aided by local nationalists, observers had no way of knowing for sure. There nevertheless developed an opinion that all victims of the riots were supporters

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<sup>57</sup> Minutes of the Lisburn urban council, 6 June 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LS/48/2/CA/4).

<sup>58</sup> James S. Donnelly, "'Unofficial' British reprisals and I.R.A. provocations, 1919-20: the cases of three Cork towns', in *Fire-Ireland*, xlv, no. 1&2 (spring/summer, 2010), p. 185.

<sup>59</sup> Figures calculated from Donnelly, "'Unofficial' British reprisals', pp 171, 185 and 192; David Fitzpatrick, 'The price of Balbriggan', in idem (ed.), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012), p. 79.

of Sinn Féin. With regards to the violence in both Belfast and Lisburn, Fred Crawford commented in his private diary that 'the victims are rebels or their sympathisers.'<sup>60</sup> In his view, the Catholic Church had given its blessing to the republican movement after Cardinal Logue arbitrated in the 1918 electoral pact between Sinn Féin and the Irish Parliamentary Party.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, and more worryingly for northern nationalists, the future minister of home affairs for Northern Ireland, Richard Dawson Bates, expressed his view that Banbridge Catholics expelled from their workplaces in July 1920 were part of 'the Sinn Féin movement'. He continued to state that the refusal of Protestants to work alongside republicans 'meets with practically the approval of everybody here.'<sup>62</sup> Latent in such remarks was a belief that republicans were fair game – that supporters of Sinn Féin were legitimate targets for violence. Similarly Unionist members of parliament defended the outbreak of violence in Belfast's shipyards, portraying the actions of loyalist workers as self-defence. Joseph Devlin, leader of northern constitutional nationalists, asserted that Sinn Féin's supporters had a right to protection from physical attack.<sup>63</sup> The view of some Unionists that all Catholic victims were supporters of Sinn Féin therefore negated criticism of the militancy of some of their community.

By contrast, local political figures were faced with the unambiguous complexity of the situation in east Ulster. The Lisburn Urban Council, confronted with the most widespread riots in the town's history, was forced to act. Similarly, the councils of other towns experiencing disturbances could not remain idle. The first response to the riots came from the police, occasionally followed by the intervention of the military. However, as will be shown, the security forces and local authorities

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<sup>60</sup> Fred Crawford, diary entry, 26 Aug. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Crawford papers, D640/11/1).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Richard Dawson Bates to James Craig, 28 July 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/70/3).

<sup>63</sup> *Irish News*, 23 July 1920.

faced a difficult situation in which their options were limited. In the aftermath of rioting, magistrates and councils also trod a fine line to avoid further outbreaks.

The R.I.C. struggled to contain the rioting that flared in the summer of 1920. The worst outbreak occurred in Lisburn in August, yet the police were also unable to control the comparatively minor disturbances in July. In the aftermath of Col. Gerald Smyth's funeral in Banbridge, the military was forced to intervene to assist the overwhelmed local R.I.C. Soon afterwards, a civil guard was established by the urban council to help maintain order.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in Dromore the military was required to restore order in July. On this occasion the R.I.C. had restored a temporary peace by firing into the air when Catholic-owned property was under attack. However, a ricochet bullet accidentally killed a Protestant man named Wilfred Mitchell, leading to animosity towards the R.I.C. in the town. On the following day, a meeting of local citizens was held at which two businessmen, T. Ferris and J. Dickson, expressed their belief that the R.I.C. would not have left their barracks had the Protestant cathedral been attacked. Many local unionists remained hostile to the police, protesting outside the barracks, preventing officers from operating in the town during the following week. In their absence, the army and civilians formed patrols.<sup>65</sup> A similar civilian scheme was established in Bangor where police required military assistance after a brief outbreak of violence on 23 July. Pickets of unarmed men wearing white armbands assisted the police in the maintenance of order.<sup>66</sup> In Lisburn the R.I.C. response to rioting in July was criticised 'by people who were not in a position either to see or judge'. However, District Inspector Swanzy praised his men's efforts. Police had repeatedly baton charged rioters when they gathered in large crowds and made six arrests. Furthermore, Lisburn did not receive military

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<sup>64</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 24 July 1920.

<sup>65</sup> *Dromore Leader*, 31 July 1920.

<sup>66</sup> *Irish News*, 26 July 1920.

assistance, despite lodging three requests. After the return of peace, local citizens arranged a meeting at which they revived the local U.V.F. in order to provide assistance to the police.<sup>67</sup>

In August a similar pattern emerged in Dromore, where a peace patrol was established to maintain order after a three-day riot.<sup>68</sup> In Lisburn the police were immediately overwhelmed after Swanzy's death, necessitating military intervention. A battalion from the Somerset Light Infantry, under the command of Brigadier-General Hackett Pain, arrived on the first evening of violence. Despite this, the riots continued unabated.<sup>69</sup> Military guards were posted at vulnerable points, such as prominent Catholic buildings. Among these were St Joseph's Church on Chapel Hill and the Sacred Heart of Mary convent on Castle Street. The latter, home to the town's nuns, had come under attack during the violence, forcing its residents to flee.<sup>70</sup>

The Lisburn Urban Council's initial response to the riots was to call out the U.V.F. to restore order. However, members of this recently revived force proved unresponsive, with some allegedly involved in the destruction of property.<sup>71</sup> The council then issued a proclamation on 23 August that councillors would form patrols in an attempt to enlist the aid of 'respectable citizens' to restore order. In this regard they largely failed, with minor assistance limited to aiding the fire brigade. The council also cut off the town's gas supply until peace prevailed.<sup>72</sup> On 28 August the council met to initiate the enrolment of a body of special constables that could more

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<sup>67</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 30 July 1920.

<sup>68</sup> *Irish News*, 24 and 27 Aug. 1920.

<sup>69</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 23 Aug. 1920.

<sup>70</sup> *Belfast Newsletter* and *Irish News*, 25 Aug. 1920.

<sup>71</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 116-17, 120.

<sup>72</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920.

effectively maintain order in the town by assisting the police.<sup>73</sup> These special constables, enlisted under the Special Constables Act of 1832 and drawn from the 'more respectable' and 'responsible' sections of the community, were placed under the charge of a recently retired R.I.C. county inspector, Robert Morrison. Given firearms, they were expected to form small patrols under the command of a serving R.I.C. officer. After complaints from 'the rougher element', aroused by the exclusion of 'the "rank-and-file" of Orangeism' from the special constabulary scheme, a further 300 were enlisted. However, the seeds of resentment were sown as recruits from this second batch were not permitted to carry arms.<sup>74</sup> In an assessment of the Lisburn Urban Council's response to the riots, the enrolment of special constables was greeted by the nationalist press as 'the only visible token of authoritative activity', apart from a tepid proclamation insisting that civilians return home by 8 p.m.<sup>75</sup>

In terms of effectiveness, the recruitment of special constables appeared to vindicate the council's judgement. On 28 September, trouble was averted after a market-day incident in which a Catholic woman vituperatively called two Protestant women 'Carson's pigs'. The situation soon intensified with a crowd gathering in Market Square before special constables hastened to disperse the assembly with a baton charge. The following day another attempt was made to gather in the centre of Lisburn, but special constables were equally effective in quashing the disturbance.<sup>76</sup> The efforts of this force were noted by the R.I.C. county inspector who, immediately

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<sup>73</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 157.

<sup>74</sup> *Irish News*, 16 Oct. 1920.

<sup>75</sup> *Irish News*, 15 Sept. 1920.

<sup>76</sup> *The Times*, 30 Sept. 1920; *Lisburn Standard*, 1 Oct. 1920.



after its enrolment, reported that it 'rendered valuable assistance in protecting property.'<sup>77</sup>

Aside from the special constables enrolled in Lisburn, the responses of the various local authorities were deemed inadequate by the nationalist press. It was reported that for many weeks after rioting had ceased Catholics continued to suffer various forms of intimidation, ranging from threats of violence to economic boycott.<sup>78</sup> Criticism was primarily aimed at the Lisburn Urban Council, as the largest disturbance had taken place in that town. The council's unionist chairman, Dr George St. George, vociferously rebuked any criticism, instead placing the blame for the riots' longevity at the door of the local magistrates. Thomas Sinclair, a Dominion Home Rule councillor in Lisburn, had written a letter to Brigadier-General Sir Hackett Pain on 24 August to protest against the limiting of the role of the military to the protection of the chapel and convent. He accused the military authorities of facilitating the continuance of the violence by refusing to directly challenge rioters. A council resolution, however, sought to shift the blame to the magistracy: 'That we the members of the Lisburn Urban Council condemn in the strongest possible way the apathetic manner in which the Magistrates acted in the crisis through which we have passed, whereby such serious destruction to property was wrought.'<sup>79</sup>

It has been argued by a local historian that antipathy to the Catholic community was at the root of the unwillingness of the Lisburn Urban Council, police and army to resist the July and August violence, and that the army's decision to send Hackett Pain, former chief of staff of the pre-war U.V.F., to Lisburn presented 'perhaps the worst scenario' for Catholics.<sup>80</sup> There can be little doubt that his role in

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<sup>77</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Aug. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/112).

<sup>78</sup> *Irish News*, 21 Aug. and 15 Sept. 1920.

<sup>79</sup> *Irish News*, 6 Oct. 1920.

<sup>80</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 120.

the military leadership in Belfast and east Ulster was of concern to nationalists. T. P. O'Connor, parliamentary nationalist M.P. for Liverpool, raised this issue in the House of Commons in July.<sup>81</sup> As a result it has been asserted that the military harboured 'a certain unwillingness' to quell the riots.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Pearse Lawlor claimed that Dr St George 'did not condemn the violence that had taken place but merely thought it had been taken too far', as he was 'prepared to tolerate an acceptable level of violence against the Catholic citizens of the town.'<sup>83</sup>

The context in which the east Ulster riots occurred, however, made a more direct confrontation with rioters unfeasible. The response of the police to rioting was determined more by inadequate manpower than antipathy to Catholics. In Lisburn, after the shooting of District Inspector Swanzy, there were reportedly only seven R.I.C. officers in the town.<sup>84</sup> Regardless of Hackett Pain's political sentiments, the military also had limited scope for manoeuvre. Only a small contingent of troops was sent to Lisburn, making the protection of conspicuously Catholic buildings a logical, more practicable tactic. Major Harrison of the Somerset Light Infantry ordered that all citizens observe an 8 p.m. curfew, reflecting the military's attempts to avoid a direct confrontation with rioters that would further inflame the situation in Lisburn.<sup>85</sup> On the rare occasion that they did take direct action against rioters, they were often faced with a threatening situation. For instance, a military raid on a house led to the arrest of a man who was subsequently transferred to Smithfield police

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<sup>81</sup> *Irish News*, 27 July 1920.

<sup>82</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 208.

<sup>83</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 160.

<sup>84</sup> Bass, *Boyd's of Castle Buildings Lisburn*, p. 28.

<sup>85</sup> Tactics designed to avoid direct confrontations are often adopted in riot control situations: Anthony Deane-Drummond, *Riot control* (London, 1975), pp 113-14.

barracks. A mob then threatened to burn the barracks, forcing the police to release the prisoner.<sup>86</sup>

Loyalist rioters understood the power and effectiveness of collective action. Operating in large numbers, they could overwhelm the police and military, leaving the security forces with two unfavourable choices: shoot at rioters, an option that would risk an escalation in loyalist violence and alienate large sections of the Protestant community, or allow the disturbances to run their course. In Dromore the use of force, which led to the death of Wilfred Mitchell and widespread animosity to the police in July, illustrated the dangers of such a course of action. Similarly, District Inspector Swanzy had recognised the danger of aggravating loyalist opinion in July 1920 when he recommended that six men arrested during the disturbances be released on condition that sureties were provided. For Swanzy, such a course of action would lessen communal discord.<sup>87</sup> It was therefore, arguably, in the best interests of the security forces to avoid accentuating tensions.

Accusations of partisanship have been levelled at the Lisburn Urban Council for its part in the enrolment of special constables in August. Criticism centres on an incident known as the 'Lisburn Mutiny'. On 14 October 1920, five special constables were convicted of looting charges dating back to the August riots. They were each sentenced to three months with hard labour, although bail was granted when one solicitor of the defendants made clear his intention to appeal the sentencing. On hearing of these convictions, 300 special constables, all from the second group of recruits (who remained aggrieved at being denied the right to bear arms), tendered their resignation in the town's Assembly Rooms and threatened to

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<sup>86</sup> *Irish News*, 25 Aug. 1920.

<sup>87</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 6 Aug. 1920.

join a loyalist crowd that had formed outside in Market Square.<sup>88</sup> Former County Inspector Morrison, the commander of the force, reasoned with the mutineers by promising to use his political influence to halt the prosecutions of a further thirty special constables on similar charges. By this course of action he managed to prevent an immediate outbreak.<sup>89</sup>

Sir Ernest Clark, appointed assistant under-secretary in Belfast with responsibility for the establishment of an administrative framework for a six-county state, was received by a deputation of Lisburn councillors on 22 October. At this meeting it was made clear to Clark that Lisburn had been peaceful until the July and August riots that were provoked by I.R.A. violence. Clark noted that many looters, who were normally of high moral character, acted spontaneously. He therefore concluded that the return of peace should not be disrupted. This was particularly pertinent 'at a time like the present' when 'far more harm would be done by the conviction of one person on evidence, the impartiality of which is admitted by everyone than the escape of 10 persons who deserved conviction.'<sup>90</sup> He therefore recommended to his superior in Dublin Castle, Under-Secretary Sir John Anderson, a course of 'abstention from any further prosecutions'. He felt that 'a serious position might arise in Lisburn and might extend to other parts of the Province if the outstanding proceedings against the thirty men were definitely taken.'<sup>91</sup>

It has been asserted that, by recommending that the additional thirty charges for riotous behaviour be dropped, the Lisburn Urban Council 'had been successful in their demand that no Protestant or Orangeman suffer from the sectarian attack on

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<sup>88</sup> *Irish News*, 16 Oct. 1920.

<sup>89</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, pp 167-8.

<sup>90</sup> Ernest Clark memo, 22 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/6).

<sup>91</sup> Ernest Clark to John Anderson, 25 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/12).

their Catholic neighbours in the town of Lisburn.<sup>92</sup> However, it is more plausible that the council abhorred the violence, preferring to avoid further disorder by following a course of action temporarily suited to the tense communal atmosphere that existed in east Ulster in the summer of the 1920. There is evidence that Dr George St. George, although a unionist, was not antipathetic to the local Catholic population. After a sectarian desecration of a Catholic cemetery in Lisburn, he established a fund to repair the damage, offering his services as treasurer and contributing money from his personal account.<sup>93</sup> Further, the council had offered sincere condolences in early August 1920 on the death of Father Mark McCashin, parish priest of Lisburn for thirty years.<sup>94</sup> In reality, Dr St. George was motivated by the same factors that largely shaped the Ulster Unionist party's policies on militant loyalism. In September 1920 James Craig urged the British government to introduce a special constabulary scheme partly to restrain his party's more extreme followers.<sup>95</sup>

The appeasement of the Lisburn mutineers, the unwillingness of the soldiers and police to take more forceful action against rioters and the Unionist party's passionate promotion of the special constabulary may appear as overtly sectarian when viewed in isolation. However, placed in the context of the republican threat to British authority in Ireland which intensified unionist fears, these policies appear more pragmatic. It was under similar conditions that the government's general amnesty to republican prisoners was aimed at easing the conflict in Ireland. It was thus that the normal administration of government and dispensation of justice were adversely affected in 1920.

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<sup>92</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 175.

<sup>93</sup> Minutes of the Lisburn urban council, 4 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LS/48/2/CA/4).

<sup>94</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 6 Aug. 1920.

<sup>95</sup> See Chapter One.

The cause of riots: spontaneous outbursts, plebeian machinations, or 'state pogrom'?

According to nationalist tradition, the east Ulster riots, along with the Belfast shipyard expulsions and communal violence that raged between July 1920 and late 1922, were part of a unionist 'pogrom' directed against the nationalist population of north-east Ulster. One I.R.A. Volunteer asserted that this pogrom 'was aggravated' by the assassination of District Inspector Swanzy, while another Volunteer claimed that 'the pogrom was pursued with increased activity' after the operation.<sup>96</sup> Republicans, however, felt that anti-Catholic violence in Belfast, Lisburn and other parts of east Ulster was inevitable, with I.R.A. activity being used as an excuse by loyalists for implementing the pogrom. Roger McCorley, a prominent member of the Belfast I.R.A. who spearheaded the shooting of Swanzy, explained the situation as follows:

There was some difficulty about the timing of this [order to kill D.I. Swanzy] as our Intelligence Department in Belfast were aware that a pogrom was being organised in the Belfast area and that the Orange Lodges were just waiting an excuse to launch the attack on the nationalist areas. Our Brigade had asked G.H.Q. to let the matter wait for a few weeks until the pogrom had actually started. When the pogrom began in July the way was clear to carry out the operations as ordered.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Statements of Thomas McNally and Thomas Fox (N.A.I. Bureau of Military History, WS 410 and WS 365).

<sup>97</sup> Statement of Roger McCorley (N.A.I. Bureau of Military History, WS 389).

It may, however, be likely that these I.R.A. Volunteers were eager to retrospectively shift blame for the anti-Catholic riots onto loyalists by depicting the outbreaks as inevitable rather than provoked by Smyth or Swanzy's assassinations. Nevertheless, constitutional nationalists were equally adamant that a pogrom had been initiated in July 1920 which worsened over the course of the summer. Joseph Devlin protested to the House of Commons that the nationalist minority of the north-east was vulnerable and in need of protection. Despite this he found a growing hostility to nationalist Ireland.<sup>98</sup> Devlin accused the Unionist leadership and government of contrivance in the expulsions, referring directly to Edward Carson's 12 July speech nine days before the outbreak of extensive communal violence.<sup>99</sup> This is often interpreted as a rallying cry to take action against nationalists in general.<sup>100</sup> Other evidence includes the party's support for the special constabulary and James Craig's declaration to shipyard workers that he approved 'of the action you boys have taken in the past'.<sup>101</sup> With the most conspicuous action of shipyard workers being the mass expulsion of Catholic and socialist employees, there can be little doubt that the soon-to-be leader of Ulster unionism and first prime minister of Northern Ireland openly condoned sectarian violence.

Before discussing whether a 'pogrom' was initiated against the nationalist community of east Ulster, a definition of the term must first be established. Associated with anti-Semitic riots in late nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia, pogroms were more loosely associated with inter-ethnic violence in the twentieth-century Soviet Union. Meanwhile, in the West the term retained its anti-Semitic connotations along with assumptions of government involvement. However, the association

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<sup>98</sup> Eamon Phoenix, *Northern nationalism: nationalist politics, partition and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994), pp 88-9.

<sup>99</sup> *Irish News*, 27 July 1920.

<sup>100</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 91.

<sup>101</sup> Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (London, 1938), p. 402; *Irish News*, 15 Oct. 1920.

between anti-Semitic riots and government organisation or involvement in favour of the offensive group, has largely been the result of historical error. Very little government organisation has been proven in attacks on the Jewish community in Russia which were largely spontaneous and unorganised ethnic riots. While some political scientists maintain a definition that stressed a degree of governmental organisation, others prioritise the relative positions of power between the conflicting groups.<sup>102</sup> Thus, Werner Bergmann defined a pogrom as 'a unilateral, nongovernmental form of collective violence initiated by the majority population against a largely defenceless ethnic group, and occurring when the majority expect the state to provide them with no assistance in overcoming a (perceived) threat from the minority.' While pogroms can be 'stage managed' by the state, this is not a necessary characteristic.<sup>103</sup> By this definition, therefore, the riots in east Ulster constituted a pogrom.<sup>104</sup> However, the application of the term by nationalists to describe the violence directed against their community more probably involved a definition which included pre-planned state or political leadership in accordance with contemporary understanding of the term.<sup>105</sup>

Taking pogrom to infer a link between rioters and political leaders, it must be argued that the east Ulster violence was spontaneous and plebeian. There is no documentary evidence directly linking Craig and his party colleagues to a planned pogrom.<sup>106</sup> To begin, Carson's 12 July speech made reference to the reorganisation of the U.V.F. which he hoped could offer protection that the police and military appeared unable to provide. Furthermore, it was not the first speech he made in

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<sup>102</sup> Werner Bergmann, 'Pogroms', in Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan (eds), *International handbook of violence research: volume 1* (Dordrecht, 2003), pp 351-2.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, pp 353-4. Parenthesis is in original source.

<sup>104</sup> This would not have been the case in Belfast where violence was reciprocal.

<sup>105</sup> Phoenix, p. 89; *Irish News*, 27 July 1920.

<sup>106</sup> McDermott, *Northern divisions*, p. 33.



which he insisted on the revival of the U.V.F.<sup>107</sup> By July 1920, however, loyalists had become more anxious at the threat of the I.R.A. and loss of some unionist-controlled councils to nationalists, making the speech more inflammatory by virtue of the political context in which it was given, rather than its content.

The immediate reaction of prominent Unionists to the shipyard expulsions was one of mild surprise. Had a pogrom been planned, Richard Dawson Bates would not have had to inform James Craig who was in England at the time of the outbreak: 'I regret to say I have just heard disturbances have broken out in the Shipyards, and are still proceeding.'<sup>108</sup> Although Bates went on to defend the expulsions, there is no indication he had prior knowledge of them. In general, the historical consensus supports this assertion. Henry Patterson demonstrated that middle-class control over working-class loyalists was fragile, thus inhibiting the implementation of a top-down plan.<sup>109</sup> Charles Townshend has commented that the shipyard expulsions, while politically motivated, were not planned or controlled by the Unionist party.<sup>110</sup> Robert Lynch agrees that 'there was no real organised plan'.<sup>111</sup> However, most historians focus on events in Belfast, where Lynch emphasised the reciprocal nature of the conflict at the expense of a planned pogrom by pointing out that most Catholic fatalities were men aged between 20 and 50 who died during bouts of rioting.<sup>112</sup> Nationalists, however, did not define the pogrom by number of deaths. Rather, they placed much significance on forced residential migration and expulsions from workplaces, such as that which occurred in some east Ulster towns. For instance, the

<sup>107</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 5 Sept. 1919.

<sup>108</sup> Richard Dawson Bates to James Craig, 21 July 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/70/3).

<sup>109</sup> Henry Patterson, *Class conflict and sectarianism: the Protestant working class and the Belfast labour movement 1868-1920* (Belfast, 1980), pp 132-42.

<sup>110</sup> Charles Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland since 1848* (Oxford, 1983), pp 342-3.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Lynch, 'The people's protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom," 1920-1922', in *Journal of British Studies*, xlvii, no. 2 (Apr. 2008), p. 378.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

Lisburn riots led a 26 per cent decrease in the local Catholic population between 1911 and 1926.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a similar lack of evidence that the east Ulster riots, particularly the largest outbreak in Lisburn, were planned. Police Commissioner for Belfast, J. F. Gelston, felt that the funeral of Col. Smyth was the cause of widespread violence in the north-east on 21 July.<sup>114</sup> While local historian, Pearse Lawlor, agrees that the July riots occurred 'as feelings ran high following the massive turnout for Colonel Smyth's funeral', he argued that Swanzy's murder 'provided the rationale for the U.V.F. in the town to implement a plan to drive the Catholic population out of Lisburn.'<sup>115</sup> His argument rested on the fact that when Col. Smyth's brother, Osbert, was killed in October 1920, there were no calls for reprisals. However, a similar point could be made about the Swanzy riots. For in August 1921, A Special George Graham, a resident of Lisburn and war veteran, died from wounds inflicted during an I.R.A. ambush in Newry on 26 April that year. His funeral in Lisburn was not too dissimilar from Col. Smyth's the previous year in Banbridge, being attended by military, police and prominent local figures.<sup>116</sup> However, there were no disturbances.

In reality, it is unlikely that the east Ulster riots were planned. In July it was mainly local inhabitants who initiated disturbances in Banbridge, Dromore and Newtownards, while residents of Belfast had been identified as the ringleaders in Lisburn and the attempted riot in Bangor.<sup>117</sup> That disturbances in two towns had to

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<sup>113</sup> For a contrast with other towns, see Appendix A.

<sup>114</sup> A. C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin 1871-1934* (Oxford, 2008), p. 216.

<sup>115</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 153.

<sup>116</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 5 Aug. 1921.

<sup>117</sup> *Irish News*, 28 July 1920; *Lisburn Standard*, 30 July 1920.

be provoked by visitors would suggest that no systematic plan was in place. The August riots were initiated by local agitators who were acting on an ad hoc basis.<sup>118</sup>

Unfortunately, there is little available information about those involved in the riots. Few people were arrested while the press was mainly concerned with victims rather than perpetrators. Yet more can be inferred from theories on crowd psychology. For instance, it is known that people converge at the scene of a riot for various reasons, with ringleaders, violent followers, looters and bystanders all being attracted. Participants with peaceful intentions may also attend.<sup>119</sup> Not all participants riot and some of those who do may not do so continuously. In short, crowds are 'kaleidoscopes of individual and collective, non-violent and violent, alternating and varied actions.'<sup>120</sup> A precipitating factor normally attracts people onto the streets, where prominent individuals – known as keynoters – narrow the focus of the crowd by advocating unambiguous and forceful action. This series of events can be identified in what occurred in Lisburn. The shooting of District Inspector Swanzy drew people together before individual ringleaders took the initiative to incite violence. In July 1920 youths from Belfast played the role of keynoters by stoking the passions of locals. In August men like John Wylie and Henry Drysdale were identified as leading figures in riots in Lisburn and Newtownards respectively.<sup>121</sup> When such figures succeed in airing their proposals for direct action 'the illusion of unanimity grows and the illusion becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.'<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Glenn Patterson, *Once upon a hill* (London, 2008), p. 142; *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Aug. 1920.

<sup>119</sup> Clark McPhail, 'The dark side of purpose: individual and collective violence in riots', *The Sociological Quarterly*, xxxv, no. 1 (Feb. 1994), p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>121</sup> Patterson, *Once upon a hill*, p. 142; *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Aug. 1920.

<sup>122</sup> Stephen Reicher, 'The psychology of crowd dynamics', in M. A. Hogg and R. S. Tindale (eds), *Group processes* (Oxford, 2001), p. 193.

Thus, crowds are not homogenous in thought or expression.<sup>123</sup> For example, Swanzy noted that while large crowds had gathered on the streets of Lisburn during the July riots only a small number attacked property.<sup>124</sup> Loyalist rioters in east Ulster expressed favour for different forms of action, ranging from looting, attacking individuals (with and without firearms) and observing. While men, women and children looted business premises in Lisburn, women protested against the employment of Catholics in Dromore. Attitudes also varied. After the shooting of a publican in Lisburn on 22 August many involved in the disturbances reconsidered their involvement after such potentially fatal violence.<sup>125</sup> It is also notable that the only two people killed (apart from an unidentified body burnt in Lisburn) were innocent bystanders who happened to be part of the crowd. These were William John Sterritt and Wilfred Mitchell, who were reportedly talking to female friends and observing events when they were shot.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, there was no homogenous 'mob', but rather a group of individuals with various reasons for being present during the riots. Many took the opportunity of the anonymity offered by a collapse in law and order to loot and perhaps even to settle personal conflicts. Such disparate motivations were a feature of nineteenth-century rioting in Belfast, with modern research into crowds and riots confirming their continuing importance.<sup>127</sup> In short, participants in the east Ulster riots more likely acted on an ad hoc basis rather than according to a plan concocted by political leaders.

Many of the rioters may have simply reacted to the heightened excitement of the situation rather than any deeply held bigotry. When testifying against William

<sup>123</sup> Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective behaviour* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New Jersey, 1987), p. 26.

<sup>124</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 6 Aug. 1920.

<sup>125</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920.

<sup>126</sup> *Newsletter*, 26 July 1920; *Belfast Telegraph*, 24 July 1920. A full inquest into Mitchell's death was reported in *Belfast Telegraph*, 31 July 1920.

<sup>127</sup> Doyle, Mark, *Fighting like the devil for the sake of God: Protestants, Catholics and the origins of violence in Victorian Belfast* (Manchester, 2009), p. 97; McPhail, 'The dark side of purpose', pp 6-12.

Gilmore, a Protestant charged with rioting after Swanzy's death, R.I.C. Sergeant Robert Edgar recalled how over his sixteen years in Lisburn he had known Gilmore as 'ordinarily a quiet, hard-working man'. Gilmore had acted in an unusually hostile manner on 23 August, as he was 'mad with drink'.<sup>128</sup> Having had no previous encounters with the law it seems striking that Gilmore should find himself at the centre of a riot. Gilmore was, however, not unique in this respect. Of the twelve people arrested during the July riots in Lisburn many were first time offenders and at least seven were drunk.<sup>129</sup> The importance of the role of alcohol consumption should not be underestimated. The local R.I.C. believed it inflamed the situation, directly leading to further destruction of property.<sup>130</sup> Samuel Chapman, for example, was described by police as being 'completely smashed' when arrested.<sup>131</sup> Reports claimed that many rioters, including youths, were drunk.<sup>132</sup>

Gilmore's transformation into a destructive loyalist rioter willing to throw a petrol tin at a window as a crowd set upon a Catholic man's house can be understood within a structural explanation of rioting. Crowds give rise to group influences that allows for a vociferous and violent expression of a social identity despite opposition from out-groups such as the police, the military, Catholics and moderate Protestants. The ascent of group influence is facilitated by deindividuation of crowd members. This process involves crowd members gaining anonymity in respect to out-group members, making them more readily acquiescent in criminal or abnormal acts.<sup>133</sup> Deindividuation, however, does not lead to a loss of identity or a reversion to

<sup>128</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 18 Mar. 1921.

<sup>129</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 30 July and 6 Aug. 1920. At least four men were first offenders, but it is likely there were many more. This claim is based on the limited information in the press regarding the petty session proceedings.

<sup>130</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Aug. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/112).

<sup>131</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 30 July 1920.

<sup>132</sup> *Irish News*, 24 and 25 Aug. 1920.

<sup>133</sup> Reicher, 'The psychology of crowd dynamics', p. 197; Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: understanding how good people turn evil* (New York, 2007), pp 8-12.

primitive instincts, but is part of the process by which crowd members place greater emphasis on a social identity that binds them to fellow crowd members. Thus, being part of a crowd 'does not entail a loss of identity but a shift to the relevant social identity.'<sup>134</sup> Subscription to a social identity brought with it a clear set of limits on crowd actions. Only certain groups were attacked – Catholics – and targets were clear – property.<sup>135</sup> The lack of personal attacks reflects the rejection of such actions. In essence inflicting harm on individuals and murder were not part of the normative behaviour of the crowd in east Ulster. This structural framework lent a great deal of rationality to the riots.

However, while the Unionist leaders were not involved in directing the violence, they were not necessarily adverse to it and did little to prevent it. There was minimal condemnation of sectarian disturbances in 1920, as Unionist politicians sought to excuse the actions of a number of their followers. The acquiescence of Unionist leaders in loyalist violence served to ensure the ascendancy of sectarian divisions in the working-class of north-east Ulster at the expense of the emerging labour movement.<sup>136</sup>

## Conclusion

While the violence that developed in east Ulster in 1920 reflected the local sectarian divisions this chapter has sought to emphasise its relationship to the wider national revolutionary context. That both the Smyth and Swanzy riots had their origins in events occurring in Cork, illustrates the links between southern and northern violence. Between 1920 and 1922 the dynamics of violence in Ulster became

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<sup>134</sup> Reicher, 'The psychology of crowd dynamics', p. 195.

<sup>135</sup> Although Protestants did suffer a loss of property it is doubtful they were deliberate targets.

<sup>136</sup> See Chapter One.

increasingly reciprocal, drawing in the I.R.A., the special constabulary and Catholic and Protestant civilians, but it began as part of a conflict between the I.R.A. and R.I.C. in the south.<sup>137</sup>

The immediate effects of the killings of Col. Smyth and District Inspector Swanzy have been outlined, but there were other more enduring effects. The most salient of these was the impact on communal relations, characterised by a widening gulf between Protestant unionists and Catholic nationalists. The revival of sectarian violence in Ulster was a direct consequence of the I.R.A.'s campaign in the south. The fear of some republican figures that I.R.A. violence would incite sectarian bitterness in Ulster was confirmed. The Unionist party benefitted greatly, insofar as communal violence halted the rise of labour in Ulster, reinforcing sectarian political alignments for the foreseeable future.

Coming only a year before the establishment of Northern Ireland, the east Ulster riots demonstrated the power of collective action by militant loyalists. It provided an early example of how the Unionist party would prioritise internal unity at the expense of social justice and communal solidarity with nationalists. Similarly, the security forces were often unable to take direct action against loyalists. As the following chapter will demonstrate, loyalist violence was representational, in that it was carried out in the name of the wider unionist community and summoned a degree of communal approval. As a result, taking firm action against loyalist rioters could inflame the security situation further by alienating much of the unionist community.

Consequently, the response of the army, police and local authorities acknowledged the wider difficulties in maintaining law and order. It is unlikely that

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<sup>137</sup> Sectarian violence in Ulster was labelled 'reciprocal' by Frank Wright in *Two lands on one soil: Ulster politics before Home Rule* (Dublin, 1996), pp 2-3.

there was much support from these quarters for the widespread anti-Catholic riots, and there exists no evidence to suggest they were organised by political leaders. In reality, the east Ulster disturbances were organic, fitting into a tradition of sectarian rioting in the region that both long predated and would survive the birth of Northern Ireland.



## Chapter Three

### Loyalist violence and the unionist community

#### Introduction

Between July 1920 and July 1922 it has been estimated that 557 people were killed and many thousands displaced as a result of sectarian conflict in the six counties that became Northern Ireland, with almost three quarters of the violence occurring in Belfast.<sup>1</sup> As a result, investigation of northern violence during the Irish revolution has been focused on communal violence in Belfast and the actions of the I.R.A.<sup>2</sup> This has led to a much greater understanding of the forces of republicanism than of the forces of unionism. For Peter Hart the need for historical inquiry into loyalist activities presented 'a vital but unenviable task for some future researcher.'<sup>3</sup> Through a comparative study of violence in Ulster and Upper Silesia, Timothy Wilson has shed light on many aspects of the relationship between loyalist and republican violence. For instance, violence in both regions was strongly shaped by indicators of identity, which in Ulster was religion. In Upper Silesia national and ethnic identity was determined by a more ambiguous and fluid indicator, that of language. Thus, in Ulster boundaries were much more clearly defined, with a lower level of violence

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster* (Belfast, 2005), p. 494; Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> Alan F. Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war: the troubles of the 1920s* (Dublin, 2004); Robert Lynch, *The Northern I.R.A. and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hart, 'Definition: Defining the Irish Revolution', in Joost Augusteijn (ed.) *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 25; Timothy Bowman's *Carson's Army: the Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22* (Manchester, 2007) focuses on the U.V.F. during the period of the Home Rule crisis and First World War.

required to maintain it. By contrast, the boundaries of identity were less obvious in Upper Silesia, necessitating greater violence to establish clear boundaries.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter seeks to add to Wilson's research investigating the relationship between the general unionist community and loyalist violence in east Ulster. It will examine the factors shaping loyalist violence, including the riots of 1920, while also investigating its role as a form of political expression within the wider Protestant community. Ultimately, this chapter aims to enhance the understanding of loyalist violence in the period of revolution, by engaging with theories of communal deterrence and communal approval as a conceptual framework for analysis.<sup>5</sup> There will also be a discussion of Wilson's assertion that there was a degree of communal approval for violence.

### The object of loyalist violence

As the previous chapter argued, loyalist violence was spontaneous, occurring without direction or planning from political leaders. The residential and workplace expulsions in east Ulster were executed by local people, and usually with local leadership (although in some cases the instigators of violence came from outside the locality). There were many similarities in how the riots materialised in several towns. In most cases Catholic homes and businesses were targeted before the initiation of industrial expulsions. Catholic employees who sought a return to work were forced to take pledges repudiating links or sympathies with Sinn Féin. An obvious question follows: what was the goal of loyalist extremists who participated in this violence?

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<sup>4</sup> T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010), pp 69-70 and 207.

<sup>5</sup> For the communal deterrence theory, see Frank Wright, *Two lands on one soil: Ulster politics before Home Rule* (Dublin, 1994), pp 5-8. For the communal approval theory see Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 99-101 and 110.

Was it to 'ethnically cleanse' their locality of nationalists?'<sup>6</sup> Or was it designed to assert their dominance over the other community in order to heighten their own sense of security?'<sup>7</sup>

There is a case that the east Ulster riots, or any other example of loyalist violence in the region, did not constitute ethnic cleansing. While it is indisputable that Catholics in Lisburn, Banbridge, Dromore and Newtownards were targets and that in some cases a majority of them were forcibly removed from their homes, it does not necessarily follow that the loyalist perpetrators of these actions were seeking to cleanse their towns of their religious or political 'opposites'. Firstly, Catholics were not prevented from returning to the affected towns. Within two months of the August 1920 riots in Lisburn, the R.I.C. county inspector noted the return of many expelled families. Significantly, however, he stated that no further outbreaks arose as a result of the return of Catholics, despite the survival of 'sectarian feeling'.<sup>8</sup> What this suggests was that the mere presence of Catholics was not enough to provoke violence from loyalists. Rather it was the perception that from within the Catholic community there existed a threat to unionist or Protestant dominance in that part of Ulster. This was not unique to 1920, having historical precedent in previous episodes of anti-Catholic rioting. As is shown below, in these earlier cases Catholics were able to continue to reside in the affected areas, therefore suggesting that ethnic cleansing was not central to the loyalist mentality.

Indiscriminate expulsions of Catholics had the effect of crudely asserting Protestant dominance over the local Catholic community. By doing so militant

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<sup>6</sup> This is asserted for the Lisburn riots of August 1920: Pearse Lawlor, *The outrages 1920-1922: the I.R.A. and the Ulster Special Constabulary in the border campaign* (Cork, 2011), p. 43. 'Ethnic cleansing' in this instance means the forcible removal of ethnic or religious groups to create an ethnically or religiously homogenous area.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Oct. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/113).

loyalist anxieties were partially mitigated. In mid-1920 the unionist community grew increasingly uneasy with political developments in Ireland. There was a deep concern that the British government would succumb to the military pressures of republicanism or that the I.R.A. itself would penetrate into north-east Ulster and challenge unionist dominance. Therefore, in a period when republicans were effectively challenging British authority in the southern provinces of Ireland, Ulster loyalists sought to reassert their dominance over much of the northern territory.

Historically 'territory is vital to the expression of identity and strategies of protection, survival and cultural enrichment.'<sup>9</sup> During the movement of many rural migrants into urban areas of Ulster in the nineteenth century, people usually settled in areas dominated by their own religious sect. Nevertheless, this was not a universal trend as large numbers of Catholics resided in predominantly Protestant areas. When violence erupted in 1920 it often took the form of refining and maintaining these territorial boundaries.<sup>10</sup>

The clearest examples of residential segregation were in Belfast and Londonderry (see Maps 5 and 6). Inter-communal violence in Belfast was shaped partly by cultural and residential segregation as these maintained prejudices. As Frederick Boal has observed about the post-1969 conflict in Northern Ireland:

Persistent segregation is likely to contribute to the perpetuation of long-standing prejudices, while at the very same time contributing to the maintenance of valued group attributes and providing a geographical basis for political action. Act to destroy the prejudice and you may undermine a rich social plurality; preserve the social

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<sup>9</sup> Brendon Murtagh, *The politics of territory: policy and segregation in Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 207-8.

plurality and you provide a fertile environment for prejudice to thrive in.<sup>11</sup>

Boal's conclusions can be applied to the 1920-22 period. Research in Belfast and Londonderry has shown the maintenance of set boundaries between the two communities usually limited confrontations inherent in territorial rivalries.<sup>12</sup> It was therefore generally accepted by both communities that cultural, political or religious expressions of identity were only tolerable within the territory of one's own community. Cutting across boundaries was objectionable, as it could be interpreted as an invasion of a foreign culture into the sphere of a community that defined itself against that culture. It was such that when violence did erupt it was often on interface areas.<sup>13</sup> While there has been much examination of the relationship between territory and communal violence in Ulster's two cities, this section will investigate this relationship in the smaller urban areas of east Ulster.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a significant population shift from the agricultural south and west to the industrial towns of north-east Ulster where shipbuilding and textiles could absorb excess labour.<sup>14</sup> In east Ulster industrial growth was met with population expansion, as Table 1 illustrates. Many towns came to share in the region's industrial development, with Banbridge being described by a visitor in 1921 as 'an outpost of Belfast'.<sup>15</sup> While towns grew, the population in rural areas declined. There was an increase in the proportion of town populations as a

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Murtagh, *The politics of territory*, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, chapter 4. For a study of communal boundaries in Londonderry see Walter Gallagher, 'People, work, space and social structure in Edwardian Derry, 1901-1911' (D. Phil thesis, University of Ulster, 1994), pp 155-6.

<sup>13</sup> Gallagher, 'People, work, space and social structure in Edwardian Derry, 1901-1911', pp 155-6; Mark Doyle, *Fighting like the devil for the sake of God: Protestants, Catholics and the origins of violence in Victorian Belfast* (Manchester, 2009), pp 76-8.

<sup>14</sup> F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1973), p. 63.

<sup>15</sup> Wilfrid Ewart, *A journey in Ireland 1921* (London, 1922), p. 146.

percentage of the total population of Ulster from 9.5 in 1841 to 38.4 in 1911.<sup>16</sup> Presumably many of the urban settlers came from the rural hinterland of the same county but as census returns indicate, increasing numbers migrated from other Ulster counties.<sup>17</sup> However, migration failed to have a major impact on the relative demography of east Ulster towns as in proportional terms the Catholic population in most east Ulster towns did not rise. In fact, Table 2 reveals that the Catholic share of the population in these towns generally decreased (the only exception being the small increase in Bangor) in the half decade leading up to 1911. Regardless, by this date there had developed in many east Ulster towns distinguishable Catholic communities. In some towns there was a concentration of Catholics in one particular street, therefore identifying that area as the heart of local Catholic life. For example, R.I.C. Head Constable John Boyd labelled Ann Street in Newtownards the 'Catholic centre' of that town.<sup>18</sup> That the riots of August 1920 in Newtownards were focused on Ann Street may imply that territorialism was a factor in the riots. To ascertain the accuracy of this claim, it will be necessary to compare residential patterns in towns in which violence erupted in 1920. What follows is a comparison of demographic data from Lisburn and Newtownards, two demographically similar towns affected by rioting in 1920.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, pp 36-9.

<sup>17</sup> Census of Ireland, 1911, province of Ulster, [Cd 6051], H.C. 1912, table XXV.

<sup>18</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Aug. 1920.

Table 1<sup>19</sup>

Population of towns in east Ulster, 1841-1911								
Town	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Ballyclare	847	940	905	1021	1475	1480	2066	3369
Ballymena	5549	6136	6769	7931	8883	8655	10886	11381
Ballymoney	2490	2578	2600	2930	3049	2975	2952	3100
Banbridge	3324	3301	4033	5600	5609	4901	5006	5101
Bangor	3116	2849	2531	2560	3006	3834	5903	7776
Comber	1964	1790	1713	2006	2165	2051	2095	2589
Dromore	2110	1862	2531	2408	2491	2359	2307	2364
Lisburn	6284	6533	7462	7876	10755	12250	11461	12388
Newtownards	7621	9566	9542	9562	8676	9197	9110	9587

If Ann Street represented the 'Catholic centre' in Newtownards, then Chapel Hill may have represented the 'Catholic centre' in Lisburn. As Appendix B reveals, 10 per cent of Catholics living in Newtownards resided on Ann Street. Similarly, 7 per cent of Catholics in Lisburn lived on Chapel Hill. These streets housed a greater portion of their towns' respective Catholic populations than any other streets. In addition, Catholic churches were located at the head of Ann Street in Newtownards and alongside a Catholic school on Chapel Hill in Lisburn. These streets were therefore the centres of local Catholic life and Protestants likely perceived them to be such.

<sup>19</sup> Adapted from W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds), *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp 36-9.

Table 2

Catholics as percentage of population of towns in east Ulster						
Town	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Ballymena	24	22	21	18	18	18
Ballymoney	31	28	29	24	26	23
Banbridge	25	22	22	23	21	23
Bangor	6	7	8	7	7	9
Comber	5	5	4	3	4	4
Dromore	31	23	21	19	15	17
Larne	28	26	23	29	23	23
Lisburn	27	25	21	22	23	24
Newtownards	12	11	10	10	8	9

While these streets can be identified as 'Catholic centres', they differ from the Catholic areas of Belfast and Londonderry in one fundamental respect: size. As Maps 5 and 6 illustrate, Catholics in the cities lived in larger areas with their own workplaces, schools and economic centres.<sup>20</sup> In the much smaller towns of east Ulster, Catholics and Protestants shared workplaces and economic spaces on a greater scale. This meant inter-dependence was stronger and residential segregation much weaker, as suggested by the high distribution of Catholics throughout each town. Most Catholics in east Ulster towns lived on predominantly Protestant streets as Maps 7 to 9 and Appendix B reveal. Therefore, it may be that while Catholic neighbourhoods in Belfast and Londonderry were recognised as Catholic territory,

<sup>20</sup> Murtagh, *The politics of territory*, p. 35.



Catholic inhabitants in predominantly Protestant towns in east Ulster were seen as incursions into wider Protestant territory.

Certainly the existence of small Catholic areas in largely Protestant towns was a prerequisite for widespread residential expulsions. However, other factors were also essential in precipitating violence. These included major provocations (such as the assassination of a police inspector), local leadership and proximity to Belfast (allowing for the easy influx of outside instigators of violence). The absence of these factors in Ballymena perhaps offers some insight as to why no violence occurred in that town despite it being a large industrial town similar to Lisburn and Newtownards in terms of demographics and nineteenth-century expansion. Appendix B and Map 9 illustrate how 10 per cent of Ballymena's Catholic inhabitants resided on Broughshane Street which, like Chapel Hill and Ann Street, housed the local Catholic Church. It was as much a 'Catholic centre' as the others, yet escaped the onslaught of sectarian violence.

Territorialism was therefore important in shaping the east Ulster riots, but in a different way than in the larger cities of Belfast and Londonderry. In the latter case violence was much more to do with the maintenance of boundaries between two conflicting neighbourhoods, while in east Ulster it represented the desire by one community to impose its dominance on a smaller, more vulnerable community that resided within the former's perceived territory. Purifying towns like Lisburn was not the goal, as Catholics were permitted to return. Rather, it was the aim of rioters to make an unambiguous statement that the unionist community was in charge and that republicanism would not be tolerated in the locality. The local assertion of Protestant dominance was therefore the primary aim of loyalist rioters. The east Ulster riots, which took the form of both residential and workplace expulsions, witnessed several

instances of loyalists forcing an oath of loyalty on Catholics. Refusal to accept this oath (which included an unequivocal repudiation of Sinn Féin) resulted in Catholics being denied the right to resume work.<sup>21</sup> This was a clear example of imposing one community's will upon another, rather than an example of a plan to permanently expel members of the victimised community.

In some towns Protestant dominance was asserted through violent means, but in other towns different methods were utilised. For instance, the importance of territory was illustrated through the petitioning of the Bangor Urban Council by the local Orange Order to have a Union flag raised above the town hall.<sup>22</sup> In doing so, local Orangemen sought to make a territorial claim by displaying the town's loyalty.<sup>23</sup> This supports Wilson's interpretation of loyalist violence as 'about defending a clearly defined boundary and, in doing so, keeping the other community in their (subordinate) place.'<sup>24</sup> In east Ulster this could be achieved without killing Catholics as the latter offered little or no resistance. The I.R.A. was weak in the region, particularly in areas dominated by unionists. Without retaliation from Catholics, it was unnecessary for loyalists to go beyond attacks on property to impose their dominance.

There were precedents of the relationship between violence and territorialism in east Ulster. Several disturbances related to territory had arisen in the past. In the early 1870s there were outbreaks of rioting in the expanding industrial towns of Ulster, notably Lisburn, Banbridge, Lurgan and Portadown.<sup>25</sup> One incident was provoked by a Catholic Lady Day demonstration returning to Lisburn from Belfast,

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<sup>21</sup> *Irish News*, 28 July 1920.

<sup>22</sup> Bangor district L.O.L. 18 minute book, 17 Sept. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Bangor District L.O.L. 18 papers, D4367/4/1/3).

<sup>23</sup> Ewan Morris, *Our own devices: national symbols and political conflict in twentieth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 120-1.

<sup>24</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 115. Parenthesis in original quote.

<sup>25</sup> Wright, *Two lands on one soil*, p. 385.

which led to a series of attacks on Catholic-owned property.<sup>26</sup> In June 1868 Protestants in Banbridge were provoked by the presence of three visiting members of the Order of St Vincent de Paul who were staging religious services in the local chapel. Crowds broke through a protective police cordon to inflict damage on Catholic-owned property.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, just as in 1920, Ballymena was exempt from violence, despite undergoing similar industrial expansion to the disturbed towns.<sup>28</sup> In 1904 loyalists took offence to the overt staging of Gaelic games in what Charles Craig, Unionist M.P. for South Antrim, termed 'the centre of a strongly Protestant district'.<sup>29</sup> A hurling match at Blaris, on the outskirts of Lisburn, attracted a large loyalist demonstration leading to attacks on Catholic-owned property.<sup>30</sup>

#### Loyalist violence and the unionist community

In Ulster any neighbourhood, town or district could potentially be regarded as belonging to the Catholic or Protestant communities. Violence perpetrated to maintain territorial boundaries, therefore, was carried out in the name of the entire community. By framing the conflict as inter-communal, extremists demanded support from members of their own community.<sup>31</sup> In the absence of active opposition from the unionist community, militant loyalists could carry out acts of violence. Tim Wilson has asserted that there is support for his claims that 'loyalist rioters in Ulster could depend upon the support (or at very least, the permissive

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 396.

<sup>27</sup> Farrell, *Rituals and riots*, p. 167; *Irish Times*, 9 June 1868.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, *Two lands on one soil*, p. 553.

<sup>29</sup> *Irish Times*, 22 Apr. 1904.

<sup>30</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 18 Apr. 1904.

<sup>31</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 99-100.

ambivalence) of a much wider unionist community'.<sup>32</sup> He observed that onlookers were attracted to the scene of a riot with many often joining in. In Belfast there were also several cases of members of the unionist community tearing cobble stones from the pavements to supply rioters with a source of ammunition.<sup>33</sup> There can be little doubt that riots provided a source of excitement for ordinary unionists, and there may have been a degree of approval, at least tacit approval, for the east Ulster riots. This was displayed through the often mixed and inconsistent messages – often amounting to rhetorical endorsement – emanating from vocal figures within the unionist community.

Violence affected members of the unionist community in different ways and was not universally approved of, particularly in the case of unionists who lost homes as collateral damage. In addition, the east Ulster riots devastated businesses, most of which were owned by Protestants, to the extent that the local economies suffered immensely. After the formation of the U.S.C. in November 1920, independent violence became less acceptable for the unionist community because more legitimate and officially-approved forms of communal defence now existed.

It is not being argued here that there was no communal approval for loyalist violence. There certainly was, but the extent to which it existed poses the question of debate. While this chapter will largely agree with Wilson, it will argue that communal approval was not as strong in east Ulster as it may have been in Belfast, as in the former case the unionist community felt under less threat from the nationalist community. To begin, this section will discuss how anti-Catholic violence impacted on the unionist community of east Ulster, before examining the views of unionists towards both nationalists and the violence perpetrated against them.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp 99-100.

Fred Crawford, recording his views on the Lisburn riots in August 1920, felt the intended victims were members or supporters of Sinn Féin. Regarding a number of Protestants that had been affected, he wrote:

They told me of some very hard cases of where Unionists had lost practically all they had by the fire of a house of a Catholic spreading to theirs, and also of some very decent, respectable families of long standing losing everything also. But when one thinks of the brutal, cold blooded murder of Inspector Swanzie [sic] one does not wonder at the mob losing its head with fury.<sup>34</sup>

Crawford, although lamenting its impact on unionists, unambiguously approved of the violence. As an outside observer, it was perhaps easier to remain detached from the hardship faced by the victims of violence, whether they were deliberate targets or not. An examination of the plight of unionist victims will shed light on the level of resentment that unionists must have felt towards loyalist rioters.

As religious affiliation was used by rioters to indicate a person's political stance, it is logical to use the same indicator to establish whether or not significant numbers of unionists were affected by the riots. Working from a list of claimants for compensation published by the *Lisburn Standard*, it is possible with reference to the 1911 census and street directories to ascertain the religion of many victims. One problem faced by the researcher is distinguishing between Protestant landlords who owned property rented by Catholics, and Protestant occupants. Further, the religion

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<sup>34</sup> Fred Crawford diary, 11 Sept. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Fred Crawford papers, D640/11/1).

of only a fraction of the list of claimants can be ascertained with certainty. Therefore, no exact figure of what proportion of claimants were Protestant can be provided.

One newspaper report claimed that 'Protestant sympathisers' were targeted.<sup>35</sup> No reason for this is provided, but a precedent for attacks on Protestants who were felt to sympathise with republicanism or socialism occurred in the Belfast shipyard in July 1920.<sup>36</sup> However, in Lisburn no indication was given whether rioters were interested in targeting socialist, or 'rotten', Protestants. Therefore, if the *Irish News* was correct in stating that some Protestants were deliberately targeted, it was perhaps more so because of their personal sympathy towards Catholic neighbours. Although there was a degree of social and cultural segregation in east Ulster, there was still much economic interaction and inter-dependence. Many Protestants let rooms out to Catholic boarders, while many Catholic servants were hired by Protestant families. It may be possible that such cases aroused the hostility of rioters, although this can only be speculated on.

It is more likely that due to the proximity of Catholic and Protestant businesses and homes that many Protestants were accidentally victimised. The worst affected areas in Lisburn according to the claims list were Bow Street (22 per cent of claims), Market Square (19 per cent), Chapel Hill (14 per cent) and Bridge Street (8 per cent).<sup>37</sup> None of these areas were exclusively Catholic. Bow Street and Chapel Hill were 36 and 59 per cent Catholic respectively, with the latter housing more Catholics than any other street in the town. These two streets were clearly targeted due to their large Catholic populations, while it was at Market Square and Bridge

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<sup>35</sup> *Irish News*, 23 Aug. 1920.

<sup>36</sup> Socialism was generally linked with republicanism by Unionist leaders.

<sup>37</sup> Addresses taken from *Lisburn Standard*, 4, 11 and 25 Feb. and 4 Mar. 1921. These figures are only indications, as many Catholic victims who travelled to Belfast after having their property destroyed may not have lodged a claim in time. This would be supported by the claims list which was updated and published with additional claims attached to the end. Many of the latter claims were by Catholics, suggesting they experienced great difficulties lodging claims immediately.<sup>37</sup>

Street where the riots began, therefore receiving disproportionate attention from rioters. These streets were not segregated as Protestants and Catholics resided side by side, as illustrated by Appendix C. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume much of the Protestant property destroyed in the riots was caused by fire spreading from adjacent Catholic homes and businesses. Newspaper reports confirm this was frequently the case with the fire brigade often focusing on neighbouring property rather than that already engulfed in flames.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, when some Protestant victims were examined in more detail it became clear that they would not have been targeted for political reasons. A Protestant widow living on Bow Street, Agnes Cherry, was forced to flee her shop and home with her two daughters. Cherry's religion was well-known in the town and her political allegiances were easily discernible from her family's involvement in the pre-war U.V.F. Her son, James Alexander, an Ulster Volunteer who joined the British army, was killed in action in 1917.<sup>39</sup>

Agnes Cherry's family home was undoubtedly destroyed as a result of the burning of an adjacent residence. It was made clear in court by other claimants that their property was also damaged in this way. John G. Ferguson, whose business and residence on Bow Street were destroyed by fire, stated that his property was only affected because it was next to that of a man whose house was deliberately targeted. Barkley Greer, a grocer on Bridge Street, experienced a similar ordeal as his business premises were located between two houses that were set alight.<sup>40</sup> There would have been resentment from Protestant victims at having lost their homes and businesses.

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<sup>38</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920.

<sup>39</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920; 'The Cherry family, the Ulster Covenant and the loss of a son' ([www.lisburn.com/history](http://www.lisburn.com/history)) (25 May 2011).

<sup>40</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 11 Feb. 1921.

In reference to the Lisburn riots the Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, Joseph MacRory, was sure 'that all decent Protestants deplore and condemn in their hearts the injustice done to our people.'<sup>41</sup> A unionist account of the riots made a point of stating that they occurred 'in spite of all the efforts of the local clergy to stop them.'<sup>42</sup> There may have been a significant degree of substance behind these statements. It is understandable that many unionists would have felt intimidated by the rioters, whose actions were presumably designed to suppress open dissent. A photograph of Lisburn rioters posing shamelessly with loot displayed a degree of confidence that would have cowed the more meek and humble members of the Protestant community.<sup>43</sup>

The role of fear in silencing opposition was important, for it explains why so few people came out to confront rioters. In Lisburn some helped in the task of extinguishing fires and others aided the authorities, while one man allegedly threatened rioters with a gun as they sought to attack Catholic houses.<sup>44</sup> Individual Protestants sometimes attempted to aid Catholic victims.<sup>45</sup> Cases such as these were rare as people were afraid of becoming victims themselves. A personal account of an anti-Catholic industrial expulsion in Ballyclare in 1912, provoked by an attack on Protestant Sunday school children by members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Castledawson, reveals the importance of fear in suppressing opposition from disapproving Protestants. A loyalist mob gathered to force Catholics out of the Kirkpatrick Bleach Works on the outskirts of Ballyclare. One man, William Taggart,

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph MacRory to the Committee of the Belfast Expelled Workers' Fund, 20 Nov. 1920 (O'Faich Library, Joseph MacRory papers, ARCH/11/5/14).

<sup>42</sup> W. A. Phillips, *The revolution in Ireland 1906-1923* (London, 1923), p. 190.

<sup>43</sup> See Figure 1. Wilson believes that this picture is evidence of communal approval. This may be true for a section of the Protestant community, while being intimidating to others.

<sup>44</sup> Lawlor, *The burnings 1920*, p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> In 1922 a Protestant woman attempted to save a wounded Catholic in the aftermath of a riot in Greencastle: *Irish Times*, 13 Mar. 1922.



cried as he left, despite calls from Protestant friends to stay. Another, the son of a popular Catholic policeman and 'of a family extremely popular and highly respected by all creeds and classes in the village' was the last to leave. Despite this, Protestant onlookers were unwilling to intervene:

In all fairness to the vast majority of the workers it must be stated that these expulsions were carried out by a relatively small number of men and women who can best be described as irresponsible religious fanatics. While this small minority brought the works to a standstill as they carried out this unprovoked attack, the remainder stood silently aside, shamefacedly watching the mass exodus, not daring to intervene, for to such a high pitch of intensity had this upsurge of passions reached, that to have done so would instantly have branded them as traitors to the cause of freedom.<sup>46</sup>

While those directly affected by violence were unlikely to approve of it, the views of the wider unionist community, many members of which experienced the violence with varying degrees of detachment, ranged from outright condemnation to tacit approval. To understand the extent of communal approval for anti-Catholic violence, it will be necessary to gauge the opinions that existed within the unionist community regarding their Catholic neighbours. Anti-Catholicism within the unionist community was widespread, but its dissemination in a moderate form was the normative condition. On the more intolerant end of the spectrum were those who believed that unionist resistance to republicanism was a manifestation of the battle

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<sup>46</sup> R. Grange, 'On the Banks of the Ollar, or random notes and reflections on old Ballyclare', c. 1960 (P.R.O.N.I., R. Grange papers, MIC155/1).

between Catholicism and Protestantism. During the 1921 election campaign George B. Hanna, Unionist candidate for Antrim, declared the upcoming election a struggle for the preservation of the Protestant faiths.<sup>47</sup> For many religious leaders, the cause of Sinn Féin was inextricably associated with the Catholic Church, as can be seen in the Rev. Richard Hall's address to Cullybackey Orange Lodge:

It is well known that not only had the majority of the Roman Catholic clergy done [sic] nothing to prevent this murderous campaign, but some of their younger men were active leaders – dragging the very name of religion into the mire. In the bull fights that still took place in Spain, one of the most degrading features of it all was the sight of the priest who was always standing by, ready to administer the last rites to any bull fighter who might be seriously injured in the beastly fight; and in the far more fiendish deeds that were practised in Ireland, there was always to be found a curate or a priest, sometimes not far off, ready to give that benediction of the Church to the malefactor.<sup>48</sup>

Hanna similarly saw no difference between nationalists and republicans, believing them both to represent the same political creed as they 'had shaken hands over the matter [of the 1921 Northern Ireland election]'.<sup>49</sup> A Ballymena Unionist councillor and former Ulster Volunteer, John Adrian, expressed scepticism regarding 'constitutionalist nationalists, as they liked to call themselves' when addressing the

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<sup>47</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 20 Aug. 1920, 22 Apr. and 13 May 1921.

<sup>48</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 8 July 1921.

<sup>49</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 13 May 1921. This is a reference to an electoral pact between Sinn Féin and Irish Party in 1921.

North-End Unionist Club in Ballymena.<sup>50</sup> Unionist M.P., T. W. Brown, said that ‘in South and East Down the majority of the voters were Nationalists, or Sinn Féiners – they meant the same thing practically now.’<sup>51</sup>

Viewing all Catholics as synonymous with Sinn Féin justified loyalist violence to some unionists. The following statement by one Banbridge resident, commenting in 1921 on the riots that had taken place in his town a year previous, illustrates clearly how the opinion that all Catholics were republicans could translate into prejudice:

We won’t go under any Dublin Parliament. What they want is our money. It’s all very well to talk about safeguards now, but this is a question that involves our whole future. Once [sic] give our freedom over to the Catholics and we shall not get it back. The thing’s impossible. We never wanted the present [Government of Ireland] Act, but, rebels and murderers as they are, we’ll meet them on the Council of Ireland, and when they show they know how to behave themselves, perhaps we’ll think it over.<sup>52</sup>

This man unambiguously associates Catholics with ‘rebels and murderers’, yet others took a more nuanced stance whereby they felt that Catholics were led astray by the machinations of the Catholic Church. This allowed for a closer identification with Catholics, who were often referred to by unionists as their

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<sup>50</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 13 Feb. 1920.

<sup>51</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 7 May 1921. For similar views, see Chapter One.

<sup>52</sup> Ewart, *A journey in Ireland 1921*, pp 147-8.

'fellow-countrymen.'<sup>53</sup> Although cultural differences existed between most Protestants and Catholics, an exclusive British identity had not yet formed within the Protestant community. Many Protestants still felt themselves to be Irish, albeit with a strong accompanying identification with Britain, and it was largely on this latter point that Protestants and Catholics differed.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, this facilitated a more amicable relationship between unionists and nationalists. For instance, Hugh O'Neill publicly praised the character of Joseph Devlin, the northern leader of nationalism, and reserved his only criticism for his political persuasion.<sup>55</sup> According to numerous local Protestant Church leaders, Catholics were merely the victims of a Romish plot. The Rev. J. A. Cullen, rector of Ballymena, told a Broughshane audience that:

They [Protestants] had no right to hate their Roman Catholic brethren, who were simply the victims of a false system, a false Church, and they deserved nothing from them but intense pity...They owed their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen a debt, and that was to pass on to them the light they had found...by living Christian lives before them day by day in their daily work.<sup>56</sup>

Cullen was not alone in his opinion. Rev. Thomas Dowzer of Broughshane told the same audience that they should not fight with their 'Roman Catholic brethren'. Some loyalists could recognise the difference between Catholics who supported republican violence and those who were against it. In a letter to the press, one loyalist wrote that

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<sup>53</sup> Ronald McNeill, *Ulster's stand for Union* (London, 1922), p. 1. Several other examples can be found in political and religious speeches recorded in the *Ballymena Observer* in 1921 and 1922.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Hennessy, 'The evolution of Ulster Protestant identity in the twentieth century: nations and patriotism', in Mervyn Busteed, Frank Neal and Jonathan Tonge (eds), *Irish Protestant identities* (Manchester, 2008), pp 258-60.

<sup>55</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 13 May 1921.

<sup>56</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 15 July 1921.

the I.R.A. were acting 'against the respectable Roman Catholic population, which has no relish for coming under a Bolshevik terror.'<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Hugh O'Neill, speaking to the Mid-Antrim Constitutional and Unionist Association shortly after the August 1920 riots, said that he did not believe Sinn Féin to be a religious movement and pointed to the large numbers of Catholics who had fallen victim to their campaign. He criticised the Catholic Church for not openly opposing Sinn Féin earlier but was pleased that such efforts were now being made. He sympathised with Catholics, whom he believed existed in a state of terror and intimidation from the I.R.A.<sup>58</sup>

By differentiating between republicans and constitutional nationalists, it was more difficult to justify indiscriminate violence against Catholics. Even those leading Unionists held to have contributed to the violence of the summer of 1920 by their inflammatory language often encouraged restraint. Two weeks prior to his speech to Orangemen on 12 July 1920, Edward Carson called for loyalist organisation under government supervision, but publicly wrote that 'it has been our proud boast that no single act of violence towards person or property has occurred' and that 'such a state of discipline will be insisted upon by all those who have consistently followed the advice I laid down.'<sup>59</sup> Even on 12 July, while Sir Edward Carson delivered his vitriolic speech in south Belfast, many Orangemen were gathered in other parts of north-east Ulster where they listened to more affable messages. In Dromore James Craig addressed an audience alongside his brother Charles and urged Orangemen to remain disciplined and report any untoward behaviour to the police rather than react violently.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 26 Nov. 1921.

<sup>58</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 3 Sept. 1920.

<sup>59</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 3 July 1920.

<sup>60</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 16 July 1920.

Calls for restraint in tumultuous times were broadcast throughout the period to help prevent attacks on Catholics. For example, the Antrim Unionist M.P., Robert Crawford, called for calm in the face of a series of I.R.A. attacks in Ballymena in mid-1922, although he added that 'they were prepared to stand firm and do what was fair, and if there was any fighting to be done let it be done fair and straight and above board, and not from behind a hedge or a ditch.'<sup>61</sup> When tensions were heightened during the period immediately after the signing of the controversial Anglo-Irish Treaty, which many unionists perceived as a sell-out to Sinn Féin, Captain S. J. Hutchinson, J.P., told a meeting of the Maze branch of the Mid-Down Unionist Association on 18 December 1921 that he did not think Ulster Protestants wanted to 'make bad blood' with their Catholic 'fellow-countrymen' and that he opposed the idea of any denomination holding a monopoly of political power.<sup>62</sup> Moderation was also promoted in Carrickfergus where church ministers initiated a campaign for peace.<sup>63</sup>

When violence did break out it often met with vociferous condemnation in the localities. In July 1920 there was a general denunciation of the disturbances in Bangor. The Rev. J. A. Carey of Bangor Parish Church voiced his strong disapproval of the violence, stating it was 'unworthy of a Christian people.' Likewise, Rev. W. J. Currie of the First Bangor Presbyterian Church said the perpetrators were 'so far from being true Protestants, they were a disgrace to their country and a danger to its welfare.' Similar references were made by Rev. W. A. Hill of the Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church.<sup>64</sup> Unionist M.P. Hugh O'Neill condemned attacks on Catholics: these 'were not the acts of any responsible Ulster Unionist, but the acts of

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<sup>61</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 16 June 1922.

<sup>62</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 23 Dec. 1921.

<sup>63</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *'Solitary and wild': Frederick MacNeice and the salvation of Ireland* (Dublin, 2012), pp 156-8.

<sup>64</sup> *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 July 1920.

an uncontrolled hooligan mob with regard to whom responsible people had no sympathy.' While he called for increased loyalist organisation under proper supervision, O'Neill stressed the need to prevent further riots such as those in Lisburn:

As that was the first occasion that he had had the opportunity of speaking in Ulster since these things occurred, he wished to press as strongly as he could and from the bottom of his heart his conviction, and he knew it was the conviction of all his colleagues in the House of Commons, that if Ulster is to maintain the great traditions which she had established as a great loyal community, as the Imperial Province, and set an example of what Government should be, these things must stop – (hear, hear) – as unless they did stop he feared much of the labour and much of the trouble which they their parliamentary representatives had taken up on their behalf over the water in the House of Commons, would be thrown away, and would come to an end. (A voice, “root them out,” and cheers.)<sup>65</sup>

At the same meeting George B. Hanna, an independent labour unionist M.P., whose rhetoric towards Catholics and nationalists was generally more hostile, also opposed striking out indiscriminately against that community. He said unionists should do their utmost to counter republican violence, but that ‘they would never do it if they wreak vengeance on those who did not share their religious views.’ He said that such actions were crime, indistinguishable from crime committed by republicans. This,

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<sup>65</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 3 Sept. 1920.

for Hanna, caused problems with the unionist image as he felt 'crime was not necessary in a clean fight. Their [unionists'] cause was clean, and their cause was just.'<sup>66</sup> Rioting and looting, being on a par with republican violence as crime, aroused Hanna's distaste.

There was a strong belief within the unionist community that the police and military should deal with the threat of republican violence. J. S. Reade, Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Belfast, speaking to the Lisburn Loyalist Association, called for loyalists to leave it to the military and police authorities to take action against the I.R.A.<sup>67</sup> A similarly critical note was evident in the aftermath of the east Ulster riots in July 1920 when one Bangor Orange lodge joined religious leaders in condemning the violence.<sup>68</sup> The Bangor Urban Council was similarly damning of rioters, passing a resolution that condemned violence and offered its wholehearted support for the forces of law and order. It also encouraged all citizens, 'irrespective of creed, sect, or party', to enrol in a protective patrol.<sup>69</sup> However, some commentators, such as Hanna, could both criticise anti-Catholic violence yet perpetuate anti-Catholicism. A Methodist minister from Carrickfergus, James Ritchie, joined his peers in condemning violence while simultaneously warning his followers of Rome's conspiracy to dominate Ulster.<sup>70</sup>

The relative levels of approval in east Ulster for loyalist violence, in comparison to other counties and Belfast, can be estimated by the level of urgency that unionists attached to security measures. The violence of the summer of 1920 was largely in response to a perception that the police and military were failing to provide adequate protection to the unionist community. By extension, therefore, any

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 2 Dec. 1921.

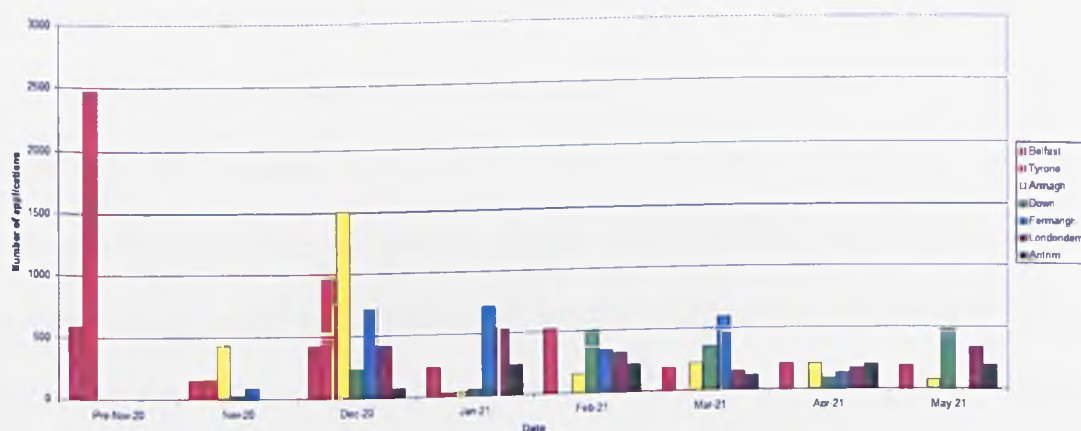
<sup>68</sup> *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 July 1920.

<sup>69</sup> *Irish News*, 28 July 1920.

<sup>70</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Solitary and wild', pp 162-3.



**Graph 1: Monthly applications for B Class of U.S.C., Nov. 1920 to May 1921<sup>71</sup>**



actions by loyalists to plug the gap in the security of their areas would have been approved of by unionists. However, the security situation and the accompanying fear of the threat of the I.R.A. differed in each part of north-east Ulster. Paramilitary activity was resumed in the spring and summer of 1920 to meet the general rise in unionist anxiety regarding the I.R.A. The U.V.F. was revived, but in east Ulster this development was met with lukewarm acknowledgement from the unionist community. In north-east Ulster generally, the revival was poor, but in Antrim it was notably weaker than other areas.<sup>72</sup> By October with the prospect of the formation of a Northern Irish state, an official force in the form of the U.S.C. was announced to tackle the deteriorating security situation in Ulster. Recruitment for the U.S.C. began on a county and city basis from November 1920. As with the U.V.F. revival, Protestants were less eager to join the B Class of the U.S.C. in east Ulster than

<sup>71</sup> Special Constabulary weekly return of recruiting, 30 Nov. 1920 to 29 Mar. 1921, (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance, FIN/18/1/8).

<sup>72</sup> Bowman, *Carson's army*, p. 192; Wilfred Spender to James Craig, 9 Sept. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 5/1).

elsewhere.<sup>73</sup> Graph 1 demonstrates that applications to join the B Class remained consistently lowest in Antrim and Down. Only in these two counties did applications to join the B Class of the U.S.C. fail to reach 500 in any month.

This does not negate the fact that a degree of tacit approval for the violence perpetrated by loyalists still existed. It merely suggests that people were less enthusiastic about communal defence schemes in less disturbed areas. Approval was evident by the qualified criticism of loyalist violence by the unionist press, emphasising its role as a reaction to something worse. For example, riots in Dromore were 'reprisals for the cruel campaign which is being relentlessly waged by the forces of Sinn Féin.'<sup>74</sup> Carson stated in parliament that it was understandable that loyalists would react how they did considering the alleged provocation initiated by Sinn Féin.<sup>75</sup> According to Frank Wright, this fits neatly into the 'deterrence relationship' that has largely defined communal conflict in Ulster since the nineteenth-century. For Wright, violence is largely representational, in that members of one community are attacked, not for personal reasons, but for their membership of their community. Therefore, as long as violence is representational and oscillatory, people tend to perceive violence directed against their own community as a greater threat, therefore tolerating, or at least understanding, violence from their own community. As a consequence, non-violent members of a community are often silenced by the overbearing influence of violent members, who 'have an influence in excess of their numbers.'<sup>76</sup> Even prior to the outbreak of serious rioting, militant influences were hard at work. Carson's speech on 12 July provided a salient example, but other less known instances existed. In Bangor, Orange leaders made

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<sup>73</sup> The B Specials received no regular pay for their service apart from an annual allowance of £10. This force was open to a wider selection of people than the full-time and professional A Specials.

<sup>74</sup> *Dromore Leader*, 24 July 1920.

<sup>75</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 23 July 1920.

<sup>76</sup> Wright, *Two lands on one soil*, pp 5-8.

calls to brethren to 'take action against the peaceful penetration of organised Sinn Féin into Ulster.'<sup>77</sup>

Whether supportive of violence against a Catholic community perceived to be unified behind the republican crusade, or critical of such actions, there was general acceptance that violence of an extreme nature was completely unacceptable. By drawing comparisons with ethnic conflict in Upper Silesia, Wilson has argued that 'generally accepted moral norms' within the Protestant community imposed restrictions on the actions of loyalists. Therefore, loyalists refrained from extreme acts, such as rape, mutilation and massacres, as these would alienate the people in whose name they supposedly acted.<sup>78</sup> This helps explain the widespread condemnation of specific acts that were deemed indefensible, such as the massacre of the McMahon family in Belfast in 1922.<sup>79</sup> As Wilson observes: 'Like magic, violence has to be performed subject to strict conventions if it's to avoid morally contaminating its practitioners.'<sup>80</sup>

In east Ulster examples of extreme violence were rare, but a few cases illustrate the extent to which it could alienate even militant loyalists. During the riots in Lisburn after the shooting of District Inspector Oswald Swanzy, one of the first premises to be targeted was that of Peter McKeever. During this raid a man was shot, in response to which some members of the raiding party withdrew in revulsion.<sup>81</sup> Following that incident some Catholics were physically attacked, but importantly

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<sup>77</sup> Bangor District L.O.L. 18 minute book, 26 Aug. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Bangor District L.O.L. 18 papers, D4367/4/1/3). This quote is from a minute entry for 20 August 1920, two days before Swanzy's murder and serious rioting in east Ulster.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 110. Another reason for this was that clear boundaries existed between unionist and nationalist communities in Ulster which required less force to maintain. By contrast, boundaries in Upper Silesia were less well defined and greater violence was used to in an attempt to establish them. See *ibid.*, p. 207

<sup>79</sup> See *idem*, 'The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast': the McMahon murders in context', in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxvii, no. 145 (May, 2010), pp 83-106.

<sup>80</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 171.

<sup>81</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 27 Aug. 1920.

they were able to make their way to the hospital.<sup>82</sup> This illustrates the conventions that were generally typical of east Ulster violence. During his local election campaign in May 1920 Louis J. Walsh, a Sinn Féin candidate, was attacked by loyalists in Ballymoney. Yet, his assailants had no intention of murdering him.<sup>83</sup> In the context of east Ulster one I.R.A. Volunteer recalled how the attack on Walsh in itself was an exception to the otherwise relatively harmonious relationship between unionists and nationalists.<sup>84</sup> Loyalists rarely intended to kill individual nationalists, preferring to leave their victims with injuries perhaps as a warning to the community at large. A clear case of this occurred with the shooting of a Catholic named Francis O'Reilly in his home in Ballyward, near Banbridge, in September 1922. R.U.C. District Inspector Allen commented: 'I am of the opinion it was not the intention of raiders to kill Reilly [sic], but simply "to put the wind up in him," and thus affect his removal. Consequently I am satisfied the explosive or most of it was removed from the cartridge.'<sup>85</sup>

While many Protestants disapproved of loyalist violence, the activities of militants were still shaped by considerations for general perceptions within the unionist community. This had a limiting effect on violence. By maintaining a moderate rhetoric, such as references to their 'fellow-countrymen', unionists promoted an opinion which lacked strong contempt or a dehumanising effect in relation to Catholics. The structural forces necessary for the dehumanisation of Catholics – such as the propagation of a 'hostile imagination' through descriptive

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<sup>82</sup> For instance, a Sinn Féin councillor in Lisburn was attacked by a large group of rioters shortly after the shooting of McKeever. They deliberately stopped attacking him so that he could seek aid at the infirmary: see Chapter Two.

<sup>83</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 28 May 1920.

<sup>84</sup> Statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762).

<sup>85</sup> 'File relating to attempted murder of Francis O'Reilly', Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs, HA/5/264).

phrases that demonise a distinct 'other' group – did not exist.<sup>86</sup> As displayed by the examples of unionist rhetoric utilised above, there was a clear absence of dehumanised opinions, even from the more militant elements. The Banbridge resident, commenting on Catholic victims of the east Ulster riots, displayed a distrust of his political opponents, but maintained a possibility to 'meet them on the Council of Ireland' which provided a forum for Catholics to 'show they know how to behave themselves'. This man even concluded that 'perhaps we'll think it over.'<sup>87</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter has tried to establish an understanding of the relationship between loyalist violence and the unionist community. It has illustrated how a sense of territorialism corresponded with perceptions of communal ownership of particular districts or towns which often manifested itself in 'representative violence'. Militant loyalists enjoyed a degree of approval, but the level of approval cannot be accurately ascertained. As Peter Hart's analysis of the killing of Protestants by the I.R.A. in west Cork has shown, there was disapproval of the killings expressed through sympathy with the victims but a conspicuous absence of open condemnation of the violence. This was partly out of fear, but Hart argued it was also because Protestants were seen as outsiders, not just by the I.R.A., but by many Catholics too.<sup>88</sup>

What is certain is that the collective opinions and attitudes of people within a context of communal unrest are fluid and difficult to assess. Sympathy with local Catholics in east Ulster was expressed by a small number of people who directly

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<sup>86</sup> Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: understanding how good people turn evil* (New York, 2007), pp 10-18.

<sup>87</sup> Ewart, *A journey in Ireland 1921*, pp 147-8.

<sup>88</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 290.

confronted rioters. However, the extent to which unionists approved or disapproved of anti-Catholic violence is obscured by the general acceptance that a political enemy existed within the nationalist community, while many Protestants concurrently lived amicably alongside Catholics they were personally acquainted with.<sup>89</sup> No co-ordinated peace strategy was formulated by political or religious leaders. Local clergy launched initiatives, but these lacked the necessary organisational framework to blossom.<sup>90</sup> Whatever goodwill existed was not efficiently harnessed, leaving people to succumb to a pervasive sense of fatalism in which Protestants and Catholics often viewed themselves and their 'opposites' as 'slaves of circumstances', placing the violence beyond the control and responsibility of individuals.<sup>91</sup>

It is clear that many mixed messages emanated from the unionist community regarding the virtue of loyalist violence. Many leaders of unionism retrospectively condoned the industrial expulsions in Belfast in 1920, something that doubtless added to the permissive environment for loyalist violence. Political leaders often refused to condemn loyalist violence, largely because the Unionist party placed internal unity of the unionist community above the welfare of the northern nationalist minority. Between 1920 and 1922 nothing short of outright and consistent condemnation of loyalist violence in conjunction with criminal prosecution was sufficient to curtail anti-Catholic aggression. Carson's speech on 12 July 1920 undoubtedly intensified the situation throughout Ulster, making violence more likely (although not inevitable) when placed in the context of the history of sectarian violence in Ulster. Further, the propagation of anti-Catholicism, even in a mild form, facilitated those harbouring more hostile views. Therefore, anybody airing anti-

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<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 172-3; Lynn Doyle, *An Ulster childhood* (Dublin, 1921), p. 48.

<sup>90</sup> Fitzpatrick, *'Solitary and wild'*, pp 158-9 and 165.

<sup>91</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 203-4.

Catholic views, regardless how mild, contributed to the permissible environment necessary to sustain anti-Catholic violence.

This chapter has focused on independent loyalist violence: that perpetrated without the official sanction of the state. A later chapter will examine the nature of loyalist violence in the context of the U.S.C. which will highlight the importance of a permissible environment, similar to that existing in the summer of 1920. The U.S.C. represented a new era in Ulster loyalism, one in which loyalists acted in an official capacity as agents of the state. This form of communal defence was more acceptable to the unionist community at large, for it placed restraints on the more extreme elements within loyalism and channelled their violence in a more manageable, albeit still imperfect, fashion.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

## Chapter Four

### A social composition of the B Specials in County Down

#### Introduction

From 1921 to 1970 the politics of Northern Ireland was largely defined by the governing Unionist party's attitude and approach to the state's substantial Catholic minority. Not without a degree of justification has Northern Ireland been associated with terms such as 'the Orange state' and 'a Protestant state'.<sup>1</sup> One of its principal features was partisan policing in the form of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Special Constabulary. In spite of the significance attached to these organisations very little is known about their formative years. Conceived amidst the bloodshed of the northern troubles and in a context of revolution in the south and west of Ireland, the northern constabularies were henceforth associated with the sectarian nature of the Northern Ireland government. This chapter seeks to broaden historical knowledge of one of these forces: the U.S.C.

In October 1920, in response to unionist pressure for greater security measures in north-east Ulster, the British government created a special constabulary. Since June violence had erupted in parts of the north. Some British ministers had begun contemplating a settlement with Sinn Féin in response to the I.R.A. campaign in the south, while in Ulster loyalists were reacting to the republican threat with violence. Thus, the Unionist party's position was increasingly precarious: they were

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<sup>1</sup> These are titles of studies on Northern Ireland: Michael Farrell, *Northern Ireland: the Orange State* (London, 1976) and Patrick Buckland, 'A Protestant state: unionists in government, 1921-39', in D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.) *Defenders of the union: a survey of British and Irish unionism since 1801* (London, 2001).



faced with a tripartite threat. Firstly I.R.A. violence was increasing in Ulster; secondly the Unionist leadership risked being undermined by loyalist responses to republicanism; and finally there was the possibility of Lloyd George granting a generous form of Irish independence to Sinn Féin.<sup>2</sup> Unionists expected to gain control of six north-eastern counties in accordance with the Government of Ireland Bill, which became law in December 1920. Without the capacity to maintain order in the north this venture was far from assured. Therefore, the idea of a special constabulary provided a possible solution to pressing unionist concerns: the need to counter I.R.A. violence and to provide a 'safety valve' for loyalist excesses.<sup>3</sup> Also, it would provide Unionist leaders with a symbolic assertion of their ability to handle their own affairs.<sup>4</sup>

The U.S.C. consisted of three classes. The A Specials were a full-time force, formed into mobile platoons designed to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary anywhere in the north. Tenure of duty lasted an initial six months and recruits received the basic R.I.C. pay of £3 17s 6d per week. The B Specials were a part-time auxiliary force and members were expected to patrol their own localities. Each B Special patrolled one night a week, unpaid. However, they received an annual allowance of £10 for expenses. The C class was a reserve force to be used in emergencies and without regular duties. Numerically, the B class composed the bulk of the U.S.C. with 19,500 positions authorised. The A class was authorised to enrol

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Lynch, *The Northern I.R.A. and the early years of partition, 1920-22* (Dublin, 2006), pp 21-37; Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 2004), pp 157-8; Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-1996: political forces and social classes* (London, 1996), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> For the concept of the U.S.C acting as a safety-valve on loyalist excesses, see T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010), p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, *Northern Ireland*, p. 41.

2,000 recruits and the C class had no fixed number.<sup>5</sup> Overall command of the U.S.C. was vested in Lt. Col. Charles Wickham, the R.I.C. divisional commissioner and later inspector-general of the R.U.C., although Arthur Solly-Flood, appointed military advisor in April 1922, also had a large degree of influence over the U.S.C.<sup>6</sup> Accountable to Wickham were county commandants while at a local level the B class was divided into districts and sub-districts, each with their own commandants.<sup>7</sup> The local structures of the U.S.C. operated separately from the R.I.C. and R.U.C., the latter having their own county inspectors and district inspectors.<sup>8</sup>

Key government figures, particularly the secretary of state for war, Winston Churchill, were favourable to the prospect of arming northern loyalists to form a special constabulary. Churchill hoped it would free British troops from duty in Ulster, allowing them to be used elsewhere in Ireland to combat the I.R.A. (or in England to contend with a threatened labour dispute). However, the proposal produced significant criticism, notably from General Nevil Macready, the G.O.C. of the British Army in Ireland. Macready foresaw its Protestant exclusivity which he felt would 'probably sow the seeds of civil war' and necessitate the introduction of additional troops.<sup>9</sup> Opposition also came from Sir Henry Wilson, chief of the imperial general staff and later chief security advisor to the Unionist government, who understood the implications of a Protestant armed force being given

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<sup>5</sup> For information on U.S.C. structure see Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary 1920-27* (London, 1983), pp 44-5.

<sup>6</sup> Lt. Col. Charles Wickham (1879-1971): English soldier; appointed divisional commissioner of the R.I.C. in Ulster in November 1920 with control over the new U.S.C. Wickham later became the first inspector-general of the R.U.C. in 1922; Arthur Solly-Flood (1871-1940): Born in Wexford, Solly-Flood joined the British army in 1891. After serving in several conflicts, including on the western front in the First World War, he was recommended to James Craig by the former chief of the imperial staff, Sir Henry Wilson, to for the position of military advisor to the Northern Ireland government. He served in this position from April to December 1922 and had significant influence on security policy and control of the U.S.C.

<sup>7</sup> Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>9</sup> C. F. N. Macready, *Annals of an active life* (2 vols, London, 1924), ii, pp 487-8.

responsibility for security matters in north-east Ulster. For Wilson the scheme was 'childish and wrong.'<sup>10</sup>

It was the intentions of leading Unionists and some British government ministers to use Ulster Volunteers as the main source of recruits for the U.S.C. However, little historical research has been conducted to determine whether these intentions translated neatly into reality. This chapter sets out to establish the most comprehensive analysis of the composition of the U.S.C. to date. It has drawn on previously unused records in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. In accordance with the Data Protection Act (U.K. 1998), the information from the U.S.C. personnel files supplied in this chapter omits details distinguishing particular individuals.<sup>11</sup> Regardless, a wealth of information from the application forms of B Specials in Co. Down between November 1920 and December 1922 reveal details regarding date of birth, occupation, previous military experience and marital status. Applicants in the 1920s were not required to state their religion but this can be ascertained in many cases with reference to the 1911 census. This information will be collated to establish an accurate profile of the U.S.C. The chapter begins by providing an overview of contemporaneous and historical perceptions of the U.S.C. Thereafter, it will offer findings from a database of 1197 B Specials providing information on various aspects of the composition of the U.S.C. to assess the accuracy of these perceptions. Finally, it will compare the composition of the B Specials with that of the I.R.A.

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<sup>10</sup> Wilson to Macready, 14 Sept. 1920, quoted in *ibid.* p. 488.

<sup>11</sup> Only the names of special constables who are mentioned in alternative sources are given.

## Perceptions

The U.S.C. has received a generally negative press since its inception in October 1920 due to the belief that it amounted to official recognition of the U.V.F. In September of that year, as plans were made to establish the force, the liberal *Westminster Gazette* called the U.S.C. 'the most inhuman expedient the government could have devised', declaring that 'all the eager spirits who have driven nationalist workmen from the docks or have demonstrated their loyalty by looting Catholics' shops will be eligible.'<sup>12</sup> The Catholic and nationalist community in Ulster was outraged by what they viewed as the arming of loyalists guilty of the expulsion of Catholics from workplaces and homes in mid-1920. The leader of northern nationalism, Joseph Devlin, voiced his opposition to what he viewed as a plan 'to arm pogromists to murder the Catholics.'<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Cardinal Logue complained to the Irish chief secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, that against a background of violence in Belfast, Londonderry and Lisburn, the government would be arming one side involved in inter-communal conflict.<sup>14</sup> Within republican circles there was a similar view of the U.S.C. as 'the Orange mob...provided with uniforms' and a force that would 'engage in the sort of activity that the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were engaged in'.<sup>15</sup> Most opponents of the U.S.C. believed that it was unacceptable that a security force be recruited from one section of the community. They suspected, as some historians later claimed, that it amounted to 'arming the Protestants'.

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<sup>12</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, 16 Sept. 1920, quoted in Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> John Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland, 1879-1925* (Manchester, 2009), p. 176.

<sup>15</sup> Statement of Roger McCorley (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 389).

Despite claims that the U.S.C. was only open to loyalist recruits, Bryan Follis has argued that the selection committees responsible for enrolling special constables rejected some loyalists, thus suggesting religion was not a factor for recruitment.<sup>16</sup> Yet, Follis's evidence – tables recording monthly figures of U.S.C. recruits – gives no indication as to who applied and who was rejected.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the assertion of a correlation between loyalists and the U.S.C. was not without justification. In previous efforts to enrol special constables by local authorities in Belfast and Lisburn, it was loyalists who had been sworn in. The result was that three special constables in Belfast were charged with looting while on duty.<sup>18</sup> A more harrowing scenario emerged in October 1920 when a large body of special constables was involved in a threatened mutiny in Lisburn.<sup>19</sup> These incidents demonstrated the potential difficulties faced by authorities in maintaining a disciplined force composed largely of loyalists within a context of communal strife.

After the creation of the U.S.C. nationalist fears were seemingly confirmed as members of the force were involved in atrocities, among the most notable being the attacks in Roslea on 22-23 February 1921 and the McMahon family massacre on 24 March 1922.<sup>20</sup> Such incidents, and the broader failure of the Unionist government to respond to nationalist concerns regarding the partisanship of the U.S.C., sustained the negative image of the security force right up until its dissolution in 1970.

Negative perceptions of the U.S.C. were largely shaped by a belief that it was based on the U.V.F. However, Timothy Bowman has argued that there was no quick

<sup>16</sup> Bryan Follis, *A state under siege: the establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920-1925* (Oxford, 1995), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Special Constabulary weekly return of recruiting, 30 Nov. 1920 to 29 Mar. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance, FIN/18/1/8). See Joost Augusteijn in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxx, no. 117 (May, 1996), pp150-153.

<sup>18</sup> *Irish News*, 28 Aug. 1920.

<sup>19</sup> See above, Chapter Two.

<sup>20</sup> Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 301; Timothy Wilson, "'The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast', the McMahon murders in context", in *I.H.S.*, xxxvii, no. 145 (May, 2010), pp 83-106.

transformation from this force to the U.S.C. Rather, there was competition between loyalist paramilitaries and the U.S.C. for recruits throughout the period to late 1922. In addition, Bowman argued that there were not enough Ulster Volunteers in 1920 to have provided the manpower to fulfil the ranks of the U.S.C.<sup>21</sup> Bowman's study thus suggested the need for caution in equating the U.S.C. with the U.V.F. One problem is the lack of available documentation on the U.S.C. which prevents a comprehensive survey of the force from being carried out. This chapter thus attempts to develop Bowman's argument regarding the composition of the U.S.C. It will first address the religious professions of B Specials in Co. Down before challenging the assumption that the U.S.C. was an official embodiment of the U.V.F. It will assess other factors relevant to its composition, such as occupation, age and marital status.

### Religion

The best known feature of the B Specials was its religious composition. It was generally accepted from the outset that a special constabulary in north-east Ulster would be overwhelmingly comprised of Protestants. Claims by the *Irish News* that Catholics would not be included in the force caused disquiet within administrative circles. Sir Ernest Clark, assistant under-secretary in Belfast, writing in November 1920 to his colleague and fellow assistant under-secretary in Dublin Castle, Andy Cope, raised the possibility of pursuing legal action against the newspaper, stating that it was not the intention of the government to recruit exclusively from the Protestant population.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the earliest stages of recruitment witnessed efforts to

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<sup>21</sup> Timothy Bowman, *Carson's army: the Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22* (Manchester, 2007), pp 190-201.

<sup>22</sup> Sir Ernest Clark to Andy Cope, 8 Nov. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/9). Sir Ernest Clark (1864-1951): English civil servant; worked under Sir John Anderson at Inland Revenue

open the force to Catholics, albeit with the intention that they would operate on separate patrols 'in order that sectarian differences may not interfere with the efficiency of the force.'<sup>23</sup> This policy of internal segregation was acceptable to a committee of Catholic magistrates in Lurgan, Co. Armagh, who concurred with Clark's ideas that Catholics would be more open to joining the U.S.C. if they were faced with a Catholic recruiting committee and if they were assured they would police their own districts.<sup>24</sup> A few months later, however, Clark expressed a belief that Catholic and Protestants, if integrated within the police forces, would be able to eliminate their differences due to the 'common enemy factor.'<sup>25</sup>

Clark's optimism was not widely shared. It was unlikely that substantial Catholic participation in the U.S.C. would have been acceptable to many within the unionist community. The logic behind a Protestant-dominated force was to neutralise loyalist anxieties about the alleged disloyalty of the R.I.C., and there had long been suspicions within official circles that Catholic police officers could not be trusted.<sup>26</sup> However, there were more immediate causes of suspicion within the context of revolutionary violence. The R.I.C. was a predominantly Catholic force with recruits being drawn from the Irish population as a whole, although the higher ranks of the R.I.C. were still very much the preserve of Protestants.<sup>27</sup> Even in Antrim and Down, where Catholics constituted 21 and 32 per cent of the population respectively, they

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in 1919; after Anderson was appointed Irish Under-Secretary in May 1920 to reform the Irish administration Clarke was offered the position of Assistant Under-Secretary in September. He was tasked with establishing the administrative framework for a northern Irish state. His unfamiliarity with Irish affairs aroused suspicions from leading Unionists regarding his political outlook, but Clark soon endeared himself to the Unionist position.

<sup>23</sup> Clark to Lord Armaghdale, 20 Nov. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/9).

<sup>24</sup> Committee of Catholic magistrates of Lurgan to Clark, 18 Nov. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/9).

<sup>25</sup> Clark to Cope, 11 Jan. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/9).

<sup>26</sup> Fergus Campbell, 'The social composition of the senior officers of the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1881-1911', in *I.H.S.*, xxxvi, no. 144 (Nov. 2009), p. 537.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 526-533.

represented 51 and 55 per cent of the R.I.C. in 1911.<sup>28</sup> However, the considerable Catholic presence within the rank and file gave many unionists the impression that republican spies had infiltrated the force.<sup>29</sup> Such suspicions were heightened by the fact that Michael Collins's intelligence network had managed to infiltrate the R.I.C. at many levels. Consequently, many unionists believed that loyalty could only be guaranteed by excluding Catholics.

Although the U.S.C. was not formally sectarian, insofar that Catholics were not legally barred from joining, appeals for 'loyalists and Unionists' to enrol in the context of republican violence made recruitment synonymous with the Protestant population.<sup>30</sup> There was a degree of agency on the part of local U.S.C. commanders, some of whom refused to accept Catholics.<sup>31</sup> The result was that the U.S.C. would become essentially a Protestant force. Of a sample of 536 B Specials from Co. Down between November 1920 and December 1922, only seven (1.3 per cent) were Catholic. There can be no doubt that the U.S.C. represented a bastion of Protestant power in which Catholics were not welcome. However, Catholic reluctance to join the U.S.C. was also caused by pressure from within their community. The attempted murder of a Catholic special constable by the I.R.A. in December 1920 and the influence of the Catholic hierarchy acted as deterrent.<sup>32</sup>

Sir James Craig, the first prime minister of Northern Ireland, was under no illusions as to the unpopularity of the U.S.C. among Catholics, recognising that they despised it even more than the British Army.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, there were occasional indications of a Catholic willingness to participate in the force. The most obvious

<sup>28</sup> Census of Ireland, 1911, province of Ulster, [Cd 6051], H.C. 1912.

<sup>29</sup> Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence*, pp 157-8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 21 Jan. 1921. Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> S. G. Tallents report on U.S.C., June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>32</sup> Sir Arthur Hezlet, *The B Specials: a history of the Ulster Special Constabulary* (London, 1972), p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Jones, *Whitehall diary*, ed. Keith Middlemas (3 vols, London, 1971), p. 208.



example of this was the attempt by Michael Collins to persuade Craig to ameliorate the social conditions of Catholics by actively seeking their enrolment onto the U.S.C. It was hoped Catholics would police their own districts, thus dispelling the opportunity for impulsive clashes between Catholic citizens and Protestant special constables.<sup>34</sup> However, rapprochement between the Unionist government and the Catholic minority was seriously hindered by the refusal of Unionist ministers to take seriously conciliatory efforts from within the Catholic community.<sup>35</sup> Added to this was a strong unwillingness by Unionist leaders to pursue a policy that would be fiercely unpopular with their own militant supporters. For instance, General Ricardo, county commandant of the U.S.C. in Tyrone, said, 'To allow the specials to become mixed was to destroy the security, in loyalist minds, of their state.'<sup>36</sup> It was mainly for this last reason that the proposed reforms of the U.S.C. in the Craig-Collins pacts failed.

The religious composition of the U.S.C. was vital in determining Catholic attitudes to Northern Ireland. Partisan policing solidified nationalist opposition to a state whose legitimacy was already in question. In 1921 numerous local councils in Northern Ireland pledged allegiance to Dáil Éireann rather than to the Belfast administration.<sup>37</sup> With the existence of the state in doubt, it is clear that the Unionist party reacted by tending to regard Catholics in general as disloyal and marginalising their role in the new state. Nowhere was this tendency more pronounced than in security measures. Although a third of the R.U.C. membership was allocated for

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins pacts of 1922: two attempted reforms of the Northern Ireland government', in *I.H.S.*, xxvii, no. 106 (Nov., 1990), p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> Kirsten Pedersen, 'Northern Ireland, 1921-30: the establishment of an Orange state?' in Joost Augusteijn and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Irish history: a research yearbook, Number 1* (Dublin, 2002), p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins pacts of 1922', p. 153.

<sup>37</sup> Farrell, *The Orange state*, p. 82.

Catholic recruits, the actual figure likely never exceeded 17 per cent.<sup>38</sup> Catholic representation in the U.S.C. was far lower, as shown above, and it was this force that would come to most define the sectarian nature of Northern Irish security policy. One U.S.C. commandant urged government ministers that Catholics should be included in the force, insisting that 'no government can govern without considering the minority... at all sacrifices to our own prejudices and feeling we ought to get the minority with us at all costs.'<sup>39</sup> Integrating all sections of society into the political institutions of the state and de-politicising the police are fundamental requirements for legitimising a security force.<sup>40</sup> In the Irish Free State the Garda Síochána was non-political and unarmed and this greatly aided its acceptance by a divided southern Irish populace.<sup>41</sup> By contrast, the U.S.C. was closely associated with the Unionist government and reflected Protestant interests, while Catholics were denied fair access to the institutions of the state by discrimination in employment (including to the civil service), gerrymandering of electoral boundaries and the abolition of proportional representation.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the Special Powers Act (1922) was used almost exclusively against Catholics. The imposition of this legislation by an overwhelmingly Protestant police force heightened Catholic alienation from the Northern state.

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<sup>38</sup> Buckland, 'A protestant state', p. 213.

<sup>39</sup> Statement of Col. W. K. Tillie, U.S.C. commandant, Derry, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2).

<sup>40</sup> Robert Reiner, *The politics of the Police* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Oxford, 2000), pp 50-9.

<sup>41</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005), pp 122-126.

<sup>42</sup> Ronald Weitzer, 'Policing a divided society: obstacles to normalization in Northern Ireland', in *Social Problems*, vol. 33, no. 1 (Oct., 1985), p. 42.

## The U.S.C. and U.V.F.

It has been widely assumed that the U.S.C. was generally recruited from the ranks of the U.V.F.<sup>43</sup> This is unsurprising considering the openness with which Unionist leaders toyed with the idea of re-constituting the U.V.F. as a constabulary force. Sir Edward Carson suggested arming northern loyalists to police Ulster districts as early as April 1920 and the idea soon attracted the support of Winston Churchill.<sup>44</sup> The U.V.F., which was in a dormant state until July 1920 when efforts to revive it were set in motion, was proposed by Unionists as the framework for a special constabulary. Prominent among advocates of this course was the intransigent Richard Dawson Bates, although some British government ministers also increasingly expressed support. Against this came voices of discontent from within British government and military circles. W. E. Wylie, legal advisor to Dublin Castle, and General Macready believed such a partisan force would lead to the alienation of the northern nationalist community.<sup>45</sup> They held the view that a special constabulary would be Protestant and exclusively loyalist. Tom Jones, assistant secretary to the British Cabinet, viewed the scheme as tantamount to recognition of the U.V.F.<sup>46</sup> However, the British government's Irish sub-committee agreed that 'advantage ought to be taken of the willingness of the North to protect themselves and steps [should be] taken to enlist Volunteers on a Special Constabulary basis.'<sup>47</sup> James Craig confirmed to Greenwood that Spender, the leader of the U.V.F., 'has placed

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<sup>43</sup> Liam de Poar, *Divided Ulster* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 98; Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence*, p. 158; Patrick Buckland, *Factory of grievances: devolved government in Northern Ireland, 1921-39* (Dublin, 1979), p. 181; J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 59; David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 30-32;

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 31-7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

the whole of the Ulster Volunteer Force machinery at the disposal of Colonel Wickham'.<sup>48</sup> Nationalist accounts also claimed that the U.V.F. was 'restored with legally-approved power to use rifles' and represented 'the arming of those Protestants who could be relied on as enemies of all nationalist ideas'.<sup>49</sup>

In practice it appears that some U.V.F. units and other loyalist forces were integrated into the new U.S.C. This was reportedly the case in Comber, Co. Down, and Lurgan, Co. Armagh.<sup>50</sup> Further evidence of an overlap between loyalist forces and the U.S.C. can be found in the appointment of U.S.C. commandants who were previously leaders of loyalist paramilitary groups. Sir Basil Brooke, founder of the Fermanagh Vigilance Force (effectively the U.V.F. renamed in the hope of neutralising the religious connotations of the force), was appointed U.S.C. county commandant for Fermanagh. Similarly, in Ballymena the B Special district commandant was George C. G. Young, a prominent Orangeman and former commander of the local U.V.F.<sup>51</sup> Finally, in Armagh the local U.V.F. leader, John Webster, became the sub-district commandant of the B Specials.<sup>52</sup> Early special constabulary forces, such as those in Belfast and Lisburn, also illustrated the likelihood that loyalists would be recruited onto peacekeeping bodies. For example, when the Lisburn urban council enrolled special constables in the aftermath of anti-Catholic rioting, the R.I.C. inspector general reported in October 1920 that a number of these men were in fact Ulster Volunteers.<sup>53</sup> A month later the R.I.C. county

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<sup>48</sup> James Craig to Sir Hamar Greenwood, 27 Jan. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/71).

<sup>49</sup> Benedict Kiely, *Counties of contention: a study of the origins and implications of the partition of Ireland* (Cork, 1945), p. 124.

<sup>50</sup> Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 16 June 1922.

<sup>52</sup> 'Typescripts re. formation of U.S.C. in Armagh, c. 1961', (P.R.O.N.I., John Webster papers, D1290/6).

<sup>53</sup> R.I.C. inspector-general report, Antrim, Oct. 1920, (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/113).

inspector recorded his belief that the U.V.F. would enrol *en masse* into the official U.S.C.<sup>54</sup>

These strands of evidence, however, should not be applied to the U.S.C. as a whole as there is no way of ascertaining whether these examples were representative. Further, the mere fact that they were deemed important enough for comment perhaps suggests their exceptionality. This section will attempt to address this problem with reference to U.S.C. application forms that required each recruit to provide details regarding previous military experience. This may be important as a large number of Ulster Volunteers went to war in 1914.<sup>55</sup>

Table 1.1

Military experience of B Specials, Co. Down, 1920-22		
Sample	1191	100 %
Ex-military	205	17 %
No experience	986	83 %

Although it is not known exactly how many Ulster Volunteers went to war in 1914, the higher estimate is 31,000. This incorporated around one third of the total force in 1914.<sup>56</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that if the U.S.C. was based on the U.V.F., then a significant number of special constables would have previous military experience. However, as Table 1.1 makes clear, only a small proportion of B Specials between 1920 and 1922 had previously been part of the British armed forces.

<sup>54</sup> R.I.C. county inspector report, Antrim, Nov. 1920, (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/113).

<sup>55</sup> U.S.C. recruits did not have to supply information regarding previous membership of the U.V.F.

<sup>56</sup> Bowman, *Carson's army*, pp 172-3.

Some ex-soldiers may have rejected an opportunity to join the B Specials due to war-weariness. It was believed by senior Unionists that the U.V.F. revival in 1920 was seriously hindered by the unattractiveness of a return to a militaristic lifestyle for Ulster Volunteers who had served during the war.<sup>57</sup> However, it could be possible that a large number of B Specials were in fact former Ulster Volunteers who did not go to war. After all, if one third went to war, then a majority did not.

**Table 1.2**

<b>Ages of B Specials at outbreak of the Great War</b>		
<b>Sample</b>	1192	100 %
<b>Under 16</b>	495	42 %
<b>16 or over</b>	697	58 %

If examining the previous military experience of B Specials cannot shed much light on whether the U.S.C. consisted of former Ulster Volunteers, then another approach that considers the ages of B Specials can be applied. Table 1.2 shows the proportion of B Specials who would have been old enough in 1914 to have joined the U.V.F. Assuming that Ulster Volunteers had to be 16 years of age and above, it is possible to eliminate a significant number of B Specials from ever having been part of the pre-war U.V.F.<sup>58</sup> As these figures suggest, 42 per cent of B Specials would have been under 16 years of age by the outbreak of war in 1914. It could therefore be assumed that a very significant proportion of the U.S.C. was too young to have been in the pre-war U.V.F. In addition, of the 697 B Specials who

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 193.

<sup>58</sup> Although the U.V.F. reportedly recruited boys as young as 14, it has been assumed that these were exceptional.

were old enough to have been members of the pre-war U.V.F., 74 per cent did not join the British army during the First World War.

In addition to these findings, as Bowman asserted, throughout 1921 and 1922 the U.S.C. competed with the U.V.F. and other loyalist vigilante forces for members.<sup>59</sup> There is little evidence to suggest the U.V.F. revival was successful in many areas. In east Ulster police intelligence failed to record much increase in membership. The R.I.C. county inspector of Antrim noted in August 1920 that the U.V.F. was being reorganised but recorded it as 'inactive' only three months later.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, in light of Unionist criticisms of the U.V.F. in 1920 for being too weak and disorganised to defend Ulster in the event of a crisis (such as the withdrawal of the army to deal with a threatened coal miners' strike in Britain), it appears that if all members of the revived U.V.F. joined the U.S.C. in 1920 then they composed only part of the latter force. The U.S.C., being much larger than the revived U.V.F., was forced to draw on large numbers of men who were not Ulster Volunteers.

It still remains, however, that the U.S.C. was viewed as a loyalist force. As indicated, some Unionists sought to recruit loyalists, while opponents of the U.S.C. accused it of pursuing deliberate partisan recruitment policies. In addition, there is reason to believe that those joining the U.S.C. understood it to be a loyalist force. For example, one man, Mr A. McMullan, wrote to James Craig pleading for reinstatement to the U.S.C. after being dismissed. He repeatedly attested to his personal loyalty to the Unionist party and the British Empire by describing how he had volunteered in the pre-war U.V.F. and the British Army during the Great War. He explained that he had left a job in the Belfast Corporation to join the A class of the U.S.C. after its establishment but that he had been dismissed unfairly in March

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<sup>59</sup> Bowman, *Carson's army*, pp 195-7.

<sup>60</sup> CI monthly reports, Antrim, Aug. and Nov. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/112-113).

1922. McMullan complained: 'I am now paying the price for my loyalty to the empire.'<sup>61</sup> Another man, William Beck, similarly hoping for re-instatement to the U.S.C., referred to himself as an 'old soldier and staunch Unionist.'<sup>62</sup> Also, a woman seeking a transfer for her husband who had enrolled in the A Specials and had been moved from Newtownards to Newry, described him as a 'staunch supporter' of the Unionist party.<sup>63</sup> In each case it is clear that a belief existed that loyalist credentials were a pre-requisite for enlistment to the U.S.C.

### Occupational and social backgrounds

The two characteristics of the U.S.C. already discussed – Protestantism and loyalism – have never been in doubt. Although this chapter indicates that links with the U.V.F. were weaker than previously believed, there is no reason to doubt that those who joined the U.S.C. were predominantly loyalists. However, due to the highly charged political situation in the north of Ireland from 1920 the historiography of the U.S.C. has inevitably focused on those aspects that most clearly contributed to inter-communal tensions in Northern Ireland: religion and politics. Unlike the I.R.A., whose contemporary opponents frequently besmirched its image by describing its members as the dregs of society, the U.S.C. has escaped derogatory descriptions of its rank and file.<sup>64</sup> Here, an attempt will be made to construct a brief outline of the occupational and social composition of the B Specials in Co. Down. Comparisons

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<sup>61</sup> Mr A. McMullan, Glarryford, Co. Antrim, to Sir James Craig, 4 July 1922, (P.R.O.N.I., Department of Prime Minister, PM/2/14/494).

<sup>62</sup> William H. Beck, Dunadry, Co. Antrim, to Sir James Craig, 23 Sept. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of Prime Minister PM/2/2/89).

<sup>63</sup> Mrs S. N. Hewitt, Newtownards, to James Craig, 29 Nov. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of Prime Minister, PM/2/8/147).

<sup>64</sup> For perceptions of the I.R.A. see Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), pp 134-5.



will consistently be drawn with Peter Hart's work on the other popular fighting force in revolutionary Ireland: the I.R.A.

Table 1.3

Occupations of B Specials, Co. Down, 1920-22			Census, 1911
Occupations			
Sample	1143	100 %	
Farmer/Son	358	31 %	31 %
Un/semi-skilled	160	14 %	16 %
Skilled	182	16 %	13 %
Shop asst./clerk	48	4 %	2 %
Merchant	13	1 %	5 %
Professional	12	1 %	6 %
Labourers	366	32 %	21 %
Unemployed/retired	4	0.3 %	

All recruits to the B Specials were obliged to provide occupational details on application forms. These have been used to compile Table 1.3. The largest occupational category for B Specials was farming, accounting for 31 per cent of recruits, a proportion that was exactly representative of the population in Co. Down. This contrasts sharply with the composition of the I.R.A., where the farming community was under-represented.<sup>65</sup>

Unskilled and semi-skilled workers were slightly under-represented (14 per cent of B Specials against 16 per cent in the 1911 census), whereas skilled workers were slightly over-represented in the B Specials. In contrast, at the height of revolutionary violence between 1920 and 1923, unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled

<sup>65</sup> Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), p. 114.

workers were significantly over-represented in the I.R.A.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, certain trades such as carpenters, blacksmiths and mechanics were particularly prominent in both forces. In the B Specials unskilled and semi-skilled factory workers – mainly weavers, bleachers and flax workers – were present in large numbers. This can be easily explained as reflecting industrialisation in the northern – and largely Protestant – parts of Down, where towns such as Gilford, Banbridge and Dromore had expanded in the nineteenth century as centres of textile production.

Another notable aspect of the occupational structure of the B Specials was the over-representation of labourers.<sup>67</sup> Accounting for 20 per cent of males of employable age in Down in 1911, labourers constituted 32 per cent of the B Specials, thus becoming the largest occupational group in the force. It is possible, in light of the economic problems of the early 1920s, that many men registered as labourers were in fact unemployed at any given period of their tenure as B Specials. One commandant of the U.S.C. in south Down told government representatives that 'it was only the unemployed who are getting in the Specials. The greater number of them were unemployed.'<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the negative descriptions of the I.R.A. as consisting of men with little or no stake in the country by mainly British-based opponents (although members of the Free State authorities also held similar views during the civil war) were more applicable to the B class of the British-sponsored U.S.C.

Timothy Bowman's study of the pre-war U.V.F. has described that force as 'the real "people's army" of the Irish Revolution.'<sup>69</sup> His research shows that the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

<sup>67</sup> These include agricultural and industrial labourers as the two were not distinguished in the 1911 census.

<sup>68</sup> Statement of W. H. Sandford, A Special commandant, Newry, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2).

<sup>69</sup> Bowman, *Carson's army*, p. 54.

U.V.F. drew largely from lower social groups than the I.R.A. and was thus more representative of Irish society. As this research demonstrates the B Specials represented a rough cross-section of Down society; in farming the B Specials mirrored society and the four largest occupational groups represented 93 per cent of the B Specials and 81 per cent of society. The only significant deviation was in the labourer group which was over-represented in the B Specials, constituting almost a third of the force and a fifth of society.

These findings may be explained by the application process for the U.S.C. Special constables had to apply for membership and fit certain criteria before enrolment. As U.S.C. recruitment tables indicate, by the time of the Truce in July 1921 the B class throughout the six counties had received a total of 17,931 applications, but only 14,905 had been recruited. This means that 3,026 applicants had been rejected, despite the authorisation of over 20,000 positions.<sup>70</sup> This suggests that selection committees turned away 17 per cent of applicants and that certain factors influenced recruitment. Thus, the composition of the B Specials was skewed accordingly.

Ideally recruits had to fit certain criteria in order to be favoured for enrolment. Age and fitness were important factors. Although an age limit of 45 was placed on all recruits of the U.S.C., it was only strictly applied to the A Specials. Older men would be considered for the B class, especially if they displayed leadership qualities.<sup>71</sup> Age and fitness were important as those who were physically unfit would not be considered.<sup>72</sup> The case of Thomas Ingram, principal of St James School, Hillsborough, illustrated this point. Ingram was aged 55 when he joined in

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<sup>70</sup> Special Constabulary weekly return of strength, 8 April to 30 September 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance, FIN 18/1/10).

<sup>71</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 20 Nov. 1920.

<sup>72</sup> W. B. Spender memorandum to O.C. Battalions, Belfast Regiment U.V.F., 29 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Spender papers, D1295/2/12).

1924 and within only three months he was forced into retirement due to the effects his U.S.C. duty was having on his health.<sup>73</sup> Simultaneously, Ingram's occupation was a hindrance to his duties. On enrolling as a B Special he encountered difficulties in getting time off work to attend an obligatory two-week training course. It was only when a local clergyman wrote to the Ministry of Education that Ingram was granted permission to close the school while he attended the training camp.<sup>74</sup> It may have been beneficial for the U.S.C. to recruit men who did not work in highly demanding occupations. Likewise, men without families were presumably preferable as they had fewer commitments at home. As Table 1.4 illustrates, just under two thirds of recruits were unmarried. This is a feature the B Specials shared with the I.R.A., although an even larger proportion of the latter were unmarried.<sup>75</sup>

**Table 1.4**

<b>Marriage status</b>		
<b>Sample</b>	1189	100 %
<b>Married</b>	421	35 %
<b>Single</b>	761	64 %
<b>Widowed</b>	7	1 %

A second factor influencing who joined the B Specials was the need to recruit men with good local knowledge. B Specials were expected to patrol their own localities, including rural areas with which full-time police or soldiers stationed in the area would be less familiar. Thus, farmers, who were particularly familiar with their rural locality, were popular. Similarly, postmen accounted for a significant

<sup>73</sup> Ingram to Assistant secretary, Ministry of Education, 9 Aug. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Education ED/14/C/290).

<sup>74</sup> Assistant secretary, Ministry of Education, to Reverend F. Machett, The Rectory, Hillsborough, 29 May 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Education, ED/14/C/290).

<sup>75</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 121.

number of recruits due perhaps to their intimate knowledge of addresses and the local population.<sup>76</sup>

In terms of why volunteers came forward, some may have been attracted to the U.S.C. by a sense of duty. While it has been suggested that many Great War veterans suffered from war weariness, younger men may have felt the U.S.C. was their opportunity to defend their country. It was with ease that Lt. Col. Goodwin, county commandant of the U.S.C. in Antrim, convinced young men in Ballymena to join the force in January 1921. After calls for loyal citizens to help counter the threat of Sinn Féin, the *Ballymena Observer* noted how large numbers of young men eagerly took application forms.<sup>77</sup>

As with enlistment in to the British Army and I.R.A., it seems reasonable to assume that collective social pressure was an important factor in recruitment. Members of social groups, sporting clubs and militias were more susceptible to collective pressures during the Great War.<sup>78</sup> A similar trend occurred in the I.R.A: in Cork there was 'a frenzy of collective joining'.<sup>79</sup> There was a strong social element to enrolling in the U.S.C. Special constables were drawn from the locality in which they would serve and many joined as part of groups, a process encouraged by the U.S.C. leadership. In a circular to U.V.F. leaders in Belfast, Wickham made clear that application forms would be available *en bloc*.<sup>80</sup> The process of enrolment also had a communal element to it as large groups were inducted at one time. In most localities there was a main recruitment day where most B Specials enrolled. These

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<sup>76</sup> There were twelve postmen in the B Specials in County Down, making it among the most represented occupations on the force.

<sup>77</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 21 Jan. 1921.

<sup>78</sup> David Fitzpatrick, 'The logic of collective sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918', in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (1995), pp 1029-30.

<sup>79</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, p. 206.

<sup>80</sup> W. B. Spender Memorandum to O.C. Battalions, Belfast Regiment U.V.F., 29 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Spender papers, D1295/2/12).

were then supplemented by other recruits, seemingly enrolled in smaller groups or individually. By recruiting large numbers collectively the local B Specials maintained social bonds and solidarity. This was strengthened by the enrolment of co-workers or family members. For example, on 24 January 1921 twenty-eight recruits were enrolled in Kilkeel, south Down. Among them were five tailors, five shop assistants and two carpenters.<sup>81</sup> In addition, two brothers were recruited. Similar trends occurred elsewhere. In the adjoining coastal villages of Annalong and Ballymartin, three stonecutters (a third of all stonecutters recruited in Down), nineteen farmers and two brothers were among twenty-five enlisted on 11 February 1921. Almost half of all fifteen bleachers recruited in Down between 1920 and 1922 enrolled on 19 May 1921 in Banbridge. These were not exceptions: three sets of brothers were recruited in Waringstown, west Down, on 25 May 1922. In that town a month later, a father and son enrolled together. In total at least ninety-three people joined alongside family members. The actual figure may have been much larger, but owing to difficulties in ascertaining family members from the lists of recruits it is impossible to know exactly how many people joined alongside brothers, fathers or sons. In addition, it can only be speculated as to how many recruits from the same occupational background actually worked together.

It is highly likely that men joining in remote rural villages were familiar with most other local recruits. In some cases men went on patrols with family members. In one incident in which B Specials shot two men near Rathfriland, the group of special constables included two sets of brothers.<sup>82</sup> This suggests there was a clear social element to the B Special force. In this respect it had much in common with the

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<sup>81</sup> These represented 36 per cent of tailors, 26 per cent of shop assistants and 9 per cent of carpenters who enrolled in the B Specials in Co. Down between 1920 and 1922.

<sup>82</sup> 'Enquiry into the conduct of Special Constabulary', 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs, HA/5/983)

I.R.A. As Peter Hart has shown, many volunteer groups were formed by friends, co-workers or members of the same family.<sup>83</sup> The obvious difference between the two organisations, however, was that special constables were selected by local magistrates with a detachment from familial and social networks of applicants. However, this does not appear to have prevented men from joining with friends and family.

Various factors affected whether someone applied to join the U.S.C. For many men joining the force represented 'a supreme duty'.<sup>84</sup> The mayor of Newtownards compared special constables to Great War volunteers.<sup>85</sup> For some the phrase 'He who is not with me is against me' was reason to join, lest one be associated with disloyalty.<sup>86</sup> Wickham appealed to the patriotism and masculinity of recruits by asking them 'to prove their loyalty and their worth'.<sup>87</sup> Admiration and respect was on offer to special constables. The chairman of Newtownards urban council, T. R. Lavery, expressed pride and honour that the U.S.C. training camp was situated in his town. The local Assembly Room was made available for recreational use by the special constabulary and live performances were offered as a form of entertainment.<sup>88</sup> Potentially recruits faced an elevation in social status, gaining respect and appreciation for their efforts that their full-time occupations alone would have rendered impossible.

The attraction of the adventure and excitement of a military life may have drawn younger men to the B Specials. This was perhaps especially the case for those

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<sup>83</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp 208-10.

<sup>84</sup> This is how one recruitment agent described the act of joining the U.S.C.: *Dromore Leader*, 12 Feb. 1921.

<sup>85</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 11 Dec. 1920.

<sup>86</sup> Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism: two: Ulster Unionism and the origins of Northern Ireland 1886-1922* (Dublin, 1973), p. 167.

<sup>87</sup> W. B. Spender Memorandum to O.C. Battalions, Belfast Regiment U.V.F., 29 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Spender papers, D1295/2/12).

<sup>88</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 18 Dec. 1920.

who were too young to have volunteered for service in the Great War and may have viewed the U.S.C. as an opportunity to voluntarily express their loyalty. For instance, in a speech at a recruitment rally in Ballymena, Lt. Col. Goodwin, U.S.C. county commandant for Antrim, said ex-servicemen 'had already done their bit'.<sup>89</sup> As Table 1.5 illustrates, the force attracted large numbers of men aged between 16 and 20 while over half the force during its first two years was aged 25 or under. When viewed in the light of Bowman's analysis of the age groups of a section of the pre-war U.V.F., the U.S.C. consisted largely of a new generation of those who were too young to have participated in earlier paramilitary movements. While these factors encouraged young men to volunteer for the B Specials, it was also favourable for recruitment committees to enrol 'the youngest and most efficient men'.<sup>90</sup>

In his profile of the U.V.F. Bowman drew attention to the higher preponderance of older volunteers in the U.V.F. than in the I.R.A. In each of Bowman's five sample groups of Ulster Volunteers, between 18 and 39 per cent were over the age of forty.<sup>91</sup> By contrast, Hart has shown that men over forty accounted for between 1 and 4 per cent of the I.R.A. from 1917 to 1923.<sup>92</sup> In relation to these two forces the B Specials in Down bore greater similarity to the U.V.F. where 14 per cent were over the age of forty.

Bowman commented on the contrast between older members of the U.V.F. and I.R.A.: 'If, as Peter Hart has argued, membership of the I.R.A. was a result partly of a rebellion of youth, then membership of the U.V.F. seems to have been

<sup>89</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 21 Jan. 1920.

<sup>90</sup> George C. G. Young, B Special commandant for Ballymena district, speaking at a recruitment meeting in Ballymena for the local B Special force, *Ballymena Observer*, 21 Jan. 1920.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 55-7.

<sup>92</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 121.



Table 1.5

Age of B Specials at point of enrolment		
Sample	1192	100 %
16-20	306	25.7 %
21-25	347	29.1 %
26-29	130	10.9 %
30-35	172	14.4 %
36-45	165	13.8 %
46-59	68	5.7 %
60+	4	0.3 %

more likely a result of mid-life crisis.’<sup>93</sup> What Bowman does not take into account is that the I.R.A., in Hart’s view, represented a break with tradition. Young men did not share with their parents the same perspective of the political situation in Ireland. While the older generations tended to oppose the break with traditional forms of political participation (constitutionalism), youth became more easily associated with the revolutionary movement.<sup>94</sup> Opportunities for Ireland’s youths were limited during the war years with restrictions on emigration. Aspiring young men from lower middle-class families were faced with the unfulfilling status as ‘the heirs of respectable, successful households’. They ‘were, however, still “the boys”, youths of no property and little consequence until the war made them heroes.’<sup>95</sup> The young men who formed the bulk of the I.R.A. did not succeed in escaping from their fathers’ shadows until the war and revolution brought new opportunities.<sup>96</sup> This raises the question: why did a similar inter-generational rivalry not occur within unionism?

<sup>93</sup> Bowman, *Carson’s army*, p. 55.

<sup>94</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies*, pp 165-170. Contemporary fiction also referred to this trend: see, for instance, George Shiels, ‘The Retrievers’, in Christopher Murray (ed), *Selected plays of George Shiels* (Gerrards Cross, 2008), p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 183.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, pp 167-170.

Irish Volunteers were the 'children of the 1890s'.<sup>97</sup> However, many B Specials of the same 1890s generation did not form a group representing a departure from the political consensus of their fathers. Rather, older generations and youth could come together in one political movement. This was possible as it was the older generation in 1913 that initiated the shift from constitutional to paramilitary-based political discourse. However, the U.S.C. represented an intensification of the political situation as it was only in late 1920 that a loyalist force was officially sanctioned by the state. Furthermore, the U.S.C. was fully endorsed by the Unionist leadership rather than being the initiative of a more extreme revolutionary group. Finally, the I.R.A. was concerned with rebelling against the establishment that the U.S.C. sought to uphold, with there being little room for inter-generational disunity in the latter case.

### Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to shed some light on the composition of the B Specials. Widely believed to be a continuation of the U.V.F., the U.S.C. in fact represented a younger cohort than the older generation of militant unionism. In Down the B Specials were mainly young, unmarried men with little personal experience of Ireland's political struggles over the preceding three decades. Also, they represented the society from which they were derived more accurately than the I.R.A.

Limits are placed on what can be discovered about B Specials by using the application forms as the main source of information. Consequently, there is much that remains unknown about the B Specials in Down during the revolution. For

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 171.

example, although it has been argued that the U.S.C. was not formed from ranks of the pre-war U.V.F., it remains the case that many special constables may have been involved in the communal violence of 1920. For many the U.S.C. was a loyalist force, undoubtedly attracting extreme elements from within the Protestant community. Due to the lack of arrests made in the aftermath of the riots in east Ulster in mid-1920, the R.I.C. had no way of knowing how many rioters, gunmen and loyalist extremists went on to join the U.S.C.

There is little evidence for the motivations of special constables. In the absence of a unionist version of the Bureau of Military History or other first-hand accounts of the revolutionary period from rank-and-file members, historical knowledge of the U.S.C. rests upon evidence left by those who were in positions of political influence. In the absence of adequate source material it can only be speculated that motivating factors may have included the same kinds of collective pressures that contributed to British Army and I.R.A. enlistment: a desire to express loyalty to a cause, a sense of duty and social pressure.<sup>98</sup>

This study covers only the B class of the U.S.C. One should not assume that the A Specials took on a similar social form. Recruitment to this full-time body offered men a greater economic incentive to join. For example, when James Bell from Rathfriland completed his first six-month term as an A Special he requested to be 'allowed to serve another period as a Special Constable in order to enable him to save money to pay for a passage to Canada.'<sup>99</sup> The A Specials may also have drawn more on ex-soldiers and, in turn, this may have resulted in a larger number of Ulster Volunteers being recruited. Similarly, the religious composition of the A Specials may have been affected by the possible recruitment of former R.I.C. officers.

<sup>98</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 8 July 1921.

<sup>99</sup> C. H. Blackwell, private secretary of James Craig, to Richard Dawson Bates, 22/3/1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of Prime Minister, PM/2/2/85/1-2).

Conceptually, the U.S.C. should be viewed within the context of both revolution in Ireland and state creation in the north, rather than solely the latter. The U.S.C. can be assessed alongside the I.R.A. whose activities in Ulster brought the former into being. As these two forces came into contact in Northern Ireland (and occasionally outside it), a greater knowledge of the composition of the opposing forces will add to our understanding of Ulster during the revolutionary period.

## Chapter Five

### **‘The wilder the better’? The Ulster Special Constabulary and unauthorised violence**

#### Introduction

The Ulster Special Constabulary was established in October 1920 to confront the threat of the Irish Republican Army in the north of Ireland. The U.S.C. would become the primary northern security force under the control of R.I.C. divisional commissioner for Ulster, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Wickham. By the end of the year special constables were active in some parts of Ulster, but it was not until the first months of 1921 that the force was effective in each of the six counties that became Northern Ireland in May that year. Its introduction was uneven – many towns and regions took longer than others to enrol a U.S.C. company. However, in July 1921 the B Specials were universally suspended as a result of the Truce between the British government and the I.R.A. It was not until late November that the Northern Ireland government took control of security policy and was able to utilise the U.S.C. to consolidate its authority. During the first half of 1922 the Unionist administration reinforced its authority with further expansions of U.S.C. membership, repressive legislation in the form of the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act and the establishment of a new northern police force: the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The U.S.C. was an unconventional security force in the context of early twentieth-century Britain and Ireland: it was recruited from the civilian population,

largely on a part-time basis. More important, however, was its partisanship. While Catholics were not legally prevented from joining, the U.S.C. was recruited almost exclusively from the Protestant population of Northern Ireland. Given the context of a communal conflict this entailed arming and bestowing a degree of legitimacy upon one side. Paradoxically, it was hoped the U.S.C. would impartially maintain law and order, protecting localities from attack.<sup>1</sup> It was also expected to work alongside conventional state forces – the R.I.C. (later the R.U.C.) and the army – that were generally recruited on a broader, non-sectarian basis. Therefore, from the outset the U.S.C. was characterised by inherent contradictions. Consequently, the U.S.C. provoked stern criticism from the Irish nationalists and many commentators in Britain. Despite the force's centrality to the establishment of Northern Ireland and the shaping of Catholic attitudes to the new state, historical inquiry into the U.S.C. has been surprisingly scarce. The two principal accounts of the force are weakened by bias and the unavailability of key archival collections.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently there has been no comprehensive or objective study of the U.S.C. This chapter seeks to add to historical understanding of key aspects of the organisation, particularly its impact on the security situation in east Ulster, and to evaluate the charges of ill-discipline against some of its members and assess critical perceptions of the force in general. The question of whether the U.S.C., as some historians have claimed, was responsible for the defeat of the northern I.R.A. in mid-1922 will be addressed in the first section of this chapter. In addition, it will be asked whether the U.S.C. was effective in inhibiting loyalist violence. Following this, the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920-7* (London, 1983), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> See Michael Farrell's left-republican account, *Arming the Protestants* and Arthur Hezlet's sympathetic history, *The B Specials: a history of the Ulster Special Constabulary* (London, 1972). Bryan Follis's *A state under siege: the establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920-1925* (Oxford, 1995) also adopts a sympathetic, pro-unionist view of the force. The bulk of the U.S.C. archive in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (P.R.O.N.I.) remains closed.

relationship between special constables and the regular state forces will be investigated, before asking whether it was the policy of those who established the U.S.C. to enrol political extremists onto the force. These three avenues of enquiry seek to establish the groundwork for further investigations into the general conduct of members of the U.S.C. Thus, the second half of this chapter will address the involvement of special constables in acts of unauthorised violence and offer an explanation as to why such incidents occurred.

### How did the U.S.C. influence the security situation?

The U.S.C. proved an effective obstacle to I.R.A. activity by mobilising a large number of armed special constables. By the time of the Truce there were 15,903 B Specials and 3,515 A Specials enrolled throughout Northern Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the northern I.R.A.'s campaign it was the B Specials that proved to be their fiercest opponents.<sup>4</sup> While the U.S.C. afforded the police a large numerical advantage over the I.R.A., opinions differ as to whether it was the U.S.C. that led to the defeat of armed republicanism in Ulster. Thus, an attempt will be made to assess the effectiveness of the U.S.C.

To begin, it will be necessary to gauge the assessment of the U.S.C. by contemporary commentators. Senior police officers often referred to special constables as providing valuable assistance, such as in south Down when the introduction of two platoons of A Specials significantly curtailed I.R.A. activity at the end of 1920.<sup>5</sup> In March 1921 the R.I.C. county inspector for Down recorded:

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<sup>3</sup> 'Special Constabulary weekly return of strength', 30 July 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance, FIN/18/1/10).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Lynch, *The Northern I.R.A. and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006), p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> R.I.C. county inspector report, Down, Dec. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/113).

'Matters would, I am confident, be much worse but for the activities of the R.I.C. and special constabulary.'<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the county inspector of Antrim believed that 'very valuable assistance is being given by Class B special constabulary in the disturbed areas.'<sup>7</sup> Such reports were commonplace prior to the suspension of the B Specials in July 1921. Major-General Sir Henry Tudor, chief of the R.I.C., expressed his delight at the U.S.C.: 'The "A" Platoons are very smart and well organised...I was very struck with the efficiency of the organisation of the "B" patrols, and the importance of the work they are doing.'<sup>8</sup>

The U.S.C., with strength in numbers, thus proved vital in the struggle against the I.R.A. In the lead up to the first Northern Ireland parliamentary elections, when the police anticipated an increase in I.R.A. activity, the B Specials were utilised to patrol roads. The absence of an upsurge in I.R.A. attacks before the elections was attributed to such policing methods.<sup>9</sup> In addition, as overnight patrols formed the main activity of the B Specials, they proved effective in countering the nocturnal raids on barracks which the I.R.A. often deployed.<sup>10</sup> They also received praise for their success in protecting private property.<sup>11</sup> It is also indicative of the effectiveness of the B Specials that during their suspension after the Truce the I.R.A. was able to openly re-organise.<sup>12</sup> One historian has argued that it was the U.S.C., more than the outbreak of civil war in southern Ireland, that brought about the defeat of the northern I.R.A.<sup>13</sup> In reality, however, despite the numerical advantage and almost omnipresence the B Specials afforded the authorities, the U.S.C. alone did not defeat

<sup>6</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Down, Mar. 1921 (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/114).

<sup>7</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Apr. 1921 (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/115).

<sup>8</sup> Major-General Tudor to Lt. Col. Charles Wickham, 13 May 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/9).

<sup>9</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Down, May 1921, (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/115).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the raid on Martinstown barracks: *Ballymena Observer*, 26 May 1922.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Beattie, chairman of Newcastle urban council, to Richard Dawson Bates, 10 Mar. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/221).

<sup>12</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, pp 81-4.

<sup>13</sup> Follis, *A state under siege*, pp 107-8.



the I.R.A. That an end came to republican violence in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1922 was the result of several factors including the transfer of responsibility for security policy to Belfast in November 1921, the passing of the Special Powers Act in April 1922, a collapse in Catholic support for the I.R.A. and the impact of the Irish civil war.<sup>14</sup>

The U.S.C. alone could not eradicate the existence of a guerrilla militia in east Ulster. As Table 1.1 illustrates, the number of I.R.A. attacks peaked during the spring offensive of 1922. Many of these attacks occurred in areas with Catholic majorities, such as south Down and the Antrim glens. Considering the Protestant nature of the U.S.C., the force drew fewer members and less support from predominantly Catholic areas such as the glens. Only when the I.R.A. ventured into Protestant areas and targeted unionist or state security buildings (i.e. guarded country houses or police barracks) could special constables be assured of encountering their enemies. Thus, it was during raids such as those on Ballydugan House in Down, Ballycastle barracks and twenty-two other similar targets between 20 May and 22 June 1922 that the I.R.A. and B Specials came into contact.<sup>15</sup> The presence of large numbers of B Specials in Protestant areas, in the words of one I.R.A. leader in Antrim, 'rendered our objective impossible to attain.'<sup>16</sup> This does not imply, however, that the I.R.A. was defeated. In many cases the attackers were repelled, but in other cases the I.R.A. could be said to have inflicted significant blows on the U.S.C. For example, although they failed to capture Martinstown barracks on 26 May 1922, the I.R.A. killed one special constable and wounded another four while

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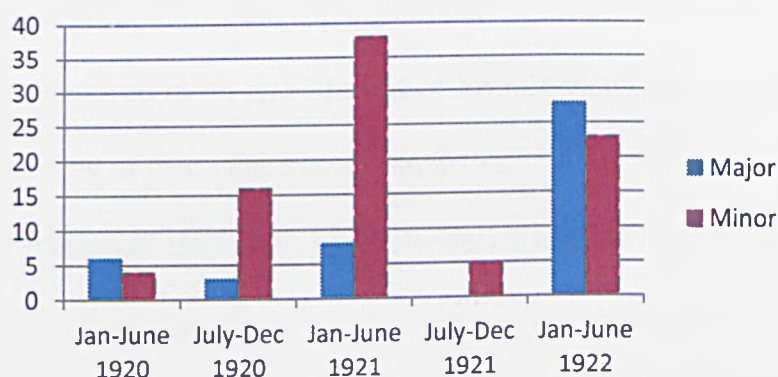
<sup>14</sup> Laura K. Donohue, 'Regulating Northern Ireland: The Special Powers Acts, 1922-1972', in *The Historical Journal*, xvi, 4 (Dec., 1998), p. 1093; Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, pp 177-86.

<sup>15</sup> For reports on these incidents see *Newtownards Chronicle*, 27 May and 17 June 1922, *Ballymena Observer*, 26 May 1922 and R.U.C. divisional commissioner's bi-monthly reports, 16 May-22 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/152).

<sup>16</sup> Statement of Thomas Fitzpatrick (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 395).

suffering minor casualties of their own.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, although providing an almost insurmountable obstacle to the I.R.A., the U.S.C. in itself was not sufficient to defeat the republican military campaign mainly due to its Protestant exclusivity (rendering it ineffective in overwhelmingly Catholic districts) and its inadequate training in counter-insurgency.

**Graph 2: I.R.A. activity per half-year periods in east Ulster, 1920-22<sup>18</sup>**



Containing the republican threat was not the only task at hand for the security forces. A founding principle of the U.S.C., similar to that of the pre-war U.V.F., was that the organisation was necessary to prevent loyalist reprisals. On 1 September 1920 Sir James Craig warned the British government that such an armed constabulary was necessary to ‘restrain their own followers’ otherwise ‘civil war on a very large scale is inevitable.’<sup>19</sup> The accuracy of such claims was initially met with scepticism by Sir Ernest Clark, the new assistant under-secretary in Belfast. However, after personally experiencing the situation in Ulster, Clark adopted Craig’s position. He believed that the formation of the U.S.C. would ease loyalist anxieties

<sup>17</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 26 May 1922 and ‘Return of people killed in Northern Ireland since 6 Dec. 1921’, July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/219). Also see statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762).

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix D for sources and definitions.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster* (Belfast, 2005), p. 474.

and prevent further spontaneous outbursts such as the shipyard expulsions in Belfast.<sup>20</sup>

In Dromore, Banbridge and Rathfriland, militant loyalists had formed themselves into independent paramilitary forces by November 1920 before the U.S.C. was enrolled.<sup>21</sup> Thus, an official force was thought necessary to act as a greater attraction than independent loyalist organisation, providing a similar function to the establishment of the U.V.F. in 1913.<sup>22</sup> As will be argued, this was a success in east Ulster. From the inception of the U.S.C., militant loyalist activity declined as the organisation was perceived as an embodiment of loyalist views and intentions with adequate understanding of their concerns and anxieties.

The effectiveness of the U.S.C. as an alternative to rival loyalist organisation can be calculated from the lack of such independent initiatives in east Ulster during periods of B Special activity. The R.I.C. county inspector of Antrim omitted any mention of a U.V.F. revival in the period between December 1920 and October 1921. It was only by the latter date, during the period when the Specials had been suspended, that he expressed concern regarding loyalist organisations. For example, the U.V.F. held a parade of 200 men in Lisburn and they formed a Loyalist Association with the expressed purpose of protecting local Protestants.<sup>23</sup> This came in the aftermath of open I.R.A. drilling following the Truce as the suspension of the B Specials led to greater unionist anxiety. Overall, therefore, the U.S.C. was effective in preventing independent loyalist organisation in east Ulster. However,

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<sup>20</sup> Follis, *A state under siege*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy Bowman, *Carson's army: the Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22* (Manchester, 2007), p. 190.

<sup>22</sup> For more on the restraining value of the U.V.F., see *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Oct. 1921 (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/116); Bowman, *Carson's army*, p. 197.

this was not the case elsewhere: loyalist groups were established in Belfast where continuous high levels of communal violence created very different circumstances.

Whilst the U.S.C. was successful in thwarting widespread organisation by militant loyalists, there was still the problem of preventing spontaneous outbursts such as the east Ulster riots of July and August 1920. The ability of special constables to counter spontaneous loyalist violence was demonstrated in Lisburn in late September 1920. During the previous month the Lisburn urban council had enrolled a force of special constables to prevent further hostility to local Catholics. This force, a precursor to the U.S.C., shared an important characteristic with its successor: both were almost exclusively (if not completely) Protestant. On at least two occasions the Lisburn special constables prevented a recurrence of trouble, appearing to vindicate James Craig's belief that loyalist volunteers could be trusted with the maintenance of law and order.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it was believed that the U.S.C., by being familiar with local people, was more effective than the R.I.C. or army at restraining loyalist extremists.<sup>25</sup> Special constables, being drawn from the Protestant community, could influence communal attitudes to a communal conflict. To Wilfred Spender special constables were of greater value to the government than the R.I.C. as the former had the sympathy of their community.<sup>26</sup> However, as will be demonstrated, these communal influences could also undermine the resolve of special constables to counter militant loyalist action. In fact, U.S.C. success against loyalist violence was due less to its direct suppression of such activity, than its ability to fulfil the loyalist desire to play a leading role in combating the I.R.A.

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<sup>24</sup> For more on the Lisburn special constables, see Chapter Two.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Buckland, *The factory of grievances: devolved government in Northern Ireland, 1921-39* (Dublin, 1979), p. 184.

<sup>26</sup> Spender to Charles Blackmore, 25 Jan. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/71).

Militant loyalists, who enjoyed the partisan backing of the Unionist party, supported the U.S.C. as it reflected their concerns regarding the I.R.A. A salient consequence of the close relationship between the Unionist party and loyalists was the limits of impartiality of special constables. The application of the law was most heavily exercised against suspected republicans, whereas some members of the U.S.C. felt themselves to be exempt from the law. Again, the Lisburn special constables, half of whom threatened to resign in October 1920 and initiate another bout of rioting, provided a clear warning of the dangers of establishing an armed partisan force.<sup>27</sup> This example demonstrated the collective power of militant loyalism. After the Lisburn special constables were enrolled, the county inspector of Antrim commented that 'they regard themselves as Ulster Volunteers more than Peace officers.'<sup>28</sup> Considering where the loyalties of the special constables lay, it is obvious that impartial policing was impossible. Moreover, the authorities were not willing to enforce the law against this obstreperous loyalist force, with Sir Ernest Clark, the assistant under-secretary based in Belfast, recommending that the riot charges should be dropped to prevent the outbreak of disturbances.<sup>29</sup> With the onset of Unionist rule in June 1921 a partisan relationship developed that ensured the survival of the U.S.C.'s collective power. This was demonstrated when suggestions to cut the annual £10 allowance for each B Special were met with threats of mass resignations.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of these examples, as well as the sympathetic attitudes of some government officials to unionist miscreants, many loyalists believed they were exempt from the full force of the law which was reserved for those who were

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<sup>27</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>28</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Oct. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/113).

<sup>29</sup> Clark to Sir John Anderson, 25 Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D/1022/12/1).

<sup>30</sup> Bowman, *Carson's army*, p. 198; also see the example of A Specials threatening to mutiny over pay: Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 256-61.

disloyal to the government. By implication many loyalists assumed that those who displayed their loyalty by taking up arms against the I.R.A. would be safe from the repressive security legislation. Suppressing loyalist violence was therefore not a priority of the U.S.C. as their relationship with the state did not demand it. However, the U.S.C. was effective in pre-empting loyalist violence and mobilisation in east Ulster as loyalists were willing to invest their trust in it to counter republican violence rather than organise themselves into vigilante groups. Therefore, despite warnings by the R.I.C. county inspector of Antrim in spring 1921 of a 'danger of reprisals on the part of the loyal population', there was no repeat of the anti-Catholic rioting and expulsions witnessed in 1920.<sup>31</sup> The lack of violence, however, was also attributable to the generally calmer situation prevalent in east Ulster where I.R.A. violence was more infrequent and posed less of a threat to the general population. In this respect it could be argued that the U.S.C. was effective as a preventative force only in the relatively calmer areas (it failed to prevent loyalist excesses in Belfast).

Moreover, by arming loyalists it could be argued that it limited the chaotic nature of loyalist violence. It was the hope of Sir James Craig in September 1920 that a force of special constables would allow for 'organised reprisals.'<sup>32</sup> Similarly, a policy of official reprisals was issued in the rest of Ireland in December 1920 to inject a degree of order into inevitable acts of retaliation by state forces. General Macready and Lloyd George officially sanctioned this policy that aimed to provide a controlled release for frustrated members of the police and army.<sup>33</sup> As this chapter will demonstrate, the U.S.C. was guilty of many abuses of authority that represent some of the more notorious examples of loyalist violence in east Ulster during the

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<sup>31</sup> R.I.C. C. I. reports, Antrim, Mar. 1921 (T.N.A. Colonial Office papers, CO 904/114).

<sup>32</sup> James Craig quoted in Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, p. 474.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: the development of political and military policies* (Oxford, 1975), pp 119-20 and idem, *Political violence in Ireland: government and resistance since 1848* (Oxford, 1983), p. 351.

revolutionary period. However, before enquiring into U.S.C. excesses, it will be necessary to discuss the relationship between special constables and regular state forces.

### U.S.C., loyalists and regular state forces

From late 1920 it was clear that there was potential for a tense relationship between the U.S.C. and regular state forces. It was assumed by the R.I.C. that special constables would work under the command of the regular police, but such an arrangement failed to materialise. Sir Ernest Clark suggested to Lt. Col. Charles Wickham, divisional commissioner of the R.I.C. in Ulster, that the B and C Specials should be 'acting with and not under' the R.I.C. Clark felt that the clamorous nature of militant Ulster loyalism, which could provoke a leadership conflict, could be placated by offering special constables a degree of autonomy.<sup>34</sup> A similar situation arose with the Auxiliary police in other parts of Ireland. An Auxiliary company commander's rank was equivalent to a district inspector and therefore awarded the force a degree of independence from the R.I.C., although reasons for this policy remain vague.<sup>35</sup> With regards to special constables, they were drawn from the loyalist population and partly reflected loyalist attitudes to the R.I.C. and the military. Therefore, to gain insight into the relationship between the U.S.C. and the regular police and the army, it will be necessary to discuss loyalist attitudes to these forces.

The east Ulster riots provide an insight into this relationship. For instance, in Chapter Two of this thesis it is described how a loyalist crowd secured the release of

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<sup>34</sup> Clark to Wickham, 18 Nov. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/9).

<sup>35</sup> D. M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British police and auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence* (Oxford, 2011), pp 98-9.

a prisoner who had been arrested by the military during the August 1920 riots. In Dromore, a loyalist crowd forced the police into their barracks after they accidentally shot and killed a Protestant man during disturbances. As these examples suggest, militant loyalists would openly challenge the authority of the police if the latter were judged to be failing to provide security to the unionist community.

When the U.S.C. was introduced there were no major clashes between it and the R.I.C. in east Ulster. In fact, within the first six months of 1921, the R.I.C. county inspector of Antrim commented on the 'harmonious' understanding between the two forces.<sup>36</sup> This is surprising as the reason for loyalist distrust of the R.I.C. was its high Catholic membership.<sup>37</sup> It may have been the case that the relative weakness of the I.R.A. in east Ulster placed less strain on the relationship between special constables and R.I.C. officers. However, minor tensions arose from the suspicion that R.I.C. officers were pro-Sinn Féin and from a desire on the part of the B Specials to distance themselves from the regular police.<sup>38</sup> Even after the establishment of the R.U.C. in June 1922, some loyalists hastened to verbally attack the regular police for recruiting Catholics.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, May and June 1921, (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/115).

<sup>37</sup> T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010), pp 89-90.

<sup>38</sup> William H. Beck, Dunadry, Co. Antrim to James Craig, 23 Sept. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/2/2/89).

<sup>39</sup> M. Kennedy, B Special commandant, Londonderry, to W. B. Spender, 10 Apr. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB/6/28/A); Samuel Thompson, secretary of 'Orange, Black and Loyalists Defence Association', Lurgan, to James Craig, 26 May 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB/6/28/C); Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 193. Although this figure was never achieved, Catholics did constitute a sizeable minority of the R.U.C. For more on B Specials clashes with Catholic members of the R.U.C., see Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 191.



U.S.C. distrust of the regular police was demonstrated when B Specials often went on patrol without a regular police officer.<sup>40</sup> One former B Special district commandant wrote:

In my area which I have just handed over 'B' Patrols are very rarely accompanied by a regular policeman...The original regulation that an R.I.C. man must accompany all patrols was never revoked, simply ignored, and the original arrangement that no raids could be undertaken by S.C's [sic] without consultation with and consent of C[ounty] I[n]spector[s] was dropped.<sup>41</sup>

This also reflected a belief among some special constables that they should operate without observing the restraints imposed on the regular police.<sup>42</sup> For example, there were reports of friction between the Crossgar B Specials and the local contingent of the R.U.C.<sup>43</sup> This reflected the incompatibility of the views of professionally trained police and those of part-time Specials with regards to the appropriate methods of policing: loyalists often bypassed the established system of justice in favour of direct action, whereas the police and army were bound by regulations as to how they could operate. Loyalist attitudes to the military were also characterised by a strong suspicion that they were not using all necessary means to counter the republican threat. The *de facto* loyalist position was to support the army and offer assistance.

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<sup>40</sup> See 'Report on killing of Archie and John McCann', 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/234) and 'Report on the deaths of John McAlinden and Patrick Tumilty', 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

<sup>41</sup> 'Notes by an ex district commandant', June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, a case in Belfast: Timothy Wilson, "'The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast': the McMahon murders in context", in *I.H.S.*, xxxvii, no. 145 (May, 2010), p. 97.

<sup>43</sup> Wickham to Samuel Watt, permanent secretary to minister of home affairs, 4 Oct. 1922, (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/32/1/288).

'Assistance', however, was often interpreted by loyalists as enabling indiscriminate attacks on members of the Catholic community. Therefore, 'any attempt at even-handed policing implied a moral equivalence between the two protagonist communities that loyalists did not themselves accept.'<sup>44</sup> Consequently, communication between local U.S.C. and police leaders were often poor, with both A and B Specials often carrying out unauthorised raids and refusing to provide the R.U.C. with information gathered.<sup>45</sup> This proved a source of grievance for the regular police who felt the U.S.C.'s insubordination could damage their own image of impartiality.<sup>46</sup>

Many loyalists disregarded military authority as much as that of the police. As Spender wrote in September 1920, in justifying the need for loyalist volunteer groups, 'the Military were in large measure out of touch with the local population and were consequently making errors of judgement which were having a most deplorable result on the minds of the loyal population.'<sup>47</sup> Yet, there was a subtle difference in their attitude towards the army. Loyalists, it seemed, were more fearful of soldiers. This was perhaps due to the reputation of the military as that of a force willing to take action against both sides of the communal divide, something General Macready warned would happen if the U.V.F. was revived in September 1921.<sup>48</sup> Loyalist attacks on the military, as a result of the killing of Protestant rioters by

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<sup>44</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 87-89.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Col. W. K. Tillie, U.S.C. commandant, Londonderry, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2); 'Notes by an ex district commandant', June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>46</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>47</sup> Quotes in Philip McVicker, 'Law and order in Northern Ireland, 1920-1936', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Ulster, 1985), p. 29.

<sup>48</sup> General Macready to James Craig, 23 Sept. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB/6/27/A)

soldiers, were an aspect of the conflict in Belfast.<sup>49</sup> However, there were no such loyalist attacks on the military in east Ulster. It was in Lisburn in August 1920 that a clash seemed most probable. In this instance soldiers were ordered to guard Catholic buildings against rioters and Major Harrison of the Somerset Light Infantry ordered his troops to use bayonets to disperse hostile crowds.<sup>50</sup> The smaller populations of east Ulster towns and villages, in conjunction with the lower levels of violence there, shaped the situation in favour of the army as militant loyalists were not as violent or as well armed or organised as their counterparts in Belfast. Thus, the arrival of a detachment of soldiers in Newtownards in July 1920 during rioting caused an immediate cessation in violence, with one rioter allegedly exclaiming: 'Them's the boys that has come up to shoot us.'<sup>51</sup> The use of troops, therefore, ensured loyalists were more wary of the army. However, there was a pervading lack of faith in the military, whom Captain Charles Craig, brother of James Craig, referred to as useless. General Cameron, commanding the military in Northern Ireland, believed that remarks of such a nature from an influential Unionist figure 'may make co-operation more difficult.'<sup>52</sup>

Unionist distrust of the police and army was reflected in local demands for autonomy. At a district level there were calls for local leadership over U.S.C. companies. For example, James G. Allen, the temporary B Special District Commandant of Comber, expressed his apprehension at proposals to appoint an English army officer in his place on a permanent basis. He stated that his complaint was merely an extension of the concerns of his men:

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<sup>49</sup> For some examples see Alan F. Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war: the troubles of the 1920s* (Dublin, 2004), pp 43, 49, 71-2, 95-6, 207 and 249; Winston Churchill to James Craig, 6 June 1922, (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 9/G/4).

<sup>50</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 25 Aug. 1920.

<sup>51</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Aug. 1920.

<sup>52</sup> General Cameron to James Craig, 28 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB/6/28/A).

Indeed some of the Specials have already intimated their intention to ground arms in the event of such an appointment being made in Comber...Now in this instance I must admit that my sympathies are entirely with the men for, as you are well aware, most of these Englishmen are as a rule so immersed in Red Tape and hide-bound rules that in my opinion they are not the right class from which these officers should be chosen.

Although Allen's motives may have included a personal desire to retain his position, he did propose the appointment of an Ulster-born ex-serviceman in his place.<sup>53</sup> His concerns thus illustrate an antipathy towards not only the British army but also to the English people as they were assumed to lack proper understanding of Ulster Protestant interests.<sup>54</sup>

An uneasy relationship existed between the U.S.C. and other security forces. Specials did not believe the military possessed adequate knowledge of Ulster affairs while the R.I.C. was held in contempt due to its alleged disloyal membership. Both were suspected of deploying insufficient aggression against the I.R.A. as loyalists engaged in more direct action. When the U.S.C. absorbed many loyalists into its ranks their views permeated the security forces. Imposing proper protocol over special constables proved difficult as 'there is no one adequate chain of responsibility.'<sup>55</sup> The organisation of the U.S.C. established a dual policing system. On the one hand were trained, disciplined soldiers and regular police officers largely

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<sup>53</sup> James G Allen to James Craig, 24 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/2/1/58).

<sup>54</sup> For more on similar Unionist views, see Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 85-6.

<sup>55</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

abiding by their structures of hierarchical authority; on the other was a hastily arranged group of armed civilians, minimally trained and saturated with the sectarian prejudices of a divided society.

The clash of values between the U.S.C. and regular state forces did not occur in isolation, but should be viewed as a wider trend in Ireland. The introduction of the Black and Tans in southern Ireland placed a similar strain on the relationship between Irish constables and their new, British-born colleagues who were perceived as being unfamiliar with the traditional respectability of the R.I.C.<sup>56</sup> As will be discussed in the second half of this chapter the distinction between special constables and regular police officers can be important for explaining the perceived ill-discipline of members of the U.S.C. An important basis for this discussion, however, was whether the U.S.C. was composed of political extremists.

### 'Wilder the better'?

The shared communal ties between the U.S.C. and militant loyalists gave rise to numerous claims that it was an anti-Catholic militia composed of 'the dregs of the Orange Lodges, armed and equipped to overawe Nationalists and Catholics.'<sup>57</sup> A Catholic R.I.C. officer delivered this damning assessment of the U.S.C. many years later:

As to the Black and Tans, I found them perfect gentlemen in comparison with the Ulster Specials. No doubt the Tans did some desperate things, but a lot depended on the man in charge of them. I

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<sup>56</sup> Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, pp 29-30.

<sup>57</sup> *Frontier Sentinel*, 20 Nov. 1920 quoted in Eamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: nationalist politics, partition and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994), p. 94.

know that I found them more easily controlled than the Specials, and if I had to live that part of my life over again, I would certainly prefer to live with the Tans.<sup>58</sup>

A similar comparison was allegedly made by Eoin O'Duffy.<sup>59</sup> The reputation of the U.S.C. as a poorly-disciplined force arises from the belief that unruly applicants – ‘mobster recruited from the streets’ – were deliberately enrolled.<sup>60</sup> In January 1921 one district commandant allegedly stated, albeit in a moment of frustration, that he needed more recruits and that ‘the younger and wilder they are the better.’<sup>61</sup> This section will determine if there is evidence to support these claims, and if so, whether they could explain cases of ill-discipline within the force.

The recruitment procedure to the U.S.C. involved a vetting process whereby all candidates were required to apply to local Justices of the Peace before appointment. Thereafter, all information was passed to local R.I.C. district inspectors for final review.<sup>62</sup> This process may have been intended to filter out undesirable applicants. For example, a 23-year-old named James Campbell from Rathfriland, described by the authorities as a ‘bad lot’, was rejected for enrolment to the B Specials.<sup>63</sup> Men like Campbell, known to the local authorities, were easily identified. However, extreme loyalists, rioters or delinquents could enter the U.S.C. if their

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<sup>58</sup> John McKenna (ed.), *A beleaguered station: the memoir of Head Constable John McKenna, 1891-1921* (Belfast, 2009), p. 32.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew Boyd, *Holy war in Belfast* (Tralee, 1969), p. 177.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Wallace Clark, *Guns in Ulster* (Belfast, 1967), p. 9. This remark is accepted at face value by several historians: see Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland, 1921-1996: political forces and social classes* (London, 1996), p. 27 and Charles Townshend, *The republic: the fight for Irish independence 1918-1923* (London, 2013), p. 181.

<sup>62</sup> Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland 1919-1922* (Cork, 2000), p. 142. A similar process is described in ‘Recruiting organisation (Class “B”’, J. A. Irvine, assistant adjutant for the county commandant, Fermanagh U.S.C. (P.R.O.N.I., Edward D. Kerr papers, D1593/12).

<sup>63</sup> A. P. Magill, assistant secretary to Ministry of Home Affairs, memo, 13 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

objectionable activities were unknown to the police. In addition, some may have committed crimes only after joining the U.S.C. For example, two brothers, James and Arthur Gray from Bangor, were expelled from the U.S.C. for poaching activities after their enrolment as special constables. Lt. Col. Charles Wickham, who was appointed the R.U.C. inspector-general in June 1922, later wrote that 'the whole family were somewhat undesirable and that it was inexpedient for any member of it to belong to the Special Constabulary and be in the possession of arms.'<sup>64</sup> The exclusion of such people reflected the hope of Sir Ernest Clark that 'only men of unquestionable fidelity and efficiency' be enrolled as special constables.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, it was the hope of Wickham that recruits to the U.S.C. display 'discipline, self-restraint and impartiality.'<sup>66</sup> He also expressed regret and concern for cases of ill-discipline. In one case in June 1921 he was reportedly 'a little depressed fearing that the incident might lead to the condemnation of the whole scheme of Special Constabulary.' It was his opinion, however, 'that at first they were bound to find some misfits out of 2,000 men.'<sup>67</sup>

As these examples illustrate, there were efforts to exclude undesirables from the U.S.C. The vetting process, while hasty and inadequate, was at least an attempt to achieve this end. While the process was arguably unsuccessful (as some militant loyalists may have joined the U.S.C.) it was not the intention of the authorities to recruit the 'wilder' elements. And although many militant loyalists may have enrolled, this alone does not explain the poor discipline of the U.S.C. To explain this

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<sup>64</sup> Wickham to Richard Dawson Bates, 21 Apr. 1925, (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/132).

<sup>65</sup> Clark to Anderson, 3 Dec. 1920 quoted in Follis, *A state under siege*, p. 14.

<sup>66</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 11 Dec. 1920.

<sup>67</sup> Wilfred Spender to Charles Blackmore, 25 Jan. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/71).

it will be necessary first to discuss some examples of unauthorised violence perpetrated by special constables before analysing why they occurred.

East Ulster, being one of the least affected areas of Northern Ireland during the revolutionary period, experienced comparatively few examples of U.S.C. transgressions. Nevertheless, those that did occur can shed light on the nature of the U.S.C. as a security force. There are two interpretations regarding U.S.C. indiscipline. Michael Farrell's critique concludes that, while the U.S.C. was involved in numerous reprisals, it sometimes received encouragement from local officers and ill-discipline never seriously opposed by the U.S.C. hierarchy. He also claimed that the Unionist government had no desire to discipline those found guilty of reprisals.<sup>68</sup> This interpretation was repudiated by Bryan Follis who claimed that there was no structured system of reprisals, and that 'outrages were of a localised and unauthorised nature, and were not part of a comprehensive policy of sectarian repression.'<sup>69</sup> Follis argued, as did the Unionist government, that the U.S.C. had a well regulated disciplinary procedure that ensured 'the insubordinate and the unruly were weeded out.'<sup>70</sup> As this chapter will argue, Follis was correct in stressing the localised nature of unlawful acts. However, Follis took his argument further with regards to the more notorious outrages committed by the U.S.C. by specifically exonerating special constables of responsibility for the McMahon murders in Belfast in March 1922 and the Cushendall shootings three months later.<sup>71</sup> Follis also noted the 'surprising restraint' of most special constables in the face of great provocation, claiming that 'unacceptable behaviour' was the result of inadequate training and

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<sup>68</sup> Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 166.

<sup>69</sup> Follis, *A state under siege*, p. 113.

<sup>70</sup> A. P. Magill, *From Dublin Castle to Stormont: the memoirs of Andrew Philip Magill, 1913-1925*, ed. Charles W. Magill (Cork, 2003), p. 73.

<sup>71</sup> Follis, *A state under siege*, pp 95, 112.



poor discipline.<sup>72</sup> However, Farrell conceded that while the government and police hierarchy did not seriously seek to prevent or punish U.S.C. excesses this did not extend to advocating or encouraging systematic reprisals.

These assertions will be tested in the remaining sections of this chapter, which will examine the three main incidents in which special constables could be implicated in illegal killings in east Ulster and offer explanations for these acts. It will be demonstrated here that both Farrell and Follis failed to objectively assess individual outrages.

### The Ulster Special Constabulary and unauthorised violence: three cases

East Ulster did not escape the catalogue of atrocities committed by either state forces or republicans elsewhere in revolutionary Ireland. The Black and Tans in particular are remembered for their brutish behaviour and often criminal methods in the south.<sup>73</sup> More recently, historians have addressed the I.R.A.'s role in massacres and other acts that fall beyond the boundaries of acceptable military conduct.<sup>74</sup> Despite initially avoiding the revolutionary violence ravaging southern parts of Ireland, Ulster also experienced sectarian killings, notably those committed by members of the U.S.C.<sup>75</sup> Even in east Ulster, where violence was comparatively infrequent, there were several cases, three of which are examined here.

The first incident occurred on 8 June 1922 in Mounthamilton, a small farming community about nine miles south-east of Ballymoney, Co. Antrim. At

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp 94-5.

<sup>73</sup> See Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, pp 82-95.

<sup>74</sup> See, for instance, Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), chapter 12 and Robert Lynch, 'Explaining the Altnaveigh massacre', in *Eire-Ireland*, xlv (Winter, 2010), pp 184-210.

<sup>75</sup> For a list of U.S.C. atrocities see Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 301-304.

around 2 a.m. three armed men visited the home of Archibald McCann, a forty-year-old Catholic farmer, with the intention of finding his nineteen-year-old nephew John at the house. Archie answered the knock at the door and was told by the armed men, who were dressed as special constables, that they wanted to speak to John. When John joined his uncle at the door the three men told him he was to be arrested for his suspected role in the recent attack on Martinstown police barracks.<sup>76</sup> John recognised one of the men as Sergeant Thomas James McDowell of the B Specials from the neighbouring village of Corkey. During a brief verbal exchange with the other two men McDowell apparently said that they should 'let the McCanns go.' One of the men said to McDowell 'sure they are Protestants', to which Archie and John naively responded that they were Catholics. Although John was initially told by the men that they were awaiting the arrival of a car to bring him back to the barracks, one then asked him 'how he would like to be shot.' John was taken from the doorway and shot in the left shoulder from close range. Believing John to be dead they then took Archie, the only eyewitness to the shooting, to the same spot and shot him three times in the head, heart and abdomen. Afterwards, the men ran away in the direction of Corkey. Archie died instantly at the scene, but John survived and recounted these events to the regular police.<sup>77</sup>

As a result of John's testimony it was assumed that a local contingent of special constables, including McDowell, was responsible. McCann stated that one of McDowell's accomplices had shot him and his uncle, although he did not know

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<sup>76</sup> Martinstown barracks was eight miles south of Mounthamilton and had been attacked on 20 May 1922 with the result that one special constable was killed and another three wounded. The R.U.C. believed John to be in the I.R.A., as he was noted as being away from his home and had only returned the night before he was shot: police bi-monthly report, 17 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/152).

<sup>77</sup> These events are recounted by R.U.C. Head Constable Crome, Ballymoney, in a letter to the R.U.C. Divisional Commissioner Lt. Col. Charles Wickham, 10 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/234). Also see John McCann's deposition from the court case against Sergeant McDowell, 8 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Antrim Petty Session records, ANT/1/2/C/32/20).

him.<sup>78</sup> McDowell was nevertheless arrested and put on trial for murder and attempted murder. The local police provided alibis for the defendant. Corkey barracks housed at least one A and six B Specials and one R.U.C. sergeant on the night of the McCann shootings. All gave statements saying that McDowell did not leave the barracks after returning from patrol at 1.30 a.m. It was claimed that those who went on patrol at that point left special constables John Johnston, Daniel Gage, William J. Boyd and Sergeant McDowell in the barracks and returned at 4.30 a.m. to find these men asleep. R.U.C. Sergeant David Smith claimed that none of these special constables left the barracks before he fell asleep at 2.30 a.m.<sup>79</sup> However, as John McCann named McDowell as one of the policemen present when he and his uncle were shot the case was sent to the Antrim Assizes.<sup>80</sup> He was found not guilty, presumably based on the insistence of the local police that he was in the barracks from 1.30 a.m., and no member of the U.S.C. or R.U.C. was convicted of the McCann shootings.<sup>81</sup>

The second incident involving members of the U.S.C. occurred on 20 June 1922 in Rathfriland, Co. Down, when a letter allegedly written by the local I.R.A. commandant was discovered in a field and handed to the police. The letter detailed plans to ambush a local squad of special constables, naming John McAlinden and Patrick Tumilty as the men who were to carry out the attack. Early in the day a group of B Specials were ordered to search for these men who were found at Ballybrick outside Rathfriland. The men were arrested and marched through the countryside back towards town. However, it was claimed by the B Specials that the two men

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<sup>78</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 30 June 1922.

<sup>79</sup> Statements of Special Constables Samuel Moore, Joseph Henry and John Scott and Sergeant Smith, taken between 8 and 12 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/234).

<sup>80</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 30 June 1922.

<sup>81</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 7 July 1922. The details of the court case can be found in 'Court case of Thomas McDowell, General Assizes', 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Antrim Petty Session records, ANT/1/2/C/32/20).

suddenly ran off in an attempt to escape and Special Constable Clydesdale fired at the prisoners. Both were struck with McAlinden, twenty-four, dying instantly and Tumilty, twenty-two, dying from his wounds a few days later.<sup>82</sup>

Before his death Tumilty was taken to hospital where he gave a statement of his version of events. He described his and McAlinden's arrest and stated that on the journey back to Rathfriland they were told to run by their captors. He claimed they then walked off before they were shot. Despite his critical condition Tumilty was able to identify five of the B Specials involved.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, due ostensibly to Tumilty's poor state of health, his statement was not used as evidence at the inquest on McAlinden's death and it was accepted by the authorities that the two prisoners had tried to escape from custody. However, it was recommended by the Ministry of Home Affairs that the special constables involved be suspended.<sup>84</sup> Two charges were later brought forward but only the commanding officer was found guilty of neglect of duty and was 'severely reprimanded.'<sup>85</sup>

The order to arrest McAlinden and Tumilty came directly from R.U.C District Inspector Allen on receipt of the letter naming the men.<sup>86</sup> This letter was discovered by James Campbell, step-brother of B Special Thomas Stuart. In a seemingly separate affair Campbell was accused of stealing 50 rounds of ammunition from Stuart on 20 June. According to Campbell, he had stayed at Stuart's house the previous night and left for work early the next morning. He claims that when he arrived at work he had a cup of tea in a field behind a neighbour's house where he discovered a note between two bricks alongside 50 rounds of

<sup>82</sup> Statements of Rathfriland B Specials, n.d., (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

<sup>83</sup> Statement of Patrick Tumilty, n.d., (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

<sup>84</sup> A. P. Magill, to R. P. Pim, secretary to Minister of Home Affairs, 17 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

<sup>85</sup> Wickham to Pim, 25 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983). It appears the commanding officer did not accompany the B Specials to arrest the two suspects.

<sup>86</sup> D.I. Allen, memo, 20 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

ammunition. This note, which implicated McAlinden and Tumilty in a planned ambush, was passed by Campbell to the police. D. I. Allen was gravely suspicious of Campbell, noting that the letter was not in the handwriting of the supposed author, local I.R.A commandant Emile Hillen. However, Allen, taking no chances, ordered the arrest of McAlinden and Tumilty. Further investigations led a Home Affairs official to the conclusion that the letter had been fabricated by Campbell to absolve him of charges of larceny.<sup>87</sup> McAlinden and Tumilty, therefore, came to their deaths as a result of 'a cock and bull story concocted by the youth Campbell.'<sup>88</sup> This incident illustrated both the paranoia of some members of the U.S.C. and demonstrated how little provocation was required to mete out pre-judicial punishments.

The final incident to be discussed occurred at the overwhelmingly Catholic village of Cushendall on 23 June 1922 and involved the killing of three Catholic men by a convoy of soldiers and Ballymena A Specials. This event remains shrouded in controversy with two conflicting interpretations. The official account, supported by some historians, contended that a party of A Specials and military were ambushed as they passed through Cushendall late on 23 June and returned fire, killing three of the gunmen.<sup>89</sup> By contrast Michael Farrell argued that the shootings were unprovoked and were a reprisal for the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson the previous night in London.<sup>90</sup> One common feature of both accounts is the lack of evidence to support their strong conclusions. Only in recent years have the findings of a British government inquiry conducted in the aftermath of the Cushendall incident been made public and this inquiry will form the basis of this section.

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<sup>87</sup> A. P. Magill memorandum, 13 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

<sup>88</sup> A. P. Magill memorandum, 10 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/983).

<sup>89</sup> *The Times*, 26 June 1922; Hezlet, *The B Specials*, pp 77-8; Follis, *A state under siege*, p. 112.

<sup>90</sup> Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 163-6.

Despite official statements that what occurred in Cushendall was an I.R.A. ambush, the involvement of soldiers in the incident and pressure from nationalist politicians prompted the British government to launch an inquiry.<sup>91</sup> This was opposed by James Craig who preferred to let the issue rest, ostensibly on the grounds that 'a better feeling now exists between all parties, and the incident occurred a considerable time ago, [and] an enquiry of any sort will only revive bitterness and recriminations, while it certainly can do no good.'<sup>92</sup> However, the involvement of soldiers extended London's jurisdiction to Cushendall and Craig was in no position to deny the British government the right to launch an inquiry.<sup>93</sup> W. B. Spender, the secretary to the Northern Ireland cabinet, had pressed for an inquiry to be held by the Belfast government in the hope to prevent one being launched from London. However, the certainty of Richard Dawson Bates, the minister of home affairs, that 'all was well' prevented such a course of action.<sup>94</sup> Unionist leaders had been convinced of the version of events given by the military in the immediate aftermath of the Cushendall shootings. Craig was initially alarmed, but was reassured by General Cameron that nothing untoward occurred on 23 June.<sup>95</sup> Despite Spender's reservations Bates and Craig believed 'that everything was all right'.

The consequent inquiry was carried out by an English barrister, F. T. Barrington-Ward, the Recorder of Hythe, and evidence was taken from a list of 78 witnesses in Waterfoot, Cushendall and Belfast between 28 August and 4 September 1922. Barrington-Ward submitted his conclusions on 9 September and found that while the military took part in the shooting, members of the group of A Specials

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<sup>91</sup> *The Times*, 28 July 1922.

<sup>92</sup> Craig to Churchill, 20 July 1922, (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 8/B/11).

<sup>93</sup> Bates and Major-General Sir Arthur Solly-Flood, 27 July (P.R.O.N.I., Cabinet conclusions, CAB 4/50/10).

<sup>94</sup> Spender to Toppin, n.d. (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 6/91).

<sup>95</sup> W. B. Spender to Toppin, 8 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB/8/B/11).

alone were responsible for the killings. What follows is a brief overview of his findings.<sup>96</sup>

At 8 p.m. on 23 June 1922 three Crossley tenders carrying 24 soldiers and three officers – Major Bryan Moss-Blundell, Lt. Arthur William Hawkins and Lt. Francis Joseph Bulfin – of the 2 Battalion of Green Howards were sent from Aldergrove military camp to investigate reports of an I.R.A. concentration in the glens of Antrim. The military, along with another Crossley tender of special constables from Ballymena, were ordered to proceed to Cushendall, a village composed overwhelmingly of Catholics. The special constables chosen to guide the military were members of the 52 Platoon of A Specials whose second-in-command, Captain Anderson, delegated leadership to Sergeant David Campbell McLean.

On approaching Waterfoot, a village south of Cushendall, the convoy encountered a large gathering of people on a hill who dispersed at the sight of the military.<sup>97</sup> Major Moss-Blundell ordered his men to dismount and called for the people to halt. When he was ignored he ordered his men to fire. There were no casualties and the convoy had not come under attack. Barrington-Ward discovered that those on the hill were men and children playing games. However, he vindicated Moss-Blundell's order to fire as his clear demand to halt had been ignored and the Major could not clarify who the individuals were. Men were also observed on the ridge of the hill and Moss-Blundell believed these to possibly compose the rebel forces he had been sent to investigate. According to him, he ordered his men to 'lay a trap' in Cushendall by closing off four main roads into the village in the hope that the I.R.A. would be present there. The tender of special constables was to enter the village first and stop on High Street; the second under Lt. Hawkins was to take up

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<sup>96</sup> All following information, unless stated otherwise, is taken from 'Cushendall enquiry: report by Mr K. T. Barrington-Ward', 9 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 6/91).

<sup>97</sup> See Map 10.

position 400 yards down Shore Street; Lt. Bulfin's men were to take a left down Mill Street and Major Moss-Blundell's tender would stop on the way into Cushendall at the R.U.C. barracks on Bridge Street [see Figure 2].

As the convoy was about to resume its journey to Cushendall an eighteen year-old man named James McAllister approached on a bicycle. Sergeant McLean questioned him and decided to take McAllister on board the first lorry as he was suspected to be an I.R.A. messenger. It would later emerge that McAllister was returning home after visiting Waterfoot to buy cigarettes and a newspaper for his mother.

On reaching Cushendall shortly before 11 p.m. Moss-Blundell's tender stopped where planned, while Bulfin's mistakenly turned left along the wrong road. All soldiers in these two tenders therefore missed the shooting in the village that shortly followed. The other lorries entered the centre of Cushendall with the special constables in front. All accounts recall that the leading tender halted outside the Post Office at the foot of High Street, but what happened next forms the crux of the controversy surrounding the overall incident. A group of local men, women and teenagers who were gathered at the Diamond – the name given to the intersection of the four roads – scattered as the special constables arrived. According to the locals, including many standing on their doorsteps conversing with neighbours, an order to get indoors was heard and firing upon the civilians commenced without provocation. The testimonies of most of the special constables, however, state that they came under attack and returned fire. On this discrepancy, Barrington-Ward found 'that no one except the police and military ever fired at all. I accept the evidence of the main body of the civilian witnesses'. He gave weight to the testimony of Special Constable Carruthers who described a peaceful scene as he entered the village:



'Fellows standing at the doors in their shirt sleeves; women too on road to Cushendun. I took them for law-abiding citizens and fired a few shots in the air – took a kneeling position and fired up in the air. I called “get in doors” in a loud tone. They got in. I never fired any more rounds.’<sup>98</sup> The report emphasised that no weapons or spent cartridges were discovered in consequent searches and no bullet marks were discovered on the Crossley tenders or the walls behind where the special constables and Lt. Hawkins’s men fired from.<sup>99</sup>

With regards to the killing of the three men, Barrington-Ward concluded that these too were unprovoked. James McAllister, who had been picked up outside Waterfoot, was taken down from the tender and dragged screaming for mercy into the alleyway behind McGonnell’s shop and shot through the mouth. Medical evidence indicated that he was shot at close range. However, the special constables testified that they did not see what happened to McAllister during the alleged ambush. They guessed he must have attempted to escape and was shot in the cross-fire.

The two other fatalities were John Gore and John Hill. Gore had been returning from the beach with friends who included his brother Pat and fifteen-year-old Lily McGonnell. They were passing the burnt bank on Shore Street [see Figure 2] when firing broke out. In response to the shooting they ran into McGonnell’s shop by the side door. John Hill, who had been standing at the corner of the Diamond conversing with friends, also ran into McGonnell’s shop with a blacksmith named James McAllister (no relation to the victim of the same name). McAllister and John Gore stayed in the front of the shop and took cover under the counter, while the

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<sup>98</sup> Statement of Special Constable Carruthers, 31 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>99</sup> Hawkins’s tender pulled up outside the burned out bank and fired across the road towards the shops.

others ran into the kitchen at the back of the building. McAllister, Pat Gore and Lily McGonnell claimed in statements to the police that two special constables entered the shop and rounded Lily, Pat and John Hill in the kitchen. One of these special constables entered the front of the shop and asked if anyone was there. John Gore stood from behind the counter and was shot immediately in the chest. The special constable then re-entered the kitchen and interrogated Lily, Pat and John Hill. On being asked if he was a Catholic, Hill confirmed that he was but that he was also an ex-soldier. Allegedly the special constable replied, 'You are one of the bastards who shot Wilson.'<sup>100</sup> Hill was then taken to the alleyway beside the shop and killed by a shot to the chest.

Immediately after this Pat Gore was taken into the front of the shop and asked to identify the dead man behind the counter. Due to the fading light the special constable had to light a match and narrowly failed to discover James McAllister, the blacksmith, hiding under the counter next to the dead body. Pat Gore instantly recognised the deceased as his brother and ran from the shop. Outside on Shore Street the local police had arrived from the barracks and Gore encountered local R.U.C. Constable Thomas McConnell. The A Special from the shop pursued Gore and aimed his revolver at him. McConnell, however, ordered him not to shoot as Gore 'is not long out of the army.' To this the Ballymena A Special replied: 'I should not think damn much of shooting you.'<sup>101</sup> The fact that both Pat Gore and Constable McConnell attest to this confrontation suggests Gore's testimony was accurate.

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<sup>100</sup> Statement of Patrick Gore, 29 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>101</sup> Statements of Patrick Gore, 29 Aug. 1922 and Constable Thomas McConnell, 2 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

Two other men were wounded at Cushendall. Daniel O'Loan was struck as he ran up Shore Street away from the firing while John McCollum was wounded as he ran towards his home on High Street. According to the statements of the Ballymena A Specials – with the exception of Special Constable Carruthers (who claimed the special constables did not come under attack on entering the village) – the three men killed were likely to have been shot through the window of the shop or in the alley by soldiers firing from the burnt bank across the road. According to A Specials and the military, O'Loan and McCollum were shot as they ran away firing rifles. Barrington-Ward, however, said he was 'satisfied that they [the A Specials] did not tell me all that they knew about the circumstances in which these three men died.'

Some within the Northern Ireland establishment reacted to Barrington-Ward's conclusions with outright abhorrence. The confidence with which some Unionists had believed there was an ambush by the I.R.A. in Cushendall intensified the impact of Barrington-Ward's verdict. The incomprehensibility of the inquiry's conclusions for some was epitomised by the reaction of the attorney-general of Northern Ireland who believed that Catholic witnesses who accused the special constables of wrongdoing should not be trusted:

To anyone with experience of Irish witnesses there is nothing extraordinary in a number of civilians from a place like Cushendall dominated up to recently by the I.R.A. coming forward to testify falsely against the Crown forces, and when, as in this case, it was a question of testifying against the Ulster Special Constabulary, the main support of the Ulster Government in resisting the attacks of the

I.R.A., any statements made by the people of Cushendall should be received with the greatest caution.<sup>102</sup>

While some, like Attorney-General Richard Best, unreservedly rejected Barrington-Ward's findings, the Government of Northern Ireland reacted by promising Winston Churchill, the colonial secretary, that they would investigate whether prosecutions could be brought forth.<sup>103</sup> The Unionist government launched an inquiry led by R.U.C. Deputy Inspector-General J. F. Gelston 'with the view to ascertaining whether any person can be made amenable.'<sup>104</sup> Gelston, however, placed little faith in civilian witnesses who he believed lived in fear of I.R.A. reprisals.<sup>105</sup> He was correct in pointing out that the I.R.A. had terrorised Cushendall in the weeks preceding the killings.<sup>106</sup> Gelston believed that as a result no local residents could be trusted to provide objective evidence and therefore relied on who he regarded as 'independent' witnesses: two Protestant visitors to the town and Lt. Hawkins and Lt. Bulfin, two of the British officers who entered Cushendall on the night of the shootings.

Gelston rejected the testimony of Pat Gore, Lily McGonnell and James McAllister as none could be relied upon to give an accurate description of how the victims were shot or of the special constables involved in the shootings. Meanwhile, he accepted the evidence of Hawkins and Bulfin and two visitors at the Glens of Antrim Hotel called Mrs Ryall and Elizabeth Wallace. These witnesses all claim that

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<sup>102</sup> Richard Best, Attorney General, to Bates, 24 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 8/B/11).

<sup>103</sup> James Craig to Churchill, 17 Oct. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 8/B/11).

<sup>104</sup> Bates to Gelston, 18 Oct. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/2).

<sup>105</sup> Gelston to Bates, 21 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet, CAB 8/B/11).

<sup>106</sup> For a list of these attacks see document attached to Wickham to Bates, 10 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/3).

they saw men shooting at the police and military and Gelston concluded that 'we are satisfied that firing on the Military and Police lorries took place from three different points in addition to the shooting by persons running into their houses'.<sup>107</sup> This version of events therefore became the official interpretation of what occurred at Cushendall.

In comparing the two reports – those of Barrington-Ward and Gelston – it appears plausible that Gelston's rejection of all civilian witnesses who offered evidence accusing the special constables of wrongdoing ensured that his inquiry would exonerate the special constables. In his final conclusions, for example, Gelston expressed his disbelief that British army officers could be guilty of lying: 'We cannot accept any statement that purports to convict two British Officers of an English Regiment, of deliberate and quite gratuitous lying, for the details rule out the possibility of honest mistake.'<sup>108</sup> For Gelston the possibility of two British officers lying was less than all the villagers of Cushendall concocting a tale to indict members of the U.S.C. Gelston's reasoning was that Cushendall residents were fearful of the I.R.A. and resentful towards the U.S.C. Although the I.R.A. did have influence in Cushendall many residents seemed to enjoy a harmonious relationship with the local police as the authorities believed that militant republicans came into Cushendall from elsewhere.<sup>109</sup>

Further evidence can be gathered from the witness statements taken by Barrington-Ward and Gelston that support the former's conclusions. The evidence of Mrs. Ryall and her maid, Elizabeth Wallace, was central to Gelston's case. However,

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<sup>107</sup> Report by Gelston, 20 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/8).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Statements of Pat Gore, Harry Foster, Sgt. Hannon, Constable McConnell and Sgt. Lunney, 29 Aug to 2 Sept (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

their evidence can be easily dismissed. Wallace, who was watching from the Glens of Antrim Hotel, stated:

I went to the front window and looked out. I saw two men with rifles pointed down Shore Street towards the village. They fired at least one shot while I was looking at them. The man nearest to me seemed in a hurry and called to the other man to come on – come on – and called him by a name like Danny. They then ran up by the side of the hotel and they fired as they ran. They got through the gate at the top...They must have gone into the plantation.<sup>110</sup>

Mrs. Ryall, who was with Wallace but was not looking out the window, corroborated this story. What Wallace claimed to have witnessed was two gunmen escaping over a gate beside the hotel while shooting at the convoy of military and police. Wallace's account, however, does not make sense. If she was correct in hearing the name 'Danny' it is highly likely she did see two men running along Shore Street towards the hotel. These would have been Dan and Thomas O'Loan who had been standing at the Diamond with friends when the special constables arrived.<sup>111</sup> When the shooting began, Dan ran along Shore Street with John McIlroy but was shot in the leg. McIlroy ran on, leaving Dan, and made his way into the plantation behind the Glens of Antrim Hotel. Dan, however, was rescued by his brother Thomas who came down Shore Street just after Dan was struck. It could have been either Thomas, helping his brother, or McIlroy, calling back to Dan, that Elizabeth Wallace had

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<sup>110</sup> Statement of Elizabeth Wallace, 14 Nov. 1922, (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/8).

<sup>111</sup> This is corroborated by statements from John McIlroy, Annie McCafferty, Kitty McNeill, Dan O'Loan, James Spence, John McCollum and Thomas O'Loan, 29-30 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

heard call 'Danny.' However, she could not have seen Dan O'Loan shooting while running, or climbing a gate as he had been shot in the thigh.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to this, Lt. Bulfin, whose Crossley tender had turned away from the centre of Cushendall immediately before the firing, could not have witnessed any shooting. Therefore, in reality, Gelston's conclusions relied solely on Lt. Hawkins's testimony and considering that Hawkins entered the Diamond and drove onto Shore Street just as the shooting had begun, he was hardly the independent witness Gelston claimed he was.

The facts of this case are difficult to ascertain. Contradictions in witness statements are numerous on both sides. The military and A Specials recall completely different scenarios when firing broke out. Sergeant Humphreys, who was in Lt. Hawkins's lorry, claimed to have seen 8 to 10 men at the Diamond firing at the A Specials from as close as five yards away.<sup>113</sup> However, other claims suggest firing came from further up Shore Street and High Street and that only two shots had rang out.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the civilian statements contained contradictions that Gelston drew attention to. However, it must be understood that in a heightened state of terror or excitement an individual's ability to accurately recall information is severely curtailed.

Two days prior to the Cushendall shootings the military advisor to the Northern Ireland government, Major-General Arthur Solly-Flood, had become increasingly exasperated with the continued presence of the I.R.A. He detailed in a letter to Craig how the security forces should react to I.R.A. activity:

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<sup>112</sup> See statements of Dan and Thomas O'Loan, 30 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>113</sup> Statement of Sergeant Humphreys, 1 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>114</sup> Statements of Sergeant McLean and Special Constables Donnelly, Braden, Lavery and Erskine, 1 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

In the case of Sinn Fein outrages on Loyalists, attack immediately Selected Sinn Fein quarters in the City, or district in the Counties. Arrest all males of fighting age and search thoroughly for arms, explosives, seditious documents etc. This action must be taken instantaneously, and forms a retaliation or punishment by the Authorities, and if put in hand immediately, will restore confidence and will prevent unauthorised reprisals by individuals...In the Cities and in the Country, maintain Flying Columns ready to operate at a moment's notice with a view to carrying out authorised punishment. Such Flying Columns to consist of selected units of A, B, or C, Special Constabulary. Schemes of attack against well-known Sinn Fein areas to be worked out beforehand.<sup>115</sup>

This letter reveals the official policy of the Northern Ireland security forces. It is probable that the A Specials and Green Howards were sent to Cushendall to execute an immediate 'authorised reprisal' in response to the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson, former chief of the imperial staff and Unionist M.P. for North Down on 22 June in London. Yet, this was to take the form of widespread searches and arrests to negate the need for unauthorised reprisals. In Cushendall, however, it appears the A Specials and soldiers acted beyond certified orders to enforce their own deadly reprisal for the death of Wilson.

It appears likely that what occurred at Cushendall on 23 June 1922 was a case of unauthorised killing by some members of the 52 Platoon of the A Specials.

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<sup>115</sup> Major-General Solly-Flood to James Craig and Bates, 21 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I, Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB/6/28/C).



Barrington-Ward's assessment of the incident appears the more plausible than Gelston's, relying as it does on a broader base of evidence. In fact, there is no evidence, other than the testimonies of soldiers and Ballymena A Specials, to suggest an ambush took place, and even the local police thought it unlikely. The group of civilians gathered at the Diamond late that night was, according to local police sources, normal with no signs of an ambush only minutes before the shootings.<sup>116</sup> One vital question, however, remains: why did it occur? The remainder of this chapter will attempt to offer an explanation for the Cushendall shootings and the other U.S.C. excesses described above.

#### Explaining U.S.C. excesses

Unlawful killings were not uncommon in revolutionary Ireland. The I.R.A. and state forces were embroiled in a conflict consisting partly of reprisal tactics. The establishment of the U.S.C. did not represent a departure from this course; rather it merely made more frequent its practice in the north. The situation in Ulster intensified: 'Long-standing communal rivalries, inflamed by armed gangs in various uniforms and disguises, ensured that in Ulster the 'Anglo-Irish' conflict began to take the shape of a sectarian civil war.'<sup>117</sup> These incidents shared many common features with violence in the rest of Ireland, such as the desire by some members of state forces to apply justice as they themselves saw fit. The attempted murder of John McCann occurred in response to a belief that he had played a role in the attack on Martinstown barracks which resulted in the death of a local special constable.

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<sup>116</sup> A police patrol passed the Diamond shortly before the convoy entered the village. Local police spoke to some of the people gathered there and noted nothing extraordinary. See the statement of Sergeant Hannon, 2 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>117</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 99.

Further aggravating the local special constables, the U.S.C. fatality at Martinstown was the result of friendly-fire, therefore adding an element of embarrassment and increased frustration to the situation.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, in Rathfriland, the two suspected I.R.A. volunteers were shot rather than taken into custody and tried along conventional lines. In Cushendall three men were killed in an unprovoked attack. All these occurrences share features with other killings involving state forces in southern Ireland. For example, in many cases prisoners were shot while allegedly attempting to escape. This was only possible, however, if arresting officers failed to handcuff or restrain prisoners.<sup>119</sup> This was also the case at Rathfriland and Cushendall. In the latter case James McAllister was not restrained when taken into custody. Sergeant McLean, who made this arrest and commanded the Crossley tender of special constables, claimed he 'had no knowledge of the order that prisoners should be handcuffed.'<sup>120</sup> In addition, most of the A Specials under McLean's command recalled that no order to supervise McAllister was given: 'I was not told off to look after McAllister.'<sup>121</sup> This is surprising considering McLean believed him worthy to be 'interrogated by higher authority.'<sup>122</sup> It appears improbable that McLean, who would a year later be promoted to Head Constable, would forget to handcuff a prisoner when he believed his convoy to be in a precarious security situation.

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<sup>118</sup> On 19 May 1922 police officers in Martinstown barracks fired a very light in response to an I.R.A. attack. Police from Ballymena responded, as did B Specials from Clough. The former encountered bicycles on the roadside near Martinstown barracks and took cover in anticipation of an ambush. When the Clough B Specials, who owned the bicycles, returned the Ballymena police opened fire believing them to be members of the I.R.A. Special Constable Thomas McNeill was later found dead and it was suspected he was killed by the Ballymena police. See police report on the attack on Martinstown barracks, May 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/222).

<sup>119</sup> Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, pp 182-4.

<sup>120</sup> Statement of Sergeant McLean, June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/1).

<sup>121</sup> Statement of Special Constable Braden, 31 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>122</sup> Statement of Sergeant McLean, 31 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

A second common feature of many killings in revolutionary Ireland was the lack of successful prosecutions of members of state forces. Police officers were rarely convicted of murder, largely because their colleagues refused to testify against them.<sup>123</sup> In east Ulster, strong alibis were provided by colleagues of members of the U.S.C. who were accused of carrying out murders. During the trial of Sergeant McDowell, accused of participating in the McCann shootings, the Corkey police force unanimously testified that he did not leave the barracks that night, despite John McCann stating that McDowell was present when he was shot. As a result, McDowell was found not guilty. Rarely did a member of the U.S.C. face punishment for his wrongdoing. The provision of alibis was a feature of the conflict in the rest of Ireland, where members of the Auxiliary force escaped conviction for murders due to the testimony of comrades.<sup>124</sup> As a supplement to alibis, some special constables simply refused to speak out against their comrades. Thomas Fagan, a Catholic who between April 1921 and July 1922 resided at Muckamore, Co. Antrim, wrote to the minister of home affairs complaining of a raid on his home by local B Specials. Fagan, writing from his new home in Westmeath, detailed his experience:

On Monday morning July 10<sup>th</sup> 1922 at 1 a.m. my house there was again raided and searched by another party of Specials 5 or 6 in number dressed in police and military uniform each armed with a rifle and bandolier[.] [W]hen they knocked at the door I asked who was there; they replied Police on duty. [T]hey would not allow me time to put on my pants[.] I went down stairs in my night attire to admit them, when the door was opened they shouted hands up, and

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<sup>123</sup> Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, pp 197-8.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, pp 185-6. It should be noted that some members of state forces failed to escape conviction: see *ibid*, pp 198-9.

said they were I.R.A. men in the uniform of the Ulster Police. [T]hey demanded all my money which I was compelled to give them under pain of death, they kept their rifles levelled on me all the time. [T]hey then allowed me to put on my pants and took me out into the open yard in my bare feet, and compelled me to march through it for about one hour, during all this time they kept punching me in the back with the muzzle of their rifles. [T]hey asked me if I would join the "A" Specials and to fight against the "Irish Free State" as I resigned the R.I.C. in 1918. They then asked me to give them information regarding three men in Antrim town, and if I did not I would be shot. I told them I had no information to give them. [T]hen the man in charge ordered them to take me down the road and shoot me. I know one of them his name is Charles McGrubb[,] Church Street[,] Antrim and can identify him at any time[.] I worked beside him for some time before he joined the Specials.

Fagan then described how his neighbour William Mairs, who was an off-duty B Special, came outside and successfully ordered the raiding party to leave.<sup>125</sup> R.U.C. Inspector-General Charles Wickham confirmed these events, adding that 'Mairs at first gave the names of three Class "B" Special Constables who were among the raiders, but subsequently has denied all knowledge of the identity of any of this party. I have very little doubt but that some of the local "B" men took part in this raid, but as Mairs is afraid to identify anyone, no action can be taken.'<sup>126</sup> Similarly, civilian witnesses could be intimidated. After the Cushendall incident, the

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<sup>125</sup> Thomas Fagan to Bates, 23 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs, HA/5/1011).

<sup>126</sup> Wickham to Bates, 22 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs, HA/5/1011).

commandant of the 52 A Special Platoon allegedly visited a key witness, calling him a liar and even threatening him with retribution.<sup>127</sup> Such practices were confirmed by a former B Special district commandant who stated that the authorities could obtain little evidence on U.S.C. transgressions as witnesses were sometimes warned that they would 'go down next' if they identified special constables as the culprits.<sup>128</sup>

While these common features do not explain reprisals or atrocities, they do place them in context. Rather than having occurred in isolation, these events reflected the exposure of their participants to the same psychological strains affecting all members of state forces locked in a battle against the I.R.A. The latter's choice of tactic – guerrilla warfare – was designed to inflict as much psychological injury on the enemy as to achieve purely military victories.<sup>129</sup> It is this common thread that offers one possibility of explaining unauthorised violence. Traditionally, dispositional explanations have been offered, but these have become increasingly viewed as inadequate for understanding such behaviour.<sup>130</sup> Rather, situational factors related to a combat scenario determine why seemingly normal people – those without any pathological impairment – commit such acts.<sup>131</sup> Working from this basis it will be argued that members of the U.S.C. in east Ulster were exposed to at least six factors that may have contributed to their willingness to commit acts of unauthorised violence.

The first factor concerns the nature of what was in effect a civil war. Special constables were engaged in a prolonged conflict in which they were under constant

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<sup>127</sup> Statement of Margaret Emmeline Dobbs, 29 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>128</sup> 'Notes by an ex district commandant', June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>129</sup> Charles Townshend, 'The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare, 1916-1921', in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 94, no. 371 (Apr., 1979), p. 318.

<sup>130</sup> Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, pp 191-2.

<sup>131</sup> John M. Doris and Dominic Murphy, 'From My Lai to Abu Ghraib: the moral psychology of atrocity', in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, xxxi, no. 1 (2007), pp 30-31.

threat of attack in their barracks, on patrol or at home. They were also faced with an enemy that they rarely, if ever, encountered in a conventional battle scenario. The I.R.A., due to its guerrilla tactics, blended in with the civilian population and could strike at the most unlikely times and places. The I.R.A. also received support from civilians who could harbour its members or weapons.<sup>132</sup> For the members of the U.S.C., these features led to anxiety and induced a sense of isolation.<sup>133</sup> This was particularly the case for a special constable who resided in demographically 'mixed' areas where his duty made him a 'marked man.'<sup>134</sup> Isolation affected Special Constable Clydesdale who was responsible for the shooting of John McAlinden and Patrick Tumilty in Rathfriland in June 1922. Clydesdale's local Orange Lodge complained to James Craig that since he 'shot two Sinn Feiners in the execution of his duty', Clydesdale 'can get no employment, his life being in danger, Employers are afraid to engage him least [sic] something should occur to bring them into trouble.' It was hoped that Craig could gain employment for Clydesdale 'in some loyal locality, where his life would be safe.'<sup>135</sup> Other special constables were targeted in their homes by the I.R.A.<sup>136</sup>

The second factor was the poor level of training and a lack of authoritative leadership. Training that amounted to two weeks for B Specials and six weeks for A Specials was inadequate for a conflict that warranted the introduction of professionally trained and war-experienced soldiers. The result of conferring responsibility upon an unprepared civilian police force was inefficiency and

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<sup>132</sup> In Cushendall weapons were stored in a school building with some local knowledge: Interview with Kathleen McAlister, n.d. (Glens of Antrim Historical Society, Oral History Project, [www.antrimhistory.net](http://www.antrimhistory.net)).

<sup>133</sup> An exception to this would have been special constables operating in overwhelmingly Protestant areas such as east Belfast.

<sup>134</sup> Wickham to Sir Ernest Clark, 18 Dec. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ernest Clark papers, D1022/2/9).

<sup>135</sup> David Strain, Rathfriland district L.O.L. No. 3, to James Craig, 13 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/2/3/195).

<sup>136</sup> Police bi-monthly report, 18 Apr. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/1044).

overzealousness. For instance, the R.I.C. county inspector of Antrim was bemused by the killing of an unarmed civilian in the village of Clough by B Specials who displayed an eagerness to use their guns rather than ascertain the level of risk the individual posed. Consequently, the county inspector, drawing attention to the almost total absence of I.R.A. activity in the locality for months prior to the incident, advised Wickham that these B Specials have their rifles confiscated.<sup>137</sup> The training of nineteen-year-old Special Constable Gerard Vanel was questioned when he fatally shot an unarmed motorcyclist who was unable to hear the calls of a B Special patrol to halt.<sup>138</sup> In another case Ellen Jane Weir from Cullybackey, Co. Antrim, died from wounds inflicted by a B Special patrol on 25 October 1922. Passing the patrol on her way home late at night she failed to stop her car when signalled to do so. Inspector-General Wickham felt the shooting of Weir was premature and that more could have been done to avoid her death.<sup>139</sup> The low quality of special constables was clear to its own local leaders. W. A. Sandford, commandant of the A Specials in Newry, responded to a question on whether special constables would be suitable to compose the bulk of the proposed R.U.C. in March 1922 by stating: 'I think you would have great difficulty in getting reliable men. You could not take 50% of the present Specials. About 10% of them are suitable for the regular police.'<sup>140</sup>

Poor training was supplemented by a lack of authoritative leadership during patrols. Such was the case when Sergeant McLean led the group of A Specials to Cushendall, rather than the 52 Platoon's second-in-command, Captain Anderson, or

<sup>137</sup> C. I. Britton to Wickham, 19 Apr. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/219). The victim was, in fact, the step-son of one of the B Specials that shot him.

<sup>138</sup> *Banbridge Chronicle*, 18 Mar. 1922 found in a file relating to the death of Samuel Gilmore (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/947).

<sup>139</sup> A. P. Magill to G. C. Duggan, secretary of the Ministry of Finance, 19 Apr. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/936).

<sup>140</sup> Interview with W. H. Sandford, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2).

the commanding officer, Captain James Butler Porter. Even at Cushendall Major Moss-Blundell, the most senior figure amongst the convoy (with over twenty-two years of military experience), decided not to enter the village but rather stopped his lorry on the way into Cushendall. Consequently, Major Moss-Blundell was unable to command either his soldiers or the A Specials. Similarly, in the case of the two men shot at Rathfriland the commanding officer of the B Specials was not present. On another occasion an arrested I.R.A. volunteer recalled how he had been saved from the violent impetuosity of Ballycastle special constables by the unexpected arrival of R.U.C. Sergeant Henderson at the barracks in which he was being held. The Sergeant demanded the prisoner be left alone.<sup>141</sup> Without adequate training and leadership many special constables were unprepared for what amounted to a civil war scenario.

A third factor affecting the behaviour of special constables was the creation of unrealistic expectations from social and hierarchical pressure to neutralise the threat of the I.R.A. Expectations were set during recruitment campaigns: 'They must make every effort from preventing the Sinn Féiners from raiding Ballymena and doing any damage there.'<sup>142</sup> Becoming a special constable was seen as a form of national service for many Protestants and, unless one had volunteered during the Great War, it was almost an act of cowardice not to join the U.S.C. One newspaper warned, 'Don't be amongst the shirkers', while a report into the special constabulary concluded that 'in many areas moderate thinking loyalists who have declined to serve in the "B" Specials have been coerced by the more ardent spirits.'<sup>143</sup> It was

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<sup>141</sup> Statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762). Indications of exaggeration are evident in this account, but this does not rule out such an event occurring.

<sup>142</sup> Lt. Goodwin, U.S.C. county commandant of Antrim, speech at a recruitment meeting in Ballymena, *Ballymena Observer*, 21 Jan. 1921.

<sup>143</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 29 Apr. 1921; S. G. Tallents report on the U.S.C., June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).



therefore deemed the duty of unionist men to join the U.S.C. and defend their locality. Special constables were also greatly affected by media warnings that Northern Ireland was under constant threat of coercion by republicans.<sup>144</sup>

However, this pressure created a set of expectations that special constables struggled to fulfil. The realities of U.S.C. duty were very different: the I.R.A. was rarely encountered in battle and B Specials often found themselves involved in mundane patrols. Boredom was a problem even in the more violent parts of Northern Ireland, such as Belfast.<sup>145</sup> One special constable in the capital wrote:

I did my first duty on Monday night and found it dull work. I went on patrol with a policeman round Cavehill Road district and except for moving on a crowd of youths who congregated at Fortwilliam Park in the evenings...we had no excitement. I then did sentry for two hours outside the barracks and Dermot Campbell and Smiles arrived triumphantly with a curfew prisoner.<sup>146</sup>

This account reveals an almost blatant desire for action, as portrayed by the joy of arresting a person for breaking the curfew. One former R.I.C. Head Constable recalled how the B Specials 'were not satisfied until they had work to do.'<sup>147</sup> In east Ulster, where I.R.A. activity was much less frequent, boredom would have been more endemic. In his report on the U.S.C., S. G. Tallents wrote that in rural areas 'duties are light and from their numbers and circumstances little recreation is

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<sup>144</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>145</sup> Buckland, *Irish Unionism: two: Ulster Unionism and the origins of Northern Ireland 1886-1922* (Dublin, 1973), p. 163.

<sup>146</sup> Special Constable Edmund Duffin, quoted in Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war*, p. 91.

<sup>147</sup> McKenna (ed.), *A beleaguered station*, p. 39.

possible.' He concluded that this led to 'a serious want of discipline.'<sup>148</sup> Unfulfilled expectations contributed to the eagerness of special constables to fight the I.R.A. and have been a feature of other conflicts in which combatants have breached the boundaries of military convention.<sup>149</sup>

Frustration at waiting for battles with an enemy that was rarely encountered intensified when violent attacks by the I.R.A. on the police increased during the May 1922 offensive. Studies into other conflicts have suggested that in similar cases where combat participants came under such stress, they converted this pressure into an increased sense of group solidarity.<sup>150</sup> It could be suggested, therefore, that in east Ulster the defence of comrades and friends came to partly define police and U.S.C. duty. Thus, the fourth situational factor was the formation of primary group solidarity. B Specials were drawn from the local community and volunteered alongside friends, family and colleagues. Comradeship was strengthened in the shared experience of patrols and the dangers of duty. An emotional dimension was added to the conflict when special constables were killed or wounded. This formed the basis of many reprisals: avenging attacks on other members of the U.S.C. or state forces. The McCann shootings were a reprisal for the attack on Martinstown barracks and the Rathfriland incident could be seen as a response to a potential ambush. The Cushendall incident may also have been a consequence of emotional strain. The Ballymena U.S.C. had come under attack from the I.R.A. in late May 1922 with the result that a special constable was wounded.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>149</sup> Take, for instance, the case of My Lai. Charlie Company, responsible for the massacre, became increasingly frustrated 'waiting for battles that never came'. V. L. Hamilton and H. Kelman, *Crimes of obedience: toward a social psychology of authority and responsibility* (London, 1989), p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> Doris and Murphy, 'From My Lai to Abu Ghraib', p. 38.

<sup>151</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 26 May 1922.

In addition, by patrolling their localities B Specials were susceptible to local prejudices and loyalties to friends, neighbours and family. Exposure to local pressures, sentimentalities and suspicions was avoided by the R.I.C. whose officers were traditionally posted outside their home county. This did not apply to B Specials, although one local commandant agreed with the assertion that 'there are stronger grounds for keeping the Specials as far away as possible [from their native place] than there are in the case of the R.I.C.'<sup>152</sup> S. G. Tallents, on his assessment of the B Specials in June 1922, agreed that any police force should be instituted on a non-local basis.<sup>153</sup> The process of primary group solidarity and local loyalties may have contributed to the growing desire of special constables to exact revenge and fulfil 'personal blood feuds'. This process was made much easier by acting as part of a group where individual culpability for a reprisal was diluted and responsibility diffused.<sup>154</sup>

The fifth factor was the stereotype that 'nationalist equals Catholics equals I.R.A.'<sup>155</sup> The almost total exclusion of Catholics from the U.S.C. reinforced stereotypes of Catholics as republicans. This view was strengthened by the assumption that civilians were assisting the I.R.A. in areas where republican activity was most prominent. For example, the U.S.C.'s correct assumption that the Antrim I.R.A. was strongest in the glens led to the belief that all Catholics throughout the glens were republicans.<sup>156</sup> Such pre-conceptions of an entire populace affected the

<sup>152</sup> Interview with W. H. Sandford, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2). Quote taken from a question posed by C. G. Duggan.

<sup>153</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>154</sup> Doris and Murphy, 'From My Lai to Abu Ghraib', p. 36.

<sup>155</sup> Quote in Dennis Kennedy, 'Border trouble: Unionist perceptions of and responses to the independent Irish state, 1921-39', in Alan F. Parkinson and Eamon Phoenix (eds), *Conflicts in the north of Ireland, 1900-2000* (Dublin, 2010), p. 92; also see Alvin Jackson, *The two Unions: Ireland, Scotland and the survival of the United Kingdom, 1707-2007* (Oxford, 2012), p. 317.

<sup>156</sup> It was known to police that the I.R.A. weapons were stored in Cushendall, some of which were recovered: *Ballymena Observer*, 4 Feb. 1921 and statement of Sergeant Hannon, 2 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

attitudes of members of state forces who were sent into the Antrim glens and other areas deemed 'disloyal'. Lt. Bulfin, one of the military officers involved in the Cushendall incident, believed that 'the majority of the villagers are of Sinn Fein tendencies'.<sup>157</sup> When the military convoy was sent to Cushendall to investigate a reported concentration of the I.R.A., the soldiers and A Specials expected to find just that. Any concentration of people – whether on the hills at Waterfoot or at the Diamond in Cushendall – was suspected to be a group of Irish Volunteers. This explains the confidence of the military in the immediate aftermath of the Cushendall incident that four members of the I.R.A. had been killed.<sup>158</sup> Also, Pat Gore recalled that one military officer expressed delight on hearing the name of his dead brother: 'John Gore of Ashbrook – That's good.'<sup>159</sup> The military officer had mistaken John Gore for another man of the same name whose brother James had been interned in 1921.<sup>160</sup>

The converse of the rhetoric of loyalty surrounding an almost exclusively Protestant force was that Catholics were strongly associated with disloyalty. This attitude was expressed by the Ballymena solicitor, James Clarke, in his defence of Sergeant Thomas McDowell after the McCann shootings: 'It was not fair that any B men – and the B Specials were all loyal, patriotic, law-abiding men – should be charged with a foul, callous murder on poor defenceless people by wretched men...It was only those who were disloyal who seemed to get any consideration.'<sup>161</sup> Similar perceptions of Protestants were held by some members of the I.R.A. and shaped

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<sup>157</sup> Statement of Lt. Bulfin, 27 June 1922, (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 8/B/11).

<sup>158</sup> 'Report on incident', Major Moss Blundell, 24 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 8/B/11).

<sup>159</sup> Statement of Pat Gore, 29 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).

<sup>160</sup> 'Report on incident', Major Moss Blundell, 24 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Cabinet Secretariat, CAB 8/B/11).

<sup>161</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 30 June 1922.

attacks on unionist communities.<sup>162</sup> This process greatly simplified an otherwise intricate conflict that delivered few opportunities for special constables to fulfil their expectations.

The final factor that may have affected the discipline of special constables was the lack of strict authority. When cases of unauthorised violence arose, the U.S.C. leadership was generally in favour of following disciplinary procedure. All the necessary machinery was in place: advisory boards consisting of local magistrates, police county inspectors and U.S.C. county commandants were established to deal with cases of ill-discipline.<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, Lt. Col. Charles Wickham, the R.I.C. divisional commissioner in Ulster and, from June 1922 the first inspector-general of the R.U.C., preferred to investigate major incidents. For example, in Co. Tyrone, Wickham rejected the suggestion of the U.S.C. county commandant to ignore a case in which B Specials were accused of raiding a Catholic man's house and stealing money from it. Wickham stated that 'action such as this cannot be tolerated', and that if the B Specials were innocent 'it is more desirable that these men should clear themselves in Court than that there should be any suggestion that we were shielding crime.'<sup>164</sup> With regards to the Cushendall affair Richard Dawson Bates, the minister responsible for security, appeared to acquiesce in an inquiry despite his initial opposition.<sup>165</sup> However, in all cases discussed here, including that from Co. Tyrone where the court case collapsed after key witnesses failed to appear in court, no special constables were punished for unauthorised violence.

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<sup>162</sup> See, for instance, the association of all Protestants in Altnaveigh with the B Specials and Orange Order: Lynch, 'Explaining the Altnaveigh massacre', p. 209.

<sup>163</sup> General Orders for Special Constabulary for the Divisional Area, Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance files, FIN/18/1/80).

<sup>164</sup> Wickham to Col. J. McClintock, Tyrone U.S.C. county commandant, 10 Nov. 1921 and 18 Nov. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/157).

<sup>165</sup> Cabinet conclusions, 27 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Cabinet conclusion files, CAB/4/50/10).

This may not have always been the case. On some occasions ill-discipline allegedly resulted in court-martialling and even disbandment of platoons.<sup>166</sup> Yet, the capacity of these disciplinary procedures to operate efficiently as a deterrent to criminality must be questioned. As Tallents pointed out in 1922, the temporary status of an A Special (recruited on six month contracts) and the voluntary nature of the B Specials, deprived the authorities of the opportunity to impose a crippling financial penalty.<sup>167</sup> However, in many key instances, such as those described in this chapter, discipline was not imposed. One reason for this may have been the opposition posed by district commandants and their head constables. It has been argued that some local U.S.C. leaders were afraid of their own men.<sup>168</sup> This is plausible considering how head constables were to be chosen:

The Sergeants will be selected by the group of Special Constables they will command. The Head Constables will be selected by the Sergeants for the areas in which the Head Constables are to act...Every appointment of a Sergeant is subject to the final approval of the District Commandant and every appointment of a Head Constable to the approval of a County Commandant.<sup>169</sup>

This process gave special constables some say in the selection of their immediate superiors. Local U.S.C. leaders were therefore usually popular with their men. An example was John Webster, the first sub-district commandant of the Armagh town B Specials, who had played a leading role in organising local 'Protective Patrols' and

<sup>166</sup> Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 51-2.

<sup>167</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>169</sup> 'General Orders for Special Constabulary for the Divisional Area', Oct. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Finance files, FIN/18/1/80).

procuring arms in the summer of 1920 when local unionists felt vulnerable to attack.<sup>170</sup> This process was criticised by Tallents, who stated that 'you cannot expect a man to be a chum for 6 days in the week and an N.C.O exacting strict discipline on the 7<sup>th</sup>.'<sup>171</sup> For a Head Constable or Sergeant to report a member of his own company would endanger his own position. In addition, local U.S.C. leaders did not want to provoke a mass rebellion. In one case the U.S.C. county commandant for Tyrone preferred not to discipline his men as it could 'cause serious trouble in the "B" Force' and he expressed concern regarding 'the difficulty there may be in keeping the only defence Force for the Six Counties in being.'<sup>172</sup>

These local obstacles to proper disciplinary procedure, and the lack of evidence to prosecute special constables (as in the Cushendall, Rathfriland and Mounthamilton cases), meant few members of the U.S.C. were punished for criminal behaviour. However, while Bates and Wickham cannot be blamed for the outcome of these cases, the conspicuous absence of subsequent disciplinary reform suggests that Bates and Wickham were unsuitable leaders. Sir Henry Wilson, former chief of the imperial staff, was invited to advise the Unionist government on security issues in March 1922. Wilson's assessment of the situation led him to the conclusion that more rigid military discipline was required. The U.S.C. lacked a systematic disciplinary code from above. One U.S.C. leader, who claimed to have dismissed 10 per cent of his force for ill-discipline, stated that discipline 'is not so rigid as I would like' and as a result he had to resort to 'humouring' his men as a form of control.<sup>173</sup> The attainment of firm discipline, Wilson believed, was handicapped by Richard

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<sup>170</sup> 'Typescripts re. formation of U.S.C. in Armagh, c. 1961', (P.R.O.N.I., John Webster papers, DI290/6).

<sup>171</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>172</sup> Col. J. McClintock, county commandant Tyrone U.S.C., to Wickham, 17 Nov. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/157).

<sup>173</sup> Interview with W. H. Sandford, 1 Mar. 1922 ((P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2).

Dawson Bates, whom he described as 'a small man in every way & thought', and thought Wickham to be 'a Major of average ability'.<sup>174</sup> Another observer, S. G. Tallents, described Bates as 'a weak man and political hack' in his inquiry into the Northern Ireland government.<sup>175</sup> Permanent secretary to Bates was Samuel Watts, whose assessment of U.S.C. indiscipline as a natural reaction to the killing of policemen – 'Human nature is human nature' – illustrated deeply institutionalised insensitivities to excesses committed by state forces.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, Sir Hamar Greenwood, 'notorious for his lies, denials, and evasions', failed to condemn reprisals by British state forces in Ireland and projected an impression that 'almost any act was legitimate'.<sup>177</sup> The absence of strict discipline created a permissive environment, and this culture was reflected by the view of Sir James Craig that the U.S.C. would facilitate 'organised reprisals'.<sup>178</sup>

By comparison, the Garda Síochána in the Irish Free State was led by Eoin O'Duffy whose 'emphasis on discipline and moral integrity contributed to the high standards within the new force'.<sup>179</sup> More analogous to the U.S.C. was the Free State National Army, which retained a rank-and-file and officer corps with old allegiances to the I.R.A. Factionalism emerged by 1923 between the revived I.R.B. and newly formed I.R.A. Organisation. A potential mutiny by the latter in the face of personnel cuts was crushed without government permission by the army command. The result was that Richard Mulcahy, the minister responsible, and nearly one hundred officers were relieved of their duties, a process that reasserted the authority of civilian

<sup>174</sup> Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: a political soldier* (Oxford, 2006), p. 280.

<sup>175</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 241.

<sup>176</sup> Watts quoted in Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 226.

<sup>177</sup> Martin F. Seedorf, 'Defending reprisals: Sir Hamar Greenwood and the "Troubles", 1920-21', in *Eire-Ireland*, xxv, No. 4 (1990), p. 80 and 86.

<sup>178</sup> Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, pp 220-1; Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 37.

<sup>179</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005), p. 127.



government.<sup>180</sup> In Northern Ireland the Unionist government was unprepared to pursue a divisive policy to enforce discipline in the U.S.C., yielding instead to its populist character.

The six factors described above all affected the behaviour of members of the U.S.C. It cannot, therefore, be assumed that unauthorised violence by the U.S.C. was simply the outcome of poor training, institutionalised sectarianism or the enrolment of more militant elements. Systemic failures rather than 'personal faults' were at the heart of the U.S.C.'s shortcomings.<sup>181</sup> Such violence resulted from the pressures of a conflict zone characterised by the complex interplay between anxiety, inadequate preparation, poor leadership and guidance, social pressure, emotional group solidarity, a binary perception of society and a lack of discipline.

## Conclusion

This chapter has sought to address key aspects of the U.S.C. in its formative years that contributed to the consequent poor relationship between the Unionist government and the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland. The first half of this chapter established that the U.S.C. operated in a context where they largely contained republican violence, but failed to defeat the I.R.A. before the outbreak of civil war in the south. However, the nature of the U.S.C. was also affected by loyalism. As an unprofessional force which had loyalties closer to those of the community from which it derived, the U.S.C. experienced a tense relationship with the regular police and army. The respective roles of republican violence and loyalist attitudes influenced how the U.S.C. operated and the actions of some of its members

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<sup>180</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: war, peace and beyond* (Malden, 2010), pp 275-276; Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands*, pp 171-3.

<sup>181</sup> S. G. Tallents report, June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

cannot be attributed solely to the enrolment of the 'wilder' elements from the Protestant community.

In turn, the nature of U.S.C. affected the relationship between the Catholic minority and Northern Ireland state. Firstly, the U.S.C.'s failure to suppress the I.R.A. bred frustration that often led to harassment of Catholics. Secondly, without completely accepting its subservient role under regular state forces, and partly encouraged by the state's failure to discipline the force, U.S.C. actions often reflected loyalist prejudices and expectations. This was the direct result of recruiting special constables from a community involved in a communal conflict with the hope that they would impartially police that same conflict. While these points demonstrate why Catholics perceived the U.S.C. negatively, they cannot explain why some special constables committed atrocities.

The second half of this chapter challenged previous interpretations of why U.S.C. excesses occurred and utilised several case studies to analyse the reason for such violence. It concluded that the interplay of structural and situational forces were contributory factors. However, these factors do not exclude personal motivations as all cases were committed under minimum levels of immediate risk. Ultimately, however, it was the situational forces that facilitated personal motivation, as when republican violence eased U.S.C. excesses became less frequent. Thus, any dispositional understanding – that the U.S.C. recruited 'wilder' men with sectarian motives – does not adequately explain unauthorised violence by special constables. Nor can a single factor be considered when explaining many cases. The Cushendall shootings, for example, may partly have been in retaliation for the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson, but were also shaped by other contributory factors.

Conclusions arrived at here should not be assumed applicable to the situation of special constables in other parts of Northern Ireland. In Belfast, where violence occurred on a much greater scale, the altered circumstances may have affected the attitudes of special constables. For instance, the greater military presence in Belfast may have applied more strain to the relationship between soldiers and loyalists, while loyalist paramilitary groups, such as the Ulster Imperial Guards and Ulster Protestant Association, were enrolled into sections of the U.S.C. in the city. Also, in peripheral regions I.R.A. cross-border raids and kidnappings of unionist civilians inevitably added to the antagonisms between loyalists and nationalists. In addition, in these areas unionist concerns relating to the border remained high with the proposed Boundary Commission. The arguments and conclusions of this chapter are more accurately applicable to the relatively peaceful region of east Ulster.

## Chapter Six

### The nationalist community

#### Introduction

For Irish constitutional nationalists the prospect of Home Rule had largely vanished by 1920 following the Irish Parliamentary party's electoral demolition by Sinn Féin in December 1918. However, in Ulster, where the Irish revolution largely failed to take root, constitutionalism resisted the onslaught of republicanism with a greater degree of success. In the six north-eastern counties of Ireland a parliament for a devolved government was established in June 1921. The failure of nationalists to achieve independence in the north-east has resulted in partitionist interpretations of the Irish revolution which have largely marginalised the experiences of northern nationalists.<sup>1</sup>

However, considering the centrality of Ulster unionist resistance to Home Rule, which in turn facilitated the re-emergence of violent republicanism, such partitionist history is untenable. In other ways too, northern aspects of the revolution should not be ignored. As late as mid-1922 Michael Collins was ordering I.R.A. attacks in Northern Ireland in the hope of avoiding a split in the southern republican movement.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the actions and experiences of northern nationalists were inextricably tied up with southern developments. For example, the relegation of Irish unity as a concern of the Irish plenipotentiaries during the Treaty negotiations and the priority given to the sovereignty of the 26 county state by the Treaty's southern

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish question: Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism 1912-1916* (Oxford, 1994), pp x-xi.

<sup>2</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 120.

critics, gravely affected the response of the northern minority to political developments. In Northern Ireland the war of independence remained unfinished after July 1921 with the I.R.A. launching an offensive in May 1922. During this period the position of the northern minority became increasingly tenuous. Communal violence was largely aimed at Catholics by militant loyalists and special constables in Belfast, and proved an obstacle to nationalist cooperation with the Unionist government. By the end of 1922 the northern I.R.A. had been defeated and efforts were made by nationalists to recognise the state.<sup>3</sup>

The historiography of northern nationalism during this period is largely limited to high-political interpretations.<sup>4</sup> In light of the subsequent emergence of the civil rights movement many attempts have been made to assess the roots of Catholic disadvantage in Northern Ireland. The years 1921 to 1925 are important here, as nationalist non-cooperation with the government affected their role in the new institutions of state. It has been posited that while the Unionist government 'did genuinely try to create a nonsectarian [sic] state in which all citizens would enjoy equal rights', the nationalist attitude to Northern Ireland was largely one of non-recognition, which alongside I.R.A. violence, reinforced nationalist disadvantage.<sup>5</sup> F. S. L. Lyons asserted that the nationalist instinct 'to hold themselves absolutely apart' undermined Catholic interests: without nationalist participation in the Lynn Commission on education, for example, the concerns of the Catholic Church could not be considered, leaving Unionists free to shape education to their own needs.<sup>6</sup> Generally, Unionists could 'Protestantize' Northern Ireland in the first decade of its

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<sup>3</sup> Eamon Phoenix, *Northern nationalism: nationalist politics, partition and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994), p. 245-49.

<sup>4</sup> The most notable studies are Phoenix, *Northern nationalism* and Enda Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland 1918-1973* (Dublin, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> A. T. Q. Stewart, *The narrow ground: aspects of Ulster, 1609-1969* (London, 1977), pp 173-5.

<sup>6</sup> F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1973), p. 721; J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 137.

existence in the absence of nationalist participation.<sup>7</sup> Marianne Elliot considered nationalist abstention as 'disastrous' as 'things were still open to change' in the early years of Northern Ireland.<sup>8</sup> However, for Patrick Buckland and Alvin Jackson the refusal of Unionist leaders to pursue a policy of conciliation inevitably shaped the minority's approach to the new northern state.<sup>9</sup> The pursuit of an armed struggle with the state was the choice of a relatively small number of nationalists and this has been the focus of recent studies.<sup>10</sup>

A close examination can reveal the dynamism of northern nationalism during the period. In the north-east constitutionalism remained a significant force, particularly in Joseph Devlin's west Belfast stronghold and its hinterland in County Antrim. In the eastern counties the I.R.A. was numerically and militarily weak, not only due to the local unionist majority, but also as a result of the constitutionalist convictions of many nationalists. This was also the case in other parts of Ireland that experienced little republican violence.<sup>11</sup> However, this relatively peaceful constituency has not composed the basis of a thorough study in the North. As shown, historians are primarily concerned with the I.R.A. in the north or with the non-recognition of the state by nationalists in general. However, it is clear that only a minority of nationalists supported the I.R.A. and that Devlin's abstention from the Northern Ireland parliament was largely shaped by violence against nationalists.

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<sup>7</sup> Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989), p. 529.

<sup>8</sup> Marianne Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster: a history* (London, 2000), p. 383.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Buckland, *The factory of grievances: devolved government in Northern Ireland, 1921-39* (Dublin, 1979), pp 29 and 233; Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: war, peace and beyond* (Malden, 2010), pp 341-2.

<sup>10</sup> Jim McDermott's *Northern divisions: the old IRA and the Belfast pogroms 1920-22* (Belfast, 2001) focuses on the I.R.A. in Belfast with limited commentary on the provincial movement. For a more comprehensive study, see Robert Lynch, *The northern IRA and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Natasha Grayson, 'The quality of nationalism in Cavan, Louth and Meath during the Irish Revolution' (Ph.D. thesis, Keele University, 2007).

Likewise, Cardinal Logue's refusal to appoint representatives to the Lynn Commission was based on similar concerns regarding immediate circumstances.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter seeks to establish nationalist agency on a local basis. It will begin by determining how nationalists were perceived by unionists and contrast these views with nationalists' self-identity. It will investigate the divisions between constitutionalist nationalists and republicans, before examining the role of the I.R.A. in east Ulster. The chapter will finish by analysing residential and social integration between nationalists and unionists. Central to this final aspect is consideration of the role of communal violence in reshaping social relations.

### Who were nationalists?

It was in east Ulster that Catholics composed the smallest proportion of the population in Ireland. In 1911 they amounted to 21 and 32 per cent of the population in Antrim and Down respectively, while by 1926 these figures were 20 and 30 per cent. Geographically, east Ulster had predominantly Catholic areas [see Map 3]. In the glens of Antrim there resided a close-knit community mostly comprising Catholics and nationalists. Protestants and unionists were few in number there, although the glens were surrounded by the unionist 'territory' of south and mid-Antrim. Aside from the glens and a small enclave centred on Toome near the northern Lough Neagh coast, Catholics were dispersed throughout Antrim in lower concentration and resided in most of the predominantly Protestant towns. Similarly in Down, Catholics dominated the south of the county, but were also resident in numerous towns with large unionist populations such as Banbridge and

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<sup>12</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, pp 237-8; John Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), p 178.

Newtownards. The Catholic community of south Down had easy access to the south of the country via Dundalk and to the west via south Armagh, unlike the inhabitants of the Antrim glens who were surrounded by a sea to the north and east [see Map 4].

The experiences of the nationalist community were partly shaped by unionist perceptions of the northern minority. In 1921 a range of views on nationalists existed at the heart of the Belfast government. These views were not always distinguishable from the stereotypes found amongst the extremities of Ulster loyalism, but they also incorporated a range of more moderate and to some extent accommodating perceptions. Joseph Lee contended that a current of racism dictated Ulster unionist views of Catholics and that rhetoric of racial superiority was prevalent.<sup>13</sup> However, Lee's case must be balanced against the continuous references by unionists and Protestant clergymen to their 'fellow countrymen'.<sup>14</sup> Messages of peace, reconciliation, tolerance and friendliness were not uncommon in Protestant church circles, while criticism of Catholics and nationalists often focused on their religion and politics, rather than on race.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of the wide spectrum of views, there was a prevailing tendency to view Catholics as synonymous with nationalism.<sup>16</sup> There were, however, other individuals at the heart of government that distinguished between constitutionalists and militant republicans. Samuel Watt, the permanent secretary to the minister of home affairs, stated privately that he was unable to believe that most Catholics

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<sup>13</sup> Lee, *Ireland*, pp 9-11. See Graham Walker's critique of Lee: 'Old history: Protestant Ulster in Lee's "Ireland"', in *The Irish Review*, no. 12 (Spring-Summer, 1992), pp 65-71.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, see Ronald McNeill *Ulster's stand for Union* (London, 1922), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> See speeches by local Protestant church leaders in *Ballymena Observer*, 15 July 1921. See also, David Fitzpatrick, 'Solitary and wild': *Frederick MacNeice and the salvation of Ireland* (Dublin, 2012), pp 155-180.

<sup>16</sup> Oliver P. Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster 1603-1983: an interpretative history* (London, 1994), p. 215; see Chapter One.



supported the I.R.A.<sup>17</sup> However, such a nuanced perception was not shared by Watt's minister, Richard Dawson Bates, who held a deep and persistent suspicion of all Catholics and nationalists.<sup>18</sup>

Stereotypes were, in part, the product of anxieties concerning state security as Catholics composed a community that traditionally voted for political parties seeking a form of Irish independence. However, these stereotypes were misleading in two ways. Firstly, a small but vociferous number of northern nationalists were Protestant. Notable amongst these was the Ballymoney Presbyterian minister Rev. J. B. Armour, whose political outlook was rooted in a liberal tradition and evolved into revulsion of partition and opposition to violent republicanism. In 1913 Armour succeeded in staging a 'Protestant Protest' against the Ulster Covenant in Ballymoney.<sup>19</sup> Despite old age he remained an ardent opponent of partition after 1920, referring to the 'bastard parliament' of the north.<sup>20</sup> In addition to Armour was the republican Rev. James Alexander Irwin, Presbyterian minister of Killead on the outskirts of Antrim town. In early 1920 he encountered Éamon de Valera in New York and joined him on a speaking tour of the southern United States. The speeches of Irwin, one of which accused Edward Carson of 'the prostitution of religion' for political gain, were utilised to put forward the case that Protestants would not be persecuted under a Dublin parliament.<sup>21</sup> Given that his participation in the tour was of 'inestimable value' to the republican cause in North America, Irwin unsurprisingly faced a degree

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<sup>17</sup> Samuel Watt, minutes of police reorganisation committee, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2).

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, Dawson Bates to James Craig, 21 and 24 July 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/70/3).

<sup>19</sup> J. R. B. McMinn, 'Liberalism in north Antrim, 1900-1914', in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxiii, no. 89 (May, 1982), p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Idem, *Against the tide: a calendar of the papers of Rev. J. B. Armour, Irish Presbyterian minister and Home Ruler, 1869-1914* (Belfast, 1985), p. lix.

<sup>21</sup> *Irish News*, 2 Apr. 1920. For a discussion of Irwin's role in de Valera's U.S. tour, see Michael Silvestri, "'The south needs encouragement': the Irish republican campaign in the American south and southern Irish American identity, 1919-20", in *Eire-Ireland*, 47:3&4 (Winter, 2012), pp 215-18.

of hostility from within his church when he returned home.<sup>22</sup> Despite their energy, republicans conceded that Armour and Irwin were unrepresentative: 'They were in a minority, and they were hemmed in by the intolerant and bigoted mass pressure that reached its peak with the Carsonite movement.'<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that Armour and Irwin were an embarrassment to any advocate of the Unionist belief that Catholicism was the root cause of rebelliousness.

Secondly, and more importantly, nationalists in east Ulster (and elsewhere in Ireland) were deeply divided between constitutionalists and republicans. In fact, constitutionalism in east Ulster was in a much stronger position than anywhere else in the country, making the region an exception from the general shift in Ireland towards support for Sinn Féin. The relative strength of constitutionalism can be seen in electoral results from 1918 to 1921. A thorough analysis of the relative support for the two nationalist parties in east Ulster in 1918 is impossible. An electoral pact for the general election ensured that Sinn Féin and Irish Parliamentary candidates did not compete in the same constituencies. Cardinal Logue, as arbiter in the electoral pact, assigned constituencies to the two parties in early December, but this was too late to retract the candidacies of those who were asked to step down. In south Down Éamon de Valera's name appeared for Sinn Féin alongside Jeremiah McVeigh for the I.P.P. However, no contest arose as electors were advised to vote for McVeigh who duly won the seat.<sup>24</sup> A more accurate portrayal of nationalist attitudes could be found in east Down where the constitutional nationalist refused to abide by the pact. Cardinal Logue had allocated the constituency to the Sinn Féin candidate but Michael Johnson of the I.P.P. defied the Cardinal and, complaining of a 'treachery',

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph Connolly, *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly: a founder of modern Ireland*, ed. J. Anthony Gaughan (Dublin, 1996), p. 160; statement of James Alex H. Irwin (N.A.I. Bureau of Military History, WS 394).

<sup>23</sup> Connolly, *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly*, pp 163-4.

<sup>24</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 51. Only 33 votes were cast for de Valera.

he refused to stand down. Johnson gained 4,362 votes to 3,876 for the Sinn Féin candidate, Russell McNabb. The seat was lost, however, to the Unionist candidate who triumphed from the split nationalist vote.<sup>25</sup>

In 1920 urban elections were held under the newly introduced system of proportional representation. Throughout Ulster the constitutionalists, including various non-affiliated nationalist candidates (i.e. Dominion Home Rulers and independent nationalists), won a larger share of the vote than Sinn Féin. According to one historian, while labour candidates took 20.9 per cent of the vote, Sinn Féin took 8.9 and constitutionalists 14.9.<sup>26</sup> A closer look at the results in local newspapers highlights several problems with this analysis. In some cases candidates were wrongly attributed to a political party when in reality they were non-affiliated.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, in some cases the exact share of votes remained unpublished. However, election results in east Ulster broadly reflected those in the rest of Ulster. Of those council seats that were contested by nationalist parties in east Ulster, the Devlinites won 13.1 per cent and Sinn Féin's won 7.1 per cent. The total share of seats that were gained by all constitutional nationalist candidates, including Dominion Home Rule and independent nationalist candidates, was 14.3 per cent. In east Ulster labour candidates out-performed both nationalist parties by taking 16.7 per cent of seats in contested areas, again reflecting the overall trend in Ulster.<sup>28</sup>

In June 1920 another round of local elections was held for rural and county councils. As the publication of the results of these elections was erratic, only a partial

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 165-6.

<sup>26</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 74.

<sup>27</sup> Take the example of J. Pettigrew, an independent, who complained of being labelled a Unionist: *Irish News*, 19 Jan. 1920.

<sup>28</sup> Election results were gathered from a survey of local newspapers, including the *Lisburn Standard*, 23 Jan. 1920; *Ballymena Observer*, 23 Jan. 1920; *Irish News*, 17 Jan. 1920. Some councils were not contested by nationalists, such as Banbridge where two nationalist councillors sat on the outgoing council: *Belfast Newsletter*, 16 Jan. 1920.

picture of the electoral landscape can be pieced together. In the Antrim County Council elections, Sinn Féin increased its share of seats. Republicans Louis J. Walsh and Patrick Downing were victorious in Ballycastle and Lisburn electoral districts respectively, while the Catholic solicitor famed for a mid-Antrim libel case with a Presbyterian minister during the Home Rule crisis, J. P. McCann, won a seat for the constitutionalists in the Ballymena poll. In Down Sinn Féin performed even better, securing four seats.<sup>29</sup> Yet, while it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the relative performances of constitutionalists and republicans, indications suggest that Sinn Féin had grown in strength in parts of Down by June 1920.

The most accurate assessment of the relative electoral strengths of Sinn Féin and constitutional nationalists can be made with regard to the first Northern Ireland elections in May 1921. The popularity of Sinn Féin had greatly improved in the six counties. In Down Éamon de Valera topped the nationalist poll with 16,269 first preference votes. Patrick O'Neill, the Devlinite candidate, won only 7,317 first preference votes, illustrating that the relative popularity of the two parties had by 1921 swung in favour of Sinn Féin. By contrast, however, Antrim nationalists remained largely constitutionalist. The combined Sinn Féin first preference vote numbered 6,232, well short of Joseph Devlin's 9,448 votes. The reasons for the continuing strength of constitutional nationalism in parts of east Ulster will be discussed later.

Assessing the relative levels of support for constitutionalism and Sinn Féin after May 1921 is problematic. Nationalists boycotted most constituencies in the 1922 U.K. general election as a protest against gerrymandering.<sup>30</sup> The local elections in January 1923 are also unreliable as markers of support as both nationalist parties

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<sup>29</sup> *Ballymoney Free Press*, 10 June 1920; *Irish News*, 27-31 May and 5 June 1920; Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 86.

<sup>30</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 262.

again boycotted electoral areas where the abolition of proportional representation offered the prospect of a Unionist majority.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that during the period between 1920 and 1922 constitutional nationalism displayed firm resilience despite the strengthening of republicanism in the region. The next section of this chapter will now discuss the depth of these divisions.

### Nationalist divisions

Sinn Féin struggled to win support from the nationalist electorate in parts of east Ulster, particularly County Antrim. In assessing how deep the division between constitutionalists and Sinn Féin was, this section will also offer suggestions as to why these divisions existed. Occasions of hostility undoubtedly arose between rival political groups, but few are as well documented as the clash between Sinn Féin parliamentary candidate for South Antrim in 1918, Kevin O'Shiel, and a Devlinite priest Father Thomas McCotter. On arriving in the constituency O'Shiel found Sinn Féin lacking in clerical support. Enlisting the help of a republican priest, Father McKillop, O'Shiel set off seeking the support of other clergy. Father McCotter, parish priest of Antrim town, was among the first to be visited. This encounter was later described in detail by O'Shiel:

When Fr. McCotter came into us in the sitting-room of his home, it was clear that he did not know who I was or what our business could be, for, after a short word of welcome with Fr. McKillop he asked,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 269. The abolition of proportional representation in local elections by the Unionist government ensured that some electoral areas that previously returned nationalist majorities would return Unionist majorities. This would weaken nationalist representations at the proposed boundary commission. It also ensured a Unionist majority on the Downpatrick council which nationalists had lost control of for the first time in January 1920.

coming towards me smilingly, his hand extended for a handshake, "And who is your friend?" When Fr. McKillop answered that question in his blunt, decisive way, explaining that I was the Sinn Féin candidate, Fr. McCotter stopped dead, the hand fell to his side, the smile vanished from his face, a cloud descended on his brow as he said: 'Oh, I'm very sorry, very sorry indeed, Sir, but I cannot welcome you. You and your friends are trouble-makers. You've already caused far too much trouble in the country. I cannot help or countenance you or your campaign in any way. I beg of you to leave us here in peace and good will of all our neighbours that we enjoy, and go back to Dublin.'<sup>32</sup>

McCotter's lack of hospitality provoked McKillop to use 'very unclerical language' and much time passed before he recovered his composure.<sup>33</sup> What is clear is that while the electoral pact of 1918 was portrayed by unionists as the conversion of constitutionalists to republicanism, it was in fact a mere political expedient drawn up in the context of nationalists' minority status.

At the 1921 Northern Ireland elections another electoral pact was signed between Devlin and de Valera whereby candidates of both parties could stand against each other but with the understanding that their supporters would submit second preference votes for the other party.<sup>34</sup> This pact angered many constitutionalists as they viewed their party's existence as conditional upon electoral

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<sup>32</sup> Statement of Kevin O'Shiel (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 1770).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Sydney Elliot, 'The electoral system in N. Ireland since 1920' (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1971), p. 827.

agreements with Sinn Féin.<sup>35</sup> Some, like McCotter, preferred to abstain from polling than to vote for the republicans.<sup>36</sup> In Portaferry, on the Ards Peninsula, Alderman Harkin addressed a Devlinite audience by stating that constitutionalists would never recognise de Valera's policies 'which had brought disaster and ruin to the country.'<sup>37</sup> Consequently, voters did not necessarily lend their support to both nationalist parties. For example, it has been noted that in the January 1920 urban elections over half of Sinn Féin voters did not transfer their votes to the constitutionalist candidate in the Lisburn north ward. Had they done so, the constitutionalist would have been elected.<sup>38</sup> In Lisburn central ward William Shaw of Sinn Féin topped the poll with a surplus of 59 votes. Of these, only 32 went to a constitutionalist.<sup>39</sup> Even James Craig privately expressed relief at the realisation that 'all is not harmonious within the ranks of our opponents' who he felt were 'preparing for a trial of strength at the Poll, in order to determine which is top dog.'<sup>40</sup>

Divisions were also evident between groups connected to political parties. The Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.) and the I.R.A. were affiliated to Joseph Devlin and Sinn Féin respectively. To understand this division the roles of the A.O.H. and I.R.A. in the conflict in Ulster must be briefly discussed. Traditionally the I.R.A. has been described as the only defender of the Catholic community in Belfast during the revolution.<sup>41</sup> Robert Lynch has argued, however, that the role of the A.O.H. must be recognised as being of equal, if not more, importance with

<sup>35</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland*, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> *Irish News*, 18 May 1920.

<sup>38</sup> Alec Wilson, *PR urban elections in Ulster 1920* (London, 1972), p. 59.

<sup>39</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 23 Jan. 1920.

<sup>40</sup> James Craig to Hamar Greenwood, 16 Apr. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I, Department of the Prime Minister, PM/1/71).

<sup>41</sup> Robert Lynch, 'The people's protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom," 1920-1922', in *Journal of British Studies*, xlvii, no. 2 (Apr., 2008), p. 376.

regards to the protection of Catholic communities.<sup>42</sup> Timothy Wilson has agreed that Hibernians played a key role in resisting attacks by loyalist crowds. In Belfast Hibernians were generally drawn from the same Catholic, working-class backgrounds as the I.R.A., with the two groups often cooperating in response to a common adversary.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout rural Ulster the relationship existed in a different context as it was mainly in Belfast that Catholic communities came under repeated and sustained attacks. In rural areas and the smaller urban spaces of east Ulster attacks on Catholics by loyalists or state forces were more infrequent and short-lived. As such attacks were not sustained, Irish Volunteers and Hibernians had little opportunity to organise defences. For example, the Cushendall shootings of 23 June 1922 occurred in a very short space of time. Although the glens of Antrim were overwhelmingly Catholic and the I.R.A. used the area as a base, it could not respond within a short time frame. On another occasion the threat of an invasion by loyalists temporarily bolstered the prestige of the I.R.A. in the glens.<sup>44</sup> As no invasion materialised, however, the I.R.A. was not presented with an opportunity to prove its worth.

Elsewhere, when sustained attacks from loyalists did occur, the problem was not the duration of the onslaught but rather a shortage of local manpower and resources. The anti-Catholic riots in east Ulster towns lasted for three nights in August 1920, but due to the strong unionist majorities within these towns the I.R.A. was impotent. This was illustrated in July 1920 when the Banbridge riots erupted in the aftermath of the funeral of R.I.C. Divisional Commissioner Gerald B. Smyth. A loyalist crowd gathered outside a Catholic-owned public house facing the premises

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<sup>42</sup> Lynch, *The Northern I.R.A.*, p. 85; idem, 'The people's protectors?', p. 382.

<sup>43</sup> T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010), pp 128-32.

<sup>44</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).



of a republican family, the Monaghans, making it clear that local Catholic-owned property was unsafe. Daniel Monaghan and two of his sons fired on the crowd from an upstairs window, allegedly after an object was thrown at his house. While succeeding in dispersing the crowd and killing a bystander, the Monaghans were soon arrested by the military. The premises, along with other Catholic homes and businesses, were then burnt that night by the loyalist crowd.<sup>45</sup>

Armed resistance was often either impracticable or futile. As a result republicans relied heavily on propaganda which was deemed vitally important by Paddy McLogan who organised the Antrim I.R.A.<sup>46</sup> The raiding of police barracks and the declaration of a truce in July 1921 increased support for the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin among nationalists in east Ulster. However, these developments did not provide protection for nationalists when violence resumed in Ulster. Therefore, no opportunity arose for Hibernians and republicans to cooperate on the defence of nationalist communities. If anything, competition for scarce manpower ensured lasting mutual hostility.

I.R.A. enmity towards Hibernians was perpetuated by the latter's perceived pacifism. A captain in the Ballycastle company of the I.R.A., Liam McMullan, claimed that Hibernians sympathised with the I.R.A. but refused to join 'to save their own skins.'<sup>47</sup> Republicans in Antrim believed that most nationalists were constitutionalists whose 'conservatism made their conversion to Sinn Féin a tedious process.'<sup>48</sup> This posed as much an obstacle to the progress of republicanism as the large unionist majority in the county. Joseph Connolly, who would later become a

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<sup>45</sup> *Irish News*, 2 and 4 Oct. 1920.

<sup>46</sup> Statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762)

<sup>47</sup> Louis O'Kane interview with Liam McMullan, 19 Apr. 1965 (O'Fiaich Library, Louis O'Kane papers, LOK/IV/B/31/1).

<sup>48</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).

Free State senator, commented on Sinn Féin organisation between the Easter Rising and the 1918 general election:

We in the North-East moved but slowly, and for obvious reasons. We were surrounded by a hostile population who were working feverishly on a war basis at a time when the war situation was particularly gloomy for the British and their allies. That element might have been ignored, but it has also to be remembered that the majority of the so-called nationalist population were equally or more hostile to Sinn Féin.<sup>49</sup>

Without widespread nationalist support the I.R.A. were forced into a 'diversionary' role to distract state resources from other areas.<sup>50</sup> As a result Hibernians, described as 'no friends of the I.R.A.', were regarded as a problem.<sup>51</sup> The rivalry was mainly non-reciprocal and non-violent. No instances of Hibernian attacks on the I.R.A. were recorded, but members of the A.O.H. were occasionally maltreated by republicans. Perhaps for propaganda reasons Volunteers attempted to establish a moral and social superiority, such as when republican police targeted poteen stills owned by Hibernians (who would report such raids to the R.I.C., further enraging their attackers). In one characteristically petty clash Liam McMullan and fellow republicans commandeered an A.O.H. dance. Assuming the role of M.C., McMullan announced the dances in Irish, identifying those that were 'foreign

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<sup>49</sup> Connolly, *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly*, p. 140.

<sup>50</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).

<sup>51</sup> Louis O'Kane interview with Liam McMullan, 19 Apr. 1965 (O'Fiaich Library, Louis O'Kane Papers, LOK/IV/B/31/1).

dances.<sup>52</sup> Republicans would occasionally make their views known to their constitutionalist neighbours. Hosting a dance for locals in Cushendall, the local priest Father McCarten invited his friend Joseph Devlin. During the event two republicans sang 'The Bold Fenian Men' to the priest's embarrassment.<sup>53</sup> However, this rivalry between the A.O.H. and I.R.A. manifested itself more violently in other parts of Ulster.<sup>54</sup> In areas like south Armagh and some peripheral Ulster counties, where the I.R.A. were stronger, attacks on the A.O.H. were more frequent and vicious.<sup>55</sup> The schism between constitutionalists and republicans, however, was not confined to the rivalry between the A.O.H. and the I.R.A.

### Partition and pragmatism

The political divisions in the nationalist community had as much to do with the Irish Party's more moderate approach to religious and political divisions in east Ulster as to whether or not a republic was a preferable political aspiration. As partition was most likely to affect nationalists in north Down and Antrim, Sinn Féin's unrealistic attitude to partition inspired little confidence within this region. After a conference of northern nationalists in June 1916, when Devlin advocated a policy of temporary exclusion of the six counties of north-east Ulster, he lost significant support in the western portion of the proposed excluded territory.<sup>56</sup> In the potential border areas nationalists believed their numerical advantage would force a territorial transfer to

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).

<sup>54</sup> For examples in County Londonderry see Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experience of ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), pp 35-6.

<sup>55</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 49 and 77; Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005), pp 41-2 and 53-5.

<sup>56</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 33 and 44-5; Fergal McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen: the development of republican politics in east Tyrone, 1898-1918* (Manchester, 2011), pp 184-7.

Dublin's jurisdiction, resulting in a shift in allegiance to Sinn Féin. After partition some nationalists maintained faith that the Boundary Commission would transfer large tracts of Tyrone, Fermanagh, south Armagh and south and east Down to the Irish Free State.<sup>57</sup> In east Ulster, with the exception of south and east Down, demographic realities meant nationalists could have few illusions about the Boundary Commission. As this section will argue, Devlin maintained the support of nationalists in this region due to his political pragmatism and his reputation for delivering material gains under the Union.

For most nationalists in Antrim and north Down, Devlin was merely accepting reality. Unionist leaders would concede no further reduction in the size of the proposed excluded territory. For these nationalists political pragmatism was preferable. Devlin took the issue of partition seriously as by 1920 it was clear that a northern state and parliament would be established under Unionist control.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, Sinn Féin's southern focus prevented it from realistically facing the problem of partition. Louis J. Walsh, a Ballycastle republican who would later stand in council and parliamentary elections, criticised the Sinn Féin leadership as early as April 1919 for not displaying adequate concern for northern issues.<sup>59</sup> Sean MacEntee was similarly irked at his party leaders for not expressing more interest in Ulster.<sup>60</sup> The success of Sinn Féin elsewhere in Ireland rested on the party's ability to capture a broad spectrum of support by prioritising political unity.<sup>61</sup> However, Sinn Féin policy on Ulster remained unclear and evasive, much to the dissatisfaction of many

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<sup>57</sup> Kevin O'Shiel, 'The problem of partitioned Ireland', in *An Irish Quarterly Review*, xii, no. 48 (Dec., 1923), pp 635-6; Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, pp 134-5; Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland*, p. 48.

<sup>58</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism* pp 76-7 and 99.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>60</sup> Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland*, p. 232.

<sup>61</sup> Richard English, *Armed struggle: the history of the I.R.A.* (London, 2003), p. 22; Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), p. 17.

east Ulster nationalists. Devlin's acknowledgement of the danger of permanent partition inherent in the Government of Ireland Bill (1920) earned gratitude from Antrim and north Down nationalists. Sinn Féin's lack of concern for Ulster matters 'would inevitably mean that any future policy would be based more on expediency than political commitment.'<sup>62</sup>

Only in 1921 when preparations for the first parliamentary elections in the north were in place, did Sinn Féin finally take partition seriously.<sup>63</sup> However, when negotiating with the British government for a settlement, Sinn Féin's primary concern was the attainment of a republic rather than Irish unity. For nationalists in north Down and Antrim who would have no possibility of incorporation into an independent Irish state if partition of any form was imposed, this revelation was met with dismay.<sup>64</sup> The Treaty harmed Sinn Féin in east Ulster, while constitutionalists avoided association with its vices.<sup>65</sup> Further, the proposed Boundary Commission was anathema to these nationalists who had little hope of a territorial transfer given the demographic realities.<sup>66</sup> Even the split in the republican movement produced no alternative on the issue of partition. Ernest Blythe, a northerner, described the differences between the Treaty and de Valera's external association plans as 'a difference between Tweedledum & Tweedledee.'<sup>67</sup> Sean MacEntee agreed, but his unrealistic response was to suggest the coercion of Ulster unionists.<sup>68</sup> The absence of a viable alternative response to partition in Document No. 2 attracted stern criticism

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<sup>62</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 43.

<sup>63</sup> Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland*, pp 334-5.

<sup>64</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, pp 145-6.

<sup>65</sup> A. C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin* (Oxford, 2008), p. 233.

<sup>66</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, pp 158-9.

<sup>67</sup> Ernest Blythe, 'Views on the Treaty', n.d. (U.C.D.A., Ernest Blythe papers, P24/1762).

<sup>68</sup> Sean MacEntee, 'The Anglo-Irish Treaty and Mr De Valera's Alternative', c. Jan. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Sean MacEntee papers, P67/873).

from northern nationalists in general.<sup>69</sup> As a result, Sinn Féin, was not seen to offer a pragmatic alternative to constitutionalism throughout much of east Ulster.

In fact, partition was arguably strengthened by Sinn Féin policy. Nationalists who had the least hope of integration into an independent Ireland through local demographic realities had little patience for a party that refused to grapple with the complexities of the political situation in Ulster. Devlin had sought to battle partition in parliament, but nationalist representation was negligible as a result of Sinn Féin abstention. That Unionists were the dominant Irish voice at Westminster had the effect of ensuring that the northern state would compose six rather than nine counties.<sup>70</sup> As a result, when a Sinn Féin electoral organiser visited Antrim and Down to rally support for the republican movement, he found little enthusiasm for his party.<sup>71</sup> Devlin's grassroots support remained strong in east Ulster with the possible exception of south Down, where Sinn Féin strengthened with the visit of leading republicans.<sup>72</sup> In addition, proximity to the proposed border made possible a territorial transfer.<sup>73</sup>

Throughout the revolution Sinn Féin maintained its southern focus at the expense of understanding or engaging with unionists. Leadership views of the Ulster question exposed a grave ignorance of its intricacies. Only two of Sinn Féin's successful candidates in Ulster in 1921 were actually northerners.<sup>74</sup> Also, republican understanding of northern Protestants and unionism often focused on the role of British influence. Michael Collins expressed his views to electors in south Armagh in 1921 that unionists were 'petted and pampered by the English, holding for the

<sup>69</sup> Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland*, p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp 26-7. A nine county Northern Ireland would have provided nationalists with greater representation in an Ulster parliament.

<sup>71</sup> Statement of Sean McLoughlin (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 290).

<sup>72</sup> Statement of Sean Cusack (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 402)

<sup>73</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, pp 44-5.

<sup>74</sup> Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland*, p. 341.

English a little corner of Irish soil as a bridgehead for interference with our liberty and aggression against our freedom.’<sup>75</sup> The strategy of Éamon de Valera, the president of Sinn Féin, for dealing with Ulster unionists oscillated between coercion and accommodation. Prior to the 1918 general election he was more favourable to coercive action, a position which drew criticism from the I.P.P leadership.<sup>76</sup> He often denied the cultural distinctiveness of northern unionists, claiming that British influence was the cause of their political aspirations.<sup>77</sup> Some northern republicans adopted similar stances. Bulmer Hobson believed that ‘English interference’ was the cause of unionist rejection of Irish independence.<sup>78</sup> Other attitudes ranged from viewing unionists as foreigners to seeing them as misguided Irishmen who would soon realise the error of their ways and fully accept their Irishness.<sup>79</sup> Although de Valera eschewed dogmatism on the concerns of Ulster unionism by the autumn of 1921, Sinn Féin made little effort to engage with James Craig and his followers.<sup>80</sup> Some like Hobson, who believed that appeals to a republic would inspire admiration from unionists, ‘seemed wilfully blind to the British monarchist feelings of northern Protestants.’<sup>81</sup>

A common aspect of republican attitudes to northern unionists was a reluctance to acknowledge that community’s cultural distinctiveness. Unionists were depicted as either misled Irish exploited by the British to maintain imperial influence, or as altogether foreign. Michael Sheehan wrote of extreme nationalism:

<sup>75</sup> Michael Collins, ‘To the Electors of Armagh’, 10 May 1921, (N.L.I., Michael Collins papers, MS 40, 442/8).

<sup>76</sup> John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster question 1917-1973* (Oxford, 1989), pp 30-35.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, pp 38-42.

<sup>78</sup> Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the nationalist movement in twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), p. 217.

<sup>79</sup> Clare O’Halloran, *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism: an ideology under stress* (Dublin, 1987), pp 31-41.

<sup>80</sup> For General Smuts’s influence over de Valera see Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster question*, pp 53-6.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Davis, ‘Ulster Protestants and the Sinn Féin press, 1914-22’, in *Eire-Ireland*, 15:4 (1980), p. 70.

'In her Anglophobia, her leaders ignored the fact that Irish disunity was the result of an internal opposition and demanded that the British Government should unify Ireland – a completely colonial attitude.'<sup>82</sup> This approach by Sinn Féin further alienated unionists, perpetuating divisions within Ireland. As Michael Laffan explained: 'Sinn Féin's ideology blinded it to unacceptable realities. In reality its nationalism was inclusive, but it made no attempt to embrace the unionists' culture, accommodate their interests or calm their fears. In practice it was southern, exclusive, Gaelic and Catholic in its attitudes and personnel.'<sup>83</sup> Similarly narrow definitions of Irishness survived in Sinn Féin in the 1980s, sparking criticism from the Social Democratic and Labour Party, descendants of Devlin's constitutional nationalists.<sup>84</sup>

Regarding partition, republican tactics such as the boycott of northern goods were counterproductive.<sup>85</sup> The Ulster Protestant Sinn Féin member for North Monaghan, Ernest Blythe, was critical of both the boycott and I.R.A. violence in Ulster.<sup>86</sup> He later stated that 'partitionist practitioners of violence do more to keep Partition in being than is done by the most extreme section of Orangemen.'<sup>87</sup> Moderate nationalists like Stephen Gwynn agreed that the I.R.A. campaign had strengthened the unionist case.<sup>88</sup> A Sinn Féin county councillor in Antrim, Louis J. Walsh, was of a similar disposition with regards to the impact of violence in the north:

<sup>82</sup> Michael Sheehan, *Divided we stand: a study of partition* (London, 1955), p. 43.

<sup>83</sup> Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland*, pp 230-1.

<sup>84</sup> English, *Armed struggle*, p. 240.

<sup>85</sup> Charles Townshend, *The Republic: the fight for Irish independence, 1918-1923* (London, 2013), p. 178.

<sup>86</sup> Davis, 'Ulster Protestants and the Sinn Féin press', pp 78-9.

<sup>87</sup> Blythe writing circa 1957, quoted in Daithí Ó Corráin, "'Ireland in his heart north and south': the contribution of Ernest Blythe to the partition question", in *I.H.S.*, xxxv, no. 137 (May, 2006), p. 64. He was also critical of northern republican violence during the revolution, such as the assassination of District Inspector Oswald Swanzy: see Davis, 'Ulster Protestants and the Sinn Féin press', p. 78.

<sup>88</sup> Colin Reid, *The lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn: Irish constitutional nationalism and cultural politics, 1864-1950* (Manchester, 2011), p. 179.



Firstly, it would land the Free State in international difficulties with England and retard the work of Reconstruction; and secondly it would, in my opinion, fail in its objective in securing a united Ireland. I am convinced that 'Ulster' must in the end come into the Free State and the inevitable pressure of natural and geographical facts added to economics will eventually force her to join us.

But the process of reunion will be retarded if the 'Ulster' man is forced to see things through a mist of angry passions. For then he wont [sic] be able to see clearly.<sup>89</sup>

Walsh later wrote that 'except as a defensive force the I.R.A. are worse than useless to us in the North.'<sup>90</sup> Blythe, whose home town of Lisburn had been devastated by loyalist rioters in the aftermath of the I.R.A. assassination of District Inspector Swanzy, stressed that republican violence in Ulster 'can only mean within a couple of years the total extirpation of the Catholic population of the North East.'<sup>91</sup> Northern nationalists were aware of the capabilities of loyalist extremists to indiscriminately inflict swift and lasting damage against Catholics. Precedents of sectarian violence such as the attacks that followed the Castledawson affair in July 1912, provided a cautionary reminder.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Louis J. Walsh to Bishop Joseph MacRory, 14 Jan. 1922 (O'Fiaich Library, Bishop MacRory papers, ARCH/11/5/14).

<sup>90</sup> Walsh to MacRory, c. mid-1922 (O'Fiaich Library, Bishop MacRory papers, ARCH/11/5/14).

<sup>91</sup> Ernest Blythe, 'Policy in regard to the North-East', 9 Aug. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Eoin MacNeill papers, LA1/F/287).

<sup>92</sup> Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster* (Belfast, 2001), p. 436.

For east Ulster nationalists, to whom the concerns of the unionist community were vital if unity was to be achieved, dismissive Sinn Féin rhetoric and republican violence held little appeal. The Home Ruler, Father Thomas McCotter, parish priest of Antrim town, attacked Sinn Féin on this point. For him, the idea of a republic was not the problem – he described it as ‘perfectly sane and sound’ – but rather Sinn Féin’s insensitivity to Ulster unionism. Being friendly with local Protestants, McCotter argued that their political concerns must be taken into account if a viable settlement encompassing a united Ireland was to come to fruition. Unionist opinion, McCotter pointed out, had prevented an earlier settlement on Home Rule.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, the interests of Ulster unionists would have to be central to any viable settlement aimed at avoiding partition.<sup>94</sup> Devlin acknowledged the concerns of unionists: ‘I have never believed that differences in religion, in political ideals or in temperament, were inconsistent with national unity. If these divisions exist in Ireland they exist also in every country of the world.’<sup>95</sup> For him a united Ireland was not irreconcilable with religious differences: ‘The people in these six counties might constitute a powerful and impressive factor in the life of a united Ireland; they might not only influence such an Ireland, but to some extent dominate it.’<sup>96</sup> While Devlin’s presidency of an overtly sectarian organisation may have damaged his reputation as an advocate of an inclusive Ireland, Sinn Féin failed to offer a more convincing alternative to his political rhetoric concerning northern unionists.

Another significant factor in the survival of constitutionalism in much of east Ulster was the personal influence of Joseph Devlin. In 1916 it was arguably Devlin’s personal influence and connections that secured success at a conference of northern

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<sup>93</sup> *Irish News*, 25 Aug. 1920.

<sup>94</sup> Sheehan, *Divided we stand*, pp 23-25.

<sup>95</sup> *Irish News*, 18 Mar. 1920.

<sup>96</sup> *Irish News*, 14 Feb. 1921.

nationalists that accepted his proposals for temporary exclusion from a Home Rule settlement.<sup>97</sup> Referring to the post-Easter Rising period, one of his republican adversaries stated: 'It would be hard to conceive any political leader that could command an equal personal loyalty to that which Mr Devlin enjoyed at the time.'<sup>98</sup> Consequently, counteracting Devlin's influence would be a struggle: 'To have any views contrary to those of Mr Devlin and his political supporters ranked as near heresy, which was barely tolerated.'<sup>99</sup> Devlin's political strength in the opening decades of the twentieth century was closely linked to his presidency of the A.O.H. While this organisation's influence in Ulster had suffered greatly after 1914, it remained dominant within the Catholic community of east Ulster throughout the revolution. In July 1921 police intelligence indicated that in Antrim the membership of the A.O.H. was almost five-fold that of Sinn Féin clubs.<sup>100</sup> In Down Hibernianism was weaker but still estimated at double the strength of republicanism.<sup>101</sup> By the end of the period the nationalist press reported evidence of a resurgence of Hibernianism in parts of Down: 'Divisions [of the A.O.H.] that owing to the recent troubles had deemed it prudent to close temporarily are being re-opened and with satisfactory results.'<sup>102</sup> 'One of the most efficient political machines in Europe' prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, Hibernianism's survival in east Ulster undoubtedly aided constitutionalist politics in the region.<sup>103</sup>

Aside from strengths in personality and grass-roots political organisation, Devlin was an astute politician with a notable record of delivering on political

<sup>97</sup> McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 187.

<sup>98</sup> Connolly, *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly*, p. 90.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>100</sup> R.I.C. county inspector report, Antrim, July 1921 (N.A.I., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/116).

<sup>101</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Down, July 1921 (N.A.I., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/116)

<sup>102</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 7 Feb. 1923.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Foy, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians: an Irish political-religious pressure group 1884-1975', (M.A. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1976), p. 151.

promises outside the national question. His political appeal was broad, encompassing old-age pensions, unemployment and conditions for female workers.<sup>104</sup> A. C. Hepburn offered the following assessment of Devlin's record on social issues: 'All in all there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Devlin's social radicalism or to suggest that it was a mere front for nationalism, any more than Connolly's socialism should be dismissed as a front for republicanism.' Going further, Hepburn claimed that James Connolly and Jim Larkin 'were in fact marginal figures in terms of achievement'.<sup>105</sup>

Devlin's record of improving the material wellbeing of his constituents may have held particular appeal for those facing inclusion in a northern state. Abstention from the political institutions of the new state would yield no improvement, while Sinn Féin came in for serious criticism from Devlin and his supporters for not opposing the Government of Ireland Bill and the detested Education Bill at Westminster.<sup>106</sup> Constitutionalist only abstained from parliamentary politics when their attendance appeared untenable, as in 1918 during the conscription crisis, and from 1921 when violence persisted in Belfast.<sup>107</sup> In the latter case, Devlin's party could not be seen to recognise the machinery of a state that continued to sponsor a sectarian police force in the form of the Ulster Special Constabulary. In early 1922 Devlin favoured some form of cooperation with the northern parliament, particularly in the aftermath of some of the worst violence of the revolutionary period in Ulster.<sup>108</sup> An end to Devlinite non-cooperation with Northern Ireland was conditional on a return to peace, independence in Catholic education, a review of

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<sup>104</sup> *Irish News*, 18 Mar. 1920.

<sup>105</sup> Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, pp 196, 203 and 124.

<sup>106</sup> See the speeches of Joseph Devlin and Michael J. Johnston: *Irish News*, 18 Mar. 1920.

<sup>107</sup> In 1921 Devlin abstained from the Northern Ireland parliament while continuing to take his seat in Westminster.

<sup>108</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, pp 197 and 214-5.

internees' cases and a return to employment for expelled workers.<sup>109</sup> As these conditions were not entirely met, it was not until 1925 that Devlin felt confident enough to lead his party into the Northern Irish parliament to campaign for concessions for the nationalist minority.<sup>110</sup> However, unlike the unconditional non-recognition policy of Sinn Féin, Devlin considered a pragmatic recognition of Northern Ireland aimed at providing material benefits for northern nationalists.

It was believed by Antrim nationalists that Devlin's broad political appeal could attract the support of Protestant voters. Partly because of this he was invited to stand for the county in the 1921 Northern Ireland parliamentary election. The constitutionalist leader was described as 'the loyal and unchanging friend of the toilers, and the poor and the lowly of every creed and class' as he accepted the invitation.<sup>111</sup> While it was not likely that he would succeed in winning many Protestant votes, Devlin nevertheless offered Antrim nationalists greater hope for a solution to the impasse created with Ulster unionism. Despite his leadership of the Catholic A.O.H., Devlin understood that Protestant support was central to a viable Home Rule settlement and he even had success in attracting some Protestant votes in west Belfast.<sup>112</sup>

The poor economic state in 1921 offered one avenue to uniting the Protestant and Catholic working classes. The linen industry was struggling in the post-war climate and many workers had either lost their jobs, or were forced to work fewer hours.<sup>113</sup> Hopes were further raised for Devlin's potential success by the support

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp 237-8.

<sup>110</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands*, pp 182-3.

<sup>111</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 20 May 1921.

<sup>112</sup> Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, pp 93-4; Bew, *Ideology and the Irish question*, p. 78.

<sup>113</sup> R.I.C. C. I. reports, Antrim, Jan., June and July 1921 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/114-116).

shown to labour candidates in the January 1920 urban council elections.<sup>114</sup> Labour became an important issue in the post-war period. A local study of east Tyrone has suggested that in 1918 and 1919 labour 'rivalled any other local political agitation.'<sup>115</sup> While Sinn Féin and I.P.P. attitudes to the working-class were similar, the Hibernians had 'an established record of sympathy' for mill and factory workers.<sup>116</sup> Devlin also attempted to gain the upper-hand on the Unionist party on the issue of labour: 'Of all the hypocrisies of which these people are guilty, the greatest is to posture as the friends of labour... They were always on the side of the rich and the powerful against the democracy'.<sup>117</sup> In contrast to Devlin's attempted appeal to Protestant workers, his Sinn Féin opponent in 1921 limited his electoral message to attacking unionist identification with Britain. Louis J. Walsh, despite his criticisms for Sinn Féin displaying little concern for Ulster, did nothing to attract unionist voters by labelling them the exploited pawns of the British political and industrial elite.<sup>118</sup>

The schism between constitutional nationalists and republicans was evident throughout Ireland but in east Ulster they formed a minority. If their views were to be heard, nationalists needed a united voice. The electoral pacts of December 1918 and May 1921 represented superficial attempts to present a unified position, but cracks were not far below the surface. These divisions shaped how Irish nationalism reacted to political developments in east Ulster. The rest of this chapter will discuss

<sup>114</sup> Labour candidates won more seats than constitutional nationalists or Sinn Féin in east Ulster in Jan. 1920 urban elections: see above, pp 6-7. In Belfast labour candidates won thirteen seats on the corporation, eroding the Unionist share of seats that fell from 52 to 37: Buckland, *The factory of grievances*, p. 223.

<sup>115</sup> McCluskey, *Fenians and Ribbonmen*, p. 227.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>117</sup> *Irish News*, 14 Feb. 1921.

<sup>118</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 20 May 1921.

nationalist agency during the revolutionary period in east Ulster, beginning with violent republicanism.

### Republicanism

East Ulster was relatively free from large-scale I.R.A. violence during the revolution, at least until the May 1922 offensive.<sup>119</sup> However, while Michael Hopkinson implied that the north-east derived most significance as a cause and consequence of the war of independence, it must be noted that I.R.A. and Sinn Féin sought a republic for the north just as much as the south.<sup>120</sup> It was also the case that northern violence interacted with southern developments and was significant in term of its local impact. Some of the worst political violence occurred in north-east Ulster.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, Irish Volunteers in the north-east were an important factor in Michael Collins's strategy for republican unity following the Treaty split. The I.R.A. offensive against the Northern Irish state in May 1922 was aimed to prevent the southern movement from succumbing to factionalism. In the north the offensive affected social and political developments. It is therefore imperative to understand I.R.A. violence in the north-east within the context of the wider revolution. An examination of the fortunes of republican activities in east Ulster sheds light on the failure to gain full independence.

Throughout 1920 I.R.A. activity became increasingly minimalist in east Ulster. Between February and June they attacked at least eight barracks, only two of

<sup>119</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 46; Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 150.

<sup>120</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 2004), p. 153.

<sup>121</sup> Lynch, 'The people's protectors?', p. 375.

which were unoccupied.<sup>122</sup> After the east Ulster riots, activity took a less offensive nature, manifesting itself in the form of arms and mail raids.<sup>123</sup> The first months of 1921 witnesses a return of attacks on barracks, while in April and May at least three ambushes against police and special constables were attempted in Kilkeel in south Down and in two mid-Antrim villages.<sup>124</sup> The months prior to the Truce saw intensified I.R.A. violence, initiating police arrests of I.R.A. leaders.<sup>125</sup> After the Truce in July 1921 operations virtually ceased, except for a few isolated arms raids on civilian homes. It was only in mid-May 1922 that the I.R.A. in east Ulster attempted a concerted assault on the state. There were attacks on police barracks in Castlewellan and Ardglass in Down, and in Ballycastle, Cushendall and Martinstown in Antrim. Several attempts were made on the lives of special constables and police in ambushes. Other activities included raids on 'big houses', symbols of the Protestant ascendancy, some of which were completely destroyed.<sup>126</sup>

These actions were part of the northern I.R.A.'s spring offensive throughout north-east Ulster. However, due to last minute changes made by Seamus Woods, O/C of the Third Northern Division, and Eoin O'Duffy, chief of staff of the I.R.A., the offensive failed. Arms destined for Antrim were held-up in Belfast, forcing the leadership to postpone all operations. Nevertheless, the Second Northern Division (incorporating counties Londonderry and Tyrone) was unable to delay and launched attacks on 2 May. Woods then further complicated matters by insisting that no

<sup>122</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 27 Feb., 21 May, and 4 June 1920; *Dromore Leader* and *Newtownards Chronicle*, 28 Feb. 1920.

<sup>123</sup> R.I.C. C. I. reports, Antrim and Down, Oct.-Dec. 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/113); *Ballymena Observer*, 17 Sept., 1 Oct., and 12 Nov. 1920; *Dromore Leader*, 6 Nov. 1920.

<sup>124</sup> R.I.C. C. I. reports, Antrim and Down, Jan.-July 1920 (T.N.A., Colonial Office, CO 904/114); *Ballymena Observer*, 4 Feb., 11 Feb., 1 Apr., 8 Apr., 15 Apr., 3 June, and 8 July 1921; *Dromore Leader*, 12 Feb. 1921; *Newtownards Chronicle*, 12 Feb. and 9 Apr. 1921.

<sup>125</sup> Kiernan Glennon, *From pogrom to civil war: Tom Glennon and the Belfast I.R.A.* (Cork, 2013), p. 52.

<sup>126</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 26 May 1922; *Dromore Leader*, 27 May 1922; *Newtownards Chronicle*, 27 May and 17 June 1922.



further action be taken until an assault against Musgrave Street barracks in Belfast took place. Consequently, the offensive was uncoordinated as some divisional areas commenced operations earlier than others. The Third Northern Division started activity on 19 May, while the Fourth Northern Division, which included south Down, only began limited operations in June. Therefore, the security forces were able to respond effectively to the spring offensive.<sup>127</sup>

There were signs from the beginning that militant republicanism would fail in east Ulster. The development of Volunteer activity was a much slower process in Ulster than elsewhere. British government reactions to the Easter Rising led to a surge in support for republicanism. In Cork republican re-organisation advanced steadily with Volunteer companies numbering almost 200 by mid-1918.<sup>128</sup> Early and efficient organisation of both Sinn Féin and the Volunteers also occurred in Longford in 1917.<sup>129</sup> In Ulster, however, organisation was poorer. Due to countermanding orders and the issuing of impracticable plans, there had been little Volunteer activity during the Easter Rising.<sup>130</sup> As a result of their inactivity, Ulster's republican leaders, notably Bulmer Hobson and Denis McCullough, were discredited in the eyes of rank-and-file Irish Volunteers. Republicanism struggled given the opposition of both constitutionalists and unionists, but a lack of effective leadership was also important.<sup>131</sup> Effective local leadership was important for growth of the Irish Volunteers throughout Ireland.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, in Ulster the Volunteer movement

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<sup>127</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, pp 140-151.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), p. 53.

<sup>129</sup> Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2006), pp 78-79.

<sup>130</sup> For the Easter Rising in Ulster, see Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, 1916* (Oxford, 2010), pp 219-222.

<sup>131</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, pp 15-17.

<sup>132</sup> Townshend, *The Republic*, pp 34-5; Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, p. 71.

progressed relatively better in areas where there emerged effective leaders such as Frank Aiken in Armagh and south Down and Eoin O'Duffy in Monaghan.<sup>133</sup>

In east Ulster militant republicanism was less organised. There was a lack of effective leaders in the county regions of what became the Third Northern Division (Antrim, Belfast and east Down). In 1919 republicans struggled to establish Volunteer companies in north Antrim. Only by inviting Paddy McLogan – 'guide, philosopher [sic] and friend' of the Antrim I.R.A – from Belfast were republicans able to establish a company in Ballycastle on an unofficial and experimental basis.<sup>134</sup> Soon afterwards the company was officially sanctioned and officers were appointed.<sup>135</sup> McLogan's organisational skills were equally important for republicans in the Antrim glens. In late 1919 he helped establish a Volunteer company of approximately eight men. Despite the low membership, this company would advance to become relatively active in gun-battles with police and special constables.<sup>136</sup> After McLogan's arrest in early 1921 another Belfast Volunteer, Tom Glennon, was appointed in his place as the O/C of the Antrim Brigade.<sup>137</sup>

In east Down the situation was different as local leadership rivalries hampered organisation. The Volunteer movement in east Down was 'small and scattered', numbering a maximum of 100 men. Two companies existed under Séan Doran and Hugh Halfpenny, alongside numerous smaller groups. In 1919 these were consolidated into a battalion. An Irish Volunteer organiser from Belfast, Sean Cusack, was delegated by Michael Collins to nominate officers to the I.R.A. battalion in east Down. To appoint a commanding officer a vote was required from

<sup>133</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 16.

<sup>134</sup> Statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609). The aggressive nature of this company was highlighted in May 1922 when three of its founding members were caught in a gun battle with B Specials. Two of these men, Charlie McAllister and Paddy McVeigh, were killed.

<sup>137</sup> Glennon, *From pogrom to civil war*, p. 47.

the existing companies. Local rivalries emerged as personal loyalties were divided between Doran and Halfpenny. Doran's victory in the vote was rejected by his rival's intransigent faction. The appointments of a battalion quartermaster and adjutant were delayed, with Cusack becoming anxious regarding the future of the movement in the area. Cusack was forced to refer the matter to Michael Collins, who softened Halfpenny's inflexibility by asking him directly if he was intending to defy G.H.Q. Doran was then duly appointed O/C of East Down Battalion. Afterwards, Cusack secured appointment as O/C of the divisional area encompassing Antrim, Belfast and east Down. The lack of organisation in the county regions led him to establish three more companies in east Down where he directly supervised training and teaching.<sup>138</sup>

Local leaders were important in the organisation of Volunteer companies in west and south Down. This area, which fell under the influence of I.R.A. leaders in Armagh, would later compose the eastern periphery of the jurisdiction of the Fourth Northern Division. Early Volunteer growth began in February 1918 under the guidance of Banbridge republican Seamus Monaghan. By 1919 a battalion was formed from three companies based in Knock, Loughbrickland and Lawrencetown. Seamus Monaghan became the Battalion O/C but was soon arrested and replaced by John Henry Byrne. A similar fate awaited Byrne, so Sean O'Rourke, another Banbridge republican, took control of the battalion.<sup>139</sup> After the shooting of an R.I.C. head constable in Newry on 21 November 1920, many local officers of the south Down I.R.A. fled south to evade capture, leaving the organisation without leadership in that region.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Statement of Sean Cusack (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 402).

<sup>139</sup> Statement of Sean O'Rourke (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 791).

<sup>140</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 69.

The suspension of violence throughout most of Ireland during the Truce period allowed for greater organisation within the I.R.A. Free from the threat of arrest, republicans could recruit and drill openly in Northern Ireland, often to the annoyance of local unionists.<sup>141</sup> The north Antrim companies established a training camp near Ballycastle. The I.R.A.'s ranks swelled, as they did throughout Ireland, following the announcement of the Truce in July 1921.<sup>142</sup> The Antrim brigade expanded beyond 150 members for the first time, while in east Down the I.R.A.'s ranks grew from 167 in June 1921 to 330 only two months later.<sup>143</sup> The inability of the police to arrest members of the I.R.A., while an affront to unionists, undoubtedly provided republicans with a propaganda coup.

Nevertheless, despite renewed interest from the nationalist population and the opportunity to openly re-organise, the I.R.A. in east Ulster was unable to overcome many of the problems it faced. For instance, it remained inadequately armed. By March 1921 only 18 or 20 serviceable rifles, in addition to a small number of revolvers and shotguns, were available to the Antrim battalions.<sup>144</sup> To improve the situation risky arms raids were made on the houses of unionists, police barracks and coastguard stations.<sup>145</sup> The importation of arms procured by G.H.Q. was no less hazardous. On two occasions the transportation of arms to the Antrim glens from Belfast almost led to capture. An oil-tanker carrying arms in preparation for the May 1922 offensive broke down in the unionist town of Carrickfergus. The driver, being an ex-soldier, approached the local military contingent and was aided in

<sup>141</sup> R.I.C. C. I. report, Antrim, Sept. 1921 (N.A.I., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/116).

<sup>142</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 220; Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 112.

<sup>143</sup> Statement of Thomas Fitzpatrick (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 395).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Statement of Thomas Fitzpatrick and Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 395 and 762).

bringing the tanker back to Belfast for repair without the arms being discovered.<sup>146</sup> Another consignment of arms fell from a lorry travelling from Ballymena to Loughguile. The crew became aware of the lost cargo when they had nearly reached their destination. The large numbers of local police and the unionist sympathies of local inhabitants made recovery of the arms too much of a risk, and as a result most of the consignment was lost. Irish Volunteer Felim MacGuill concealed the remaining rump of the weaponry on the roadside. It is likely that he was witnessed later recovering the arms as his name was soon afterwards discovered on a police wanted-list by a local Sinn Féin priest.<sup>147</sup> The transportation of arms to a unionist stronghold such as County Antrim brought with it high risks, limiting the I.R.A.'s ability to improve its arms store.

The I.R.A. continued to struggle to operate in unionist areas, although some veterans portrayed their struggle in heroic terms: 'around Loughguile it was practically a weekly occurrence for the local Volunteers to snipe patrols and barracks.' When Catholic property was attacked by police or unionists, the I.R.A. allegedly 'burned something at least ten times the value belonging to the other side. Immediate reprisals.'<sup>148</sup> Such accounts exaggerated the I.R.A.'s military role in Antrim. Other than the burning of unionist houses during the 1922 spring offensive, the I.R.A. rarely destroyed civilian property. Weekly battles were also unlikely given that police reports often referred to the peacefulness of east Ulster throughout the period. Some Volunteers were more honest about the difficulties they faced,

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<sup>146</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill and Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609 and 762).

<sup>147</sup> The priest, Father James Smyth, was in Ballymena police barracks seeking a driver's licence and noticed the list. Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).

<sup>148</sup> Statement of Thomas Fitzpatrick (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 395).

conceding that the I.R.A. was forced to limiting its engagements to 'activity of a diversionary character.'<sup>149</sup>

Generally, the I.R.A. was militarily ineffective in east Ulster. Some daring raids were successful, but these were rare. One cunning success was the raid on Ballycastle barracks in August 1920. The local I.R.A., under Paddy McLogan's direction, arranged a sports event nearby, hoping that it would preoccupy local police resources. With the barracks undermanned, Willie Lynn, a local Volunteer, knocked on the barracks door, engaging the one remaining officer in casual conversation. Two cars of I.R.A. men then pulled up to the barracks and raided it, successfully capturing all equipment and arms.<sup>150</sup> However, this was an exception. The Crossgar barracks fiasco in County Down has been described as the epitome of the 'early amateurish approach' of the I.R.A. in parts of Ulster.<sup>151</sup> However, failure to capture barracks characterised the entire period of the I.R.A. campaign in east Ulster as the police normally repelled attacks.<sup>152</sup>

Consequently, the I.R.A. shifted their focus to more vulnerable targets. The big houses of the north suffered significant damage, more so in east Ulster than elsewhere.<sup>153</sup> In addition, minor operations continued. Postal raids occupied most of the I.R.A.'s time, chiefly due to their propaganda value. Captured mail was stamped 'Passed by I.R.A. censor' and left at the property of a local unionist who would inevitably return the mail to police or the post office.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).

<sup>150</sup> Statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762).

<sup>151</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 22-3.

<sup>152</sup> Statement of Thomas Fitzpatrick and Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 395 and 609). A key instance was the I.R.A. failure to capture Martinstown, Antrim and Ballycastle barracks in May 1922.

<sup>153</sup> Olwen Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland: land, power and social elites, 1878-1960* (Dublin, 2009), p. 147.

<sup>154</sup> Statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762).

In east Ulster the I.R.A. was forced to prioritise small-scale activity. With the large Protestant population, republicans risked being labelled sectarian if they targeted civilians. I.R.A. violence that led to the death of Protestant civilians could be counter-productive, but the establishment of the U.S.C. largely eased this problem.<sup>155</sup> It was necessary for the I.R.A. to limit their targets to police, special constables and the military in order to avoid risking the loss of whatever communal support the Irish Volunteers enjoyed.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the inhabitants of the 'big houses' attacked by the I.R.A. were rarely injured by the raiders.<sup>157</sup> The destruction of these buildings, symbols of the Anglo-Irish elite, cultivated a significance that would have been blemished by the killing of their residents. Similarly, an attack on Crebilly Castle was justified as it was allegedly to be occupied by police forces in the spring of 1922.<sup>158</sup>

Nevertheless, the I.R.A. faced too great an enemy that, while ostensibly incorporating only the police and U.S.C., also included most of the unionist population who were inclined to aid the authorities. Police intelligence and manpower were vastly improved with the establishment of the B Specials. Members of the I.R.A. testified to the role of the U.S.C. – 'practically every house was connected with the "B" Specials' – whose presence made operations almost too hazardous.<sup>159</sup> The reliance on sympathisers and safe-houses was vital for Irish

<sup>155</sup> 'Description of activities of U.V.F., 1918-22', author unknown, n.d. (O'Fiaich Library, Louis O'Kane papers, LOK/III/G/7).

<sup>156</sup> Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 150-2.

<sup>157</sup> Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland*, p. 147; statement of Thomas Fitzpatrick, (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 395).

<sup>158</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).

<sup>159</sup> Statements of Thomas Fitzpatrick, Felim MacGuill and Liam McMullan (N.A.I. Bureau of Military History, WS 395, 609 and 762).

Volunteers, but these were usually the homes of known republicans like Felim MacGuill in Waterfoot and the Lynn household in Ballycastle.<sup>160</sup>

The size of the Protestant population made support for the I.R.A. more risky. Consequently, few nationalists were willing to aid the I.R.A. Volunteers who were 'on the run' were often made to feel unwelcome in some localities, such as Rathlin Island that would otherwise have offered ideal protection due to its isolation.<sup>161</sup> Even when they were welcome in such areas, Volunteers were reluctant to remain in one place 'in order to spread the burden of our support amongst as many people as possible.'<sup>162</sup>

In addition, the Catholic hierarchy in Ulster remained largely critical of both the I.R.A. and state violence.<sup>163</sup> Cardinal Logue, archbishop of Armagh, denounced the I.R.A. and their aim of a republic.<sup>164</sup> These factors added to the constraints on the I.R.A., as one Volunteer later pointed out: 'The 3rd Northern were always up against a situation where the Unionist elements, plus the A.O.H. elements, plus the very large ex-British soldier family type were antagonistic and were prepared to give information to the authorities.'<sup>165</sup>

The northern I.R.A. began to collapse from mid-1922 after the uncoordinated spring offensive. Repressive security legislation led to the internment of large numbers of republicans, effectively crippling the organisation. In Northern Ireland 282 people were interned in June 1922 and 545 by the end of the year. Of these only 35 had been released by January 1923, and not until June did those released

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<sup>160</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609); Louis O'Kane interview with Liam McMullan, 19 Apr. 1965 (O'Fiaich Library, Louis O'Kane papers, LOK/IV/B/31/1).

<sup>161</sup> Wallace Clark, *Rathlin: its island story* (Coleraine, 1993), p. 160.

<sup>162</sup> Statement of Liam McMullan (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 762).

<sup>163</sup> Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland*, pp 137-162 and 166-8.

<sup>164</sup> *Newtownards Chronicle*, 7 May 1921.

<sup>165</sup> Statement of Thomas McNally (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 410).



outnumber those still interned.<sup>166</sup> Many that evaded capture went south to join the Provisional Government Army. In Antrim 92 Volunteers did this, with only 34 returning by the end of 1922. Similarly, in Down only a minority returned: 44 out of 201.<sup>167</sup> For those who returned home the police imposed restrictions on their movements, requiring them to make regular visits to their local R.U.C. barracks.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, by the end of 1922 the I.R.A. was devastated in east Ulster. As early as August an Antrim Volunteer recalled: 'the Republican population was in a most depressed mood. The feeling that the South had let the North down was widespread.'<sup>169</sup> By December only sixteen men remained active in Antrim and Down.<sup>170</sup> While it was poor coordination of the northern offensive in May 1922 and government tactics that jointly ensured its defeat, the I.R.A. in east Ulster had been limited by its poor military organisation. Tellingly, the most influential I.R.A. act in the region – the assassination of District Inspector Oswald Swanzy – was carried out by units from Belfast and Cork.

### Non-violent resistance to partition

After partition nationalists attempted to establish a 'state within a state.'<sup>171</sup> Historians have subsequently attempted to assess the degree to which nationalist non-cooperation with the Northern Ireland government contributed to long-term

<sup>166</sup> Reports on internment, 1922-1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/32/1/46).

<sup>167</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 218.

<sup>168</sup> See internment files and restriction orders in the Ministry of Home Affairs files. For instance: restriction order of Joseph O'Loan, Dec. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs, HA/5/1184).

<sup>169</sup> Statement of Felim MacGuill (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 609).

<sup>170</sup> Lynch, *The northern I.R.A.*, p. 202.

<sup>171</sup> Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster*, p. 221.

alienation of the northern minority. This section will argue that some historians have overstated the extent of nationalist non-recognition of the Unionist government.<sup>172</sup>

In east Ulster and Belfast teachers from 102 Catholic schools refused to take salaries from the Belfast parliament, while thirteen schools in Antrim and Down refused to permit state inspectors.<sup>173</sup> However, this policy was short-lived. During the Irish civil war recognition of Northern Ireland was partly forced upon northern nationalists, particularly in education, when the Dáil advised Catholic school teachers to seek their salaries from the northern administration.<sup>174</sup> Provisional Government leaders advocated a policy of recognition as they realised northern unionists could not be coerced. For Ernest Blythe, progress towards Irish unity rested on 'showing a friendly and pacific disposition towards the Northern Government and people' until unionists discovered the economic impracticalities of partition. This necessitated the full recognition of the Belfast parliament by school teachers, local government bodies and nationalist politicians.<sup>175</sup> Victims of state violence were also encouraged by the Dáil to apply to the state for compensation. For example, in November 1922 the Lynn brothers of Ballycastle, regarded by the police as among the most ardent republicans in east Ulster, were granted a loan of £1000 by the Dáil for damages to their business properties (allegedly inflicted by police) on condition that they would pursue full recompense for their case in the northern courts.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Stewart, *The narrow ground*, p. 175. Stewart stated that 'Catholics simply refused to recognise the state.'

<sup>173</sup> Ministry of Education memo on the payment of teachers and inspection of school, Apr. 1922 and 13 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Education files, ED/32/B/1/2/123).

<sup>174</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 211.

<sup>175</sup> Ernest Blythe, 'Policy in regard to the North-East', 9 Aug. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Eoin MacNeill papers, LA1/F/287).

<sup>176</sup> Caomighin Ó Saidhail to the Irish Land Commission, 25 Apr. 1924 (N.A.I., Dáil Éireann records, DE/5/127). The Lynn brothers consisted of William, Daniel, Charles, Patrick, John and Robert, and were referred to as a 'dangerous family' by the police. William was O/C of the 1 Battalion, Antrim Brigade of the I.R.A.: R.U.C. memo, Feb. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/293).

The policies of southern leaders were not the only important factor in determining nationalist attitudes to the Northern Ireland government. Only a minority of nationalists actively participated in some form of non-recognition, while many nationalists cooperated with the Northern Irish state from its inception. Although Cardinal Logue flatly rejected an invitation to participate in the Lynn Commission, established to formulate educational reform, two-thirds of Catholic school teachers in Belfast received their salaries from the Belfast administration.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, many nationalists remained supporters of the rump I.P.P., whose initial refusal to cooperate with the Northern government was conditional on the failure of the security forces to protect nationalists rather than doctrinaire adherence to abstentionist principle. Furthermore, the Unionist government alienated many nationalists as the price for security.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, had peace prevailed in early 1922 or before, most nationalists and their representatives would have been less adverse to a Belfast parliament.

The tendency to overstate nationalist repudiation of the authority of the Northern Irish administration can be challenged by reference to local government. Councils with Unionist minorities in east Ulster rarely made reference to the national question. With the strong labour vote in the 1920 urban elections there was a renewed attempt to address key social issues such as housing.<sup>179</sup> Although the 1898 Local Government (Ireland) Act introduced party politics into local administration, there was a large degree of cross-party cooperation during the revolution.<sup>180</sup> The Warrenpoint urban council, composed of five Unionists, two Devlinites, one independent nationalist and four Sinn Féin councillors (giving a total of seven

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<sup>177</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 191.

<sup>178</sup> Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster*, pp 220-1.

<sup>179</sup> For instance, see the venomous tirade of Bangor labour councillor Alex McKay against the Unionist 'clique' on the council: *Irish News*, 2 Feb. 1920.

<sup>180</sup> Buckland, *The factory of grievances*, p. 38.

nationalist seats), adopted a diplomatic stance to communal violence. In the aftermath of widespread anti-Catholic rioting in east Ulster in the summer of 1920, the council unanimously condemned attacks on 'the sacred principle of freedom of conscience.'<sup>181</sup> However, this was not simply a reflection of the council's nationalist sympathies, but more a manifestation of its determination to remain aloof from divisive national politics as indicated by their response to the I.R.A. killing of Special Constable John Cummings in Warrenpoint on 6 February 1921.<sup>182</sup> The council, including Sinn Féin members, unanimously adopted a resolution that condemned what they labelled a 'murder', describing Cummings as a 'gallant man.'<sup>183</sup> On both of these occasions there was no record of a split in voting.

On partition, a much less avoidable topic for a local government body situated near the proposed Irish border, the Warrenpoint council remained evasive for as long as possible. As many southern councils passed resolutions pledging allegiance to Dáil Éireann, a circular from Dublin Castle in which the Irish administration sought assurances of loyalty from local authorities was sent out. The Warrenpoint councillors simply stated 'that the Council had not passed any of the Resolutions to which exception was taken in his [the under-secretary's] letter and that therefore the letter did not apply to the Council.'<sup>184</sup> Therefore, while refusing to positively confirm the authority of the Local Government Board, the council stressed the fact that it had made no repudiation of that authority. Ambiguity such as this from Irish local authorities was not uncommon throughout 1920 as the Dáil policy

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<sup>181</sup> Minutes of the Warrenpoint urban council, 6 Sept. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/71/2/CA/2).

<sup>182</sup> For the death of Special Constable Cummings, see *Irish News*, 9 Feb. 1921.

<sup>183</sup> Minutes of the Warrenpoint urban council, 7 Feb. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/71/2/CA/2).

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 Sept. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/71/2/CA/2).

on recognition of the Local Government Board was still being formulated.<sup>185</sup> It was only in December 1921, during the final stages of the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations, that the Warrenpoint urban council articulated a more explicit opinion on partition. A resolution placed before the council expressed sympathy with local ratepayers, 'the great majority of whom decline to acknowledge the authority of the Northern Parliament', resulting in a split vote of six to five between nationalists and Unionists.<sup>186</sup>

In Downpatrick the urban council also had a non-Unionist majority of three Devlinite nationalists and four labourites against five Unionists. It adopted an ambiguous attitude to partition. Support was shown by the nationalist and labour councillors for a Monaghan county council resolution rejecting the proposed partition of Ireland in May 1920, provoking a walk-out by the Unionist councillors who complained of the introduction of politics into proceedings. However, a few months later the council unanimously offered assurances of its compliance with the Local Government Board after being informed that loans for the administration of local services would otherwise be withheld.<sup>187</sup> Many local government bodies in Ireland faced similar risks of denial of loans, grants and access to overdraft facilities by refusing to acknowledge the Local Government Board. There were cases of acquiescence with the British state, but these 'were motivated by financial pressures, rather than a lack of patriotism.'<sup>188</sup> It was only in December 1921, when south Down

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<sup>185</sup> Mary Daly, *The buffer state: the historical roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin, 1997), pp 50-2.

<sup>186</sup> There was one abstention by Patrick McGivern, a Sinn Féin councillor: minutes of the Warrenpoint urban council, 6 Dec. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/71/2/CA/2).

<sup>187</sup> Minutes of the Downpatrick urban council, 3 May and 6 Sept. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/31/2/BA/8).

<sup>188</sup> Daly, *The buffer state*, pp 58-67.

nationalists were hoping for inclusion in an independent Irish state, that the council reaffirmed its resolution of 3 May 1920.<sup>189</sup>

In April and May 1922 both Warrenpoint and Downpatrick urban councils were dissolved by the minister of home affairs, Richard Dawson Bates, who appointed town commissioners in their place.<sup>190</sup> The effect of these measures can be assessed by the response of Warrenpoint councillors when the council was reinstated after the January 1923 urban elections. A resolution was passed at the council's first meeting, in which the Boundary Commission was called upon to act so that 'the unanswerable case of the Town of Warrenpoint and of the Districts known as South Armagh, South Down and East Down may be presented and the Inhabitants relieved from the enforced Authority of a Parliament to which they most strongly object.'<sup>191</sup> The transformation of the council's rhetoric, from one of outright rejection to strong objection, was enough to avoid a repeat of government sanctions. The new Sinn Féin chairman of the council, T. H. Caulfield, stated that allegiance to the Belfast parliament was given 'under duress', provoking resentment within the unionist media at the council's disingenuous nature.<sup>192</sup>

These examples illustrate the extent to which political circumstances and financial burdens shaped the attitudes of non-Unionist urban councils. Inter-party relations, as indicated by the universal condemnation of violence perpetrated by both loyalists and republicans, were often harmonious. Only when it seemed possible that areas with nationalist majorities might be transferred to the independent Irish state did the councils express their opinions on the national question with any conviction.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 12 Dec. 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/31/2/BA/8).

<sup>190</sup> Minutes of the Warrenpoint urban council, 20 Apr. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/71/2/CA/2); minutes of the Downpatrick urban council, 1 May 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/31/2/BA/8).

<sup>191</sup> Minutes of the Warrenpoint urban council, 23 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/71/2/CA/3).

<sup>192</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 7 Feb. 1923.

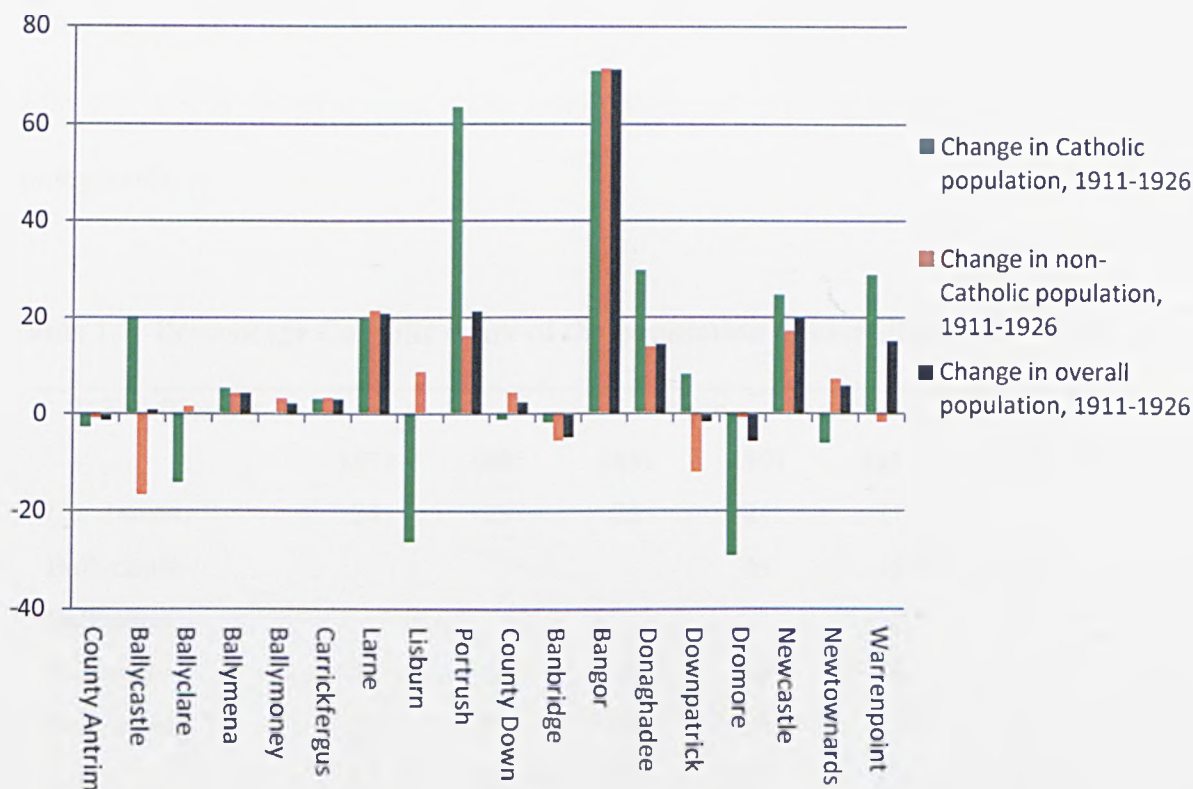
Nationalist attitudes to Northern Ireland were therefore more diverse than has often been acknowledged. Factors such as communal violence, partisan policing, national political developments, the potential of territorial transfer under the terms of the Boundary Commission and the attitude of the southern republican leadership were all vital in shaping the northern nationalist approach to partition at any given moment.

#### Inter-communal violence, state-creation and the nationalist community

Nationalist agency during the revolutionary period took many forms. Some joined the I.R.A. with the expressed aim of the violent overthrow of British rule. Combatants were a minority, however, as most nationalists remained peaceful. Outside politics nationalists continued with their daily lives, adhering to a cultural identity at odds with the Britishness of the ruling Unionist party. Maintenance of this cultural distinctiveness was in itself part of general nationalist reaction to the Irish revolution and state creation in the north-east of the country.

The most notable effect of political violence was internal migration and a strengthening of segregation. The major violence that erupted in July and August 1920 in Lisburn, Banbridge, Dromore and Newtownards had a lasting impact on the nationalist communities there. These riots, which were reprisals for the assassination of two members of the R.I.C., shared much in common with the reprisals of state forces in other parts of Ireland. However, they were led not by the police or army, but by loyalist crowds, indicating the depth of communal divisions.

**Graph 3: Population changes in east Ulster towns, 1911-1926 (in percentage)**



The burning of Catholic-owned property forced many Catholic families to flee, resulting in the long-term decline of the Catholic populations of these towns. As Graph 3 illustrates, the Catholic population of Ballyclare, Lisburn, Dromore and Newtownards all disproportionately fell in comparison to fluctuations in the non-Catholic and overall populations in the same period. Of these Ballyclare was the only town that did not experience violent expulsions in 1920, but it had witnessed similar disturbances in July 1912 as a result of the Castledawson affair.<sup>193</sup> The decline in the Catholic share of the populations of Ballyclare, Dromore, Lisburn and Newtownards outstripped that of counties Antrim and Down. Banbridge, however, was anomalous. Riots occurred there in 1920, yet the Catholic population declined in line with a drop in the general population of the town. In Ballyclare, Lisburn and Newtownards the

<sup>193</sup> R. Grange, 'On the banks of the Ollar, or random notes and reflections on Old Ballyclare', c. 1960 (P.R.O.N.I., R. Grange papers, MIC155/1).



non-Catholic population increased, while in Dromore it decreased by an almost negligible 1 per cent. Therefore, apart from Banbridge, these predominantly Protestant towns became even more religiously, and by implication, politically homogenous.

**Table 1.1: Percentage Catholic share of the population in east Ulster, 1871-1926**

D.E.D./County	Year					
	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1926
<i>Co. Antrim</i>	24	23	22	21	21	20
Ballycastle				49	48	57
Ballyclare				8	10	9
Ballymena	22	21	18	18	18	18
Ballymoney	28	29	24	26	23	23
Larne	23	23	29	23	23	23
Lisburn	24	21	22	23	24	18
<i>Co. Down</i>	31	30	27	31	32	30
Banbridge	22	22	23	21	23	24
Bangor	7	8	7	7	9	9
Downpatrick	45	47	48	53	52	57
Dromore	23	21	19	15	17	13
Newtownards	11	10	10	8	9	8
Warrenpoint			54	54	56	62

Similarly, in some predominantly Catholic towns, such as Downpatrick and Warrenpoint, the non-Catholic populations declined against a rise in Catholic inhabitants. As Table 1.1 illustrates, there was a gradual increase in the Catholic share of the population of Downpatrick and Warrenpoint throughout the late

nineteenth and early twentieth-century.<sup>194</sup> During this period the sharpest increase in the Catholic share of the population occurred between the years 1911 and 1926, suggesting that the east Ulster riots may have been a factor in this demographic shift. Many Catholic refugees migrated to nearby towns in east Ulster: Warrenpoint, for example, was so affected that local councillors arranged a special sitting to discuss the influx.<sup>195</sup> In Ballycastle a similar transformation occurred with an increase in the Catholic population and a decrease in the non-Catholic population. During the revolutionary period Ballycastle changed from a town with a slight non-Catholic majority to one with a clear Catholic majority by 1926. The reasons for the decline in the Protestant populations of Ballycastle, Downpatrick and Warrenpoint are unknown, but may be linked to I.R.A. violence in these areas and the threat of territorial transfer to the Irish Free State in the case of the latter two towns. Another theory may be that Protestants who perceived their majority status to be under threat (as in Ballycastle), or feared a further reduction in their minority level (as in Downpatrick and Warrenpoint), may have moved to a more Protestant area to become part of the local dominant religious group.<sup>196</sup>

The revolution intensified segregation in east Ulster. Catholics expelled from their homes mainly stayed within the north-eastern counties, partly because migration to the Free State was discouraged by southern ministers.<sup>197</sup> The Catholic population of the territory of Northern Ireland fell by 10,000 (2 per cent) between 1911 and 1926, suggesting that many refugees either returned home or migrated to

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<sup>194</sup> A. C. Hepburn, *A past apart: studies in the history of Catholic Belfast 1850-1950* (Belfast, 1996), p. 34.

<sup>195</sup> Minutes of the Warrenpoint urban council, 6 Sept. 1920 (P.R.O.N.I., Local Authorities files, LA/71/2/CA/2).

<sup>196</sup> This was the case in some Northern Irish towns between 1911 and 1981: Brendan Murtagh, *The politics of territory: policy and segregation in Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 41.

<sup>197</sup> O'Halloran, *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism*, pp 131-33; Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 256.

other areas within the north.<sup>198</sup> Communal solidarity and safety was offered by moving to regions with greater religious, cultural and political homogeneity such as the Antrim glens and south Down.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, displaced families may have preferred to migrate to somewhere nearby only for the duration of the conflict.<sup>200</sup> Many returned home, but the decline in the Catholic population of towns affected by violence demonstrates that some did not. It could be the case, therefore, that the disproportionate rise in the Catholic populations of Warrenpoint in south Down and Ballycastle (on the fringe of the Antrim glens) reflected a migration of displaced Catholics to areas that offered greater security from loyalist violence. Internal migration within the north-east occurred as there were nearby Catholic areas. By contrast, in southern Ireland the Protestant population declined by 34 per cent, perhaps due to the absence of nearby Protestant-dominated regions.<sup>201</sup>

Residential segregation was accompanied by a cultural distinction between nationalists and the unionist majority. When all Catholic school teachers were finally willing to recognise the Ministry for Education in late 1922, it was on the understanding that the government would let ‘bygones be bygones’ and not interfere with ‘their ideals as Catholics and Irishmen.’<sup>202</sup> Cultural autonomy had been a feature of pre-revolution social relations. In some rural areas preservation of customs and identity was assured by geographical isolation, such as in the Antrim glens, described by Louis J. Walsh as remaining ‘in spirit at any rate unconquered and unconquerable.’ The glens, he stated, were clearly distinguishable from the ‘planted

<sup>198</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, p. 256.

<sup>199</sup> Lynch, ‘The people’s protectors?’, p. 378.

<sup>200</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. at war*, pp 255-7.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223; Andy Bielenberg, ‘Exodus: the emigration of southern Irish Protestants during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War’, in *Past and Present*, ccxviii, no. 1 (Feb., 2013), p. 221.

<sup>202</sup> J. Macauley and James Hendley, Sacred Heart Presbytery, Belfast, to Lewis McQuibban, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Education, 11 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Catholic school teachers in Northern Ireland papers, T2886/1).

territories' and to another republican they were 'so Irish-hearted and Gaelic in speech'.<sup>203</sup> During the prolonged period of nineteenth-century urbanisation, migrant Catholics often settled in Catholic areas of religiously-mixed towns. In Gilford, a small mill town in west Down, 61 per cent of Catholic households were on streets with Catholic majorities, while 8 per cent resided on exclusively Catholic streets.<sup>204</sup> In other towns which had a Catholic minority significant portions of Catholics were living on streets on which their co-religionists were in a majority. In Crossgar and Ballycastle, which had 64 per cent and 52 per cent non-Catholic majorities respectively, 80 per cent of Catholics lived on streets where their co-religionists were in the majority. In Antrim town the figure was 43 per cent. This practise allowed Catholics to preserve their traditions and offered a sense communal solidarity.<sup>205</sup> This occurred most notably in Belfast and Derry, but it also occurred in east Ulster towns as proximity to a Catholic church and school was important for choosing where to live.<sup>206</sup>

Even within religiously-mixed towns intermingling was limited. In Ballycastle, a north-Antrim town which gained a Catholic majority during the revolutionary period, the annual Lammass Fair was a rare occasion when social barriers were permeated. As Louis J. Walsh wrote:

But once a year at least, all Ballycastle, - old and young, Catholic and Protestant, rich and poor, gentle and simple, Orange and Green, -

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<sup>203</sup> Louis J. Walsh, *Old friends: being memories of men and places* (Dundalk, 1934), p. 79; Aodh de Blácam, *The black north: an account of the six counties of unrecovered Ireland: their people, their treasures, and their history* (Dublin, 1938), p. 169.

<sup>204</sup> Marilyn Cohen, 'Urbanisation and the milieu of factory life: Gilford/Dunbarton, 1825-1914', in Chris Curtin, Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson (eds), *Irish urban cultures* (Belfast, 1993), pp 234-5. The date attributable to these figures is unclear, but it is assumed to be 1911.

<sup>205</sup> John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 1990), pp 34-5; Denis Barritt and Charles Carter, *The Northern Ireland problem: a study in group relations* (Oxford, 1962), p. 53.

<sup>206</sup> Hepburn, *A past apart*, p. 34.

foregathered on the Diamond for the three nights of the Lammas Fair, and joked and gambled and chatted and made merry together. All differences of creed and class and everything else were for the time being forgotten. You were all just Ballycastle folk...<sup>207</sup>

However, the fair was notable by its exceptional nature:

I think that the Lammas Fair had a good deal to do with the friendliness and neighbourliness of Ballycastle. I don't think that I ever knew a small town, the people of which seemed so much like the members of one big family. In any other town you might live your life and never exchange more than a nod with many of its inhabitants. They would belong to different congregations, different social sets, different avocations from yourself. There was no common meeting place.<sup>208</sup>

Walsh's comments reflected not only affection for Ballycastle, where he practiced as a solicitor and won election to the Antrim county council in 1920, but also his perception of a lack of shared space in east Ulster. To some extent his assessment was accurate. As well as churches and schools, social events were often segregated. In Ballymena an ostensibly friendly inter-communal gesture was made when Catholics were permitted the use of the local Protestant Hall in February 1920. However, rather than reflect a bridging of the religious gulf, this event was hosted

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<sup>207</sup> Walsh, *Old friends*, p. 88.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

for the exclusive enjoyment of the Ballymena Catholic Club.<sup>209</sup> In Lisburn there was notable segregation in social activities: 'the later years [of the early twentieth-century] the dances at the Wee [Hibernian] Hall would become much more exclusively Catholic in complexion.'<sup>210</sup> 'Endo-ritualistic and 'endo-economic' practices placed strict limits on the level of social integration in early twentieth-century Ulster.<sup>211</sup> The most salient example of the former was the popularity of the Orange Order, which attracted Protestant males to monthly meetings where they could bond over a common sense of loyalty and define themselves in opposition to Catholic nationalism.<sup>212</sup> As Gaelic culture took root in east Ulster with the first Feis na nGleann in 1904, it enjoyed early interest and patronage from leading Antrim unionists such as Ronald McNeill. However, the Feis soon became politicised, alienating the unionist community from Gaelic culture.<sup>213</sup>

Similarly, there was much exclusivity in the sphere of sports. Gaelic activities were enjoyed by nationalists and the Gaelic Athletic Association excluded members of state forces, including the police, for which unionists held a deep affinity. The G.A.A. therefore became 'more alien to Protestants than the Catholic religion itself.'<sup>214</sup> A Catholic living in a demographically mixed area who was known to participate in association football could be shunned by Protestant neighbours if he chose to play Gaelic sports as his primary leisure activity.<sup>215</sup> In fact association football, which attracted both Protestant and Catholic enthusiasts, failed

<sup>209</sup> *Ballymena Observer*, 13 Feb. 1920.

<sup>210</sup> Glenn Patterson, *Once upon a hill: love in troubled times* (London, 2008), p. 94.

<sup>211</sup> Anthony Buckley, *A gentle people: a study of a peaceful community in Ulster* (Holywood, 1982), pp 118-9.

<sup>212</sup> Rosemary Harris, *Prejudice and tolerance in Ulster: a study of neighbours and 'strangers' in a border community* (Manchester, 1972), p. 133.

<sup>213</sup> Éamon Phoenix, 'Introduction', in idem, Pádraic Ó Cléirreacháin, Eileen McAuley and Nuala McSparran (eds), *Feis na nGleann: a century of Gaelic culture in the Antrim glens* (Belfast, 2005), pp xii, xiv.

<sup>214</sup> Hepburn, *A past apart*, pp 134-5; also see, Harris, *Prejudice and tolerance in Ulster*, p. 135.

<sup>215</sup> Buckley, *A gentle people*, pp 155-6.

to bridge the cultural gap. Irish soccer inevitably became caught up in politics by the second decade of the twentieth-century. The singing of the national anthem at international matches created problems for nationalists, while a north-south divide had opened with southern clubs seeking independence from British control of the sport. Also, sectarian riots erupted after a Belfast Celtic match in 1920, while sectarianism manifested itself in east Ulster, such as when Lurgan Celtic travelled to play Banbridge United in April 1920. The Lurgan players were refused permission to dress in local premises and at half-time were attacked by home fans.<sup>216</sup>

Furthermore, the representational nature of communal conflict in Ulster led to greater intra-communal solidarity. As Catholic victims of loyalist violence fled from their homes, they were aided by the Catholic Church and others within the community. The Expelled Workers' Fund received charitable donations and contributions from individuals and relief organisations such as the American White Cross, to alleviate the distress of expelled Catholic families from Lisburn and other east Ulster towns.<sup>217</sup> However, victims primarily sought assistance from local sources and this reflected northern nationalists' mutual understanding of their unique circumstances. Daniel Monaghan, a Banbridge republican who lost his business and home to rioting in July 1920, appealed to the Irish National Foresters' Convention in Enniscorthy for financial aid. Another member supported Monaghan in his appeal, stating that English, Scottish and southern Irish delegates of the convention had 'no conception of the reign of terror' pervading in the north.<sup>218</sup> Many of the refugees went immediately to Belfast to seek aid and some were housed in a shelter on the

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<sup>216</sup> Mike Cronin, *Sport and nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic games, soccer and Irish identity since 1884* (Dublin, 1999), pp 118 and 121-22; *Irish News*, 27 Apr. 1920. Also see a denial of this incident in a letter from James B. Diamond, secretary of Banbridge United Football and Athletic Club, *Irish News*, 6 May 1920.

<sup>217</sup> Phoenix, *Northern nationalism*, p. 137; Bishop MacRory to the Committee of the Belfast Expelled Workers' Fund, 20 Nov. 1920 (O'Fiaich Library, MacRory papers, ARCH/11/5/14).

<sup>218</sup> *Irish News*, 5 Aug. 1920.

Falls Road alongside other expelled families from Belfast.<sup>219</sup> Such a shared experience would have had a binding effect within the Catholic community.

In periods of conflict social segregation is often the result of an instinctive impulse of self-preservation. At the centre of ethnicity, according to Donald Horowitz, is a sense of kinship. In a study of Asian and African ethnicities he concluded that ethnic groups were 'kinship greatly extended', and that if 'group members are potential kinsmen, a threat to any member of the group may be seen in somewhat the same light as a threat to the family.'<sup>220</sup> Intermarriage was therefore perceived as degenerative and, in Ulster society, was uncommon.<sup>221</sup> Cases of exogamy were indeed low in east Ulster, with only twenty recorded on the 1911 census for the town of Ballymena. During periods of violence intermarriage generally declined in ethnically divided societies.<sup>222</sup> Reflecting a predisposition to preserve one's own community, people in Ulster traditionally harboured 'a definite moral responsibility to patronise members of their own group' by buying from their businesses and utilising their services.<sup>223</sup> Social integration was so minimal in some areas that during the twentieth-century adjacent communities in the Ards peninsula still retained dialectical distinctions that reflected separate Scottish and Irish ancestry.<sup>224</sup>

Despite there being harmonious relations between neighbours of different cultural and religious backgrounds, Catholics and Protestants in Ulster were

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<sup>219</sup> Albert Coyle (ed.), *Evidence of conditions in Ireland comprising the complete testimony, affidavits and exhibits presented before the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland* (Washington, 1921), pp 571-2.

<sup>220</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflict* (California, 2000), pp 63-4.

<sup>221</sup> Buckley, *A gentle people*, pp 2, 63-4 and 119; Harris, *Prejudice and tolerance in Ulster*, pp 143-4; Patterson, *Once upon a hill*, pp 112 and 115.

<sup>222</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflict*, pp 62-3.

<sup>223</sup> Harris, *Prejudice and tolerance in Ulster*, p. 139.

<sup>224</sup> Philip Robinson, 'The geography of tradition: cultural diversity in the Ards peninsula', in Alan Gailey (ed.), *The use of tradition: essays presented to G. B. Thompson* (Holywood, 1988), p. 21.



generally socially immiscible with respect to each other.<sup>225</sup> By attaching themselves to mutually exclusive cultural pastimes and traditions, suspicions of the other community remained intact. When revolutionary violence in southern Ireland reinforced unionist anxieties, Catholics resident in predominantly Protestant areas presented the easiest and most risk-free target for militant loyalists. Therefore, Protestant and Catholic social segregation contributed greatly to the shaping of loyalist violence against Catholic minorities. This violence in turn led to a strengthening of cultural distinctiveness by reinforcing residential segregation in east Ulster.

More divisive factors arose in the early 1920s with the onset of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence. An indelible source of friction was the establishment of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the arming of local B Specials. This antagonised neighbourly relations, by bestowing upon unionists the legal right to challenge their nationalist neighbours.<sup>226</sup> B Specials were, in the words of Seamus Heaney, 'neighbours with guns'.<sup>227</sup> Many of the special constables involved in late-night visits to Catholic homes were known to residents.<sup>228</sup> One former district commandant of the B Specials provided his assessment to S. G. Tallents, a British official sent to investigate the Northern Ireland government, in June 1922:

There can never be any possibility of establishing confidence and security so long as the "B" Force, the ordinary Protestant countryman

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<sup>225</sup> Harris, *Prejudice and tolerance in Ulster*, p. 132; Buckley, *A gentle people*, p. 131; Barritt and Carter, *The Northern Ireland problem*, pp 60-1.

<sup>226</sup> Barritt and Carter, *The Northern Ireland problem*, p. 62.

<sup>227</sup> Seamus Heaney, *District and circle* (London, 2006), p. 33.

<sup>228</sup> One of the B Specials present during the McCann shootings in June 1922 was known to the victims. Similarly, that same night, another patrol nearby was causing a disruption by calling at several houses. At least one of these special constables was known to the residents: see, 'Report on the killing of Archie and John McCann', 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/234); Thomas Fagan also knew one of the special constables who raided his home: Fagan to Richard Dawson Bates, 23 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/1011).

and in many cases corner boy, is supplied with arms and clothing by his Government and 'authorised' to get 'on top' as it were, of his R.C. neighbours. The latter resents it all the time, and even the most respectable and constitutional Nationalist gets more bitter as the record of raids and abuses by the uncontrollable elements pile up and harmless and innocent people suffer.<sup>229</sup>

Other forms of communal dominance were practiced by special constables, such as the raising of an Orange Order banner in the centre of the nationalist village of Cushendall in July 1921.<sup>230</sup> In his assessment of the B Specials and their impact on communal relations, Tallents wrote:

Today the feeling against the specials and the 'B' in particular is more bitter than against the Black & Tans – with this great difference – on the removal of the black & tans [sic] one side of the contending parties was removed. In N. I. the feeling against those who serve in the 'A' and 'B' will remain and the latter being the vast majority of the loyalists of military age it is hard to visualise how the two sections of the population will ever settle down to peaceful conditions again.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> 'Notes by an ex-district commandant', June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27).

<sup>230</sup> Statement of Margaret Emmeline Dobbs, 29 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/8).

<sup>231</sup> Tallents report on U.S.C., June 1922 (T.N.A., S. G. Tallents papers, CO 906/27). Tallents overestimated the number of loyalists enrolled in U.S.C., but his point nevertheless stands.

It was primarily security measures that alienated Catholics from the Northern government.<sup>232</sup> This was not only due to the well documented Protestantism of the R.U.C. and U.S.C., but due to the state's response to violence perpetrated by state forces. Of note here is the Cushendall incident in June 1922 when three Catholics were killed and two others wounded by A Specials. Despite a British inquiry finding that this was an unprovoked attack, court cases brought by the survivors and families of the deceased ruled that no compensation could be awarded on the basis that the A Specials did not constitute an illegal assembly. As the special constables were sent to Cushendall as a lawful force, the actions of one or two of their party could not be deemed as the actions of an illegal assembly under the Criminal Injuries Act.<sup>233</sup> This therefore restricted the ability of victims from claiming compensation for crimes inflicted on them by members of a loyalist state force. Similarly, some victims of loyalist violence faced humiliation in the claims courts in order to gain compensation.<sup>234</sup> One riot victim, Elizabeth Neeson, described how she had suffered a nervous breakdown in the aftermath of her home being destroyed. Despite this she was subjected to scrutiny that bordered on ridicule by the solicitor representing the county councils.<sup>235</sup> Glenn Patterson has written of these Lisburn court cases: 'For some the court ordeal cannot have been much less traumatic or invasive than the destruction of their homes.'<sup>236</sup>

The terror of expulsion from one's own home, supplemented by a tough handling by the courts, undoubtedly increased the sense of alienation from the judiciary and the state it represented. While the courts were not acting in a sectarian

<sup>232</sup> Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster*, p. 379.

<sup>233</sup> See the cases for compensation at Ballymena Quarter Sessions, 3 July 1923, and the Lord Chief Justice's decision on an appeal by the claimants, 1 Nov. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/14-15).

<sup>234</sup> Patterson, *Once upon a hill*, pp 161-165; Pearse Lawlor, *The burnings 1920* (Cork, 2009), p. 207.

<sup>235</sup> *Lisburn Standard*, 11 Feb. 1921.

<sup>236</sup> Patterson, *Once upon a hill*, p. 162.

manner, as many Protestant victims were similarly affected, it was Catholics who formed the bulk of the claimants. All of the factors mentioned – communal violence, the intensification of residential and social segregation, and alienation from the state – contributed to the isolation of the nationalist community in east Ulster. Police reprisals, preferential treatment for loyalists and injustices – perceived or real – committed against the nationalist community in the early 1920s would form part of the nationalist collective-memory in the late twentieth-century. I.R.A. activities that often provided the basis to police reprisals would be forgotten ‘to leave only pure, distilled Catholic victimhood.’<sup>237</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored how nationalists in east Ulster experienced the Irish revolutionary period. Importance has been given to how local developments were shaped by both communal violence and national events. As a result, it can be seen that nationalism in east Ulster was greatly divided, often to the detriment of the common nationalist goal of Irish unity. However, such distinctions reflected not merely party political differences on the ideal of a republic, but a strong conviction that Sinn Féin tactics and attitudes were counter-productive in Ulster. Also, given the likelihood of partition, many nationalists believed that Joseph Devlin could offer them material benefits through parliamentary participation. For many nationalists in Antrim and north Down, Sinn Féin offered no practical solution to partition. I.R.A. violence was counterproductive in a predominately unionist region, while Sinn Féin largely failed to address the realities of unionist opposition to Irish independence.

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<sup>237</sup> Fionnuala O Connor, *In search of a state: Catholics in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1993), pp 109-111.

Devlin, on the other hand, offered a pragmatic approach with the potential for a more harmonious relationship with the Unionist party. He accepted that Unionist support was required for an end to partition, a goal non-cooperation was less likely to achieve. Only in south and east Down, lying near the proposed Irish border, did Sinn Féin's more uncompromising rhetoric appeal to nationalists.

By the end of the period most Irish Volunteers acquiesced with the authority of the northern state. Despite the uncompromising notion of Sinn Féin policy, political republicans adopted a much more pragmatic approach to partition. The decision of some nationalist-controlled councils to pledge allegiance to Dáil Éireann in December 1921 was likely influenced by the treaty negotiations. Hitherto councils were eager to remain in operation to administer local services in recognition of their traditional role and purpose. Cooperation with the government of Northern Ireland was also necessary for Sinn Féin councillors who, by late 1922, realised the most probable route to incorporation into the Free State was through the Boundary Commission. This entailed the continued operation of local government bodies so that local voices could be heard by the Commission.

Attitudes within the nationalist community were also affected by the idiosyncrasies of individual members of that community. For example, most local parish priests remained supportive of Joseph Devlin. This influenced the attitudes of parishioners and weakened the prospects of the I.R.A. Similarly, Louis J. Walsh, despite being a Sinn Féin county councillor in Antrim, was generally a pacifist, who not only opposed violence in Ulster for fear of loyalist reactions, but also in Ireland where he anticipated the hijacking of the republican movement by 'hot heads' which

would facilitate a British massacre of the Irish.<sup>238</sup> These features shaped nationalist agency in east Ulster and would otherwise have remained obscured without investigation into the social aspects of the revolutionary period.

The range of opinions that existed suggests that the extent of nationalist non-recognition of Northern Ireland has been overstated. Many nationalists were eager for a return to peace, despite their resentment of partition. Politics was only one concern among many for nationalists and unionists alike. The desire for economic stability, security and social harmony influenced most people. A commandant in the U.S.C. provided his views on Catholic aspirations to a committee established to investigate police reorganisation in early 1922: 'After all the I.R.A. is against all constituted authority, and I think all the Catholics in Northern Ireland want to do is to live in peace and quietness under ordered Government.'<sup>239</sup>

Members of the minority community could construct a sense of security through migration to nationalist-dominated areas. This was a key consequence of revolutionary violence that resulted in the strengthening of sectarian boundaries. This was a pacific form of agency aimed at avoiding conflict through securing communal solidarity with those of similar political and cultural dispositions. However, the factors shaping demographic changes during this period can only be speculated on. Further analysis awaits the opening of the 1926 Northern Ireland and Free State census data which will facilitate more nuanced analysis of the shifts in local populations. Nevertheless, tabulated data available from the 1926 census demonstrates how some towns in east Ulster became more Protestant or Catholic in

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<sup>238</sup> Louis Walsh to Bishop MacRory, 29 May 1919 (O'Fiaich Library, Bishop MacRory papers, ARCH/11/5/14).

<sup>239</sup> Col. W. K. Tillie, U.S.C. district commandant, 1 Mar. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/47/2).

complexion, reflecting how some people reacted to the uncertainty of the revolutionary period.

Revolutionary violence resulted in a strengthening of cultural distinctiveness between nationalists and unionists. As this chapter has shown, long-term disaffection was rooted in communal violence, internal migration and the intensification of inter-communal mistrust. Any accurate assessment of the nationalist minority of Northern Ireland must consider both the political aspects of the early years of Northern Ireland, and their social impact on ordinary people.

## Conclusion

This thesis has examined counties Antrim and Down during the years 1920-22 with particular attention given to episodes of violence and the impact this had on the wider community. The objectives of the present study were to demonstrate the interconnectedness of violence in east Ulster with conflict in the rest of Ireland; to examine motivations for participation in violence; and to investigate the local dynamics and consequences of inter-communal conflict. More generally, this thesis has set out to explore the impact of the Irish revolution on a part of Ireland where the national majority formed the local minority.

Chapter One of this study outlines the context for the wider period under study, but also illustrates the dynamics of popular politics in the unionist community. The Unionist party was the dominant political force amongst northern Protestants. However, the party elite did not take its hegemony for granted; rather it carefully ensured that internal dissent was managed and external threats quashed. While republicanism represented the most obvious threat to unionism, labour politics was potentially as much a threat to unionist solidarity. This was a major problem, identified as such in 1918 with the formation of the Ulster Unionist Labour Association. The threat came in two forms: independent labour and unionist labour. The former (consisting of labour, socialist and trade unionist organisations) pledged to unite the Protestant and Catholic working-classes and made progress to this end by winning unprecedented support in Belfast and the industrial towns of east Ulster in the 1920 urban elections. However, this success proved short-lived as sectarian issues emerged in the summer of that year to eradicate working-class unity and secure pan-Protestant support for Ulster unionism. Unionist labour, however, posed



as much a threat. George B. Hanna, an Orangeman and populist sectarian figure, successfully challenged the official unionist candidate in a by-election in May 1919 in East Antrim. By promising to strive for the rights of Protestant workers against the ruling elite, Hanna had the potential to inspire other unionist labourites to follow suit. However, the Unionist party overcame Hanna's threat to unity by offering him a seat within the first Northern Ireland parliament and incorporating him within the official party.

Such episodes demonstrated that despite the threat of republicanism the unionist community did not band together without difficulties in 1920. Ordinary unionists were not under the control of the Unionist party leaders. In fact, the party elite can be seen to have reacted as much to the concerns of its grassroots as it shaped them.<sup>1</sup> When the shipyard expulsions and east Ulster riots erupted in July and August 1920, it may have been to James Craig's advantage insofar as it eliminated the independent labour threat, but it also posed the risk of spiralling to undesirable levels of violence and damaging his party's standing in London. Therefore, the unionist community in 1920-22 was not monolithic, a finding that is demonstrated by this local study. Unionist clubs and constitutional associations, many of which were revived after the First World War, bristled with a wide-ranging variety of opinions, protestations and exhortations. These were often at variance with the official party line, particularly with regards to British government actions. The Truce and Treaty were largely received with more hostility in the clubs and associations than by Craig and his cabinet colleagues. Nevertheless, the Unionist party, whose leadership assumed office as the government of Northern Ireland in June 1921,

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<sup>1</sup> This 'bottom-up' dynamic has been identified within nationalism by other historians. See Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Cork, 1998) and Fergus Campbell, *Land and revolution: nationalist politics in the west of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005).

managed to retain support from the unionist community through a series of preferential policies. Draconian legislation was introduced to suppress republican violence, while its stipulations were rarely applied to loyalist miscreants. In addition, the Ulster Special Constabulary afforded the unionist community its own state-sponsored volunteer army. While such moves would have indelible effects on relations between the northern state and its minority population, they also ensured that loyalist rebelliousness was strictly limited.

There has been much historiographical disagreement on whether grassroots loyalists acted in an autonomous manner or if they followed the direction of unionist leaders. Chapter Two attempts to establish the relationship between loyalist rioters and their political leaders. While the riots of 1920 appeared to fit into a narrative of state reprisals against nationalist communities in southern Ireland, they were fundamentally different in nature. No evidence has been found to support the idea that a systematic plan for anti-Catholic violence existed; rather loyalist rioters appeared to have acted largely on their own initiatives. Failure to retrospectively condemn such violence by the Unionist leadership may be interpreted as approval for the riots, but such acquiescence fell short of demonstrating any active part in the actual event. The claim of an orchestrated state pogrom against Ulster Catholics fails to withstand scrutiny when the reality of the government's security policy in 1920 is laid bare: the army and police were overstretched combating the I.R.A. in the southern provinces and could ill-afford to swamp unionist towns such as Lisburn when riots broke out. Even when the R.I.C. or army made their presence felt, it was directed at cooling the situation rather than taking rash actions that would escalate matters. Retrospective arrests were attempted, but the judiciary was handicapped by the ability of collective action by loyalists to force it to drop cases against rioters

who had subsequently joined a local special constabulary in Lisburn. Acquiescence by the authorities was not a preferential policy designed to placate loyalists; rather it was in line with wider developments in Ireland and had also resulted in general amnesties for republicans in the hope of easing the general security situation.

Aside from addressing the issue of responsibility for loyalist violence, this thesis sought to explore questions regarding its aims and levels of communal support. Chapter Three challenges simplistic labelling of anti-Catholic violence as ethnic cleansing. If such assertions are to be made they should be done so with greater nuance. In this instance it is argued that greater emphasis should be afforded to the relationship between territorial contestation and a society divided by culture, religion and politics. Clearly defined boundaries proved important in averting violence between communities lacking in mutual trust. The importance of these boundaries were evident not only in the heightened tensions of the period 1920-22, but also in episodes of violent acts that occurred in east Ulster in the decades prior to the Irish revolution. Boundaries were based on representative features of Ulster society. For instance, any area with high levels of Protestant or Catholic residents could be perceived as belonging to the dominant religious community.

While violence perpetrated to maintain boundaries has been depicted by some as representative of the collective wishes of the community, others have posited that loyalist violence was as much an anathema to many ordinary Protestants. Many lost property while others undoubtedly lost Catholic friends who were unable to return after violent expulsions. This research has even identified examples of rioters being alienated by violence that they deemed too extreme. This is not to dispute that many Protestants accepted loyalist violence as a necessary evil to defend against the looming threat of republicanism. Rather, it argues that the extent of

acquiescence to violence cannot be precisely defined and care must be taken in generalising about unionist attitudes. Most people lived through the revolutionary years as non-violent observers who preferred the normality of daily life. Fear, intimidation and a propensity for self-preservation undoubtedly explain the lack of public criticism of loyalist violence by Protestants as well as support for such activities. Official forms of communal defence were more acceptable, but in east Ulster the establishment of the B Specials met with relatively little enthusiasm from the unionist community.

The U.S.C. was an important force in the Irish revolution. It is generally accepted by historians that the I.R.A.'s failure in north-east Ulster was in large part due to the mass mobilisation of unionist volunteers. The U.S.C., while countering republican activities, also helped to ease unionist anxieties. It has often been claimed, as Chapter Four notes, that the U.S.C. was merely the official embodiment of the Ulster Volunteer Force. However, without any prior investigation into the personnel of either force, such assertions lack authority. The claim of Timothy Bowman that the U.V.F. did not simply transform into the U.S.C. is given firmer foundation in this thesis. Some generally held assumptions, such as the almost exclusive Protestantism of the U.S.C., are confirmed here. However, not all Protestants responded with enthusiasm to the revival of the U.V.F. A revival in 1920 failed to rally the enthusiasm of 1913. As the post-war U.V.F. remained small this suggests that many of the men who volunteered for the U.S.C. were not Ulster Volunteers. In fact, when the ages of special constables are taken into account, it is clear that a large portion of B Specials were too young to have been Ulster Volunteers in the pre-war period when the U.V.F. was most popular amongst unionists. Therefore, the U.S.C., in part, represented a new, younger, cohort of

unionist volunteers. In the context of paramilitarism in revolutionary Ireland, this is not unique: the I.R.A. was also composed of a large body of young men with no pre-war history of paramilitary activity.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the composition of the B Specials is important as it was the actions of many of its members that gave the wider U.S.C. a poor reputation. This bad press pre-dated the force itself, with opponents claiming even before its inception that it would be recruited from the very worst kind of Ulster Protestants. However, special constables to a large extent reflected the society from which they came. While many enrolled as a way to express their loyalty, there is evidence to suggest that others joined for different reasons. For instance, the fact that A Specials were paid a full-time wage raises the possibility that they attracted recruits for economic as much as ideological reasons. However, to make this claim with any authority it would be necessary to conduct further research into the A Specials. With regards to B Special, motives included social or familial pressures as well as ideological factors.

If unionists who could be described as the 'wilder' elements of society enrolled in the U.S.C., it was not by design. A vetting process, however imperfect, was initiated to filter undesirable applicants. In addition, Lt. Col. Charles Wickham favoured disciplining and even expelling miscreants from the force. Regardless, many special constables engaged in unauthorised acts of violence. It is therefore important to ask why these unauthorised acts of violence were perpetrated. Chapter Five makes clear that the U.S.C. was moulded into a force that largely reflected loyalist attitudes, including a degree of antipathy to nationalists and ambivalence to other state forces depending on whether that other force was judged to be acting in

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Townshend, *The Republic: the fight for Irish independence 1918-1923* (London, 2013), p. 43.

the perceived interests of the unionist community. Yet, this is not enough to explain acts of unauthorised violence. Six core factors are offered as an explanation in Chapter Five which seeks to demonstrate how structural pressures shaped the actions of special constables. Although much remains to be discovered about the complexity of the communal conflict in Ulster, this structural approach offers more nuanced insight than dispositional explanations asserting that miscreants within the U.S.C. were simply 'wilder'.

The actions of special constables and loyalist rioters had a massive impact on the wider community – both nationalist and unionist. They also created problems in the relationship between the security forces and the unionist community. As the security forces professed loyalty to the state, violence from militant loyalists ensured a mutual suspicion between many unionists and the security forces. This relationship was further complicated by the role of the Unionist government of Northern Ireland, which often undermined the position of the army or police by refusing to condemn loyalist violence or take action against paramilitaries.

Another area of inquiry which has received limited attention from historians is the position of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland. The final chapter in this study highlights the divisions and problems that faced nationalists in east Ulster. While the south and west of Ireland gained a form of independence in this period, northern nationalists were incorporated into a new state of Northern Ireland and governed by their traditional political opponents. Relations between the ruling Unionist party and the nationalist community were at an historic low, with Joseph Devlin harbouring little hope for fair treatment and some Unionist ministers, notably Sir Richard Dawson Bates, regarding nationalists with unqualified contempt. Attention is most often drawn to salient cases of discrimination, such as the

enrolment of the Protestant U.S.C. and the passing of the Special Powers Act in April 1922. However, the nationalist community experienced difficulties beyond these policies. In the lives of ordinary nationalists there was harassment from Protestant neighbours who were either militant loyalists or special constables. Victims of indiscriminate violence experienced further degradation when applying for compensation or the renewal of licenses required to rebuild businesses destroyed during rioting.

The representational nature of communal violence meant that Catholics were often viewed as republicans by unionists. This failed to accurately reflect the divisions within the nationalist community in which constitutionalists passionately sought to maintain a distance from republicans. In east Ulster constitutionalism remained dominant, particularly in Antrim. As a result the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin failed to gain as much support from nationalists as they did in many other parts of Ireland. Therefore, the experience of law-abiding nationalists was a paradoxical one in which they were assumed by unionists to be in sympathy with republicans, yet in reality represented a major obstacle to the progress of republicanism in east Ulster. In addition, constitutionalists were inclined to acquiesce in the northern state if assurances of fair treatment were given by the Unionist government. However, without government assurances of fairness and security, a significant minority of nationalists residing in demographically mixed towns decided to move to more religiously homogenous areas. Internal migration in north-east Ulster during the Irish revolution does, however, require greater analysis, including greater comparison with the internal migration of southern Protestants.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the southern Protestant experience of the revolution, see Andy Bielenberg, 'Exodus: the emigration of southern Irish Protestants during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War', in *Past and Present*, ccxviii, no. 1 (Feb., 2013), pp 199-233 and David Fitzpatrick, 'Protestant

This thesis enhances our understanding of the role played by ordinary unionists in resisting the Irish revolution in the north-east of Ulster. It is the only local study of the Irish revolution that involves analysis of primarily loyalist rather than nationalist agency. In doing so it provides greater insight into the reasons why the Irish revolution failed in the north-east, illustrating that resistance came as much in the form of paramilitary and vigilante activity as in parliamentary protest by political leaders. This thesis points to the need for further local studies in the north-east to assess the nature of local unionist and nationalist political activity. New insights will be possible as new sources, applicable to particular localities, become available. The outcome of such research would increase our knowledge of the Irish revolution and the foundations of the Northern Ireland state.

### Limitations

This thesis has focused on violence and its impact on politics and society in east Ulster. While revolutionary violence is important, it must be recognised that most people continued living their lives as ordinarily as possible, with few participating in acts of violence. Loyalties were multifarious and did not always conform to neat political labels such as nationalist, republican, unionist, loyalist, Hibernian or Orangeman. Political labels were more often imposed on individuals by others than adopted voluntarily. Most people's priorities in life were more personal than political but unfortunately many aspects of ordinary people's responses to revolution have been lost to history.



One example of personal loyalties overriding political labels was provided by Joseph Connolly, the Sinn Féin electoral candidate for Antrim in 1918 and 1921. Connolly recorded in his memoirs his belief that Orangemen viewed every Catholic as ‘the enemy’ and aimed at ‘the expulsion or extermination of Catholics.’<sup>4</sup> This is a clear example of the application of a political label and crude agenda to a diverse body of people whom the commentator could not possibly have known on a personal level. However, a more sober assessment of unionists is provided later in his account. Connolly claimed he was approached by a local unionist and Orangeman at the funeral of his mother-in-law who died after an R.U.C. raid on her home in Glenarm. The unionist warned him that the police would conduct another raid on the home in which the mourners planned to gather afterwards. Connolly fled and evaded arrest. He concluded: ‘It was one of a number of experiences that I have had which showed that decent Orangemen could be and generally are decent Irish neighbours in the rural districts of Northern Ireland.’<sup>5</sup>

The Orangeman in question may have been motivated by his friendliness with local nationalists or by his disapproval of the R.U.C.’s behaviour. Either way it is clear that some people held loyalties and moral standards that did not always conform to narrow political labels. This reality is expressed by the north Antrim playwright George Shiels in *The Retrievers*, written in 1924.<sup>6</sup> Set along the Irish border in 1922 it tells the story of the politically divided Maguire family, the son of which is a republican who rebelled against his father’s constitutional nationalism. The loyalties of other characters are less easily defined, such as that of a corrupt

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<sup>4</sup> J. Anthony Gaughan (ed.), *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly: a founder of modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1996), p. 196.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>6</sup> George Shiels (1881-1949) was a Catholic playwright from Ballymoney, Co. Antrim. He emigrated to Canada at the age of nineteen to work as a labourer. After an industrial accident he was unable to walk again and returned to Co. Antrim, where he took up writing, finding success as a playwright. He turned down an honorary doctorate from Queen’s University, Belfast, in 1931.

policeman who ‘went into khaki with the blessing of the priests and the Irish Party’, only to return resentful of politics and ready to exploit the lawlessness of the period for his own personal gain.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, although this study unavoidably utilises narrow political labels, it acknowledges that these can often fail to convey the complexity of individual outlooks and experiences. In addition, although violence provides a more measurable factor by its conspicuousness, non-violence was more prevalent and can offer great insight into popular attitudes during periods of relative upheaval.

This is not the only limit to this thesis. Its timescale – 1920 to 1922 – could have been expanded either way as the events of this period were shaped by those preceding them, and the violence of the period was equally important in determining future events. Also the findings of this study should not be assumed to apply outside the boundaries of east Ulster, as the relative strengths of the nationalist and unionist communities in other parts of north-east Ulster would alter key variables.

The final limitation of this research concerns the availability of key sources. Chief amongst sources that continue to be withheld from public scrutiny are the 1926 census and the U.S.C. archive in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Until the public release of these collections it will be impossible to answer in greater detail some of the questions posed in this thesis, including the extent of demographic change as a result of the revolutionary period and the composition and nature of the special constabulary.

It is hoped that this study encourages further research. The internal dynamics of the unionist community and the relationship between the Unionist government and extreme loyalists, both of which have been investigated here, require further

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<sup>7</sup> George Shiels, ‘The Retrievers’, in Christopher Murray (ed.), *Selected plays of George Shiels* (Gerrards Cross, 2008), p. 12.

research within a wider geographical framework. More analysis could be conducted into the existence and impact of moderate political figures within the heart of the Unionist cabinet, and the extent to which these were frustrated by the adoption of more populist policies. The relationship between segregation and communal violence, which has gained much attention from historians and political scientists of Northern Ireland, could be placed within the context of research on segregation in other parts of the world.<sup>8</sup> With regards to the U.S.C. and other forms of loyalist paramilitarism, these could be placed in the wider European context. There is growing scholarly interest in paramilitarism in Europe after the First World War. The reasons for the emergence of armed militias, such as the militarisation and ‘brutalisation’ of post-war societies, continue to be debated.<sup>9</sup> In Ulster, however, the tendency of loyalists to form or join paramilitary groups was attached inextricably to the challenge to their own citizenship of the United Kingdom. With the British government failing to make convincing guarantees to safeguard their citizenship, large numbers of unionists felt compelled to join the U.V.F. Paramilitarism in Ireland therefore predated the First World War, although events during the European conflict, notably an intensified effort by Irish separatists to gain independence from 1916, exacerbated the situation. The U.S.C. can be seen as forming part of this wider context of paramilitarism in Europe, but has yet to be incorporated fully into that scholarship. By providing greater insights into the nature and actions of the U.S.C.’s membership, the groundwork has been laid for further research on the role of Ulster in Irish and wider European experience of post-war revolution.

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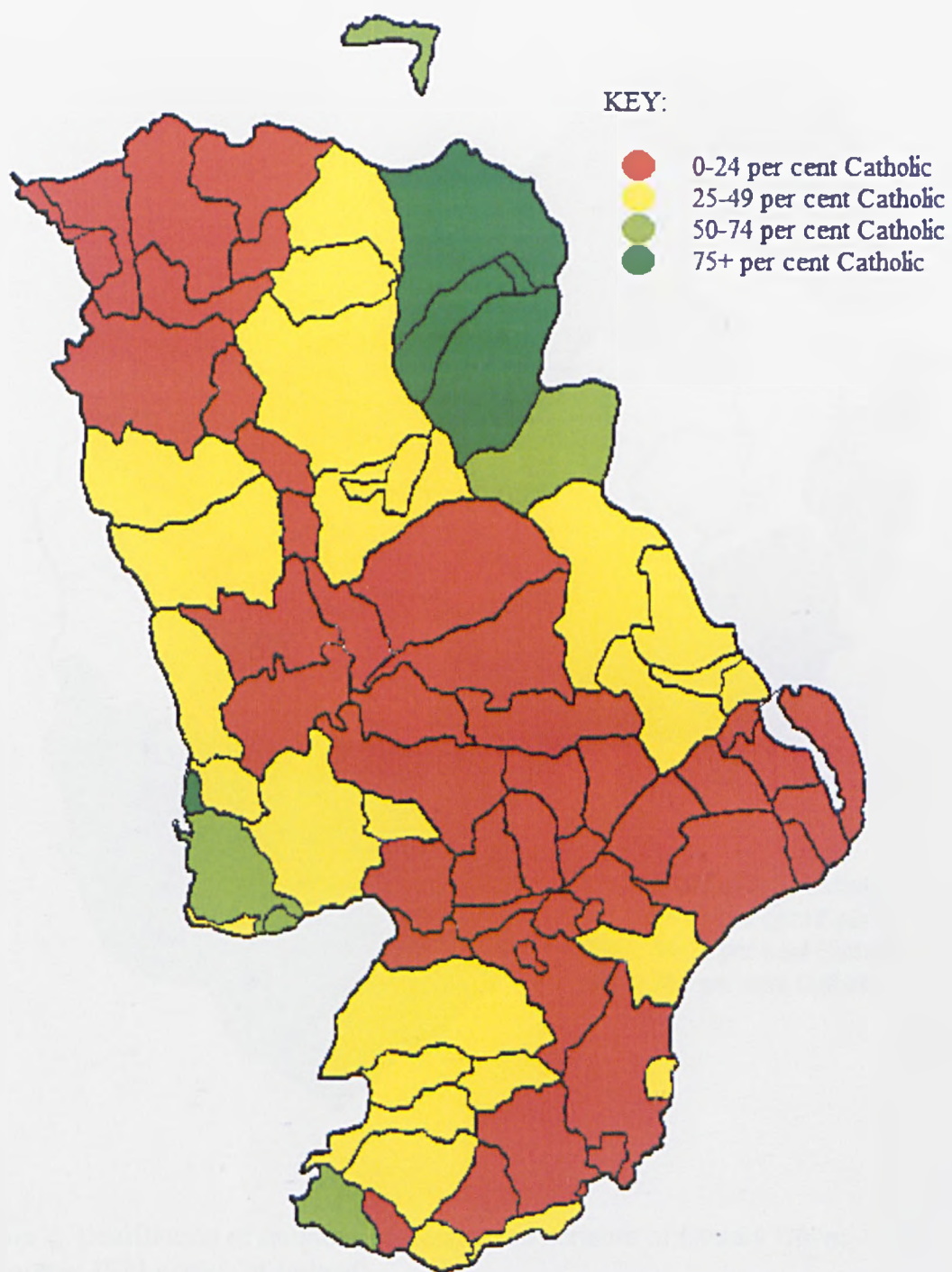
<sup>8</sup> See for instance, Carl H. Nightingale, *Segregation: a global history of divided cities* (Chicago, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, ‘Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War: an introduction’, in idem (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), pp 1-4.

# MAPS

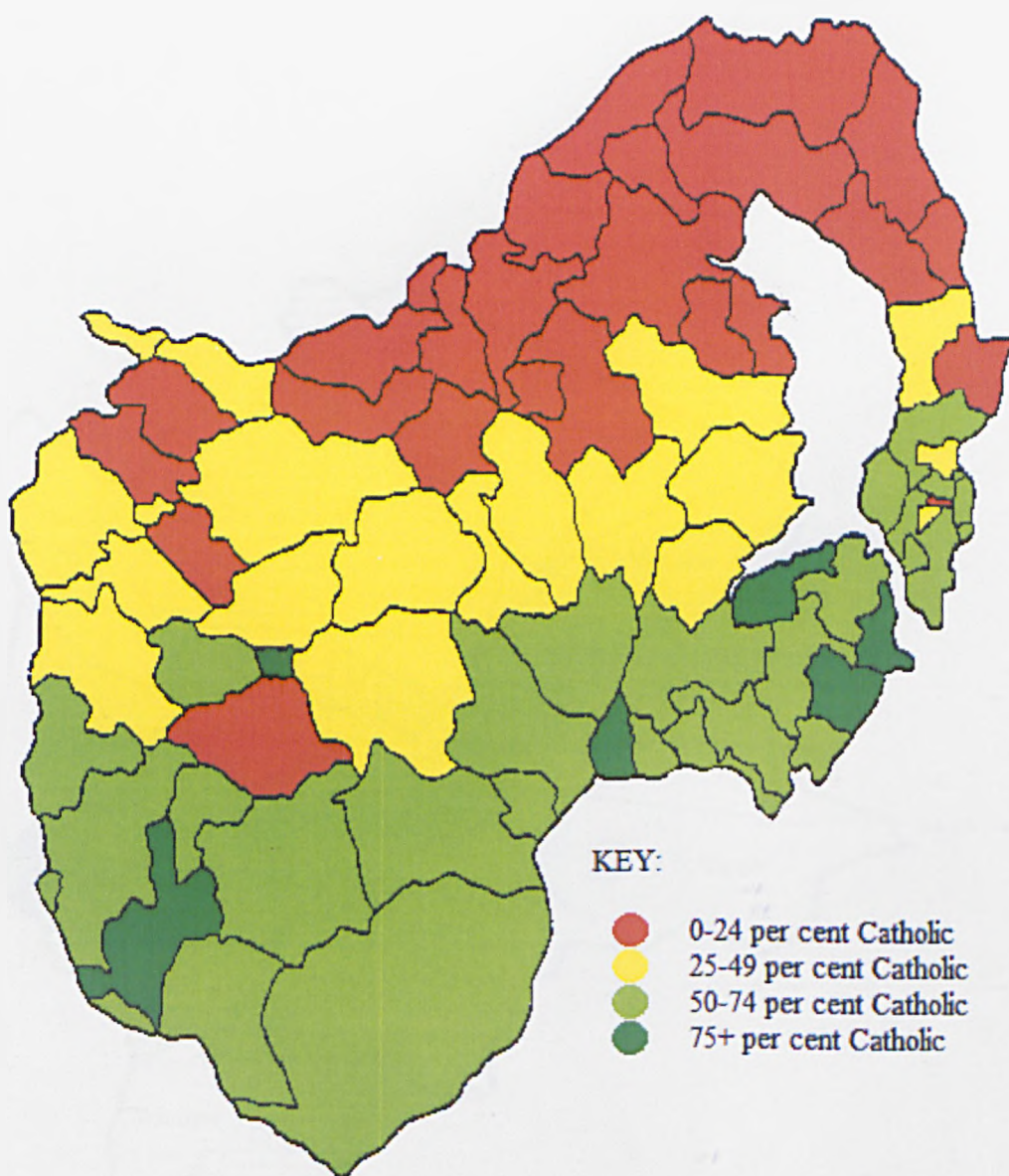


Map 2: Counties Antrim and Down

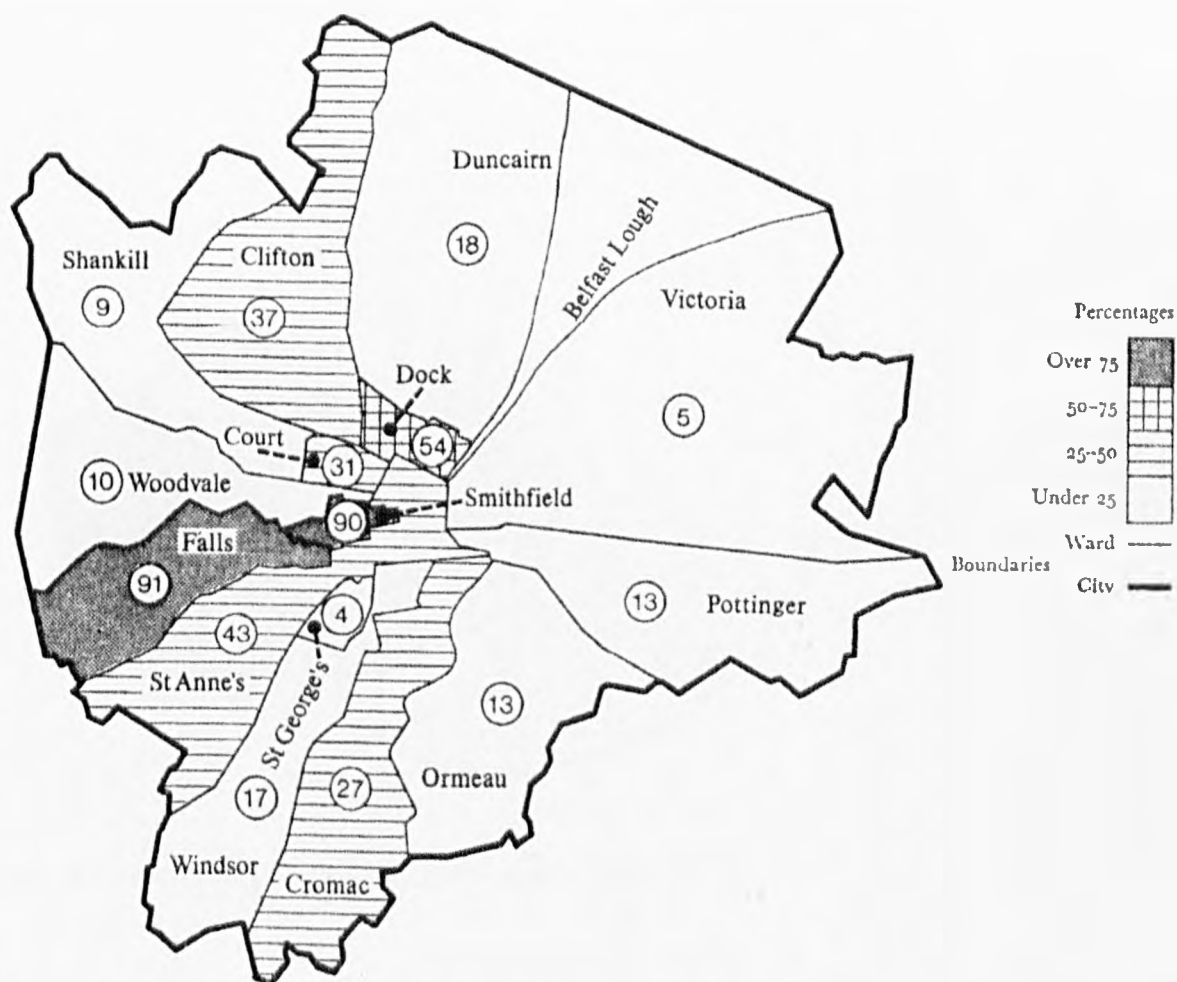


*Map 3:* Distribution of religious professions in parishes of County Antrim, 1911.  
(Source: 1911 census of Ireland)





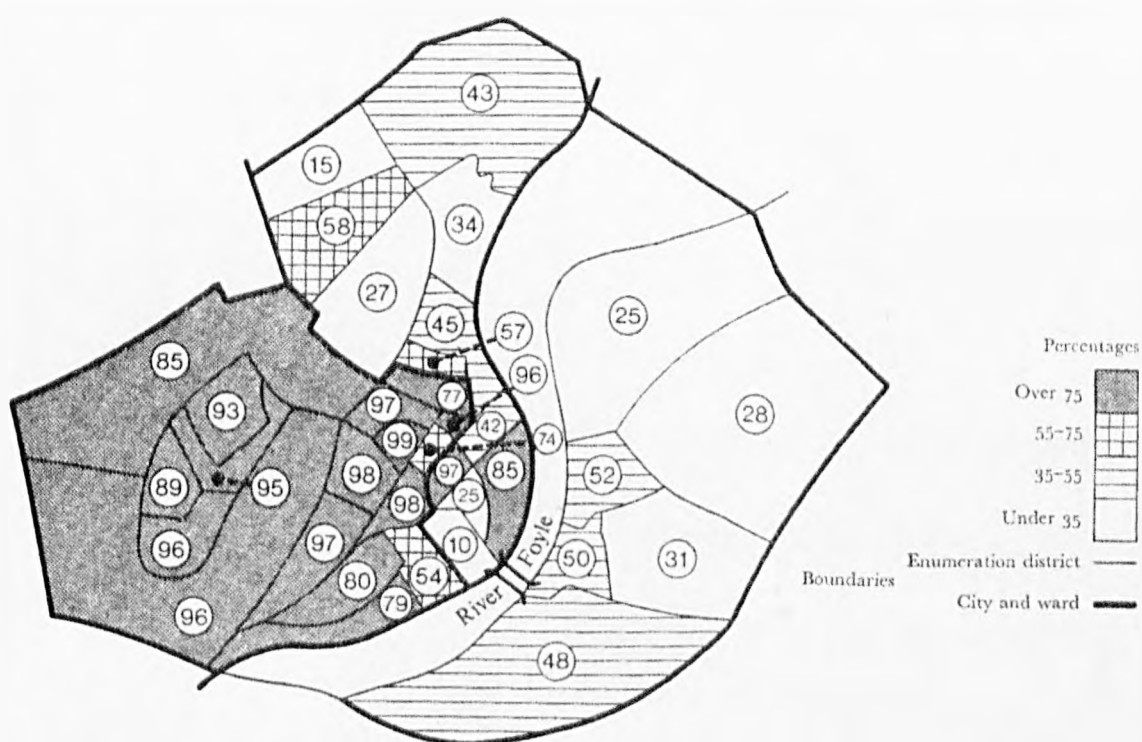
*Map 4:* Distribution of religious professions in parishes of County Down, 1911.  
(Source: 1911 census of Ireland)



Map 5: Catholic population of Belfast, 1961<sup>1</sup>

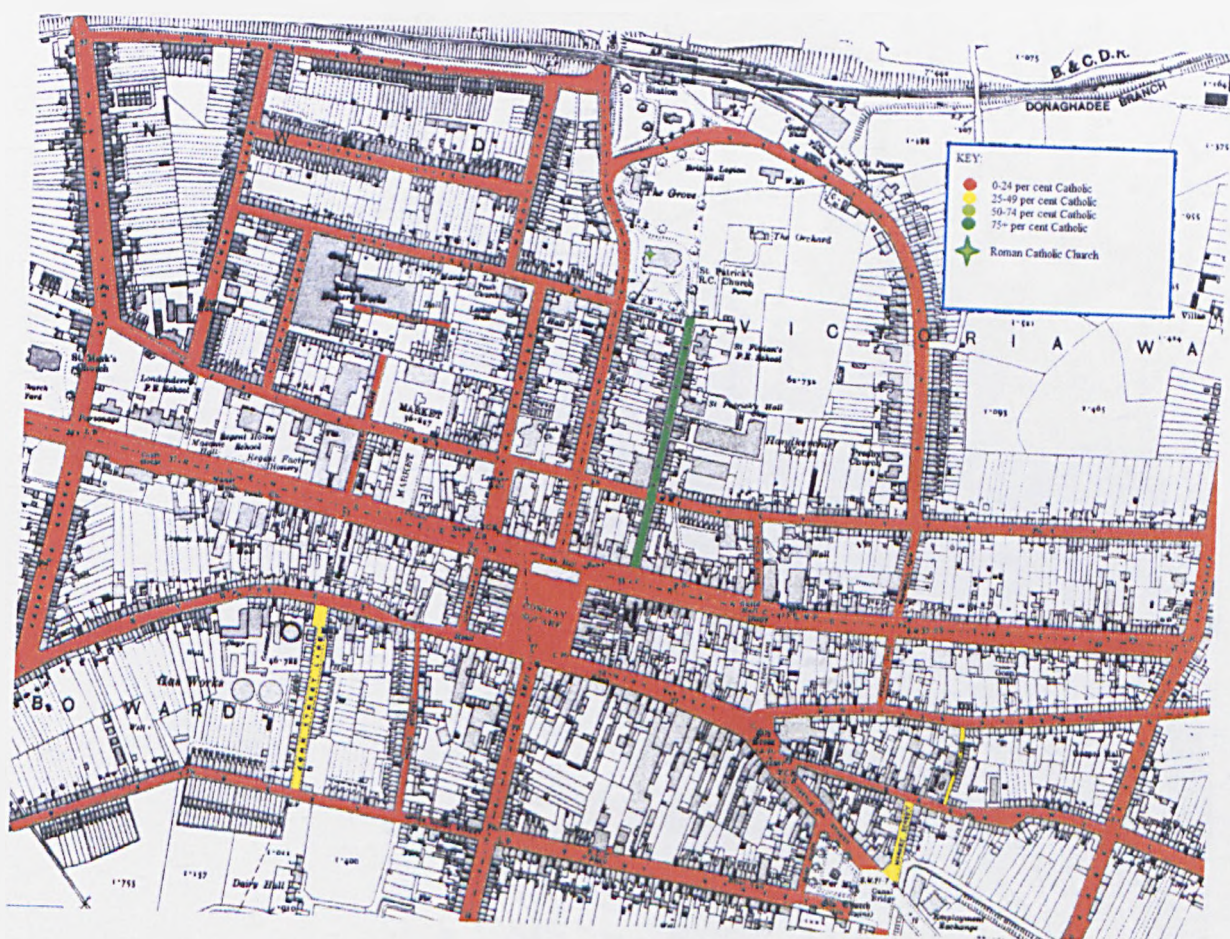
<sup>1</sup> E. Rumpf and A. C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and socialism in twentieth century Ireland*, (Liverpool, 1977), p. 168.





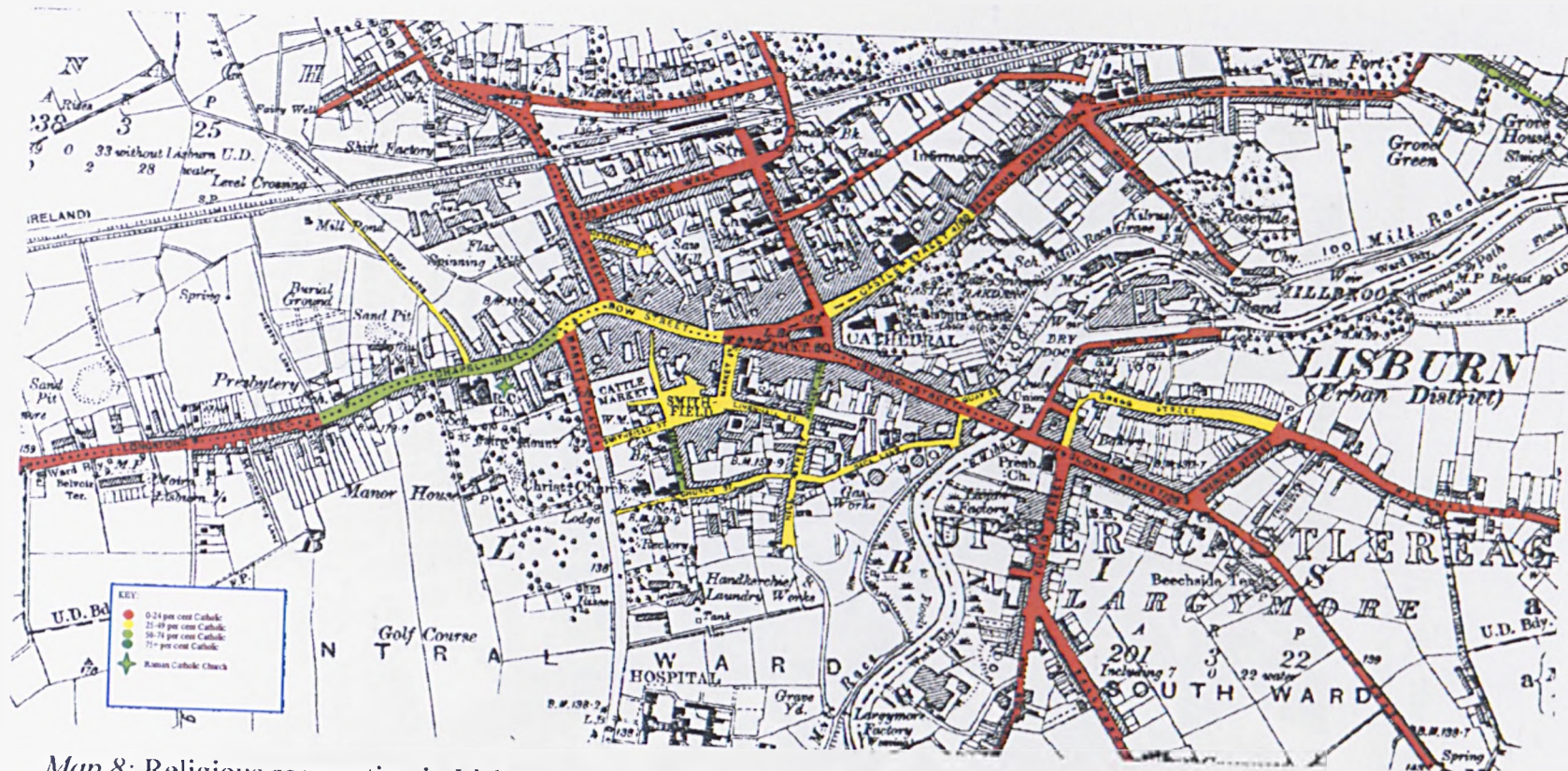
Map 6: Catholic population of Londonderry, 1961<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

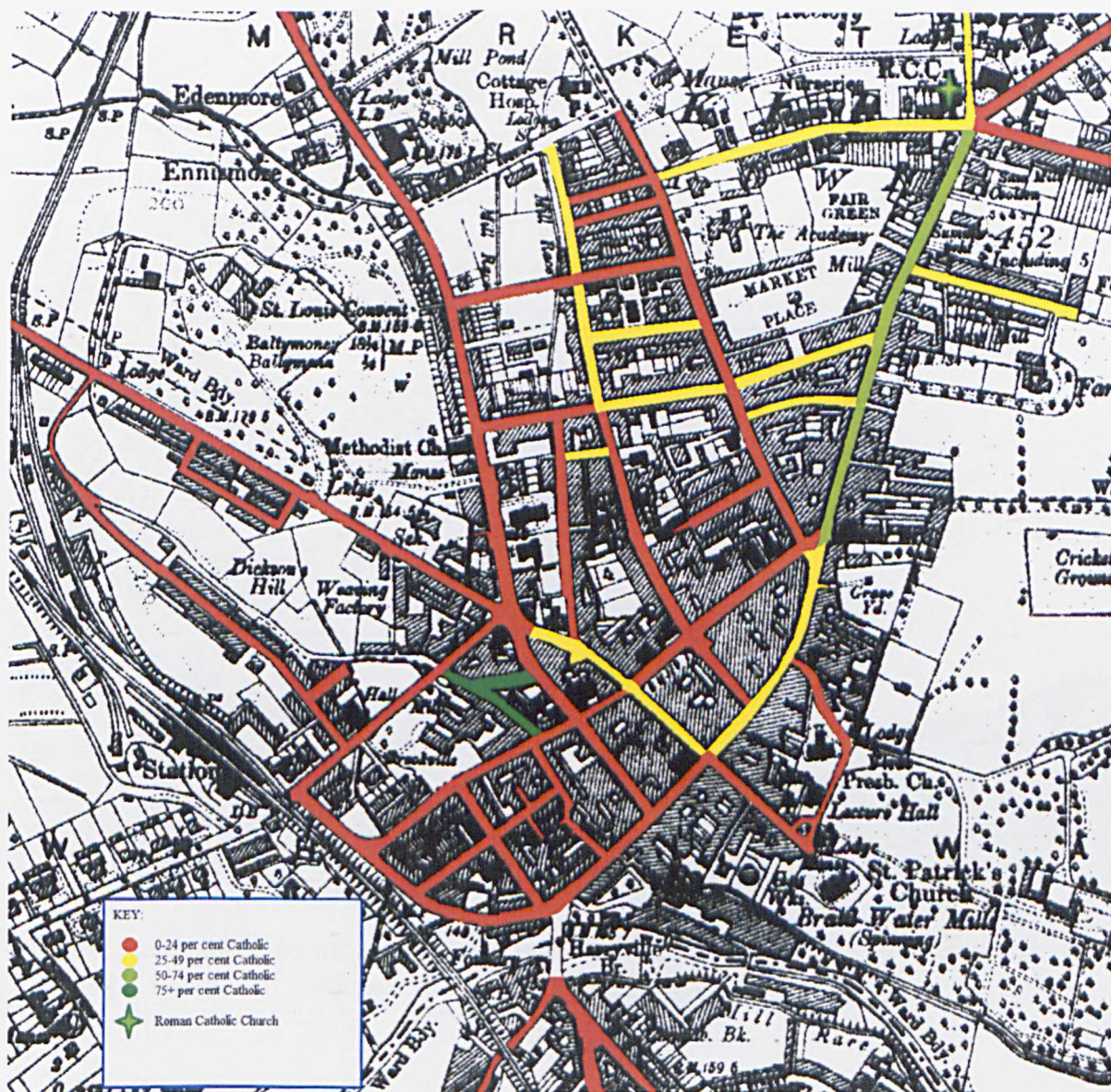


Map 7: Religious segregation in Newtownards, 1911. (Sources: 1911 census of Ireland; P.R.O.N.I., Records of Ordnance Survey, OS/31/2).













*Map 10:* Route taken by military convoy into Cushendall on 23 June 1922. (Sources: P.R.O.N.I, Records of Ordnance Survey, OS/6/1/23/1).

# FIGURES





*Figure 1: Looters in Lisburn, 1920 (courtesy of Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum).*





Figure 2: Map of Cushendall, 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/20/A/2/6).



# APPENDICES

# Appendix A – Changes in Catholic and non-Catholic populations of urban county districts in east Ulster, 1911-26<sup>1</sup>

Urban County District	Total Population				Catholics				Non-Catholics			
	1911	1926	Change	%	1911	1926	Change	%	1911	1926	Change	%
ANTRIM COUNTY	194133	191643	-2490	-1.28%	39751	38619	-1132	-2.85%	154382	153024	-1358	-0.88%
Ballycastle	1969	1986	17	0.86%	947	1135	188	19.85%	1022	851	-171	-16.73%
Ballyclare	3369	3362	-7	-0.21%	344	295	-49	-14.24%	3025	3067	42	1.39%
Ballymena	11381	11873	492	4.32%	2049	2154	105	5.12%	9332	9719	387	4.15%
Ballymoney	3100	3168	68	2.19%	725	723	-2	-0.28%	2375	2445	70	2.95%
Carrickfergus	4608	4749	141	3.06%	672	691	19	2.83%	3936	4058	122	3.10%
Larne	8036	9714	1678	20.88%	1880	2248	368	19.57%	6156	7466	1310	21.28%
Lisburn	12388	12406	18	0.15%	2979	2194	-785	-26.35%	9409	10212	803	8.53%
Portrush	2434	2953	519	21.32%	275	449	174	63.27%	2159	2504	345	15.98%
DOWN COUNTY	204,303	209228	4,925	2.41%	64485	63589	-896	-1.39%	139,818	145639	5821	4.16%
Banbridge	5101	4854	-247	-4.84%	1176	1153	-23	-1.96%	3925	3701	-224	-5.71%
Bangor	7776	13311	5535	71.18%	680	1161	481	70.74%	7096	12150	5054	71.22%
Donaghadee	2213	2534	321	14.51%	105	136	31	29.52%	2108	2398	290	13.76%
Downpatrick	3199	3147	-52	-1.63%	1676	1809	133	7.94%	1523	1338	-185	-12.15%
Dromore	2364	2229	-135	-5.71%	398	282	-116	-29.15%	1966	1947	-19	-0.97%
Holywood	4035	4823	788	19.53%	708	826	118	16.67%	3327	3997	670	20.14%
Newcastle	1765	2119	354	20.06%	720	896	176	24.44%	1045	1223	178	17.03%
Newry	11963	12226	263	2.20%	8924	9468	544	6.10%	3039	2758	-281	-9.25%
Newtownards	9587	10149	562	5.86%	885	830	-55	-6.21%	8702	9319	617	7.09%
Warrenpoint	1938	2232	294	15.17%	1081	1391	310	28.68%	857	841	-16	-1.87%

<sup>1</sup> Information collated from 1911 census of Ireland.

**Appendix B - Demographic spread of religious professions in east Ulster towns, 1911**

**Key:**

**A - Street name**

**B - No. of inhabitants**

**C - No. of Catholics**

**D - Catholics as percentage of inhabitants on street**

**E - Percentage of total Catholic population of town**

<b>Antrim</b>				
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Adair's Entry	10	0	0%	0%
Bridge Street	12	0	0%	0%
Carson's Entry	13	0	0%	0%
Castle Street	320	161	50%	40%
Church Street	356	54	15%	13%
Colman's Entry	9	6	67%	1%
Darragh's Entry	7	0	0%	0%
Fleming's Entry	4	3	75%	1%
Fountain Street	272	12	4%	3%
High Street	387	84	22%	21%
Kiln Entry	15	0	0%	0%
Market Square	65	23	35%	6%
Massareene Street	140	16	11%	4%
Murphy's Entry	4	0	0%	0%
Nutts Entry	1	0	0%	0%
Orr's Entry	10	6	60%	1%
Railway Street	61	4	7%	1%
Riverside Street	420	23	5%	6%
Scott's Entry	2	0	0%	0%
Townparks	71	9	13%	2%
Well's Entry	9	1	11%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2188</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Ballycastle</b>				
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Ann Street	448	191	43%	20%
Broombeg	9	9	100%	1%
Castle Place	21	16	76%	2%
Castle Street	331	171	52%	18%
Clare	42	0	0%	0%
Clare Street	11	8	73%	1%
Davy's Row	17	16	94%	2%
Drumavoley	39	22	56%	2%
Drumawillan	64	2	3%	0%
Fairhill Street	103	56	54%	6%
Glebe	6	0	0%	0%
Gortamaddy/Whitehall	59	40	68%	4%
Harriet's Lane	13	12	92%	1%
Kilcreg	5	0	0%	0%
Mary Street	7	0	0%	0%
McCurdy's Row	23	20	87%	2%
Mill Street	114	69	61%	7%
Mullarts	16	8	50%	1%
New Market Street	49	31	63%	3%
North Street	187	51	27%	5%
Poor Row	62	33	53%	3%
Townparks	244	110	45%	12%
Union Street	61	61	100%	6%
Wilson's Row	33	21	64%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ballyclare				
A	B	C	D	E
Ashley Gardens	32	6	19%	2%
Back Street	464	95	20%	30%
Ballyclare Urban	280	22	8%	7%
Ballyclare	23	1	4%	0%
Ballycor Road	116	19	16%	6%
Ballyeaston Road	234	7	3%	2%
Ballygallagh	255	20	8%	6%
Ballynure Road	306	7	2%	2%
Coronation Terrace	89	9	10%	3%
Doagh Road	163	67	41%	21%
Foundry Lane	65	9	14%	3%
Green Road	343	20	6%	6%
Main Street	105	6	6%	2%
Market Square	162	2	1%	1%
Mill Lane	116	9	8%	3%
Moss Road	260	14	5%	4%
Park Street	6	0	0%	0%
School Street	20	0	0%	0%
Wilson's Row	92	4	4%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3131</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ballymena Town				
A	B	C	D	E
Albert Street	264	18	7%	1%
Alexander Street	215	88	41%	4%
Ballyloughan	9	0	0%	0%
Ballymoney Road	41	2	5%	0%
Ballymoney Street	185	31	17%	2%
Bottom	16	2	13%	0%
Broughshane Road	205	40	20%	2%
Broughshane Street	319	198	62%	10%
Carnarvon Place	4	0	0%	0%
Cushendall Road	308	95	31%	5%
Duke Street	72	25	35%	1%
Flag Hill Lane	42	17	40%	1%
Flag Lane	65	25	38%	1%
Flexton Terrace	53	8	15%	0%
Fountain Place	98	19	19%	1%
Garfield Place	155	2	1%	0%
Greenmount Terrace	57	6	11%	0%
Greenvale Street	177	21	12%	1%
High Street	223	17	8%	1%
Hill Street	164	57	35%	3%
John Street	22	3	14%	0%
Lawn View Place	27	10	37%	0%
Market Road	75	19	25%	1%
Mount Street	184	9	5%	0%
Park Head	161	2	1%	0%
Park Street	95	1	1%	0%
Springwell Street	419	146	35%	7%
Suffolk Street	108	38	35%	2%
Sydney Lane	22	7	32%	0%
Thomas Street	41	7	17%	0%
Townspark	43	3	7%	0%
Warden Street	66	16	24%	1%
William Street	212	88	42%	4%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>4147</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>51%</b>

Ballymena Urban No. 2				
A	B	C	D	E
Brian Street	40	7	18%	0%
Bridge Street	327	62	19%	3%
Bridge Street Place	61	14	23%	1%
Brocklamount Urban	344	44	13%	2%
Castle Street	213	49	23%	2%
Church Street	188	56	30%	3%
Clarence Street	164	14	9%	1%
Clonavon Place North	34	10	29%	0%
Clonavon Place South	22	0	0%	0%
Clonavon Road	143	21	15%	1%
Clonavon Terrace	117	0	0%	0%
Coach Entry	79	44	56%	2%
Cullybackey Road	107	2	2%	0%
Galgorm Road	21	2	10%	0%
Galgorm Street	353	51	14%	3%
George Street	45	2	4%	0%
Gladstone Terrace	36	1	3%	0%
Hope Street	82	9	11%	0%
Hope Street Terrace	11	0	0%	0%
Kinhilt Street	113	9	8%	0%
Kintullagh Terrace	33	0	0%	0%
Linenhall Street	58	1	2%	0%
Meeting House Lane	11	0	0%	0%
Mill Row	37	29	78%	1%
Mill Street	209	64	31%	3%
Mitchell's Entry	14	2	14%	0%
North Street	112	15	13%	1%
Pound Cottages	59	22	37%	1%
Princes Street	265	19	7%	1%
Prospect Place	95	0	0%	0%
Robert Street	43	34	79%	2%
Waveny Road	105	6	6%	0%
Wellington Street	156	21	13%	1%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>3697</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>30%</b>

Ballymena Urban No. 3				
A	B	C	D	E
Adair's Court	25	6	24%	0%
Alfred Street	220	32	15%	2%
Alfred Street Place	40	13	33%	1%
Casement Street	57	5	9%	0%
Castle Gardens	43	16	37%	1%
Douglas Terrace	79	25	32%	1%
Edward Street	79	3	4%	0%
Gilmore Street	44	0	0%	0%
Henry Street	249	59	24%	3%
James Street	227	41	18%	2%
King Street	66	6	9%	0%
Ladysmith Terrace	84	0	0%	0%
Larne Street	391	48	12%	2%
Moat Road	310	24	8%	1%
Paradise Avenue	32	0	0%	0%
Patrick's Place	151	21	14%	1%
Queen's Street	822	28	3%	1%
Railway Street	255	14	5%	1%
Waring Street	128	12	9%	1%
Water Street	59	14	24%	1%
White Row-Ballykeel	38	19	50%	1%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>3399</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>19%</b>
 <b>Ballymena Total</b>	 <b>11243</b>	 <b>2016</b>	 <b>18%</b>	 <b>100%</b>

	Ballymoney			
A	B	C	D	E
Ballybrakes	20	0	0%	0%
Bravallen	9	0	0%	0%
Castle Street	470	206	44%	28%
Charles Street	90	7	8%	1%
Charlotte Street	320	78	24%	11%
Church Lane	39	7	18%	1%
Church Street	104	16	15%	2%
Glebe	15	0	0%	0%
Henry Street	101	21	21%	3%
High Street	117	11	9%	2%
John Street	90	8	9%	1%
Linenhall Street	70	23	33%	3%
Main Street	279	82	29%	11%
Market Street	88	40	45%	6%
Meetinghouse Street	214	52	24%	7%
Millquarter	53	0	0%	0%
Oyone Avenue	16	0	0%	0%
Queen Street	157	11	7%	2%
Rodenfoot Street	109	17	16%	2%
Seymour Street	25	2	8%	0%
Townhead Street	180	60	33%	8%
Townparks	194	40	21%	6%
Union Street	264	24	9%	3%
Victoria Street	76	20	26%	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3100</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>100%</b>

	Banbridge East Urban			
A	B	C	D	E
Ashley Street	49	7	14%	1%
Ballymoney Hill	32	17	53%	1%
Bridge Street	95	5	5%	0%
Brooklane	19	12	63%	1%
Brown's Row	36	22	61%	2%
Castlewellan Row	100	2	2%	0%
Chief's Row	53	10	19%	1%
Church Square	103	39	38%	3%
Church Street	110	18	16%	2%
Downshire Street	5	1	20%	0%
Dromore Street	408	124	30%	11%
Factory View	69	10	14%	1%
Ferguson's Row	74	0	0%	0%
Hill Street	166	54	33%	5%
Hill Street Court	9	9	100%	1%
Lurgan Road	60	8	13%	1%
McCaws Row	28	1	4%	0%
Millmount Road	43	8	19%	1%
Prospect Terrace	57	0	0%	0%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1516</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>30%</b>

<b>Banbridge West Urban</b>				
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Anderson's Street	14	9	64%	1%
Ardery's Court	17	6	35%	1%
Bird Lane	15	13	87%	1%
Bridge Street	175	29	17%	3%
Checker Hill	53	19	36%	2%
Commercial Road	105	43	41%	4%
Downshrine Place	46	21	46%	2%
East View Terrace	26	0	0%	0%
Edenderry Road	26	4	15%	0%
Edenderry Terrace	46	17	37%	1%
Fort Street	58	29	50%	3%
Friars Lane	55	29	53%	3%
Friars Place	69	7	10%	1%
George's Row	21	2	10%	0%
Gospel Lane	10	6	60%	1%
Green Row	43	0	0%	0%
Kenlis Court	62	0	0%	0%
Linen Hall Street	50	6	12%	1%
Linns Street	45	0	0%	0%
Meeting House Road	23	3	13%	0%
Mountain View Terrace	27	0	0%	0%
Mourne Terrace	27	8	30%	1%
Newry Road	123	6	5%	1%
Newry Street	441	124	28%	11%
Poplar Row	39	25	64%	2%
Pound Street	61	9	15%	1%
Railway Street	215	44	20%	4%
Rathfriland Street	320	90	28%	8%
Riverview Terrace	42	1	2%	0%
Rully Street	382	43	11%	4%

Scarva Road	38	12	32%	1%
Scarva Street	366	120	33%	10%
The Workhouse	189	67	35%	6%
Victoria Street	90	20	22%	2%
Workhouse Road	20	0	0%	0%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>3339</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Banbridge total</b>	<b>4855</b>	<b>1159</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Bangor				
A	B	C	D	E
Abbey Street	237	23	10%	3%
Albert Street	154	11	7%	2%
Alfred Street	105	2	2%	0%
Balloo Lower	73	0	0%	0%
Balloo Upper	141	0	0%	0%
Ballycroghan	55	0	0%	0%
Ballyfotherly	140	0	0%	0%
Ballygilbert	55	2	4%	0%
Ballygrainey	110	0	0%	0%
Ballygrot	412	20	5%	3%
Ballyholme	128	2	2%	0%
Ballyholme Road	207	23	11%	3%
Ballyholmerd	104	3	3%	0%
Ballykillane	185	27	15%	4%
Ballyleidy	57	3	5%	0%
Ballymacconnell	140	0	0%	0%
Ballymacormick	89	12	13%	2%
Ballymagee	66	0	0%	0%
Ballymagee Street	222	14	6%	2%
Ballyminetragh	91	1	1%	0%
Ballymullan	176	12	7%	2%
Ballyree	62	0	0%	0%
Ballysallagh Major	80	2	3%	0%
Ballysallagh Minor	64	5	8%	1%
Ballyvarnet	103	18	17%	2%
Beatrice Road	160	5	3%	1%
Belfast Road	18	1	6%	0%
Bingham Street	99	2	2%	0%
Bridge Street	25	9	36%	1%
Broadway Street	46	4	9%	1%
Brunswick Road	92	31	34%	4%
Bryansburn	138	14	10%	2%
Bryansburn Road	89	15	17%	2%
Carnlea	55	3	5%	0%
Castle Square	220	0	0%	0%

Castle Street	209	31	15%	4%
Central Avenue	80	7	9%	1%
Church Street	300	21	7%	3%
Clifton Street	174	17	10%	2%
College Avenue	19	0	0%	0%
Conlig	77	0	0%	0%
Conlig Town	239	1	0%	0%
Copeland Island	25	0	0%	0%
Corporation	117	3	3%	0%
Cotton	289	6	2%	1%
Crawfordsburn Town	89	6	7%	1%
Croft Street	28	5	18%	1%
Crosby Street	97	9	9%	1%
Donaghodee Road	143	2	1%	0%
Downshire Road	154	5	3%	1%
Dufferin Avenue	245	32	13%	4%
Farnham Park	95	3	3%	0%
Farnham Road	88	6	7%	1%
Godfrey Avenue	6	0	0%	0%
Gransha	191	13	7%	2%
Gray's Hill	79	7	9%	1%
Gray's Hill	96	4	4%	1%
Groomsport	22	1	5%	0%
Groomsport Road	51	6	12%	1%
Groomsport Town	239	0	0%	0%
Hamilton Road	229	15	7%	2%
Holborn Avenue	225	14	6%	2%
King Place	10	0	0%	0%
King Street	173	44	25%	6%
Lorelei Street	15	6	40%	1%
Main Street	90	2	2%	0%
Manse Road	35	0	0%	0%
Maxwell Road	50	8	16%	1%
May Avenue	46	1	2%	0%
May Street	28	5	18%	1%
Mew Island	4	3	75%	0%
Mill Row	3	0	0%	0%



Mount Pleasant Street	26	2	8%	0%
Mount Royal Street	14	4	29%	1%
New Munster Terrace	5	1	20%	0%
New Street	71	5	7%	1%
Orlock	25	0	0%	0%
Orrisbrook Terrace	50	0	0%	0%
Park Lane	12	0	0%	0%
Pickie Terrace	22	2	9%	0%
Portavoe	81	2	2%	0%
Primrose Street	9	5	56%	1%
Princetown Avenue	33	1	3%	0%
Princetown Road	363	32	9%	4%
Princetown Terrace	4	0	0%	0%
Prospect Road	123	8	7%	1%
Queen's Parade	115	7	6%	1%
Queens Parade	57	3	5%	0%
Raglan Road	34	2	6%	0%
Railway View Street	148	18	12%	2%
Rangurly Avenue	32	3	9%	0%
Rathgill	59	0	0%	0%
Ruby Street	38	0	0%	0%
Seacliffe Road	249	30	12%	4%
Seaforth Road	15	0	0%	0%
Shardon Drive	21	6	29%	1%
Sheridan Drive	22	2	9%	0%
Somerset Avenue	57	3	5%	0%
Southwell Road	156	7	4%	1%
Springfield Avenue	41	0	0%	0%
Springfield Road	47	0	0%	0%
Tennyson Avenue	53	8	15%	1%
The Vennel	39	6	15%	1%
Victoria	297	23	8%	3%
Ward Avenue	43	2	5%	0%
Waverly Drive	38	1	3%	0%
Windson Avenue	34	0	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10691</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

	Crossgar			
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Ballyaglan	107	2	2%	0%
Ballygoskin	89	1	1%	0%
Ballywillan	117	6	5%	1%
Cluntagh	154	47	31%	7%
Crossgar	90	51	57%	7%
Derryboy	197	15	8%	2%
Downpatrick Street	158	117	74%	16%
Dree	111	89	80%	13%
Drin	86	81	94%	11%
John Street	40	9	23%	1%
Killinchy/Woods Street	143	5	3%	1%
Killyleagh Street	236	24	10%	3%
Lisinaw	40	4	10%	1%
Lisnamore	45	25	56%	4%
Lissara	31	11	35%	2%
Market Square	44	13	30%	2%
Market Street	7	5	71%	1%
Mary Street	14	3	21%	0%
Moneybane	248	203	82%	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Downpatrick				
A	B	C	D	E
Bridge Street	246	105	43%	6%
Church Street	148	49	33%	3%
Circular Road	164	104	63%	6%
English Street	215	36	17%	2%
Fountain Street	195	130	67%	8%
Inish Street	511	287	56%	17%
John Street	353	324	92%	19%
Market Street	145	94	65%	6%
Mary Street	66	55	83%	3%
New Bridge Street	174	16	9%	1%
Pound Lane	95	44	46%	3%
Saul Street	437	182	42%	11%
Scotch Street	329	148	45%	9%
Steam Street	121	92	76%	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3199</b>	<b>1666</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Lisburn				
A	B	C	D	E
Alma	5	0	0%	0%
Antrim Place	131	34	26%	1%
Antrim Road	145	14	10%	0%
Antrim Street	271	42	15%	1%
Ashleaf Place	29	2	7%	0%
Ava	25	7	28%	0%
Bachelors Walk	351	36	10%	1%
Back Lane	128	50	39%	2%
Ball Alley Lane	49	22	45%	1%
Ballinahinch Road	317	13	4%	0%
Ballinderry Road Old	1	0	0%	0%
Ballymullen	5	0	0%	0%
Barnsley's Row	113	47	42%	2%
Barrack Lane	15	3	20%	0%
Barrack Street	117	68	58%	2%
Barrack Yard	5	3	60%	0%
Basin Lane	3	0	0%	0%
Beechside Terrace	39	4	10%	0%
Belfast Road	32	0	0%	0%
Belsize Road	38	3	8%	0%
Benson Street	149	37	25%	1%
Bow Street	189	68	36%	2%
Bradburys Court	64	4	6%	0%
Bradburys Row	24	1	4%	0%
Bridge Street	314	69	22%	2%
Bullick's Court	7	3	43%	0%
Bullick's Square	60	45	75%	2%
Canal	273	66	24%	2%
Castle Street	256	96	38%	3%
Chapel Hill	328	193	59%	7%
Church Street	259	86	33%	3%
Circular Road North	108	1	1%	0%
Clonevin Park	85	3	4%	0%
Cromwell's Highway	33	10	30%	0%
Dublin Road	352	94	27%	3%

East Down View	75	45	60%	2%
Edgar's Entry	12	0	0%	0%
Edgars Lane	1	1	100%	0%
Farymount Square	21	21	100%	1%
Fort Street	76	2	3%	0%
Graham's Gardens	3	0	0%	0%
Grahams	61	0	0%	0%
Graham's Place	19	0	0%	0%
Grand Street	110	73	66%	3%
Gregg	512	180	35%	6%
Grove Street	175	126	72%	4%
Hancock	21	3	14%	0%
Haslem's Lane	93	26	28%	1%
Hill Street	328	113	34%	4%
Hillhall Road	327	33	10%	1%
Hutchinson Entry	15	0	0%	0%
Ivan Street	43	0	0%	0%
James Street	17	0	0%	0%
Johnston's Entry	4	3	75%	0%
Kennedy's Mill Yard	3	1	33%	0%
Knockmore	7	0	0%	0%
Largymore	63	5	8%	0%
Leamington	99	71	72%	3%
Linenhall Street	92	27	29%	1%
Lismagarvery	79	3	4%	0%
Llewellyn Avenue	144	37	26%	1%
Longstone Lane	12	1	8%	0%
Longstone Street	861	154	18%	5%
Low Road	137	12	9%	0%
Lyness	14	11	79%	0%
Mack's Alley	8	1	13%	0%
Mack's Court	19	11	58%	0%
Magheralave Road	193	14	7%	0%
Manor Street	23	2	9%	0%

Market Lane	111	77	69%	3%
Market Place	91	19	21%	1%
Market Square	90	18	20%	1%
Market Street	79	25	32%	1%
McCall's Court	8	8	100%	0%
McCartney's Entry	6	4	67%	0%
McKeown Street	144	69	48%	2%
Mercer	294	6	2%	0%
Mill View	50	25	50%	1%
Millbrook Road	262	2	1%	0%
New	16	0	0%	0%
Old Hillsborough Road	256	41	16%	1%
Oldwarren	48	4	8%	0%
Park Parade Villas	28	3	11%	0%
Phillip's Court	19	10	53%	0%
Pump Lane	115	55	48%	2%
Quay	39	16	41%	1%
Railway Street	203	50	25%	2%
Saintfield Road	41	3	7%	0%
Sandy Lane Old	6	0	0%	0%
Seeds Entry	3	1	33%	0%
Seymour	260	23	9%	1%
Sloan	321	18	6%	1%
Smithfield	164	72	44%	3%
Spruce	27	27	100%	1%
Stannus Place	27	12	44%	0%
Stewarts Court	28	17	61%	1%
Tanyard Lane	44	20	45%	1%
The Island	13	1	8%	0%
Tonagh	33	8	24%	0%
Tower Side Terrace	18	0	0%	0%
Victoria Crescent	73	0	0%	0%
Wallace Avenue	73	7	10%	0%
Wards Court	7	2	29%	0%
Well Lane	48	16	33%	1%

Wesley	245	21	9%	1%
Wesley Terrace	47	5	11%	0%
Westbourne Terrace	75	6	8%	0%
Wilson	117	10	9%	0%
Young Street	301	9	3%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11817</b>	<b>2810</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Newtownards North</b>				
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Ballyalcock	49	8	16%	1%
Ballyharry	51	0	0%	0%
Ballyhenny	30	0	0%	0%
Ballyreagh	52	1	2%	0%
Ballywatticock	145	1	1%	0%
Bootown	35	0	0%	0%
Corportation North	35	0	0%	0%
Cronstown	37	8	22%	1%
Drumhirk	136	0	0%	0%
Greystown	26	0	0%	0%
Loughriscouse	271	2	1%	0%
Movilla	74	4	5%	1%
Whitespots	172	3	2%	0%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1113</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4%</b>

<b>Newtownards South</b>				
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Ballyalton	38	0	0%	0%
Ballybarnes	23	0	0%	0%
Ballycullen	61	2	3%	0%
Ballymagreehan	23	0	0%	0%
Ballymoney	35	2	6%	0%
Ballyrogan	66	1	2%	0%
Ballyskeagh High	91	0	0%	0%
Ballykeagh Low	43	1	2%	0%
Commons	2	0	0%	0%
Corporation South	61	2	3%	0%
Craigogantlet	75	1	1%	0%
Greengraves	157	2	1%	0%
Killarn	84	3	4%	0%
Milecross	69	4	6%	1%
Scrabo	49	0	0%	0%
Tullynagardy	44	2	5%	0%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>

# Newtownards Urban

A	B	C	D	E
Ann Street	87	65	75%	10%
Back Shuttlefield	21	5	24%	1%
Balfour Street	318	30	9%	4%
Bangor Road	55	1	2%	0%
Brewery Lane	8	0	0%	0%
Browns Lane	9	5	56%	1%
Canal Row	36	0	0%	0%
Castle Place	14	2	14%	0%
Castle Street	29	5	17%	1%
Church Street	522	57	11%	8%
Church Terrace	31	9	29%	1%
Circular Street	84	0	0%	0%
Conway Square	65	11	17%	2%
Court Square	32	6	19%	1%
Court Street	99	3	3%	0%
Curry's Quarter Street	25	0	0%	0%
Darrah's Lane	15	1	7%	0%
Donaghadee Road	90	0	0%	0%
East Street	89	14	16%	2%
Ford Street	55	2	4%	0%
Francis	124	10	8%	1%
Francis Street	41	0	0%	0%
Francis Street Little	102	2	2%	0%
Frederick Street	242	11	5%	2%
Front Shuttlefield St	106	3	3%	0%
George's Street	99	0	0%	0%
Gibson's Lane	13	0	0%	0%
Glen Road	29	0	0%	0%
Glenford Place	20	0	0%	0%
Greenwell Lane	13	0	0%	0%
Greenwell Street	651	43	7%	6%
Half Acre Lane	11	0	0%	0%
High	122	12	10%	2%
James' Street	242	23	10%	3%

John Street	197	14	7%	2%
John Street Lane	48	12	25%	2%
Kennell Lane	8	1	13%	0%
Lower Mary Street	38	4	11%	1%
Lower Pound Street	13	1	8%	0%
Mark Street	328	41	13%	6%
Market Street	36	12	33%	2%
Marquis Street	86	7	8%	1%
Mary Street	70	12	17%	2%
Mary Street Lane	26	3	12%	0%
Mary Street Place	16	0	0%	0%
McCormick's Court	5	2	40%	0%
Meeting House Lane	3	0	0%	0%
Mill Street	93	0	0%	0%
Movilla Street	431	41	12%	6%
North Street	31	0	0%	0%
Pound Street	139	7	5%	1%
Price's Lane	12	0	0%	0%
Queen Street	81	0	0%	0%
Regent Street	70	1	1%	0%
Russell Place	18	4	22%	1%
Shore Road	85	16	19%	2%
Shuttle Row	20	4	20%	1%
South Street	125	10	8%	1%
Talbot Street	51	7	14%	1%
Thomas Street	103	15	15%	2%
Union Lane	15	0	0%	0%
Upper Court Street	21	0	0%	0%
Upper Movilla Street	120	0	0%	0%
Victoria Avenue	249	23	9%	3%
Wallace Street No. 1	108	3	3%	0%
Wallace Street No. 2	223	1	0%	0%
West Street	61	9	15%	1%
William Street	377	38	10%	6%
William Street Place	17	0	0%	0%

Windmill Row	72	12	17%	2%
Zion Place	52	7	13%	1%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>6947</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>93%</b>

<b>Newtownards Total</b>	<b>8981</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>100%</b>
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## Appendix C – Religious affiliations of residents of Bow Street, Lisburn 1911

House Number	Family Name	Catholics	Protestants	Other information
1&3				Shop
5				Shop
7				Shop
9	Reid	4		
11				Public House
13				Public House
15	Lavery	2		
17	Campbell		3	Public House
19				Public House
21				Shop
23	Hennon	8		Public House
25				Shop
27				Shop
29	Johnston	5		
31				Shop
33				Shop
35				Shop
37	Monteith		4	
39	O'Shea	7		
41				Shop
43				Shop
45	Hinds	1	4	Catholic servant
47				Shop
49				Public House
51	Nevin	2		
53	Wallace		3	
55	Rooney	3		
57	Mayes		7	
59	John G Ferguson	3	2	Catholics were boarders
61				Shop
63				Shop
65&67	Rodger	1	6	Shop; Catholic and Protestant servant
69&71				Shop
73				Shop
75	Crossey	4		
77	Jackson	1	2	Catholic servant
79				Shop
81				Shop
83	Patterson		4	
85				Shop

House Number	Family Name	Catholics	Protestants	Other information
2				Shop
4	Hagan		1	7 'Christians'
6				Shop
8	Adair	8		
10				Shop
12				Shop
14				Shop
16				Shop
18				Ulster Bank
20	Wilson		9	Public House
22	Bukett		2	
24				Shop
26	Thompson		1	
28				Offices
30	Ruddy	1	3	Catholic servant
32				Shop
34				Building
36	Rice	5		
38	Rice	4		
40	McBride		5	
42.1	McVeigh	2	1	
42.2&44	Anderson	1	2	Catholic servant
46	Watterson		4	
48				Shop
50				Public House
52	Coulter		9	
54&56	Johnston		3	
58	Dowey	7		
60	Bailey		7	
62				Shop
64	Black		2	
66				Shop
68	Russell		5	
70	Thompson		12	
72	Creighton		5	

*Note:* The Housing and Building Return (Form B) of the 1911 census recorded houses in the order above. It is assumed that house numbers were arranged with odd numbers and even numbers running along opposite sides of the street.



## **Appendix D – I.R.A. activity per half-year period in east Ulster, 1920-22**

Major incidents include all those that involved ambushes, attacks on occupied police barracks, assassinations, gun battles with police or special constables and attacks on country houses.

Minor incidents include attacks on unoccupied police barracks, arms raids, mail raids, activity involved in imposing the economic boycott, republican police activity, personal assault, threats, burning of government buildings, destruction of railways or railway stations and destruction of bridges.

Numerous cases of cutting telegraph wires are not included in either category as no reliable figures could be obtained.

Sources: R.I.C. county inspector and inspector-general reports, 1920-1921, (T.N.A., Colonial Office papers, CO 904/111-116); bi-monthly police reports, (P.R.O.N.I., Ministry of Home Affairs files, HA/5/152); *Dromore Leader*, *Newtownards Chronicle*, *Ballymena Observer* and *Lisburn Standard*, 1920-22.

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WS 410	Statement of Thomas McNally
WS 609	Statement of Felim MacGuill
WS 746	Statement of Sean Culhane
WS 762	Statement of Liam McMullan
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HA/5/219	Return of persons killed or wounded
HA/5/222	Files relating to outrages (Antrim)
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HA/5/264	File relating to attempted murder of Francis O'Reilly, Sept. 1922
HA/5/293	Seizure of arms and ammunition
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