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The Gatekeeper: A Biography of Liam Tobin



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Introduction

Liam Tobin was an intelligence officer, a Major General, one of Michael Collins' most trusted lieutenants, and later a mutineer. He is both a controversial and fascinating figure. Yet he has not received adequate attention in the historiography for his contribution to the Irish Revolution, and therefore the rationale of this thesis to examine the numerous roles that he played from 1916 to 1924. Part of the reason for this lack of focus on Tobin is because he largely remained silent about his activities during this period, particularly with regards to the War of Independence and the Civil War. In recent years a greater interest has developed regarding the countless people involved at all levels with IRA Intelligence, and as such an in depth examination of Liam Tobin, Deputy Director of Intelligence, is necessary in order to understand how this system operated.

Additionally, his involvement in the Army Mutiny of 1924 requires considerable analysis, as studies on this crisis have had a tendency to focus on the perspectives of Richard Mulcahy and the Free State government. Arguably, two of the most important primary documents available on the mutiny have been neglected in the narrative thus far. The first is the pamphlet published by Tobin and his group, the IRA Organisation (IRAO), entitled *The Truth About The Army Crisis*.[1] The second is *A Brief History of Events,* (accessible through the military pension file of Volunteer and mutineer Patrick O'Connell) another document compiled by the IRAO, both of which outline the timeline of events leading up to the mutiny from their perspective.[2] Despite the seriousness of their actions in mutinying against the Army and the government, much of the complexities of the lead up to the crisis in March 1924 have been dismissed or overlooked. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand that the mutiny was not a spontaneous event, and the gradual build up of tension between the IRAO, the Army and the government is important to the historiography of the tumultuous early years of the Irish state.

His role in the Civil War also requires further study. While he may not have been directly linked with the more shocking aspects of the fighting, he would be made a Major General and continued to work with army intelligence. Because of this he is often associated with the atrocities that were inflicted on anti-Treaty prisoners and supporters. From this point of view, he is an interesting character in his own right, given that he later made a switch after the mutiny to

[1] Liam Tobin and Irish Republican Army Organisation, *The Truth about the Army Crisis (official): With a foreword by Major-General Liam Tobin*, Issued by the Irish Republican Army Organization 78A Summerhill, Dublin, 1924.
[2] IE-MA-W24SP1606 Patrick O'Connell, p. 44

join Fianna Fáil in 1926. He would also go on to have productive relationships with many prominent anti-Treaty republicans in later life.

Therefore, there is a multi-dimensional side to Tobin that has not fully been probed by historians up until this point. Tobin remains something of an enigma, however, as he does not fit into any proscribed categorisation often seen in narratives surrounding the period, especially regarding the Civil War and the tendency to refer to individuals as either pro or anti-Treaty supporters. Indeed many significant works completed by both historians and contemporaries make no reference to him. This includes Ernie O'Malley's *On Another Man's Wound,* Dorothy MacArdle's *The Irish Republic*, *A Nation Not A Rabble* by Diarmuid Ferriter, William Sheehan's *British Voices: From The Irish War of Independence 1918 - 1921*, *Dublin Castle and the Anglo-Irish War* by Eamonn. T. Gardiner, Paul MacMahon's *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, *The Munster Republic* by Michael Harrington, John Gibney's *The Irish War of Independence and Civil War*, nor was he mentioned in any of the articles recently published in *Ireland 1922: Independence, Partition, Civil War,* edited by Darragh Gannon and Fearghal McGarry.[3]

It would be inaccurate to say that the historiography around the Irish Revolution has ignored the contributions of Liam Tobin completely, as he is frequently mentioned in many of the secondary studies covering this period. Nevertheless, these references have tended to be brief, providing a summary of his role as Deputy Director of Intelligence, or at times merely acknowledging that he held this role. For example, a brief description is included in Padraic O'Farrell's *Who's Who in the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War.*[4] This is most often the case with studies where the main focus is Michael Collins, and unsurprisingly most of the analysis is fixated on him, with on average six to ten references to Tobin in passing. However, Tim Pat Coogan devotes quite a lot of time to Tobin in his 1990 work *Michael Collins: A Biography*, and also in his later book *The Twelve Apostles*. In both studies Coogan has discussed

[3] Diarmuid Ferriter, *A Nation Not A Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923*, (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2015); Eamonn. T. Gardiner, *Dublin Castle and the Anglo-Irish War: Counter Insurgency and Conflict*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); John Gibney, *The Irish War of Independence and Civil War,* (United Kingdom: Pen & Sword History, 2020); Michael Harrington, *The Munster Republic: The Civil War in North Cork*, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2005); Darragh Gannon and Fearghal McGarry, ed., *Ireland 1922: Independence, Partition, Civil War,* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2022); Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic,* 3rd Ed, (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1999); Paul MacMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels: British Intelligence and Ireland 1916 - 1945*, (United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 2011); Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, 3rd Ed,(United States: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1999); William Sheehan, *British Voices: From The Irish War of Independence 1918 - 1921: The Words of British Servicemen in Ireland 1918-1921,* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2007)

[4] Padraic O'Farrell, *Who's Who in the Irish War of Independence and Civil War, 1916-1923*, (Dublin: Lilliputt Press, 1997), p. 218

Tobin quite fairly, mainly referring to his involvement in intelligence and his role as a bodyguard during the Treaty negotiations.[5]

Other secondary sources have focused on the intelligence war in Dublin from 1919 to 1921 more specifically, and as such they dedicate more time to Tobin and his contributions. In particular, Dominic Price's book *We Bled Together,* and Michael Foy's *Michael Collins: The Intelligence War*, go into significant detail on Tobin's duties as Deputy Director, and both place emphasis on the importance of the role he played in running the intelligence office in Collins' absence.[6] T. Ryle Dwyer has also referenced Tobin in several of his works. In *Michael Collins: The Man Who Won the War,* he refers to Tobin being left in charge of the office on Crow Street, and mentions him several times in relation to intelligence.[7] In his 2005 study *The Squad,* however, he put greater emphasis on Tobin's role and the hierarchy in which the office operated under him.[8] Two recent studies in particular that have made extensive use of the primary material available in the Military Archives are *Someone Has To Die For This*, and *Killing At Its Very Extreme* by Darren Kelly and Derek Molyneux, and both constantly refer to the statements of intelligence officers and Squad men working with Tobin.[9]

One significant issue with Tobin's place in the historiography is that studies tend to focus on his work with intelligence alone. Many studies of the Civil War also downplay Tobin in deference to Michael Collins. When he is discussed at any length outside of the scope of intelligence it is normally in connection with Oriel House and its reputation for its treatment of anti-Treaty prisoners. There has been little attention given to his time spent in Cork in August 1922, or any reference to his contempory's remarks about him during this period. For example, Sean Enright in his work *The Irish Civil War* only mentions Tobin once.[10] Meanwhile Eunan O'Halpin accuses Tobin of being involved in some of the worst atrocities of the Civil War but

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[5] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: A Biography,* (Dublin: Arrow Publishing, 2015); Tim Pat Coogan, *The Twelve Apostles*, (United Kingdom: Head of Zeus, 2017)
[6] Dominic Price, *We Bled Together: Michael Collins, The Squad and the Dublin Brigade*, (Cork: The Collins Press, 2017); Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War: The Struggle Between the British and the IRA 1919-1921*, (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2008)
[7] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: The Man Who Won The War*, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1985)
[8] T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad: And the Intelligence Operations of Michael Collins,* (Dublin: The Mercier Press Ltd, 2005)
[9] Derek Molyneux and Darren Kelly, *Someone Has To Die For This: Dublin November 1920 - July 1921*, (Dublin: The Mercier Press Ltd, 2021); Derek Molyneux and Darren Kelly, *Killing at its Very Extreme: Dublin October 1917 - November 1920,* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2020)
[10] Sean Enright, *The Irish Civil War*, (Dublin: Merrion Press, 2019)

did not provide any further details.[11] Likewise, it has been long suspected that Tobin was involved to some degree in the shooting of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson in June 1922. However, studies of the assassination downplay his role. Ronan McGreevy's recent study *Great Hatred* does go into considerable detail on his potential involvement.[12] On the other hand, Keith Jeffrey's study, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* never mentions Tobin, and Rex Taylor's 1961 account *Assassination* referred to him only once.[13]

This is also problematic when it comes to addressing the mutiny of 1924. Studies that focus on the early years of the Irish Free State often reference the mutiny, although they do not go beyond describing it as a conflict between Tobin and the IRA Organisation, and Army GHQ. There has been a tendency in the mutiny literature to overlook the failings of other key figures in the months leading up to the mutiny, including Richard Mulcahy, Kevin O'Higgins and William Cosgrave. In addition, only a handful of sources describe the gradual build up of tensions between the sides from late 1922 to March 1924. This includes Maryann Gialanella Valiulis' 1985 thesis *An Almost Rebellion*, Pádraig Ó Caoimh's recent work *Richard Mulcahy: From the Politics of War to the Politics of Peace*, and Eunan O'Halpin's *Defending Ireland* published in 1999. This has resulted in quite a narrow view of the mutiny's origins, and as such Tobin and the mutineers receive primary blame for quite a complicated event in the early years of the state.

Despite his low profile in the secondary literature, however, Tobin's contemporaries mention him more frequently in their own accounts of the period. Associates such as Piaras Béaslaí (a long time friend), Siobhan Lankford from Cork, and David Neligan (a former spy for Collins in Dublin Castle) mentioned Tobin throughout their respective books.[14] Lankford in particular emphasised the importance of Tobin's role in the intelligence war, and pointed out that he never sought publicity in later years.[15]

With regards to primary material, this thesis has made extensive use of the Military Archives in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin. These archives house an abundance of readily available primary material on Tobin. The witness statements were collected by the Bureau of

[11] Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 53
[12] Ronan McGreevy, *Great Hatred: The Assassination of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson MP*, (United Kingdom: Faber & Faber, 2022), p. 382
[13] Keith Jeffrey*, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*: A Political Soldier, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2006); Rex Taylor, *Assassination: The Death of Sir Henry Wilson*, (United Kingdom: Hutchinson, 1961), p. 127
[14] Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, Volume II, (London: George. G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1926); David Neligan, T*he Spy In The Castle*, 2nd Ed, (United Kingdom: Prendeville Publishing, 1999)
[15] Siobhan Lankford, *The Hope and the Sadness*, (United States of America: Tower Books, 1980), p. 127

Military History from the 1940's - 1950's, and are referenced in many studies on the Revolution. Despite access to the statements online, they have not been compiled on Tobin in order to get an idea of how the intelligence office functioned or his daily duties as Deputy Director, and Tobin's own statement only referred to his participation in the Easter Rising, and omits mention of any activities to do with intelligence, the Civil War or the mutiny.[16]

The statements provided by former Squad and intelligence staff members, however, help to piece together a picture of Crow Street's daily operations and convey a very clear hierarchy in the office with Tobin at the top. The Military Archives also house The Collins Papers collection, and the Military Pension Files. They provide a deeper insight into the number of people that were working with Tobin in the War of Independence and the Civil War. The Collins Papers, especially show the manner in which information was collected by intelligence officers, and again the structure of the department becomes clear from the correspondence between Tobin and the officers working under him.

Tobin is also seen as a less dynamic character in comparison to someone like Michael Collins. Private material from Tobin's family, however, sheds a different perspective of him and his personality. Letters between Tobin and his mother from his time in prison after the Rising, and during his time in Cork in 1922, portray a more personable side to his character which has never been seen before, and this insight into his personal feelings on events helps the reader to better understand his activities during the Revolution. Due to his role as an intelligence officer, there will always be an element of mystery around Tobin, and his activities, especially when it comes to the Civil War and afterwards. This private material provided by family members, therefore, is critical when completing any analysis of his role in the Revolution, as it allows the reader to see Tobin's gradual development from a rank-and-file Volunteer in the Easter Rising, to the seasoned intelligence officer who was forced to confront the mental strain that the fighting had put on him. This thesis has also been substantially enhanced because of the generosity of Brian Hand, Tobin's grandson, who consented to be interviewed on the more personal aspects of his grandfather's time throughout the Revolution.

Additionally, the Mulcahy Papers in the UCD Archives are highly valuable sources when examining what Tobin was doing during the Civil War, as they contain memos and

[16] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin

correspondence directed to and from him in 1922. At this time he was very much still fixated on running the intelligence department, then operating out of Oriel House on Westland Road.

The purpose of this thesis is to convey the significance of the multiple roles that Liam Tobin played in the Irish Revolution, whether they be admirable or controversial. The structure is composed of five parts that are further divided into nine chapters, with each focusing on the key periods of his life; the Easter Rising, the War of Independence, the Civil War, the Army Mutiny, and his later years after the Revolution.

The first part of this thesis is the shortest as it only contains chapter one, and it looks at Tobin's early years and the political influences within his family. It focuses on his participation in the Easter Rising as a low-ranking Volunteer, and his subsequent imprisonment in England. It questions what were his early influences for joining the Volunteers? Specifically, this first chapter conveys the personal feelings of Tobin as a young Volunteer, and letters written by him from prison also give an indication as to the contacts that he was beginning to make. Additionally, these letters are extremely valuable as sources as they offer a more personal side to the intelligence officer that would be formed later on.

Part two is composed of three chapters, and as it examines Tobin's role as Deputy Director of Intelligence, it is the largest section in the thesis. While it was Michael Collins who was overseeing the operation as Director, Tobin as his Deputy was the one running the main intelligence office at 3 Crow Street. On a daily basis it was more common for Collins to communicate with the wider battalion intelligence officers throughout the country, which left Tobin in charge of Crow Street. The three chapters will look at the typical duties carried out by Tobin, the role that women played in his intelligence network, and Tobin's interaction with spies from 1919-1921.

Questions will focus on the nature of his work, and specifically, it will examine the multi-layered role he played as an office manager and gunman is also one of the overarching themes of this section, and it will consult the primary sources available in the Military Archives to piece together the typical duties that Tobin was carrying out as Deputy Director of Intelligence. In its opening paragraphs it is also crucial to discuss Tobin's early activities in Cork to show that the intelligence war was not confined to Dublin.

The third part of this thesis focuses on the Civil War, and it contains chapters five and six, which will examine Tobin's activities from the truce in July 1921 to the end of the Civil War in

May 1923. The main questions that will be discussed are how well did Tobin adjust to this new role as a Major General, and considering his participation in the mutiny, what were his initial thoughts on the Anglo-Irish Treaty? In addition, the extent of his involvement in the shooting of Sir Field Marshal Henry Wilson will also be analysed, largely based on claims made by contemporaries from the time, and the subsequent literature that has handled them. Chapter six in particular looks at how Tobin adapted to fighting former friends during the Civil War, and it attempts to convey a fair portrayal of his treatment of these one time associates.

Part four is the second largest of the thesis as it examines Tobin's role in the Army Mutiny. It contains chapters seven and eight. The central question to be considered is what were Tobin's motives behind the mutiny? Chapter seven breaks down the list of grievances that were expressed by Tobin's group, the IRAO, while chapter eight examines the findings of the Army Inquiry. The Army Inquiry Collection in the Military Archives is the basis for this section, as well as documentation published by Tobin and the IRAO in the aftermath of the mutiny.

The purpose of this section is not to justify the actions of the mutineers, but rather to examine the complex tensions that had been building between the IRAO, Army GHQ and the government from 1922. As such, in order to understand Tobin's motives behind the mutiny, it is necessary to devote time in this section to analysing the actions of Mulcahy and the Army Council, which involves moving the focus away from Tobin at times. In particular, the statements in the Army Inquiry Collection are extremely valuable as source material because they reveal how the actions of the IRB and the IRAO influenced each other. It is not possible to understand the mutiny and its origins without also looking at the impact of the IRB and Mulcahy in the Army, as the inevitable reduction of numbers after the Civil War alone would not have been enough to bring about the mutiny.

The final part of the thesis examines what form Tobin's nationalism took after the revolutionary years. It contains only chapter nine, and it is intended to provide an insight into Tobin's family and friendships in later life, especially those relations with anti-Treaty IRA men. Of particular interest is the fact that he switched his support to Fianna Fáil in 1926, and as a result developed good relations with Éamon De Valera. Chapter nine will focus on four main aspects of Tobin's later life that require attention; the importance that he placed on commemorating dead comrades, the formation of his own political party Clann na nGaedheal in

1931, his role within the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes, and suggestions that he had been working for De Valera throughout the Second World War as an intelligence officer.

From a historical point of view, Tobin stands as an anomaly because he is not typical of the Civil War divide that dominated Irish politics for decades, and indeed still does. Not only did he show support for De Valera, while still maintaining his loyalty to Collin's memory, he also befriended many anti-Treaty comrades in later life, and worked to try to resolve these differences in the form of religious retreats.[17] This in itself makes Tobin an interesting character. He was not liked by everyone he met, and even in the present day it is not uncommon to see references to him being a traitor for his part in the mutiny. By not offering much of his own account of his activities in the Irish Revolution, a contradictory image had emerged of him. He was considered a mutineer, a soldier, a loyal friend, a bitter man, ill-disciplined, an experienced officer, a gunman, impractical, and yet also ice cool in a crisis. He is not exceptional in this aspect, as many other central figures have experienced similar treatment in the historiography, especially Richard Mulcahy, Kevin O'Higgins, and Michael Collins. The difference with Liam Tobin, is that his memory has been left in limbo until now because there has never been an attempt to examine or understand the role that he played.

[17] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

Part I: Early Influences and the Easter Rising

Chapter 1 - Family Life and Young Volunteer

An examination of the significance of Liam Tobin's role in the Irish Revolution would be incomplete without understanding the underlying influences that motivated him to become involved in Republicanism. Tobin did not provide any details as to when or how he became involved in the Irish Volunteers, only stating in his witness statement in the Bureau of Military History that he joined C Company in the Dublin Brigade with some local friends from Phibsborough in 1914.[18] It would be misleading however, to believe that his Republican ideals can only be reduced to this point. Tobin's paternal family came from Mitchelstown in North Cork, and his mother's side were from Kilkenny and Tipperary. Known as Bill in the family home, he was born William Joseph Tobin in Cork City on 15th November 1895 to Mary Agnes Tobin (née Butler), and David Tobin from Cloughleafin, a townland outside of Mitchelstown. The family lived for a time in what was Great George's Street (now Washington Street). Records show that the family was still living there in 1898.[19] He was the eldest of three children, with a sister Catherine, and a brother Nicholas. The Tobins were a large family comprising many relatives in the North Cork area; David Tobin was one of 17 children born in the family home which still stands in Cloughleafin, and had previously been owned by Liam Tobin's grandfather, also William. As such there were many family connections in Mitchelstown.

Although Tobin only lived in Cork until he was about six years old, he would come into contact with these connections later on during the War of Independence when working as Deputy Director of Intelligence. Marriages were made with other local families in the area, including the Ceannt family, whose relation Éamon Ceannt was executed after the Easter Rising. According to Tobin's grandson Brian Hand, the separatist tradition in North Cork was very much a presence in the family, including during the times of the Land War. His mother's family were Fenian in their nationalist sympathies, and the influences of figures like Robert Emmett were keenly felt in the home. This undoubtedly would have been an influence on a young Liam in the development of his nationalist ideas.[20] According to the 1901 census the family moved to Kilkenny, eventually

[18] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p.1
[19] 'Civil Records', Irishgenealogy.ie, Accessed on 15th September 2023, https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/
[20] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

moving to John's Quay in 1911.[21] One aspect of living in the city at this time was the very obvious presence of soldiers from the Boer War coming and going. Hand also refers to common military phrases that Tobin used, such as 'up guards and at em', and 'steady the buffs' (meaning to calm down), a common nineteenth century military phrase. This suggests an impression of being aware of the presence of the British Empire during his childhood.[22]

Tobin was educated by the Christian Brothers in Kilkenny, and later was apprenticed in the hardware trade, at one point commenting to his eldest daughter that he found this work dull. In this regard he may be compared with Liam Lynch, who coincidentally was a hardware apprentice in Mitchelstown around the same time. While in the city the family frequently took in lodgers; one was a teacher, which may have improved Liam's attitude towards education. He also reportedly had a good collection of books, and a keen interest in reading, along with elegant handwriting.[23] Despite having a more limited, informal education than some of his later comrades, there is no evidence that this was a hindrance to him in his capacity as Deputy Director of Intelligence from 1919 to 1921. While Michael Collins at least had the benefit of administrative training in the civil service in London, Tobin's apprenticeship in the hardware trade was more low level, and certainly more monotonous than his later intelligence activities. This suggests an intellectual curiosity which he later applied to his subsequent military duties. Equally, Peter Hart also estimated that shop assistants and clerks made up only 4% of the workforce outside of Dublin, yet they made up between 10-25% of the IRA membership.[24]

The family relocated to Dublin in approximately 1912 when Tobin was around the age of 17, moving to a house at 24 Munster Street, Phibsborough. From 1917 - 1921 senior members of the Volunteer GHQ used it as a safe house even though it was well known to the Castle authorities as being Tobin's family home, suggesting strong family support for both Tobin and the independence movement. The hardships experienced by him were also extended to his family members. They were subjected to frequent raids, house searches, and arrests by the military as they sought information on their son. Family tradition reports that Tobin's mother Mary Agnes was not afraid to shout abuse at raiding Crown forces. Tobin's father, David, worked in the carpet department at Clerys, and he had some connections with the Gresham Hotel as well. As a

[21] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p.1; 'Census of Ireland 1901'; 'Census of Ireland 1911', Nationalarchives.ie, Accessed on 4th January 2022, https://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/
[22] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[23] Ibid
[24] Peter Hart, *The IRA at War: 1916 to 1923*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 115

result, Tobin would have had regular contact with his father in the city, but they had to be careful as his family would have been vulnerable to being attacked.[25] Nicholas, Liam's younger brother, also joined the Volunteers after the Rising, and took part in the War of Independence himself, having been trained in the use of a Lewis (machine) gun, and participated in the burning of the Customs House.[26] Their sister, Kitty does not appear to have been directly involved in the war, though like her parents, she helped hide fugitive IRA members. She later married a former British Army soldier from Australia who had fought in Gallipoli.[27]

The house was busy, particularly early on in the War of Independence. Kevin O'Doherty, son of revolutionary Katherine O'Doherty, grew up on nearby Connaught Street, and was a small boy during the period. He recalled one evening going to the outdoor toilet at the back of the house, only to find Liam Tobin crouched down inside, pressing his finger to his lips. Tobin had been in 24 Munster Street when a raid had occurred, and he ran into O'Doherty's backyard.[28] Patrick Berry, a prison warder in Mountjoy who assisted the IRA intelligence staff from 1919, also recalled attending small gatherings of well known high-ranking Volunteers at the Tobin home, including Collins, Tom Cullen, and Georóid O'Sullivan.[29] When raids became very common, they frequently had to run out into the back lane behind the houses. During one such raid in the middle of the night, David, Nicholas and a lodger were all arrested by the military.[30] Tobin appears to have remained very close to his mother, as their correspondence never ceased throughout his time in prison after the Rising and continued during the Civil War. The family also seem to have developed close bonds with some of his comrades, including Tom Cullen. While Nicholas Tobin was the only other family member to have been directly involved in the fighting, there is a sense that Tobin's close interactions with his family, however brief, during the War of Independence, provided an emotional comfort to a life otherwise dominated by isolation and secrecy.

Tobin participated in the Easter Rising in the Four Courts. Similar to some of the other figures at the time, he was not well known before 1916. Despite his low rank, it is interesting how his sentencing and trial would play out in the aftermath of the fighting. The British placed

[25] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[26] IE-MA-BMH.WS0755, Sean Prendergast, p. 516
[27] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[28] Michael Kevin O'Doherty, *My Parents and Other Rebels: A Personal Memoir*, (Dublin:Errigal Press, 1999), p.45-46
[29] IE-MA-BMH.WS0942, Patrick Berry, p. 13
[30] "Household Roused", *Sunday Independent,* 1st February 1920, p. 5

an unusual amount of importance on this low-ranking Volunteer, making him the seventh to be court-martialed on 3rd May, and even had him share a cell with Joseph Plunkett in Kilmainham Gaol at one point.[31] One potential reason behind this is that the authorities had come to see him as a troublemaker due to his activities during anti-conscription meetings. In her account of the Revolution, *The Hope and the Sadness,* Siobhan Lankford stated that he had been well known in Dublin by the RIC for breaking up all conscription meetings 'within a thirty mile radius' of the city, reasoning that this was why he was sentenced to death initially after the Rising, despite having a low rank.[32] Derek Moyleux and Darren Kelly also reflect on this in their book *Those Of Us Who Must Die*, as despite the close attention the courts gave him, the British couldn't have had any idea how lethal an enemy he would become during the War of Independence.[33]

Tobin joined the Volunteers shortly after the Howth gun running in 1914, as he stated in his witness statement that he previously had been quite critical of them despite seeing them marching in the Phibsborough area. The successful shipment of arms at Howth convinced him that they 'meant business', and subsequently he and others from the area joined up with C Company of the 1st Battalion.[34] Brian Hand also suggests that there may have been a peer element to his decision to join, in addition to the family associations with nationalism; he also had a cousin who participated in the Rising, Michael Tobin.[35] There is no evidence to suggest that Tobin had any involvement with the IRB at this point, so it is unlikely that this organisation had an influence to join the Volunteers. On the other hand, Joost Augusteijn acknowledges that there were recruits that recognised that it was necessary to use force to obtain independence, but that they remained unaware of the existence of the IRB, and it is possible that this was the case for Tobin.[36] However, he was representative of what Peter Hart called 'the typical Volunteer' in that he was young (aged 19), unmarried, and a shop assistant by trade.[37]

During the lead up to the Rising he had been employed in Henshaws hardware shop on Christchurch Place, and together with Michael Staines (then working with the Quartermaster General's department) and Frank Harding, they succeeded in taking some shotguns, small arms,

[31] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022; IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p. 9-11
[32] Siobhan Lankford, *The Hope and the Sadness*, p. 126
[33] Derek Molyneux and Darren Kelly, *Those of Us Who Must Die: Execution, Exile and Revival after the Easter Rising,* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2017), p. 6
[34] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p.1
[35] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[36] Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1919-1921*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), p. 32
[37] Peter Hart, *The IRA at War: 1916 to 1923*, p. 121, 134

pike handles, and shotgun cartridges away from the store. It was also during his time in Henshaws that he was given the first indication that something other than a regular mobilisation was planned, as before quitting his employment, Staines made a remark to him that he would see him on Easter Sunday.[38]

His witness statement provided to the Bureau of Military History was limited to his experiences during the Rising and his time in prison afterwards. Initially disappointed about Eoin MacNeil's cancelation of the mobilisation orders, he and other Volunteers based in Phibsborough decided to mobilise anyway, and they gathered with their company at Blackhall Place. Despite the small numbers who turned up (he estimated less than two hundred), when their Commandant Ned Daly informed them that they were going out to fight, the vast majority of the men stood firm.[39]

They then moved off to their position at the Four Courts, and upon entering Tobin's first job was to break up the windows and barricade them from enemy fire using books and other objects scattered around the building. On his first day he was posted at a barricade at Church Street Bridge. It was then that he would come under fire from the military for the first time and he facetiously remarked, 'it was an experience I did not like'. The following day he noticed a fight breaking out at the far end of the barricade involving a British soldier and several Volunteers who were trying to take him prisoner, but were being prevented from doing so by some wives of British soldiers. They eventually managed to get the soldier into the Four Courts. Convinced that he would be killed, he produced his rosary beads and showed them to Tobin, who reassured him that it was merely their intention to take him prisoner, not to shoot him. They also succeeded in taking two other men prisoners as they approached the barricade by car; upon seeing that the Volunteers were armed they attempted to reverse, but were stopped and fired upon. One of the men was a Major in the British Army, and the other was Lord Dunsany, with Tobin referring to the former as a 'decent man' who would later attempt to help the Volunteers during their military trials. The Major would also deny recognising Tobin during his trial later on.[40]

Towards the end of the week Tobin was sent out with some others to a different barricade at Greek Street to provide cover for the men retreating from Upper Church Street. After being

[38] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p.1-2
[39] Ibid, p.2
[40] Ibid, p. 3 - 5

positioned there for some time, one or two of their men from the Four Courts began running past them. This apparently signalled the end of their occupation of the building as the British forces had moved in. Tobin and the rest of the men made their way back to the Four Courts to discover that the military had surrounded the area; they had actually arrived back to witness the surrender taking place. They joined the rest of their battalion within the British cordon, had their arms taken, although Tobin did attempt to break his rifle off the railings before handing it over. Having assisted in the defence of the Four Courts for the week, he would state that nothing particularly extraordinary happened to him during the Rising, although he did remember the shelling of the Four Courts taking place, and rather dejectedly recalled someone trampling on him as he tried to sleep inside a washroom at one point.[41]

The men were taken from the Four Courts to O'Connell Street under heavy guard, and the sight of the ruins gave them their first indication of how bad the fighting had been at the GPO. On the way they began to sing songs to uplift their spirits and according to Tobin on their march they began to whistle 'The Boys of Wexford'. They were joined at Upper O'Connell Street by other units, where the military surrounded them with fixed bayonets, with Tobin remarking that he did not think that they would not require much provocation to use them. From here they were moved to the grounds of the Rotunda Hospital where they remained until Sunday, after which they were taken to Richmond Barracks, receiving a hostile reception from those who supported the British in the process. Tobin was placed in a gymnasium with the rest of the Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having been lined up for inspection by a number of detectives who came in to pick out the main instigators of the uprising. He reported standing next to Piaras Béaslaí at one end of the hall during the inspection, when both men were picked out and selected to move to the other side of the room. Not understanding why he should be picked out as an ordinary rank and filer, Tobin questioned the detective why he was moving him, only to be told, "Come on, get over. What do you think you were doing for the last week?". Eventually, he and several others, including Peadar Clancy, were brought out to await their court martial, joining a group that included the Pearse brothers at the front.[42]

At his trial Tobin stated it was not made clear to him if the death sentence was mandatory or at the discretion of the court. The first witness called was the officer he had taken prisoner in

[41] Ibid, p. 3 - 5
[42] Ibid, p. 8-9

the Four Courts, identifying Tobin as the one who put him under guard, although in his testimony he also acknowledged that Tobin had brought his cigarettes and other amenities during the week. Nonetheless, he made a clear identification, and also made a point to the President of the trial that Tobin had been armed. The second witness was the Major who had been with Lord Dunsany when they had been taken prisoner by the Volunteers, though he is described by Tobin as being a 'fair minded' Englishman who said he failed to recognise any of the men in the Four Courts.[43] Records from the prison register at Mountjoy Jail states that he was eventually found guilty of taking part in an armed rebellion against His Majesty the King, and was originally sentenced to death, which was later commuted to 10 years penal servitude. This record also describes some minor marks on his hand and wrists, and a scar over his left eye. This description, in particular the scar, would be used by the British authorities during the War of Independence.[44]

When the trial was concluded he, Clancy and others were transferred to Kilmainham Gaol, and placed in a room with Joseph Plunkett, whom Tobin described as 'an extraordinary man' who tried his best to persuade them that they would not be executed, although he knew his own fate was sealed. Later Plunkett would be taken out, and each of the remaining men were put into their own cell. Despite having no bedding or place to lay down, being exhausted Tobin did succeed in sleeping for a time, until he was awoken and told the sentence of the court-martial;

> 'During that night I was awakened by being shaken by a British officer and a couple of armed soldiers…I was completely dazed with sleep…He said "You have been sentenced to death" reading from a document. With that he left…in a matter of minutes… he reopened the door and said "and the sentence of the court has been commuted to ten years penal servitude". He repeated this practice with the other prisoners too, apparently considering this procedure as a rather good joke".[45]

The following day he was taken with other prisoners to Mountjoy. There he also met a friend from Kilkenny, Patrick Berry, a warder who was friendly to their cause. He succeeded in getting word to Tobin's parents about what had happened to him, as they had been at a family funeral in Cork all during Easter week. Berry also recalled this exchange, stating that he had been able to

[43] Ibid, p.10-12
[44] "Ireland, Prison Registers, 1790-1924", Ancestry.co.uk, Accessed 3rd September 2023, https://www.ancestry.co.uk/discoveryui-content/view/2261553:61943
[45] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p.11-12

provide what little comfort he could in the form of baths and food for the prisoners who had been brought in.[46] This was one contact that would prove useful to Tobin's intelligence work during the War of Independence.

Some days later he and several others were given their own uniforms back and marched to the North Wall to be placed on a ship for Holyhead. He recalled that as they walked along the North Circular Road, a man ran out from one of the shops, pushed his way through the soldiers, and shoved cigarettes and tobacco into Tobin's hands, for which he stated he was extremely grateful. Once they reached the North Wall they were brought on board a ship, and taken down to the holds where it was 'very uncomfortable, very smelly and dark'. Moments later Tobin was told he was wanted back on deck, and as he was brought up he saw his mother waiting to say goodbye to him. Berry had contacted the family to alert them as to what was happening, and he would recall that Mrs. Tobin later informed him that her son had said "we put up a good fight, Mother".[47]

Eventually they arrived in Holyhead, though it was an uncomfortable journey with no lights permitted due to fears over German submarines, and most of the crew were hostile to them due to their activities. From there they boarded a train, which was the beginning of another journey that lasted two or three days. Tobin stated that they had no idea where they were going, but they stopped periodically at stations. On one such occasion, the passersby found out who they were, which resulted in several women spitting at the windows. Included in the group of about a dozen prisoners were Fionán Lynch, Ned Duggan and Joe McGuinness. Finally, they were brought to Portland prison, which would be the first of several prisons for Tobin; he described the exterior as being 'anything but inviting but we were marched in'. Once inside their names were taken, and given a 'threatening kind of speech' by the warder in charge, who made it clear that it was up to them if they wanted to make their time in penal servitude hard or easy.[48] J.J Walsh and Sean McGarry were also imprisoned here for a time; Walsh made similar reference to the hostility shown to them by warder governor Denty, who he referred to as 'Denty's Inferno'.[49]

He remained in Portland for around six months before being transferred to Lewes prison, where they were joined by comrades who had been jailed in Dartmoor, including Frank

[46] IE-MA-BMH.WS0942, Patrick Berry, p. 3
[47] IE-MA-BMH.WS0942, Patrick Berry, p. 3; IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p. 13;
[48] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p. 14
[49] Sean McEnright, *Easter Rising 1916: The Trials*, (Dublin: Merrion Press, 2014), p. 105

Thornton. There were no other prisoners in Lewes so they were allowed some degree of freedom to make the place their own, which resulted in problems for the prison warders enforcing discipline. Fellow prisoners included Joseph McGuinness, Éamon De Valera, Thomas Ashe and Simon Donnelly, and despite restrictions generally considered to be less severe than Portland, the prisoners soon began to strike in order to obtain prisoner of war status.[50] Tobin stated,

> "We talked all day to each other and generally made our own arrangements. For all practical purposes the disciplinary system of the prison no longer functioned. We decided, after being there for some months…that we would demand prisoner of war status and treatment. This I believe, was done with the concurrence of our people at home".[51]

Plans were arranged to cause destruction to the prison locks, but they were discovered during a search of one of the cells. This resulted in them being locked in their cells, and so they were ordered by the leaders of the 'strike' to cause as much damage as they could, such as breaking windows or furniture. This destruction was accompanied by daily and nightly concerts where they sang nationalist songs through their windows.[52] William Murphy also refers to this strike in his work *Political Imprisonment and the Irish*, arguing that the situation escalated to 'considerable destruction of prison property', so that there was no option but to separate the prisoners and move them elsewhere. However, Murphy does argue that after many weeks of this behaviour enthusiasm for the strike declined, although the men had no option but to continue with their actions.[53] Based on his witness statement, however, there is no indication that Tobin was not fully committed to the strike.

All of the men who participated in this strike were moved elsewhere, including Tobin. The final prison of his sentence, Broadmoor on the Isle of Wight, a 'criminal lunatic asylum', was a far cry from the comradery experienced in Frongoch prison camp. He was transported with five other men, all handcuffed to heavy chains to make escaping impossible. Their presence on the train to the prison drew the attention of some onlookers, and so, in order to keep up their

[50] Derek Molyneux and Darren Kelly, *Those of Us Who Must Die: Execution, Exile and Revival after the Easter Rising,* p. 247
[51] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p. 13-14
[52] Ibid, p. 13-14
[53] William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 66

disturbance, they began to sing the German patriotic song, ‘The Watch on the Rhine’, which only increased their guards' agitation. [54]

Upon arriving at Broadmoor, they were informed that their ‘trouble making was at an end’, and were placed in separate cells once again. There were also a number of their comrades who were already occupying the punishment cells there, and the strike that was started in Lewes was continued. Tobin eventually found himself in front of the prison governor for refusing to obey some command given to him, the result of which was that he had his boots removed (apparently out of concern that he would use them on the governor), which left him in his socks; there were so many of them on punishment that the prison authorities ran out of slippers. Subsequently he was given three days of bread and water. Having just finished his punishment, Tobin was then informed by the warders that he and all his comrades were to be taken to London for their release. They were taken on a final train journey, and brought to Pentonville prison where they were measured for civilian clothes, and sent to Euston station for their return journey back to Ireland. It was the summer of 1917 before he was released, but Tobin does not state when exactly this happened. However, he recounted that once again they were met by a hostile crowd on the train to Pentonville, only this time instead of spitting they were throwing stones and other objects to break the glass windows of their carriage.[55]

Conclusion

The witness statement provided by Tobin reveals very little of what his personal feelings were during this period, despite spending quite a significant amount of time in prison. Family members stated that he had been placed in solitary confinement for a time, and that he was also beaten.[56] His letters to his mother, however, show how his family helped to maintain communications with friends at home. Writing as Convict G130, the frequency in which Tobin was allowed to write would often change as he moved prisons. Throughout his correspondence with his mother, he repeatedly asks after many of his friends back at home, and he also forwarded messages from prisoners to their own loved ones. He named Diarmuid Lynch, J. J Walsh, Piaras Béaslaí, Austin Stack and Harry Boland as being amongst his fellow prisoners, and his letters highlight the wide reaching connections that were being made at the time. For

[54] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin, p. 16-18
[55] Ibid, p. 14-16
[56] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

example, he stated in March 1917 that he had a visit from a friend of a friend, Miss O'Callaghn, who was then living in Manchester, and was keen to pass on any news to the prisoners from Dublin.[57]

The letters also show the more sensitive, personable side to Tobin, as he was adamant that his family try not to worry about him, and constantly attempted to reassure them that he was fine. In one letter from 5th March 1917 he claimed to be in good form, and that he was not suffering too much from the cold nights.[58] It is important to remember, however, that the prison letters were heavily censored. One particularly melancholic letter was sent on 19th December 1916, in which he expressed his sadness that 'this is the first Christmas that any of us have ever been separated', and noted 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'.[59] At one point he had asked his mother for a family photo, and wrote to her on 3rd May 1917 informing her that he had placed it in such a position that he saw it the minute he walked into his cell, and so it 'completely altered my surroundings, I am delighted with it'.[60] These sentimental reflections of happier family times portray a very different image of Tobin from the serious, rigid reputation he would develop as the Revolution progressed, and particularly so because of the stress of his role as Deputy Director of Intelligence. At the same time, the young revolutionary that is eager to rejoin the fight is also very much present in these letters, as he asked for pencils and books so that he might try to learn Irish while in prison. One letter written from Portland prison on 8th September 1916 had an almost ominous message as he wrote 'I also left some things in Jerry's wardrobe, keep them safe, they will be useful again'.[61] Ultimately, the letters between Tobin and his mother reflect Tobin's changing perspective as a young rank and filer who was initially unsure about the seriousness of the Volunteers, to someone who was beginning to broaden his connections so that he would eventually come to the attention of the Dublin Brigade as a man who had a talent for intelligence work.

[57] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin 5th March 1917, p. 2. Courtesy of Brian Hand.
[58] Ibid
[59] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin 19th December 1916, p. 2. Courtesy of Brian Hand.
[60] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin 3rd May 1917, p. 1. Courtesy of Brian Hand.
[61] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin 8th September 1916, p. 3, Courtesy of Brian Hand

Part II: Intelligence

Introduction

In 1919 Michael Collins would establish the IRA intelligence department, with himself as the Director and Tobin as Deputy. When evaluating the importance of IRA intelligence in the War of Independence, studies have conveyed how this side of the conflict was just as essential as the military one, with Collins' contemporary Frank O'Connor recalling that it was 'a savage battle between two secret services, fought out without mercy in darkness'.[62] Although the war could not have been fought through the use of intelligence alone, the work of the department helped to support the activities of the Squad and other brigades throughout the country by allowing them to determine who was the most immediate threat at the time. Likewise, the informers working for the IRA within the DMP (Dublin Metropolitan Police), RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary), and British Secret Service provided invaluable information concerning upcoming raids, arrests, informers, and British intelligence on the Volunteers. In this regard, historian Paul MacMahon argues that the British intelligence service was limited in its effectiveness compared to the IRA's operatives, who engaged in better communication in Dublin and the rest of the country, and concludes that the British found it hard to counteract the activities of Collins' intelligence service.[63] Michael Hopkinson, however, would make it clear that IRA intelligence effectiveness was exaggerated in the rest of the provinces, although Tobin would maintain contacts in Cork throughout the Revolution.[64]

In an interview with RTE in 1964, Frank Thornton placed emphasis on the fact that Tobin had been one of the first men involved in intelligence in 1919, and that the department had been built up gradually under both him and Collins together.[65] Following on from this Tom Cullen and Thornton would eventually be brought on as his deputies. Interestingly, historian Eamon Duggan recently dedicated one of his chapters in *We Go Into Action At Noon* to Thornton's contribution to the Revolution, but not Tobin, although Duggan does make several references to his role in

[62] Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow: Michael Collins and the Irish Revolution*, 5th ed. (Dublin: Poolbeg Press Ltd, 1991), p. 137
[63] Paul MacMahon, "British Intelligence and the Anglo-Irish Truce, July-December 1921" in *Irish Historical Studies* 35, no. 140 (2007): 519–40. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20547492, p. 521
[64] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2002), p. 54
[65] Frank Thornton, Interview by Brian Farrell, "The Survivors", RTE, November 26th 1964, https://www.rte.ie/archives/2020/0311/1121626-frank-thornton-intelligence-officer/

intelligence.[66] Other historians have also supported this claim that Tobin was one of the first intelligence officers recruited by Collins, including Margery Forester, Cathal Liam and Peter Hart.[67] In particular, Dominic Price and Michael Foy offer well-researched and detailed studies on the intelligence war in Dublin, with both studies discussing Tobin as an individual beyond merely acknowledging that he was Deputy Director.[68]

Squad man Vinny Byrne stated that the intelligence staff at one point was made up of Tobin, Cullen, Thornton, Joe Dolan, Frank Saurin, Ned Kelleher, Joe Guilfoyle, Patrick Caldwell, Patrick Kennedy, Charles Dalton, Dan McDonnell, and Charlie Byrne.[69] The intelligence department had 3 offices; Cullenswood House, Bachelors Walk and a finance department at Harcourt Street. Solicitor and sympathiser Michael Noyk would then obtain the office at 3 Crow Street for Collins, which allowed the intelligence office to operate within a few hundred yards of Dublin Castle, although Michael Foy would point out that it was a rarity for Collins to be there himself.[70] This would become the first intelligence headquarters, and the main office that Tobin was operating from, with the men working out of the second floor of the building.

According to Collins biographer Piaras Béaslaí, it was around 1918 that Collins became familiar with Tobin, recounting how Tobin was still a young man when he became Deputy Director of Intelligence at only 24 years old. Having served time in prison with Tobin from 1916 - 1917 in Portland and Lewes prison, Béaslaí stated that Tobin first came into contact with Collins in connection with the work of the National Aid Association for the families of those who had been executed after the Rising, and later the New Ireland Assurance Company.[71]

Tobin has not received extensive credit for the role that he played in running the office at 3 Crow Street. His work with intelligence was a vital contribution to the survival of the IRA in Dublin throughout the War of Independence, and arguably the secretive nature of his work itself has prevented any detailed study of his activities, in addition to his own refusal to speak on the

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[66] Eamon Duggan, *We Go Into Action At Noon: First-hand Accounts From Ireland's Revolutionary Years 1913-1922,* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2021), p. 117 - 134

[67] Margery Forester, *Michael Collins: The Lost Leader,* (Ireland: Gill Book, 1971), p. 84; Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins*, (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 204; Cathal Liam, *Fear Not the Storm: The Story of Tom Cullen*, (Ireland: St Padraic Press, 2011,) p. 17

[68] Dominic Price, *We Bled Together: Michael Collins, The Squad and the Dublin Brigade*; Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War: The Struggle Between the British and the IRA 1919-1921*

[69] IE-MA-BMH.WS0423, Vincent Byrne, p. 33-37

[70] Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War*, p. 41

[71] Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, p. 201 - 202

subject in later life. On the other hand, in the witness statements provided to the Bureau of Military History, many of his fellow intelligence officers did provide detailed accounts of the daily routine of the office and Tobin's role in it. For example, one intelligence officer, Patrick Caldwell, recalled Captain Joycelyn Lee Hardy referring to him as 'the notorious Liam Tobin', and this section will discuss the significant threat that Tobin posed to the British.[72]

From late 1917 throughout the conscription crisis of 1918 Tobin began to become reacquainted with the North Cork area. After this release from prison in 1917 he was eventually made an intelligence officer with the Dublin Brigade, and his role in Cork was to help organise anti-conscription meetings where he could, and to assist the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan members to set up an intelligence service in North Cork and Cork City. This period would allow him to gather names of useful contacts and associates that he would later use in the War of Independence, and he was able to exploit this link to the South West of the country throughout the war. When the Civil War broke out in 1922, however, Tobin found that these same comrades were now on the opposing side. In his capacity as a Major General in the National Army, he would be sent to Cork in August 1922 to assist in the recapturing of the Fermoy and Mitchelstown areas, from where his paternal family originated.

Despite the secretive nature of his intelligence work, the Bureau of Military History and the Military Pension Files are useful in piecing together the objective of his trips to Cork, as many contemporaries provided a detailed account of his duties, and what rank he held at the time. Laurence Condon of the Fermoy Volunteers stated that Tobin was sent from Dublin to the area in 1918 to act as an instructor for their company, while Patrick Ahern, also of the Fermoy Volunteers, confirmed this in his own witness statement, recounting that Tobin was known to be involved with General Headquarters in Dublin by 1918, and was sent to North Cork to act as an organiser for Volunteer units.[73]

Maire Goode, based in Cork City, had been one of the Cumann na mBan women whose home was used by Tobin to store arms and gunpowder. In her military pension application she stated that he stayed with her on and off from about 1917 to 1918, and as far as she was concerned he appeared to be the 'head of the Fermoy people at the time'.[74] Siobhan Lankford corroborated this in her own application, reporting that Tobin had been present in the area around

[72] IE-MA-BMH.WS0638, Patrick Caldwell, p. 29
[73] IE-MA-BMH.WS1003, Patrick Ahern, p. 4; IE-MA-BMH.WS0859, Laurence Condon, p. 2
[74] IE-MA-MSP34REF7367, Maire Goode Pension File, p. 14

1918 as Tomás MacCurtain was keen to set up an intelligence service for a Second Cork Brigade. In his reference for Lankford's pension, Tobin confirmed that MacCurtain had asked him to organise the district, and this would be the beginning of a lot of his relationships with the key people in the area, such as George Power and Liam Lynch.[75]

George Power would become a common associate throughout the War of Independence, as he also travelled to Dublin on occasion to meet with Tobin and other members of the intelligence staff. Based in the Fermoy area, Power had been on the run when Tobin arrived in the area to help with the collection of arms for the local Volunteers, and gradually extended the intelligence operations in Fermoy and Mitchelstown.[76] Likewise, Tobin appeared to have enjoyed a good friendship with Liam Lynch, although he later assisted in bringing him into custody at the outbreak of the attack on the Four Courts in June 1922. Having been introduced by Lankford, Tobin and Liam Lynch had come together to organise the Volunteers in Fermoy, with the battalion falling under the command of both men for one of its first significant operations involving the attempted seizure of arms from a train.

Florence O'Donoghue detailed how this first major mobilisation of the men took place in the summer of 1918, when they received information that a train was to come from Cobh to Mallow with arms onboard. It was decided that they should ambush the train between the Castletownroche and Ballyhooly area, where 50 Volunteers had been waiting for the train to pass. Unfortunately, on this occasion they were unsuccessful as the train never made its way to them; those detailed to cut the telegraph wires in the station had cut them too early so it did not depart.[77] Tobin was also named as being involved in the theft of some rifles from British soldiers as they entered the Methodist Church in Fermoy in September 1919, alongside Lynch once again.[78] Meda Ryan also refers to the attempted train ambush in her biography of Liam Lynch, and emphasises the importance of it for the Volunteers who took part. She described how organised the attack was, in that wires were cut, cars were mobilised, and if nothing else Lynch considered it a valuable experience for the battalion, and it remains a significant mobilisation in the months leading up to the War of Independence.[79] In his recent biography of Liam Lynch,

[75] IE-MA-MSP34REF29397, Siobhan Lankford Pension File, p. 67
[76] IE-MA-BMH.WS0451, George Power, p. 1, 9
[77] Florence O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 2nd Ed (United Kingdom: Anvil Books, 1987), p. 23
[78] Barry Keane, *Cork's Revolutionary Dead*, (Ireland: Mercier Press, 2017), p. 109
[79] Meda Ryan, *The Real Chief: Liam Lynch*, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2012), p. 26

Gerard Shannon, also makes reference to Tobin's time in Cork with MacCurtain and Lynch, pointing out his close association with GHQ even in these early years of the Revolution.[80]

These visits to Cork were aided by the fact that the New Ireland Assurance Company (of which Tobin was a founding member) had been set up in January 1918. The purpose of the company was to establish an Irish owned life company, with the added benefit that insurance agents could move around the country without attracting the suspicions of the local Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). To the RIC in Cork Tobin was simply another insurance agent travelling the county on business. Officially the agent in charge of Munster, he had an office on Grand Parade in Cork City, also conveniently located to some of his safe houses, although Maire Goode stated that the city soon became too dangerous for him to stay in, despite this cover.[81]

His work during 1918 was not limited to Cork, as contemporaries from the Tipperary and Limerick areas also stated that he was helping them to organise their local battalions and Sinn Féin branches. In his reference for the military pension application of Volunteer Tadhg Crowley, Tobin informed the board that he spent a lot of time with Crowley and other Volunteers in Limerick during the conscription crisis, the purpose being to set up a line of communication between this location and Mitchelstown. Interestingly, for a man so fixated on maintaining confidences, Crowly also divulged in the same reference that Tobin was in the area for IRB business at the same time, although he did not elaborate on the nature of this work.[82] Another local Volunteer, Patrick Luddy stated that Tobin was also in the area of the Cork and Tipperary border in 1918, helping to organise the local Sinn Féin branch.[83] Tobin's presence at anti-conscription rallies was noted by Lankford previously, and he had been well experienced in these activities in the lead up to the Rising.[84] Advertisements for anti-conscription meetings to be held in Fermoy and Mitchelstown frequented the local newspapers, and it is most likely that Tobin attended these as well, either as an organiser or as a speaker.[85]

It is clear that this period from 1917 to late 1918 was used as training for the work he was to carry out in intelligence, and during this time he had been making a name for himself with the higher-rankings of the Volunteers. His connection to North Cork in particular is important to

[80] Gerard Shannon, *Liam Lynch: To Declare A Republic,* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2023), p. 42-43
[81] IE-MA-MSP34REF7367, Maire Goode Pension File, p. 15
[82] IE-MA-MSP34REF60696, Tadhg Crowley Pension File, p. 24
[83] IE-MA-BMH.WS1151, Patrick Luddy, p. 5
[84] Siobhan Lankford, *The Hope and the Sadness*, p. 127
[85] NLI Florence O'Donoghue Papers, MS 31,421/11/9, Letter from George Power to Florence O'Donoghue 22nd June 1950

discuss in this section, as the contacts he would make in these early years would have both productive and negative implications for him as the Revolution progressed, particularly when it came to the Civil War. Clearly understanding the value of a well placed informant or contact, Tobin made good use of them, and it also indicates that he understood that it was not enough for the intelligence war to be focused in Dublin. Piaras Béaslaí would describe him as being someone who was very good at sorting through seemingly trivial pieces of information in order to extract the important details from it, and his time in North Cork provides one such example of this.[86] In the lead up to the capture of British Brigadier General Lucas by the Volunteers in Fermoy in 1920, Tobin had been staying at the house of a sympathiser, Tom Neill, close to where Lucas had been stationed. The father of the owner of the house made a passing remark about planning to go fishing with Lucas the following Saturday at the local Blackwater River, evidently unaware that such information would be of great interest to someone like Tobin, who duly passed it onto Laurence Condon, lieutenant in the Fermoy Company.[87]

This gives an indication of the threat that Tobin posed to the British authorities, as he was not only an active gunman accompanying the Squad on executions, but he was also highly observant, and quick thinking in tight situations. He was able to run intelligence operations in Crow Street with the efficiency of a seasoned administrator, retained vast amounts of information, and was absolutely not above acting as a gunman when the situation called for it. David Neligan would argue that after Collins, Tobin was Dublin Castle's most dangerous enemy, and the extensive primary material provided by his contemporaries will be used to examine this assertion in this section.[88]

In recent years there has been a growing literature focusing on the intelligence war, as well as an emergence of studies that focus on the staff as a whole, as opposed to Collins solely as the Director. The works by Michael Foy, Dominic Price, T. Ryle Dwyer and Joseph E. A. Connell Jr have all given consideration to the significance of Tobin's role. In particular, the literature has begun to focus on the involvement of women in the intelligence war, and Tobin's associations with these women will also be examined in this section. Much of the primary materials in the Military Archives give more detailed descriptions of his daily routine and offer an insight into how Collins valued the work he did in Crow Street. Joseph E. A. Connell Jr also

[86] Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, Volume II, p. 202
[87] IE-MA-BMH.WS0859, Laurence Condon, p. 9
[88] David Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, p. 72

makes use of these witness statements and pension files in his study *Michael Collins: Dublin 1916-1922* to highlight the interconnectedness of the intelligence department.[89] Michael Foy goes one step further and acknowledges the multi-layered role that Tobin played as Deputy, arguing that at different times he functioned as 'an office manager, field agent and triggerman', and highlights how all routine administration was detailed to him by Collins.[90]

[89] Joseph E. A. Connell Jr, *Michael Collins: Dublin 1916-1922*, (Dublin: Wordwell, 2017)
[90] Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War,* p. 50

Chapter 2 - The Notorious Liam Tobin

The Beginning of Intelligence

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the IRA intelligence department began, as Michael Collins had been building up his own portfolio of potential spies within various services across the country from 1917. It is generally accepted that he began to organise intelligence along official lines around early 1919, and it was at this point that he brought Tobin on board as his Deputy, with Tobin stating in his military pension file that he was active in this role from April 1919.[91] Frank Thornton, Tobin's assistant, would point to around July 1919 as the time when Collins began to organise the department, and subsequently, he and other intelligence officers joined later in the year in September.[92] Similarly, Dominic Price states that by autumn 1919 Collins had invited Thornton, Frank Saurin, Joe Dolan and Joe Guilfoyle into the department as intelligence officers as well.[93]

Frank Thornton stated that one of the first jobs was to organise intelligence units in brigades across the country. Undoubtedly their role as insurance agents with the New Ireland Assurance Company aided them in this work. Every company had an intelligence officer for their area, and from this there would be a battalion intelligence officer who would be in charge of all company officers. Any useful or relevant information would then be passed on to the brigade intelligence officer, ensuring that 'the area was covered by a network of agents'. In this way, Thornton argued it was easy for Intelligence GHQ in Crow Street to make enquiries on information from a certain area, as there were a variety of agents to work with, and in return only information that was deemed reliable and valuable was passed to GHQ for consideration.[94] Joseph. E. A. Connell Jr also points out that intelligence was divided into the gathering of information on British forces, and the gathering of information on British agents.[95]

Collins' Squad, known as The Twelve Apostles, would also work closely with the intelligence department when it came to the shooting of suspected enemy spies and detectives. The first detective was shot in 1919 in Drumcondra, and 4 had been killed in total by the end of

[91] IE-MA-MSP.24SP2764, Liam Tobin Pension File, p.13
[92] IE-MA-BMH.WS0510, Frank Thornton, p. 74; NLI MS 31655, Account of I.R.A. Intelligence during the Anglo-Irish War 1940, p. 5
[93] Dominic Price, *We Bled Together*, p.89-90
[94] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 3-4; NLI MS 31655, p. 6-8
[95] Joseph. E. A. Connell Jr, *Michael Collins: Dublin 1916-1922*, p. 142

the year.[96] The standard formation for a job such as this was that at least one intelligence officer would accompany the Squad in order to identify the target for execution. It was separate from the intelligence department in the sense that they did not work on collecting material for Collins, but nonetheless the members of each group would become interchangeable in the course of the Revolution, as they frequently worked closely together, and would continue to do so during the Civil War. The first leader of the Squad, Mick McDonnell, pointed to early 1920 as being the time when it was formed.[97]

The historiography of the intelligence war in Dublin justifiably focuses on Collins' skills in setting up the intelligence staff, and his talent for organising the department along administrative lines. There is no question that the success of the intelligence war in Dublin would not have had the same impact had it not been for the role he played. However, one of Collins' strengths was his ability to surround himself with efficient, trustworthy people, and knowing how to delegate tasks that were suited to specific individuals. Arguably recruiting Liam Tobin to act as Deputy Director allowed him to focus on other duties that he was responsible for, all while knowing that the office located at 3 Crow Street was running effectively in his absence. As a result Tobin filled a void in the intelligence department and this would earn him a place on the British's most wanted list.

A clear line of command was established within Crow Street as new officers were recruited and intelligence began to expand from 1920 onwards, and T. Ryle Dwyer has placed emphasis on the fact that Tobin was in charge of the office.[98] New staff were told to report directly to Tobin, he would outline their responsibilities going forward, and it was common for reports to be given to him at the end of the day. Many of the intelligence officers referred to the practice of keeping Tobin updated of the results from their activities that day, whether it be observing a target or collecting information from an informer. Tobin undoubtedly was the main figure involved in coordinating the information that was coming in, and where applicable, deciding on their next move.

An examination of The Collins Papers housed in the Military Archives, makes this hierarchy clear, with various dispatches containing instructions from Tobin such as 'Frank put a

[96] NLI MS 31655, p. 2
[97] IE-MA-BMH.WS0510, Frank Thornton, p. 74; IE-MA-BMH.WS0225, Michael McDonnell, p. 5
[98] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: The Man Who Won The War*, p. 62

man on this and report'.[99] Likewise, Vinny Byrne referred to the practice of the Squad reporting significant events of the day back to Tobin, 'our senior officer'.[100] Meanwhile, Tobin would keep Collins abreast of all activities when they met that night at Vaughans hotel or Devlin's pub. One correspondence illustrates the efficiency of the intelligence office. Collins sent a dispatch to the Dublin brigade in February 1921 detailing some of the agents they were to contact, later requesting that Tobin make available all 'descriptions and photographs' that had previously been collected and catalogued on the men in the previous months.[101]

Charles Dalton recalled that in 1920 he was taken by a member of the Squad to be interviewed by Tobin at Crow Street, which had the sign 'Irish Product Company' on the front door. Dalton described how four other Volunteers were also there and there were a lot of newspapers lying around. Then seated at the table 'was a tall young man, with dark hair brushed back very smoothly…he had the look of a dominant personality'. Dalton recognised him as being a Volunteer that he frequently had seen around the city 'when there was something very important on hand', and thus, Tobin's seniority within the system immediately became apparent. When the interview was over, and he was satisfied with Dalton's abilities, he then instructed him on his new duties.[102] Intelligence officer Patrick Kennedy reported a similar experience around the middle of 1920 when he was selected for intelligence work at GHQ. He was taken to Oriel Hall by fellow Volunteer Paddy Moran, and introduced to Tobin, Cullen and Thornton, where they emphasised how 'dangerous and secret this work was', informing him that he would have to leave his employment as it required full time work. His initial instructions upon starting were to contact a number of agents who were working under the British crown, keep in contact with them and report back on his findings to the department.[103] Similarly, in February 1921 Joe Kavanagh was transferred to GHQ intelligence and told to take his orders from Tobin, while another intelligence officer, Thomas Markham also stated that he worked under Tobin's direct orders.[104]

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[99] IE-MA-CP-05-01-26, Working On File, p. 11
[100] IE-MA-BMH.WS0423, Vincent Byrne, p. 40
[101] IE-MA-CP-05-01-16, J File. Auxiliary Division, RIC, p. 57
[102] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade: Espionage and Assassination with Michael Collins' Intelligence Unit* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2014), p. 94 - 95
[103] IE-MA-BMH.WS0499, Patrick Kennedy, p. 1
[104] IE-MA-MSP34REF9980, J. Kavanagh Pension File, p. 16; IE-MA-W24SP10942, Thomas Markham Pension File, p. 64

With regards to the pressures of the role of Deputy Director, physical descriptions of Tobin from 1919 onwards clearly convey that the risks and responsibilities he was undertaking were taking a toll on him. David Neligan, the detective that was working for Collins in Dublin Castle, would provide a description of him as being,

> 'tall, gaunt, cynical, with tragic eyes, he looked a man who had seen the inside of hell. He walked without moving his arms and seemed empty of energy. Yet this man was, after Collins, the Castle's most dangerous enemy. Like all of us, a poor man, an ex-shop assistant, he had a great flair for intelligence work, and was Collins chief assistant'.[105]

Inevitably comparisons would be made between Tobin's strait-laced personality, and that of Collins who, while also known for his work ethic, was described as lively and full of energy. For example, in the immediate aftermath of discussing Neligan's description of Tobin, Tim Pat Coogan refers to Collins' 'cheerful manner' and 'winning smile'.[106] It should also be noted that there is no indication that Tobin was 'poor' as Neligan claimed, as the 1911 census conveys that they had lodgers, as well as the income of his father.[107]

The study by Darren Kelly and Derek Molyneux, *Killing at its Very Extreme,* offered a similar comparison to Collins, as they describe Tobin as studiously persistent in his work, 'lanky, dark haired and angular, and unlike his fellow Cork man Collins, not known for exuberance'.[108] Likewise, Margery Forester describes him as the more serious, 'dark, sleek-haired' Tobin.[109] That is not to say that these comparisons serve as a critique to his abilities as an intelligence officer, but rather they highlight that despite the differences between the two men in terms of personality and appearance, Tobin was no less essential a figure when it came to running the office. His grandson, Brian Hand, would also argue that, far from being a recluse, there was an element of his work that required him to be sociable and well able to converse with people he was coming into contact with. This certainly appears to have been the case with friends and contacts in Cork, as he travelled back and forth from Dublin to maintain communication with them.[110]

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[105] David Neligan, *The Spy In The Castle*, p. 72
[106] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 77
[107] 'Census of Ireland 1911', Nationalarchives.ie, Accessed on 4th January 2022, https://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/
[108] Darren Kelly and Derek Molyeux, *Killing at its Very Extreme*, p. 127
[109] Margery Forester, *Michael Collins*, p.84, 90
[110] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

T. Ryle Dwyer also points out that Collins never visited Crow Street, as does Joseph. E. A Connell Jr in his study of Collins' key locations in Dublin.[111] Instead Tobin and his subordinates would pour over articles and pages of newspapers and society columns, which focused on the movements and public appearances of all of those associated with the British government in Ireland.[112] Not only participating in this kind of work himself, Tobin categorised the information coming into the office into a filing system based on locations, military, civilian, DMP, etc. Once this categorisation was completed, often Tobin would ask that further inquiries be made, or pull the information as and when Collins requested it. Dalton reported that he would be given the daily newspapers and told to cut out the columns referring to the RIC or military. These would then be pasted on card and sent to Collins for his instructions. Then any photos and other data which could be of interest were cut out and put away. While Collins operated from his own office during the day, Dalton confirmed that he would meet with his lieutenants to discuss intelligence matters at night.[113]

With regards to the telegrams that they received in the office, Dalton stated that Tobin obtained copies from sympathisers who worked for them in the Central Telegraph Office. These would be addressed to district RIC inspectors throughout the country, usually referring to planned raids and arrests, and were written in code. As Crow Street possessed a keyword from the telegram, they were able to decipher them. This keyword was changed at least once a month and the new one would be telegraphed in the existing code. Thornton would boast that they were aware of intended raids one hour before they were carried out.[114] Early on they secured the police and military codes that were changed once a month, with Thornton recounting that the British never suspected that they had obtained the codes. Most raids had a DMP man with them, and as a result any DMP men working for the intelligence office were able to cover for IRA men on raids if they reorganised them.[115] They also had people working for them in hotels as porters and maids, waitresses in restaurants frequented by British forces, railway staff and in particular, those working in the post office (this connection was set up by mid 1920). Each of these individuals

[111] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: The Man Who Won The War*, p. 62; Joseph. E. A. Connell Jr, *Michael Collins: Dublin 1916-1922*, p. 142
[112] Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow*, p. 98
[113] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade,* p. 95 - 97; IE-MA-BMH.WS0434, Charles Dalton, p. 7
[114] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade,* p. 95 - 97; NLI MS 31655, p. 9
[115] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 16 - 17

had their own assigned numbers to use instead of their names. According to Thornton, they also had members of the civil service, the RIC and the British Secret Service working for them.[116]

Intelligence officer Patrick Caldwell stated that a typical assignment was when he was sent by Tobin to Amiens Street police station to look out for a policeman called 'Roberts'. He was given a photo, and after watching him getting into a car one morning, he was then instructed to go to the train platform and observe all of Roberts' movements from when he left his carriage until he reached his car. On the morning of 22nd June 1920 members of the Squad under Paddy O'Daly were detailed to shoot Roberts, and so Caldwell was the intelligence officer who was brought along to identify him. In the end Roberts was only wounded, but later resigned from the police.[117] This is a prime example of how the intelligence system and Squad collaborated together when carrying out this kind of work, from the initial findings to the firing of bullets.

Béaslaí stated that in June or July 1919 Collins was in contact with several political detectives in G division (the section of plainclothes detectives working within the DMP).[118] Collins would remain secretive about a number of his contacts throughout the war, and it is generally regarded that only he knew the exact number of people working for him. However, at a certain point in 1919 and early 1920 it became necessary to make others in the intelligence department aware of some of these contacts for fear that they would be shot or other agents would become suspicious of them. For example, Tommy Gay, a librarian working on Capel Street, ran dispatches and secret operations for him, and initially Collins remained tight-lipped on the work he was doing. Eventually he introduced Tobin and Cullen to Gay as they had been tailing him, and there were fears that he could be shot or injured if they mistook him for an enemy agent.[119]

Similar incidents would occur in the case of Detective Ned Broy of G Division, who Tobin and Cullen had also been tracing for several nights without Broy's knowledge. Thornton stated that contacts were also made with army men, auxiliaries, privates and sergeants, although he stated that they were never fully trusted, particularly as some were working for payment by the intelligence unit. In an attempt to combat this, if they secured two people in a unit, they would ask each of them to submit a full report on the other. As the war got worse, Thornton

[116] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 7; NLI MS 31655, p. 10
[117] IE-MA-BMH.WS0638, Patrick Caldwell, p. 24 - 25
[118] Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, p. 217
[119] Dominic Price, *We Bled Together*, p. 91

claimed that intelligence 'was intensified everywhere and practically every move of the British was known in advance'.[120] All files were detailed and drawn up in a specific order, such as G division enemies, members of particular clubs, and generally anyone connected with the crown forces, divided by location and jurisdiction. New information would be added as it was acquired, and inquiries would be made as to potential sympathies that an individual held, and how useful they could be to the department.

Tobin also participated in the identification of spies, as was the case with Bernard McNulty, aka 'Molloy', a British agent who was shot on 24th March 1920. He would occasionally also take part in the shootings, including Alan Bell, another British official, who was killed two days later on 26th March 1920. Thornton commented that this kind of work was not exclusive to Tobin or other higher-ranking members of the department, and that it was also common for lower-ranking intelligence officers to assist with Squad jobs or activities.[121] Historian Dominic Price also argues that the intelligence officer would often join in the killing, usually firing the first shot.[122] Squad man Joe Leonard would also detail how useful the intelligence service was to them, as they had 'first hand knowledge of enemy movements, documents, and photographs' which helped them to counter the assaults of the British.[123] Price argues that orders to kill particular members of the RIC and DMP would come from Collins alone, but that they were usually delivered by Tobin or else Cullen to the members of the Squad; individual members of the group would corroborate this.[124]

Vinny Byrne confirmed that the Squad came directly under the control of Collins, but that it was Tobin who delegated his orders.[125] Charles Dalton would also report that when the Squad was fully formed they would wait for hours at Seville Place for Tobin to bring them their instructions, acting as an intermediary between the different elements of the intelligence department, and assisting them in coordinating their work while Collins oversaw their activities from above.[126] For instance, Joe Dolan stated that it was Tobin who ordered him to shoot Willie Doran, the porter in the Wicklow Hotel suspected of spying for the British.[127] This practice

[120] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 5-6
[121] Frank Thornton, Interview by Brian Farrell, "The Survivors", RTE, November 26th 1964
[122] Dominic Price, *We Bled Together,* p. 115
[123] IE-MA-BMH.WS0547, Joseph Leonard, p. 8
[124] Dominic Price, p. 80
[125] IE-MA-BMH.WS0423, Vincent Byrne, p. 31
[126] IE-MA-BMH.WS0434, Charles Dalton, p. 42
[127] T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad*, p. 209

would continue after the former Squad leader, Mick McDonnell, suffered a nervous breakdown in the summer of 1920, after which James Slattery assumed the leadership position. Slattery also confirmed that it was typical for him to receive orders directly from Crow Street, 'usually from Liam Tobin, sometimes from Tom Cullen, and occasionally from Collins'.[128] William Stapleton, another member of the Squad, would also corroborate this when he stated that even after Bloody Sunday Tobin would frequently bring instructions straight to Seville Place or other locations across the city.[129]

In his witness statement, Vinny Byrne described once being summoned to Crow Street with Tom Keogh and James Slattery to receive information from Tobin on the movements of the notorious Igoe gang operating in the city. Named after their leader, Eugene Igoe, the gang were feared undercover British agents that were top of the IRA's wanted list due to their reputation for identifying its members for execution and arrest. On this occasion all three were reprimanded by Tobin for coming unarmed, and were then ordered to Harcourt Street where Igoe himself was soon to arrive, again indicating that Tobin was both managing the flow of information coming into the office and overseeing the execution of its use, in the literal sense of the word.[130]

Tobin would provide the details of these activities when he would meet with Collins in Vaughans or Devlin's each evening; Vaughans in particular saw 'a considerable amount of business' being transacted. He stated that men who worked for them in the post office would come along with any captured documentation, and decisions would be taken about the content of these papers. This related to a wide variety of things that would be caught going through the mail, including codes for the RIC and military telegrams. For obvious reasons, Tobin would not be able to take such documents away with him to his safe house, and so he would often give them to Tom Cullen who then stored them in a flat owned by Miss Margaret Browne (later Margaret McEntee). They would be kept in the flat there until Tobin required them.[131] James Gleeson also alluded to the danger of documents being captured in raids, and pointed to one instance when Tobin himself was almost caught during a military raid in a safe house, escaping by the skin of his teeth, but it resulted in him leaving important documents behind.[132]

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[128] IE-MA-BMH.WS0445, James Slattery, p. 3
[129] IE-MA-BMH.WS0822, William Stapleton, p. 32 - 33
[130] IE-MA-BMH.WS0423, Vincent Byrne, p. 58
[131] IE-MA-WMSP34REF60579, Margaret McEntee, p. 80 - 82
[132] James Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday*, (United Kingdom: P Davis, 1962) p. 117

Devlin's pub was frequently used by Tobin and other intelligence officers from approximately September 1919 to July 1922. The owner Liam Devlin stated in his pension application that the first Volunteer to stay with him was Tobin, who stayed for a week presumably to ensure the location was safe for a dispatch centre. Dispatches were usually left there for delivery to him, Collins, Cullen, Thornton and Joe O'Reilly. Practically every night they would call to get dispatches, and it was also used as a location for Tobin and the others to meet with detectives working for them, such as Broy.[133] Collins would also meet David Neligan with Tobin at Devlins, Bannon's Public House, or at Tommy Gay's house in Clontarf. All of the information received was given to either Collins, Tobin, Thornton or Cullen, and when public houses were not available, 'dark street corners' were used for these exchanges.[134]

Tobin also emphasised the importance of establishing and maintaining contacts with those who worked for the enemy forces. One such contact for him personally was Patrick Berry, the warder in Mountjoy. They would meet seven nights a week for dispatches coming in and out of the jail, and Berry would be useful in providing them with updates on the prisoners. T. Ryle Dwyer argues that it was most likely Tobin who introduced Berry to Collins.[135] Similarly, Thomas Walsh, businessman and sympathiser, allowed his business premises at O'Connell and Talbot Street to be used for 'any and every kind of army activity'. On instructions from Collins, Ned Broy, post officials and friendly auxiliaries were directed to leave information with Walsh, and so Tobin, in turn, was told to keep in close contact with him because of important connections which he made. Tobin stated in his reference for Walsh's pension that this link was vital for them in later uncovering certain enemy spies at the time, including Quinslick, Jameson and Molloy.[136] Volunteer and post office official Eugene Kelly was also in contact with a number of DMP detectives who were passing information to the IRA; this included Broy and a detective called Connolly. Through this connection he passed on useful intelligence to Tobin and Cullen, and left documents at various locations around Parnell Square and Talbot Street, and according to Tobin he proved himself to be an 'outstanding man' and one of the best contacts that they had.[137]

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[133] IE-MA-MSP34REF55488, Liam Devlin Pension File, p. 11
[134] David Neligan, *The Spy In The Castle*, p. 2 - 3
[135] T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad*, p. 16
[136] IE-MA-WMSP34REF57114, Thomas Walsh, p. 28 - 32
[137] IE-MA-MSP34REF1130, Eugene Kelly, p. 17, 18, 33

Charles Dalton emphasised the important role that post and telegraph office workers played in the collection of information, stating that it was one of the most fruitful sources of information that they received, as the British forces mainly depended on communication on the telephone and telegraph services. In the Central Telegraph Office they had Liam Archer working for them, and in the principal sorting office there was Paddy Moynihan, each with their own code numbers for intelligence dispatches. Information would also be collected via contacts that Collins was personally in touch with, including some postal officials who were engaged on the mail boats, and also from London through his contact with Sam Maguire. Decades later Tobin would later support the pension applications for many of the people who had been helping them in the post office. For instance, Sean O'Connell had passed on information to them from 1919, even trying to tap into the military telephone wires. When O'Connell was applying for his pension in the late 1930's, Tobin stressed that having this link with the mails was crucial, and added that the information that was passed to the intelligence office was 'responsible in no small part for its success', concluding that beyond question the work O'Connell and his colleagues did was of the 'greatest value to the Army in its efforts to counter the enemy secret service'.[138]

Tobin as Collins' deadliest lieutenant

Michael Foy refers to Collins' capture as being akin to the holy grail for the British forces.[139] In addition, Michael Hopkinson emphasises the success of the intelligence officers in Dublin, arguing that by 1919 Collins had already established an effective network of agents. Maurice Walsh also points to Florence O'Donoghue of Cork and Collins being the two most important figures to emerge with regards to the organisation of military intelligence.[140] Foy argues that creating such a department would have daunted others who were 'less confident and resilient' than Collins, yet he also recognises that Collins had no intention of being a 'departmental desk manager' in Crow Street, preferring instead to move around his intelligence empire.[141] Both Foy and Price remain two of the few historians who have gone beyond merely acknowledging the role Tobin played in the intelligence war, with Foy referring to him as a 'laconic keeper of secrets', adding that he was chosen for his experience working as an intelligence officer with the

[138] IE-MA-MSP34REF20065, Sean O'Connell, p. 26, 63
[139] Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War,* p. 142
[140] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 69-70; Maurice Walsh, *G2: In Defence of Ireland Irish Military Intelligence 1918-1945*, (Cork: The Collins Press, 2010), p. 33
[141] Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War,* p. 26, 45

Dublin Brigade, and therefore was not the typical 'Collins man' who was given a job based on his association with the charismatic leader.[142] The importance of Collins to the intelligence war cannot be understated, but it is also necessary to focus on Tobin as the person who was managing the flow of information that contacts and informers were gathering.

There has been little emphasis on how crucial Tobin's role was to the intelligence war, especially when taking into consideration that Collins had virtually no input in the day to day running of Crow Street. Joseph E. A. Connell Jr argues that Collins had complete trust in Tobin, Cullen and Thornton, and although he delegated the instructions from afar, he also recognised the important role all three lieutenants played in its organisation and structure.[143] Likewise, Paul MacMahon in his study, *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, is justified when he asserts that Collins was the mastermind behind intelligence. However, his 600 page study does not mention Liam Tobin at all.[144] Other historians have also commented on the effectiveness of Tobin, Cullen and Thornton, with Tim Pat Coogan referring to their 'remarkable solidarity and consistency' in the course of those violent years, and Joseph E. A. Connell Jr also argues that while the role of Collins cannot be understated, the success of the intelligence department was attributable at least as much to the canniness of the three deputies.[145] Peter Hart reached a similar conclusion, arguing that Collins was the boss, but that the success of IRA intelligence was as much to do with their hard work as his direction.[146]

Tobin is often portrayed as the more serious, rigid member of the intelligence office, less robust and charismatic than his counterparts. T. Ryle Dwyer, however, describes him as an inconspicuous individual whose appearance was deceptive.[147] Some of Tobin's contemporaries have devoted more credit to the contribution that he made to intelligence, with Rex Taylor pointing out that he was a 'natural expert at decoding cipher documents', and that the work he carried out was of 'inestimable importance to Collins'.[148] In addition, a number of the witness statements refer to him as being considered an important person within the General Headquarters staff from at least early 1918, including Dalton, and Sean Whelan, who was involved with Tobin

[142] Ibid, p. 50 - 51
[143] Joseph. E. A. Connell Jr, *The Shadow War: Michael Collins and the Politics of Violence*, (Dublin: Eastwood Books, 2019), p. 210 - 211
[144] Paul MacMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels: British Intelligence and Ireland 1916 - 1945*, (United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 2011), p. 26-27
[145] Joseph E. A. Connell Jr, *The Shadow War,* p. 210; Tim Pat Coogan, *The Twelve Apostles*, p. 71
[146] Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins*, p. 205
[147] T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Man Who Won The War*, p. 62
[148] Rex Taylor, *Michael Collins,* (United Kingdom: New English Library, 1958), p. 100

in the shooting of District Inspector Lea-Wilson in Wexford in 1920. In his contribution to Uinseann MacEoin's collection of contemporary accounts, *Survivors*, former Volunteer Tony Woods even went so far as to claim that 'Tobin of course was the real intelligence man in Dublin in the Tan struggle, not Collins', and that Collins himself would be the first to admit this. While this view may be hyperbolic, and there can be no doubt as to Collins' leadership of intelligence, it nonetheless highlights the fact that many of the successes that Collins experienced were because he was able to leave the office running in the capable hands of Tobin.[149] Anne Dolan and William Murphy also emphasise how essential Tobin was to Collins in their recent biography, *Michael Collins: The Man and the Revolution*. Despite the study's focal point being Collins, they acknowledge that Tobin played a crucial role in the intelligence war, and assert that Collins' strength was 'what people were prepared to believe of him'.[150]

Siobhan Lankford would convey her own recollections of the period in her book *The Hope and the Sadness*. Arguably her account is the most detailed one on Tobin available, as she directly stated that his work for the Revolution was never fully recognised;

> 'He was Michael Collins' most able assistant. He never sought publicity, and he got his work done with speed and efficiency by the simple method of doing it himself if there was nobody available to carry out his orders as quickly as he wished. Only Michael Collins could really do justice to Liam's devotion to the Republic. He was a brave and daring soldier whose motto was 'Arms are the badge of free men; he who is unarmed will soon be in chains''.[151]

While Collins' name does appear in the reports maintained by the intelligence office, he is mainly corresponding with Tobin, either by issuing instructions for him to then delegate to the rest of the staff, or by asking for information on previous reports made about an individual. For example in June 1921, in one file marked 'Enemy Officials in Civil Administration', Collins instructed Tobin to, 'please cause enquiries to be made with a view to locating 'Miss Cissie Stapleton', 1 Wilfred Road, Palmerston Park'. Tobin's response is fairly typical of the kind of straight forward exchange that was common between the two, as he confirmed that he knew the

[149] Tony Woods, in *Survivors*, edited by Uinseann MacEoin, (Dublin: Argenta Publications, 1980), p. 322
[150] Anne Dolan and William Murphy, *Michael Collins: The Man and the Revolution*, (Cork: The Collins Press, 2018), p. 95
[151] Siobhan Lankford, *The Hope and The Sadness*, p. 127

person, but instructed Thornton to get a more recent address for her.[152] Tobin had also obtained a list of all lady typists that worked in Dublin Castle after the truce in August 1921, proving that they continued to keep tabs on any possible link to the British authorities even after the truce. They also had a list of all enemy motorcars, which included the model, colour, any distinguishing features and the journeys each made daily. This list was frequently updated, with Tobin noting in one report that a particular black 4 seater carries very important officers.[153]

Evidence from The Collins Papers further shows that the department functioned like any typical office in the city, with Tobin handling reports covering everything from surveillance on potential enemy agents, the importation of arms and the possibility of seizing them, or the recruitment of men for a job. One report from 30th June 1921 detailed a possible shipment of arms coming into Dún Laoghaire, which saw Thornton, Collins and Tobin corresponding over the course of three months on the need for discretion and care when attempting to take the cargo.[154] Tobin's diligence is clear throughout, as he stressed the importance of clarifying the information received, and spent time considering which battalion was most suitable for each job.

On another occasion on 6th July 1921 Tobin received information from an intelligence officer concerning someone who gave information to the Castle some weeks prior, whereupon the messenger was instructed to get a definite name before proceeding any further.[155] There are also other instances of Tobin prioritising different reports and cases over others, and dictating to the intelligence officers which should be given preference. But Collins' control of the office from afar remains clear as he dictated additional lines of enquiry for Tobin to follow up on himself, and on one occasion even reminded him that 'a note was sent to you about getting stuff typed in single spacing!'.[156] There were also times when Tobin appears to debate whether more serious action should be taken if the person under surveillance posed a threat. Evidence of this can be seen in a report dating from 31st March 1921 concerning Col. R. B . Cousins, an enemy agent located in Dublin. Surveillance on the individual continued for several more months, and just days before the truce on 7th July Tobin questioned 'Should he be got?'. The same report also provides a glimpse into the more stoic side of the man, as once a final decision is reached by

[152] IE-MA-CP-05-01-19, N File: Enemy Officials (Civilian). Civil Administration, p. 10
[153] IE-MA-BMH-CD-188-01-1103 Frank Thornton Personal Record
[154] IE-MA-CP-05-01-07/4, Daily Reports: Dunleary, p. 4
[155] IE-MA-CP-05-01-03, B1 File: Located in Dublin, p. 8
[156] IE-MA-CP-05-01-18, L File: Cases to be dealt with after Truce, p. 15

Collins, Tobin issued instructions for those carrying out the execution to take the man's guns when the job is completed.[157]

Tobin was considered to be quite a formidable character in his own right, with Dan Breen referring to him as 'brave to a fault' and 'ice cool in a crisis', and it was well known that he was not impulsive or reckless in carrying out his orders, making him a valuable trigger man.[158] The most well known example of this is in the case of Alan Bell, who was shot by Tobin and Mick McDonnell as they pulled him off a tram in March 1920. On another occasion he and Squad man Tom Kelleher waited for British officer Captain Joycelyn Lee Hardy one day near Wicklow Street with the intent to kill him for his treatment of IRA prisoners, but he got by them. Hardy had a reputation as one of the most vicious interrogators in the Castle.[159] Additionally, when applying for her pension in 1945, Margaret McEntee informed the board of assessors that Tobin had also been involved in the shooting of Detective Dalton in April 1920. She described how he and others had come from her flat, and after the shooting took place at Blackchurch, they later returned to get rid of their arms. Tobin would confirm this in his reference for her application, although he did state that others accompanied him on this occasion, so it cannot be certain if his shot was the fatal one. Nevertheless, the dumping of the gun afterwards implies at least that he would have no scruples about carrying out the task.[160]

He was also a key asset for some of the more risky activities and plans considered by GHQ, including the attempted rescue of Volunteer Sean MacEoin from prison in May 1921. Friend and comrade, Tony Woods, stated that Tobin had participated in this failed prison break, and recalled that only 'the toughest men in the A.S.U [Active Service Unit] were selected' for this particular job.[161] Even in the months before accepting his commission as Deputy Director, James McGuill claimed that Tobin was also involved in the attempted jail break of a number of important prisoners in Dundalk prison. McGuill stated that on two separate occasions, Tobin and Sean McGarry were sent to get a plan of the prison, in which Frank Thornton was also serving time.[162]

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[157] IE-MA-CP-05-01-03, B1 File: Located in Dublin, p. 49
[158] Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom,* 3rd ed, (United Kingdom, Anvil Books, 1981), p. 129
[159] Tony Woods, *Survivors*, p. 316 - 317
[160] IE-MA-WMSP34REF60579, Margaret McEntee, p. 53, 80 - 82
[161] Tony Woods, *Survivors*, p. 316 - 317
[162] IE-MA-BMH.WS0353, James McGuill, p. 43

Clearly considered to be one of the most reliable members of Collins' inner circle of comrades, Tobin would be sent on other tasks around the country, and eventually his presence at 'jobs' would be an indication to the other participants that something important was happening. Another Volunteer, Henry MacNabb recalled how Tobin had been sent by Collins to Belfast with orders to bring down a large quantity of ammunition to Dublin. When taking into consideration how closely railways were monitored at the time, this was no easy feat.[163] Similarly, Michael Lynch recounted the day in October 1920 when he saw Dan Breen being carried by Tobin and Cullen from a safehouse after being shot, describing how Breen had been on the verge of death, with a city of crown forces searching for him, and was being half carried down the front path by both men.[164]

On the orders of Collins he was also sent to London on at least two occasions between 1919-1921 to examine the possibility of shooting members of the London cabinet. On the first trip he was sent with Mick McDonnell and fellow intelligence officer George Fitzgerald, during which they observed all major events that the ministers attended. The trips were due to Cathal Brugha's insistence that it may be possible to carry out such a job, but in both cases Tobin reported that it would be suicidal.[165] There is only one known instance of Tobin discussing any of his intelligence activities in detail. In 1961 he had a conversation with historian and law professor Geoffrey Hand, in which he described these trips to London, detailing how he informed Collins that it would have meant 'writing off' whoever was assigned to the job because Downing Street was the only location possible to carry it off. At one point Collins actually joined him in London, and Tobin remarked to Hand that he had suggested stealing the Coronation Chair from Westminster Abbey. Unsure whether Collins was serious or not, he merely concluded that 'nothing came of it'.[166]

Additionally, one of the most vital aspects of Tobin's role in intelligence was to act as a gatekeeper between Collins and those who wished to make contact with him. This would apply to Volunteers and intelligence officers as well, and many of them would state that they rarely, if ever, met Collins. With the exception of the Squad members (who Collins would meet with periodically), and those GHQ members closest to him, very few actually saw Collins on a regular

[163] IE-MA-24SP12908, Henry McNabb, p. 35
[164] IE-MA-BMH.WS0511, Michael Lynch, p. 85
[165] T.Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad,* p. 53-56; Leon O'Broin, *Michael Collins*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1980), p. 76
[166] Leon O'Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 76

basis, and Tobin was one of many who loyally guarded him from outside threats. This included interviewing or screening those who requested to meet him, and it applied to both friend and foe alike, as even those who claimed to be sympathisers had to be treated with suspicion until proven otherwise. This was the case with David Neligan, who would go on to be one of Collins' most infamous spies inside Dublin Castle. Neligan would later describe his first meeting with Collins in great detail, but before this could happen a meeting was arranged for Tobin to question him, and get an understanding of where his loyalties lay. Neligan stated,

> "His motive in meeting me was to safeguard Collins and the revolutionary movement against a possible enemy, as many 'friends' had turned up sailing under false colours. By adroit questioning he sought to prove my mind…he was satisfied and arranged a meeting with Collins".[167]

Liam Devlin would relay a similar story when applying for his pension, as he stated that he did not know Collins' identity when he met him, although it was some days after this that Tobin came to stay in his pub for the first time. Only after he could be satisfied that the family were sympathisers was Devlin formally introduced to Collins.[168] These same methods of observation and investigation were extended to new intelligence recruits. When Patrick Kennedy was recruited into the office full time in 1920, careful enquiries had been made about his character and military record, to ensure that he was reliable and trustworthy. For obvious reasons this investigation into new staff was vital in protecting the identities of other intelligence officers, especially in the case of Kennedy who would go on to meet informers at least once a day, including Neligan. Failure to look into a new recruit's background thoroughly enough could have had disastrous consequences for those passing information to Collins and the department. In his letter of reference for Kennedy's pension, Frank Thornton confirmed this practice, stating that they had to be fully satisfied as to the activities of all staff 'before they would even consider him as a likely candidate for intelligence GHQ'. Subsequently, Thornton reported to Tobin that he was satisfied with Kennedy's background.[169]

[167] David Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle* p. 72
[168] IE-MA-MSP34REF55488, Liam Devlin, p. 23
[169] Thornton RTE Interview; IE-MA- MSP34REF1549, Patrick Kennedy, p. 61 - 64

A similar procedure would take place when Collins was approached by self-proclaimed 'sympathisers' who would make grand offerings of guns, information and ammunition as means of helping the Volunteers. Despite his normally shrewd personality, Collins would at times show misjudgement when it came to dealing with these suspected spies. Michael Foy even suggests that he could be 'surprisingly naive with British agents posing as friends'.[170] In the case of two spies, John Jameson (or John Charles Byrne) and Bernard 'Molloy' McNulty, the promise of guns and information may have been too much of a temptation for him to ignore, and on both occasions Cullen and Tobin made attempts to convince Collins that they posed a very serious security threat.[171]

Christmas Eve 1920 provided another infamous example of Collin's misjudgement, when he insisted on hosting a dinner for his friends in the very public Gresham Hotel dining room. During the festivities auxiliaries raided the hotel, dragging Collins off to the bathroom for a closer examination when they questioned his identity. After some time had passed, Tobin became concerned and made an excuse to check on him, whereupon he found one of the auxiliaries comparing Collins with a bad photo that had.[172] This safeguard also applied to Volunteers visiting from other parts of the country, as George Power found when he travelled from Cork to Dublin for a week to discuss the position of North Cork. For several nights he slept in Vaughans with Collins, Tobin and Cullen, and later discovered that Tobin and Cullen had been detailed to look after him and accompany him everywhere.[173]

This method of scrutinising suspects did not go out of practice even decades later, as Dan Breen detailed in one incident from the 1940's. From 1940 to 1959 Tobin worked as Superintendent of the Oireachtas, and frequently received a lift home from Breen when he was a TD during the Second World War. For a time during this period Breen had become friendly with a man he met at the races, and after arranging to meet him at Leinster House one afternoon, Breen stated that he noticed Tobin was trying to get his attention. The man in question turned out to be a former detective who was with another man that Breen had shot one night in Drumcondra in October 1920. The man was subsequently told by Tobin not to return. Another, slightly more humorous incident, took place around the same time during one of their drives home, when

[170] Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War*, p. 51
[171] Darren Kelly and Derek Molyeux, *Killing at its Very Extreme,* p. 170
[172] Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow*, p. 183
[173] IE-MA-BMH.WS0451, George Power, p. 9

Breen almost hit a man on a bicycle. Once they had passed him, Tobin informed him that it was Dinny Barrett, former commissioner of the Black and Tans, and jokingly remarked that it was a pity that he had not hit him.[174] Both incidents appear harmless in their nature, but nonetheless it is indicative of Tobin's ability to retain key information even decades later, and highlights why he had been so effective as an intelligence officer.

In addition, Frank O'Connor argued that Collins' lieutenants were told what information they were required to know, and no more.[175] Despite this, as his deputy, Tobin was privy to some of the more sensitive information than most within the department. T. Ryle Dwyer claims that when Collins would go to his office on Mespil Road in the mornings this was only known to around half a dozen people, including Tobin. Contemporary and Collins confidant Batt O'Connor confirmed this, claiming that only Batt, Tobin, Cullen, Sinead Mason (Collins' secretary) and Joe O'Reilly knew about Mespil Road.[176] He also appeared to have been aware of certain details regarding more loyalist supporters, as David Neligan alluded to attending a party in the house of one such British sympathiser. Neligan stated that he later asked Tobin who owned the house, and even when he was publishing his own account of the war, *The Spy in the Castle,* in 1968, Neligan elected that it was better not to disclose the details. Although he may have had his own confidences, it is apparent that Collins still had an immense amount of trust in Tobin, and it was understood that he could be relied upon to maintain the secrets of the department. At no point did Tobin divulge details about his intelligence work, unless to provide a reference for a military pension application, and limited his own witness statement to the Easter Rising. He repeatedly refused to reveal specific details about their work, and remained silent on the issue. When asked to provide a reference for a pension, he often refused to elaborate on specific duties that an individual may have carried out, merely confirming that he was aware that they held a position under his command. For example, when Robert Brennan (former head of Dáil Éireann's Department of Propaganda) applied for his pension in 1946, Tobin provided him with a reference to back up his claim, but only to verify that he had been involved with intelligence work, making it clear that he could not provide details on the nature of the work carried out by Brennan.[177]

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[174] IE-MA-BMH.WS1739, Daniel Breen, p. 27 - 28
[175] Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow*, p. 99
[176] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: The Man Who Won The War*, p. 76; Batt O'Connor, *With Michael Collins in the Fight for Irish Independence*, (London: Peter Davies, Ltd, 1929), p. 133
[177] IE-MA-MSP34REF184488, Robert Brennan, p. 115

Furthermore, many of his contemporaries, even critics, praised Tobin's efficiency as an intelligence agent, and organiser. He did not have good relations with David Neligan in the years after the Revolution, yet even he pointed out that Tobin had received no official training, and had a basic education with the intention of entering the hardware trade. Nonetheless, Neligan commented how remarkable it was that he was able to match the talents and efficiency of his British counterparts, and concluded that 'he would have been worth his place in any intelligence bureau'.[178] Historian Roger Faligot also refers to Tobin's quick learning curve in his study *British Military Strategy in Ireland*, arguing that he, Cullen and Thornton were remarkably efficient despite this 'on the spot training'.[179] To this end, there is some truth to Neligan's claim that after Collins, Tobin was the most dangerous man that Dublin Castle came up against.

Tobin also featured prominently on the radar of the authorities from at least 1918 to early 1919 while engaging in intelligence activities in Cork, as Cumann na mBan members stated that he frequently had to change safe houses when certain areas were no longer safe for him. His family home on Munster Street, Phibsborough, was also raided several times by the British from at least early 1920. Patrick Berry described going to gatherings there, with guests including Tom Cullen and Collins, and recalled that they often had to run out the back lane when they heard a raid approaching.[180] Seán Ó Mhurtuile also referenced staying in the family home several times in his memoirs, including spending Christmas Day there in 1920. He described one raid that was carried out in June 1920 which they had warned Tobin's family about in advance. They later found that his father and brother Nicholas had been arrested, as well as a lodger who was unfortunately also named William Tobin. Although his father and brother were released some hours later, the lodger was kept under interrogation for longer, with Ó Mhurtuile commenting that he was very lucky to be eventually released, as 'at that time arrest for Liam Tobin would have meant certain death'.[181] As previously stated, Kevin O'Doherty, a neighbour, also recounted that one night he found Tobin hiding in their outdoor toilet during a military raid.[182] By the end of Autumn 1920 their house was no longer safe for him, and he would reside at many joints and safe houses across the city.

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[178] David Neligan, p. 72
[179] Roger Faligot, *Britain's Military Strategy in Ireland: The Kitson Experiment*, (United Kingdom: Zed Press, 1983), p. 94
[180] IE-MA-BMH.WS0942, Patrick Berry, p. 13
[181] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Additional Papers, P7/A/209, Seán Ó Mhurtuile Memoirs, p. 105,106,132
[182] Michael Kevin O'Doherty, *My Parents and Other Rebels,* p.45-46

Dominic Price also refers to an attempt to capture Tobin when he visited an ice cream parlour near Sackville Street. British intelligence reports state that a plan was made to capture 'the man with the scar' one evening in either late December 1920, or early January 1921. They had received information that Tobin would visit the parlour between 7.45 and 8.30 pm, and on the night in question plans were made for a lorry of auxiliaries to wait on Rutlands Square, with one man on the ground to point him out. In this instance Tobin did not turn up, but every precaution was taken by the British in the event that he did, including forming blocks on each side of the parlour if he were to be found in the area.[183]

Intelligence officer Patrick Caldwell also referred to an incident that occurred between himself and fellow officer Joe Guilfoyle in September 1920. He had been detailed to keep watch for Captain Hardy outside his hotel, only for both of them to be arrested by the target in question later that afternoon; Hardy apparently had a sixth sense for spotting intelligence officers. During their search and interrogation at the Castle, one of the officers found a note from Tobin in Guilfoyle's pockets, whereupon Caldwell recalled that the attention of both Hardy and the second officer present turned to Guilfoyle;

> 'The officer who was searching Guilfoyle became quite excited when he found this note and said to Captain Hardy, who was searching me, "We have here a letter from the notorious Liam Tobin". With that Hardy forgot all about me and directed his attention towards Guilfoyle'.[184]

Conclusion

It is likely that Neligan's assertion concerning the threat that Tobin posed referred to the deceptive exterior that he portrayed to the people around him, that of a seemingly harmless individual who moved quietly and listlessly. But Neligan himself was well aware of the extent of Tobin's knowledge of both enemy and ally alike, and it is likely that he understood that it was his talent for collecting and organising details such as these that made him such a foreboding figure in the intelligence war. The fact that Captain Hardy became so fixated on the letter found on Guilfoyle proves how valuable a catch the British authorities considered Tobin to be. Combined

[183] Dominic Price, p. 210; TNA WO 35/86 B, Letter to Auxiliary F Company December 1920, Raid and Search Reports: Special Intelligence and Military Reports
[184] IE-MA-BMH.WS0638, Patrick Caldwell, p. 29

with his thoroughness as an intelligence officer, Tobin also proved that he was willing to participate in the executions of spies and enemy agents, and not merely as a bystander or identifier of the target in question. The fact that his contemporaries also referred to him as being a quiet and self-preserved presence only further highlights how much of a lethal figure he was. This can be seen in the claim made by Tim Pat Coogan that Tobin also sent Captain Hardy anonymous death threats even in the years after the Revolution. If this is true, it only serves as further proof that despite his quiet exterior, Liam Tobin was not a Volunteer to be underestimated.[185] Hardy would later write several fictional works about his time in Ireland, including *Never In Vain*, with the title character Andrew Kerr is loosely based on himself. One section of the book discusses Kerr receiving a death threat years after the Revolution, and it is possible that this is a covert reference to threats that Hardy himself may have received.[186] Moreover, the wording of a real death threat sent to Hardy before the truce implies that the IRA were prepared to execute him at any time;

'Your days are numbered, do not think that by leaving the country or remaining in the castle you will escape the hand of justice, your death warrant is signed, IRA'.[187]

[185] Tim Pat Coogan, *The Twelve Apostles*, p. 183
[186] Jocelyn Lee Hardy, *Never In Vain*, (United States of America: Doubleday Inc, 1936), p. 10, 303
[187] TNA CO 904/177/380, Letter to Captain Joyceln Lee Hardy, Ireland: Dublin Castle Records, Administration, Police

Chapter 3 - Women in Intelligence

Throughout his time as Deputy Director of Intelligence Tobin also came into contact with several women who assisted him with his work, whether it be through carrying dispatches, storing arms, passing on information, or providing safehouses for men on the run. Meda Ryan makes several references to Tobin in her work, *Michael Collins and the Women Who Spied for Ireland*, discussing how he would meet women dispatchers throughout Dublin, and detailed how he and Collins once passed their guns to Maire Comerford and Moya Llwelleyn Davies during a raid in a restaurant.[188] An examination of the military pension files makes it clear that many women who took part in the Revolution, and particularly those involved with secretive intelligence work, had to work even harder than their male counterparts to prove the significance of the role that they played. In a number of cases Tobin was called to make a reference supporting their application, and appeared to have been very willing to do so for any of the women that he remembered working with, at times even stating that they deserve recognition above the ordinary Volunteer, due to the high risks they took. While there is no evidence to suggest that Tobin was particularly radical in his feminist viewpoints, he did not have any issue with working with women, and he understood the value that they brought to the intelligence war. Throughout Dublin there were many women who played an active role in the war on intelligence who he came into contact with on a weekly, if not daily basis. These women ranged from waitresses in restaurants that the auxiliaries frequented, maids, clerks, and even prostitutes, all who passed on information and carried dispatches for the Volunteers.

Dublin woman Celia Collins stated in her pension application that messages, dispatches and parcels were frequently left in her tobacconist shop on Parnell Street, and people like Tobin, Dick McKee, Harry Boland, and Tom Cullen often came to collect documents or leave something in her care. She also occasionally took dispatches to known Collins joints around the city, including Devlin's pub or Vaughans, never knowing the contents of anything she was transporting or keeping. In addition, her home would be used as a safe house for men, and she eventually had to be treated for nervous trouble by her doctor due to the stress of the high risks she was taking.[189] Similarly, Madge Comer stated that from 1918 she was carrying dispatches for Collins, Tobin and Cullen, and organising safe houses for anyone on the run. She was also acting

[188] Meda Ryan, *Michael Collins and the Women Who Spied for Ireland, (*Dublin: Mercier Press, 1996), p.58, 64
[189] IE-MA-MSP34REF60818, Celia Collins, p. 53-61

as a courier between Collins and Mountjoy prison, and was one of the informants who passed on details to Tobin regarding the spy Molloy, who had been meeting Tobin under the pretence of being an IRA sympathiser. Generally speaking, she worked as a dispatcher between most members of the headquarters staff, and also between the policemen that Collins had working for him, such as James McNamara and David Neligan. She would meet with Tobin, Cullen and Thornton on a weekly basis, sometimes in Bewleys cafe, and Tobin himself described her as being reliable and trustworthy.[190]

Tobin would also provide a reference for Moira Kenny O'Byrne, who he again referred to as a reliable worker. He frequently stayed at a house that Rory O'Connor and Georóid O'Sullivan managed to get on Park View Avenue in 1921, which O'Bryne was in charge of. Tobin also stated that Collins and other GHQ men were constant callers at the house, but eventually it was raided, and so they discontinued using it. He went on to say that she carried dispatches for the intelligence officers, and stored documents for them.[191] Fellow Dubliner Bridie Whelan also recalled working in this house, and carried dispatches for the intelligence staff. She confirmed it was a meeting place and safe house used by the headquarters staff, including Collins and Tobin, and also added that it apparently was owned by a person of 'well known loyalist views'. In July 1921, possibly just before the truce, the house was raided, and among the men present at the time was Tobin. In his own book, Neligan referred to a party taking place in a similarly described house, also stating that it belonged to the loyalist that Tobin refused to name.[192] Tobin would give Whelan a reference for her pension application in 1936, stating that he was glad to testify for the work that she did, and corroborated that that house was owned by a well known British sympathiser.[193]

Back in the city centre, Margaret O'Callaghan worked as a waitress in the Red Bank restaurant, a location Tobin and other members of the intelligence staff frequently used and they would leave parcels for her to keep in her locker. This continued until September of 1920 when she was persuaded by Collins to open the West End Cafe on Parkgate Street, and the auxiliaries would regularly go there. This made it easy for her to get information from them, and arms or dispatches would also be left at this location. In his reference to her pension in January 1939,

[190] IE-MA-MSP34REF37758, Madge Comer, p. 34
[191] IE-MA-MSP34REF381, Moira Kennedy O'Byrne, p. 38
[192] David Neligan, p. 98
[193] IE-MA-MSP34RERF40879, Bride Whelan, p. 14

Tobin confirmed that he had known her since 1918, and claimed that her restaurant's close proximity to the British military headquarters made it a valuable location for the intelligence department.[194] Eilís Bean Ni Chonall also recalled that O'Callaghan had been employed in the Red Bank; she was then known as Margaret 'Peg' Flanagan. She confirmed what both O'Callaghan and Tobin said about members of headquarters and the Dublin brigade frequently going into the restaurant to leave dispatches and parcels with her, emphasising that they trusted her completely with the contents that they were leaving with her. Eilís also mentioned that the West End Cafe had a large customer base of police officers and soldiers from the surrounding enemy headquarters, and it was in this manner that much valuable information was secured, and passed on to the intelligence staff.[195]

Tobin also made use of a connection closer to home at 45 Munster Street, mere yards from where his own parents lived. British intelligence reports indicate that this location was brought to their attention through an informer one street over on Connaught Street, who had been watching the Tobin family, particularly keeping an eye out for Liam. The source informed Dublin Castle that Tobin was known to call at number 45 between 9.30 - 11.30 on certain days, describing him as 'the tall dark man with the scar above his left eye'. They reported that Tobin was friendly with one of the daughters of the family, and they assured the British authorities that if they carried out a raid they would find guns, ammunition and documents that Tobin had left there. Needless to say, they did not succeed in capturing Tobin in this manner, as the back lane behind Munster Street often provided a safe getaway, however, the British reports show that they were eager at the prospect of bringing him in for interrogation.[196] Although it is not common to see this association referenced in the major studies of the intelligence war, D. M. Leeson makes reference to it in his study *The Black and Tans* in 2011.[197]

Tobin also worked closely with many female comrades in North Cork. During his time there from 1917-1918 he encountered women who would be of enormous help to him during the War of Independence. In her pension application, Maire Good from Cork City confirmed that from 1917 she kept tins of gunpowder in her house for Tobin, whom she described as being head

[194] IE-MA-MSP34REF20537, Margaret O'Callaghan, p. 38
[195] IE-MA-BMH.WS0568, Eilis Bean Ni Chonall, p. 50
[196] TNA WO 35/86 B, Letter to Dublin Castle 19th April 1921, Raid and Search Reports: Special Intelligence and Military Reports
[197] D. M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence 1920-1921*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 35

of the 'Fermoy chaps', and often supplied meals to prisoners and men on the run. From the period of 1917 - 1919 he also stayed in her house on and off when he was in the city, and she also brought visitors and dispatches to the house for him.[198] Likewise, Margaret O'Leary's home in Cork was also used as a safehouse, especially for men released from prison after the Rising, including Tobin.[199]

One of the most valuable connections Tobin had in Cork City was Josephine O'Donoghue (nee Clarke), who was working in Victoria Barracks on the North side of the city. In his reference for her, Tobin stated that her services to the intelligence office were equal if not surpassing that of their own work in Dublin due to the important contacts she had with the British forces. He complimented her character as being 'most reliable', and stated that the information secured by her and sent to them in Dublin was of as much value to headquarters as it had been to the brigades locally in Cork. He also mentioned the significant danger she placed herself in throughout her period of service from mid September 1919, and claimed that Collins himself regarded her as the 'perfect example of an intelligence officer', and one of the best inside contacts that the Cork Volunteers had.[200]

During the conscription crisis Tobin also had made a very useful contact in the form of North Cork Cumann na mBan member, Siobhan Creedon (later Lankford), based in Fermoy. Having been introduced to her by Tomás MacCurtain, it was thought that she could be useful for 'investigation work and could be relied on', due to her employment in the post office in Mallow at the time. Tobin spent several weeks in the area, and at some point after their meeting he also introduced her to Liam Lynch, commenting that 'that was the beginning and basis of an intelligence service which would run smoothly and with amazing results' up to the Civil War. As an example of her contribution to the war effort, he recounted that on one occasion she was able to get a hold of the British military's plans in the event of conscription being applied to Ireland. He also commented that in being able to provide a reference for her he was able to 'pay tribute to one who gave such splendid service to the army'.[201]

Another woman who played a significant part in the intelligence network in North Cork was May Power (later May Foley). She had become involved with Cumann na mBan before the

[198] IE-MA-MSP34REF7367, Maire Good, p. 13 - 15
[199] IE-MA-MSP34REF33412, Margaret O'Leary, p. 30 - 33
[200] IE-MA-MSP34REF55794, Josephine O'Donoghue, p. 33
[201] IE-MA-MSP34REF29397, Siobhan Lankford, p. 67

War of Independence, and she was a sister of George Power. Her house was used for dispatches, and she was also in communication with civilian clerks in the military barracks in the area, as well as postmen. Through these she was able to supply reports on raids and intelligence officers who were seen leaving the barracks. On one occasion around 1918 to 1919 she also took arms and ammunition from Cork City with Tobin and a Fr. Tom Roche by train, with her sitting in the car between them on the return journey. During this time she stated they were both armed and she had the 'stuff' on her person. She also appeared to have become well acquainted with Tobin during his early trips to Cork on intelligence business, and also claimed that she received a warning from him during the Civil War, informing her that her activities as an anti-Treaty dispatcher were being watched, and she should be more careful.[202]

To this end, Tobin did recognise the contribution that women made to the intelligence war in Dublin, and in the wider country. He is listed as a reference in the military pensions collection for a number of different women who he had worked with from 1918 to the truce, and appears to have been happy to assist them in getting the pension that he felt they deserved. In the case of Margaret O'Callaghan, he wrote again to the Board of Assessors on her behalf, urging them to hurry with her application as she was the mother of four young children, all below working age, and her husband was an invalid.[203] At the very least he referred to the women as dependable and trustworthy people who were well thought of by Collins and other members of the headquarters staff, and admittedly did try to push forward their applications as much as he could. Tobin also appeared to be aware of the problems that some of the women faced when trying to get the pensions that they were entitled to, as he repeatedly emphasised that the information that they passed on was extremely valuable to the intelligence war.

[202] IE-MA-MSP34REF31507, May Foley, p. 6 - 9
[203] IE-MA-MSP34REF20537, Margaret O'Callaghan, p. 79

Chapter 4 - Spies and Informers

The constant presence of suspected spies created its own tension for the intelligence officers as they tried to distinguish friend from foe, and up until present day attempts have been made to clarify the guilt of all spies who had been assassinated by Collins' Squad. Anne Dolan refers to how the world of spies and informers was problematic and 'acted on the word of rumour and suspicion', and that it made terror its own type of war.[204] Likewise, Rex Taylor alleged that a private source gave him a note said to be from Collins to Dick McKee in which he stated that all suspects they question are to be presumed guilty until proven innocent.[205]

Tobin and his officers were thrust into a world of where secrecy and paranoia remained at the forefront of their lives. In addition to dealing with external threats they also had to maintain contact with members of the British forces under different identities to obtain information from them, all the while knowing that one wrong word could make the difference between life and death. Piaras Béaslaí also made it clear how intense the world of intelligence gathering could be, emphasising that in every town and village all movements of persons were watched and reported on, and that the RIC were the eyes and ears of the British administration throughout the country.[206] Ned Broy and David Neligan were two of main figures working for Collins within Dublin Castle, but Neligan also admitted that when it came to Castle informers, the British were often lucky to have their men positioned in the right place at the right time, and that an espionage agent that was well placed to collect information was 'a pearl beyond price'.[207]

Frank Thornton stated that Kidd's Buffet on Grafton Street was frequently used to meet British agents. This spot would be used by many secret service agents and it was where a lot of valuable information was picked up through careless and idle talk.[208] Michael Hopkinson would remark that British agents were completely ignorant of who they were talking to when divulging information to Tobin and Cullen.[209] Thornton pointed to one occasion when he, Frank Saurin, and Tom Cullen were introduced as touts to Lieutenants Bennet and Aimes who were later shot on Bloody Sunday. Every week the agents would meet there to discuss Collins and the

[204] Anne Dolan, "Spies and Informers Beware", in *Years of Turbulence*, edited by Diarmuid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan, (Dublin: UCD Press, 2016,) p.161
[205] Rex Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 98
[206] Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, p. 320 - 321
[207] David Neligan, p. 82 - 83
[208] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 22
[209] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 70

Republican movement. Thornton recalled that during one of these visits, one British officer told him that if they could only locate Tobin, Cullen and himself then he could find Collins.[210]

Charles Dalton also stated that when those in Crow Street got offers of assistance they first had to make up their minds 'whether we could trust them or not', and even then there would be a limit to what they would be told.[211] Thornton referred to one instance in May 1921 when their confidence in an informant would be shaken. He and Tobin had been dealing with an auxiliary called McCarthy from F Company, who had been passing documents to both of them. Here again, the Volunteer that had introduced him (William Beaumont) brought McCarthy to meet Tobin first at a public house on Abbey Street before he met with anyone else in the department. Despite this, T. Ryle Dwyer points out that McCarthy was likely paid for his information, and Tobin was highly suspicious of him and other paid informers. During this time he, Thornton and Tom Cullen would often frequent a restaurant called La Scala, and on one particular Friday Tobin arrived with a new brown suit on. As they entered the restaurant they noticed McCarthy sitting across from them with two men they did not know. The following week Thornton made his way to the restaurant on his own, only to find the whole of O'Connell Street covered with auxiliaries. The auxiliaries eventually proceeded into the restaurant, demanding that the waitress tell them of the location of the men, particularly describing Tobin as the 'tall thin man wearing a new brown suit'.[212] Joseph McKenna also refers to this incident in his work *The Fight for Dublin 1919-1921*, arguing that despite their suspicion of McCarthy as a paid informer, they knew they needed to continue to meet with him for as long as they could.[213]

Despite almost falling into the trap that was set for them, the intelligence officers were not deterred from continuing to associate with double agents or auxiliaries, with Thornton simply concluding,

> 'There, however, were the chances which had to be taken when dealing with men of the McCarthy type, who after all we're only working for the pay they received…one couldn't

[210] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 22, 23, 28
[211] IE-MA-BMH.WS0434, Charles Dalton, p. 5 - 6
[212] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 50-51; T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad*, p. 220
[213] Joseph McKenna, *The Fight for Dublin 1919-1921: Urban Warfare in the Struggle for Irish Independence*, (United Kingdom: McFarland, 2021), p. 104

possibly expect anything else to happen, and we can only congratulate ourselves that we escaped so luckily on occasions like this'.[214]

Other intelligence officers would be given money in exchange for gathering information on enemy agents. Robert Ahern claimed that he was given £1 a week to use to converse with the auxiliaries and Black and Tans in public houses to try and get information from them. One of his main tasks was to uncover civilian spies, and when identities were established all details were reported back to the brigade.[215] Another intelligence officer, Thomas Walsh stated that 'he would rather be fighting any day of the week' than having to take the risks he did by meeting with these suspected agents.[216]

In his own account of the Revolution, Dalton referred to a target called Nemo from January 1921, who was head of a number of RIC men from all parts of the country where Volunteer activity was heavy. After weeks of being unable to track their movements, one morning the intelligence staff were informed that Nemo and his men were walking up Grafton Street, and Tobin immediately sent a message to the Squad.[217] On another occasion, Bernard Byrne recalled that they wanted to get the hangman of Mountjoy, Pierrepoint. After receiving information that he would be staying in the Gresham Hotel, Cullen and Tobin were detailed to cover the position for his arrival, the floor and room he was staying in. Despite giving instructions to the Squad the following morning, the information turned out to be false, and it was discovered that Pierrepoint had been at the hotel some days prior.[218] Nonetheless, the incident gives an indication as to the practices leading up to an assassination of a spy or enemy agent.

There were a number of specific British agents who crossed paths with Tobin during his time as Deputy Director, and these instances are indicative of both his cool and collected demeanour, but also his ruthlessness in understanding what his duties were. Joseph E. A. Connell Jr argues that while it was true that Collins' personality is often what attracted people who were willing to turn over information, it could also inhibit him, and that he was fortunate to have people like Tobin and Cullen around him, who were more sceptical when it came to Greeks

[214] IE-MA-BMH.WS0615, Frank Thornton, p. 45-47
[215] IE-MA-BMH.WS1676, Robert Ahern, p. 7 - 8
[216] IE-MA-WMSP34REF57114, Thomas Walsh, p. 28 - 32
[217] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, p. 145 - 146
[218] IE-MA-BMH.WS0631, Bernard Byrne, p. 28

bearing gifts.[219] While Tom Bowden credits Collins with removing all informers in his own force as well as the RIC and DMP, contemporary Frank O'Connor claimed that the shooting of spies did not take up a lot of Collins' time due to the numerous responsibilities and titles that he held from 1919 to 1922.[220] Rather, it was Tobin's role as gatekeeper that resulted in the handling of spies who would try to infiltrate the intelligence department.

John 'Jameson' Byrnes

Possibly the most well known case of a British agent who made such an attempt was John Byrnes, or John Jameson as he was known in late 1919, who approached Collins with promises that he could provide him with weapons. While Collins did not completely trust Jameson, the promise of guns had an impact on his judgement of the situation, even when some of those closest to him made their suspicions of the man clear. This included Tom Cullen and Tobin, who were instrumental in setting a trap for Jameson to prove his guilt as a spy. The New Ireland Assurance Dublin office was located at 56 Bachelors Walk, and one day in early 1920 Jameson met Tobin here with the promised revolvers. Thornton then met them in Kapp & Peterson, the building next door that was also used by Collins' staff, being careful to allow Jameson to see the entrance to the cellar where the revolvers were to be placed. They had been warned by their DMP informant James MacNamara that a raid was to be carried out on the premises, and after the initial search was unsuccessful, the military arrived back for a second raid; this time they proceeded to the cellar. This was all observed by Tobin, Cullen and Thornton from across the river.[221]

A similar trap was set by the three of them some days previously, when they staged a row in front of Jameson under the pretence of being asked to provide security for an emergency Dáil meeting. They deliberately revealed the details of the location, and Thornton would later report that the house in question was indeed raided on the night the meeting was to be held.[222] Cullen had also tried to warn Collins that similar raids had taken place around locations where Jameson had been. Speaking on why Jameson was eventually executed by the Squad, David Neligan claimed that 'his audacity outweighed his good sense'.[223]

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[219] Joseph E. A. Connell Jr, *The Shadow War*, p. 211
[220] Tom Bowden, "The Irish Underground and the War of Independence 1919-21", *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 2 (1973): 3–23. http://www.jstor.org/stable/259991, p. 7; Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow*, p. 130
[221] Dominic Price, *We Bled Together,* p. 109
[222] NLI MS 31655, p. 19
[223] David Neligan, p. 65

Both Neligan and Frank O'Connor pointed out how quick Collins was to trust Jameson, with Neligan stating that although he may have had his own suspicions he was reluctant to do anything about him.[224] O'Connor also referred to the day Collins arranged to meet Jameson at Batt O'Connor's house. He reported that Tobin was disgusted that such a meeting was to take place, yet both he and Cullen brought Jameson to the house under escort, presumably observing his movements and actions on the way.[225] On another occasion, Tobin was again escorting Jameson to a meeting with Collins at Batt O'Connor's home when they witnessed soldiers in lorries near the meeting location, only to turn in the opposite direction because they had mistaken Jameson for Collins.[226]

Throughout December 1919 to February 1920, Tobin and the other members of the intelligence department made it clear to Collins that they did not trust the man, and though Collins was not completely ignorant of the threat Jameson posed to the movement, the actions of his deputies were instrumental in protecting their intelligence network. Jameson also appeared to have regarded Tobin as one of the main accesses to Collins, as even after all intelligence men were ordered to keep away from him, Jameson made several attempts in February 1920 to meet with Tobin, knowing he would have details of Collins' location. He was eventually executed on 2nd March 1920, during which he is reported to have stated that Tobin was a particular friend of his (again highlighting Tobin's seniority within the high-ranking Volunteers), amongst other declarations of loyalty to Ireland.[227]

There were several other spies that Tobin became directly involved with, either by tracking their movements, or taking part in their executions. Michael Foy mentions Frank Digby Hardy as one such example, commenting that he was the worst agent to slip through the net. In July 1920 he had written to the British Viceroy boasting of his knowledge of the Volunteers, which a postal worker passed to the IRA. Tobin is reported to have told Collins that they had another Jameson on their hands, and by September 1920 Hardy was advised to be on a boat leaving Dún Laoghaire.[228] There was also the shooting of Detective Dalton from G Division. On 20th April 1920 Detective Dalton and Detective Robert Spencer were making their way towards Dorset Street, Dalton having been given the job of looking into the IRA members coming into

[224] Ibid, p. 64 - 65
[225] Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow*, p. 117
[226] Ibid, p. 117 - 119
[227] Ibid, p. 126
[228] Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War*, p. 133 - 137

Dublin from Galway and Mayo, and had ignored previous warnings to back off. Tobin had been watching him for some time, and eventually the Squad were detailed to shoot him.[229] Squad man James Slattery confirmed that Tobin accompanied them on the night of the shooting to identify him to the Squad.[230] As previously stated, Margaret McEntee also mentioned in her pension claim that on this night Tobin, Cullen and others left their guns in her flat. Tobin would confirm his involvement in this shooting as well.[231] The fact that he was armed during this incident is not surprising, and even if he did not pull the trigger in the case of Dalton, the action of pointing someone out to be killed would only increase the burden that he shouldered during this time as Deputy Director.

Tobin and the spy Molloy

Tobin would also be targeted by spies himself. In early 1920 Bernard McNulty, also known as 'Molloy', approached Vinny Byrne, this time asking if he would introduce him to Tobin. In this case Tobin found himself to be in more direct danger than he had ever been with Jameson. No doubt Molloy was aware that an acquaintance with Tobin would eventually secure a meeting with Collins, and this decision to seek out Tobin first confirms how the British perceived him to be merely one step away from Collins himself. Molloy approached Byrne in early 1920 to request the meeting, but it is not clear whether Tobin ever revealed to Molloy who he was, or if he met with him under an assumed name.[232] Molloy had been stationed at a British payroll at Headquarters on Parkgate Street, and after being introduced to Batt O'Connor, he claimed that his superiors wanted him to join the secret service, and through this he hoped to be able to pass information to Collins.

Joseph E. A. Connell Jr argues that although Tobin, Cullen and Thornton met Molloy in locations like the Cairo Cafe and Kidd's Restaurant, they never trusted him. It appears that Lily Mernin, also known as the 'the little gentleman', had been the one to expose his real identity to the intelligence officers. During the War of Independence she worked as a typist in Dublin Castle, and would pass on extensive valuable information to Collins.[233] Squad leader Mick McDonnell would also claim that he considered Molloy to be one of the most dangerous spies

[229] Darren Kelly and Derek Molyneux, *Killing at its Very Extreme,* p. 221 - 222
[230] IE-MA-BMH.WS0445, James Slattery, p. 8 - 10
[231] IE-MA-WMSP34REF60579, Margaret McEntee, p. 53, 80 - 82
[232] IE-MA-BMH.WS0423, Vincent Byrne, p.37
[233] Joseph E. A. Connell Jr, *The Shadow War*, p. 223

sent from England, and one particular encounter between him and Tobin, described by fellow Volunteer Richard Walsh, explains why.[234] Walsh also claimed that throughout their meetings Molloy remained anxious to find out who Tobin really was and who he represented, so it is possible that Tobin was indeed using another identity during these discussions.[235]

According to Walsh, Collins persuaded Tobin to meet Molloy one evening in Bewley's Cafe on Grafton Street. On his way he recognised several of Captain Hardy's men mixing with other people in the street, and when he entered the cafe he saw there were at least a dozen of Hardy's men sitting at tables inside. At this point he realised that he was trapped. Spotting Molloy at a table alone, and not seeing any other way out, Tobin reluctantly took a seat next to him, whereupon the spy immediately complained that the Castle were starting to get suspicious of him and wanted results.[236] He produced paper for Tobin to sign to make the Castle believe that he was truly working for them, but Tobin knew that he could not sign it as he believed his body would be found with this document. Tobin gave Molloy some kind of bluff to excuse himself from the cafe, only to be followed by him and Hardy's men as they exited. He eventually succeeded in making his escape via a tram, all the while knowing that he could have been lifted by Hardy's agents at any moment. At the same time, Richard Walsh also stated that he suspected that Tobin would have had some kind of line of retreat planned for himself, as he would never have gone to such a meeting alone. Regardless, this meeting sealed the fate of Molloy, and he was eventually shot on 24th March 1920. Speaking of Tobin's capabilities as an intelligence agent, Walsh concluded that this event proved Tobin's 'ability and courage', admitting that he was surprised to hear that he survived these interactions. He claimed that Tobin relayed this account to him shortly after it occurred.[237]

Patrick Caldwell recounted that in March 1920 he and Joe Guilfoyle were given the job of watching Molloy. On one occasion they followed him from O'Connell Street where he was talking to Tobin and Cullen, and when he left them they followed him to the lower yard in Dublin Castle. They reported this back to Tobin, who simply replied 'That is correct'. Within a week they were both told to meet Tobin and and Cullen on Grafton Street between 7 and 9 pm, where Cullen gave him a .45 webley revolver, and Tobin told them that the job was the execution

[234] IE-MA-BMH.WS0225, Michael McDonnell, p. 3; NLI MS 31655, p. 13
[235] IE-MA-BMH.WS0400, Richard Walsh, p. 96
[236] Ibid, p. 97 - 98
[237] Ibid, p. 99

of Molloy, and that they were to ensure that the Squad were not interfered with as they carried this out.[238] Two women who rushed to give medical assistance to Molloy later told an inquiry into his death that despite being in close proximity to the event, they could not identify any of the men involved.[239] On this occasion Tobin may not have pulled the trigger himself, but it conveys the more brutal aspects of his role as Deputy Director, and the risks involved with having to interact with suspected spies. James Slattery also recounted that on the morning of the execution Tobin joined them to point out the target.[240]

David Neligan would claim that he had been aware of Molloy from his associates in Dublin Castle, although he could never be sure of his true identity or background. He did mention that Molloy had left a will in the Castle, which is alleged to have stated that if something happened to him 'Liam Tobin was the man who would do it'. Neligan also stated that a 'redcap friend' of Molloy's had told him that he had often shadowed him when he went to meet Tobin. As a result, after the execution was carried out, Neligan warned Tobin to lay low for a while, as this friend was on the lookout for him.[241] The fact that this alleged 'redcap' would refer to Molloy's meetings with Tobin also indicates that Molloy had been aware of Tobin's true identity as Collins' Deputy. The will was subsequently given to the secret service, and according to Neligan it earned Tobin a top place on the list of wanted men.[242] Mystery surrounded the shooting, and newspapers sought to find out the identity of Molloy, and what his position was within the military. The remains were kept in the Mercer Hospital for several days before eventually being collected by the military, and Molloy was given a full military funeral, although it is reported that no relatives were present.[243] Frank Thornton later remarked sardonically that had Molloy succeeded in tricking any of them into the Castle, 'a hot reception awaited us'.[244]

Executions carried out by Tobin

There are only two documented shootings in which it is confirmed that Tobin had actually fired at the target, both taking place in 1920. On 26th March 1920 he participated in the shooting of Alan Bell, the British inspector who was investigating the location of the Dáil funds, and in June

[238] IE-MA-BMH.WS0638, Patrick Caldwell, p. 23
[239] "Mr. A. Bell, R.M., Shot Dead in Dublin", *Irish Independent*, 27th March 1920, p. 5
[240] IE-MA-BMH.WS0445, James Slattery, p. 7
[241] David Neligan, p. 72
[242] Ibid, p. 72 - 73
[243] "Bryan Fergus Molloy: Buried with full military honours", *The Liberator*, 1st April 1920, p. 4
[244] NLI NS 31655, p. 20

1920 he was involved in the execution of Percival Lea-Wilson in June 1920 in Wexford. One event from the Rising that would haunt Tobin (and the other Volunteers who witnessed it) was Lea-Wilson's treatment of Thomas Clarke and other prisoners in the Rotunda Gardens after the surrender. Arguments have been made by contemporaries that the Squad and intelligence staff simply followed orders when it came to carrying out executions, and that no shootings were motivated by revenge against British activities. One Squad man would recall how Collins chastised another member for threatening to go after the detective who carried out a raid on his home.[245] Lea-Wilson appears to be the exception to this rule however, as accounts from those involved in the execution make no attempt to conceal that revenge was definitely at the forefront of their minds.

Despite the assassination occuring four years after the Rising, its planning arguably began in the grounds of the Rotunda. Several contemporaries have made reference to the treatment that Lea-Wilson inflicted on the leaders of the Rising, notably Clarke, who he is alleged to have beaten and stripped, and also Seán MacDiarmuida. Tobin himself also described the incident in his own witness statement. This in itself is quite surprising, as he had previously refused to make any reference to the activities of the intelligence department, yet in his description of Lea-Wilson, Tobin made it clear he had every intention of getting even with him if he were ever given the opportunity. Tobin wrote his statement thirty years after the execution took place, yet his anger was still evident. The statement also remains one of only two instances of Tobin directly naming a target for assassination, the other being Detective Dalton, whom he would name in Margaret McEntee's pension file. However, despite admitting his desire to get even with Wilson, he never actually stated that he took part in the shooting, nor does he provide any details of the event.[246]

In Tobin's account, Lea-Wilson had been placed in charge of the rebels in the Rotunda grounds, and he described the conditions that they were left to lie in. They were told to remain sitting or lying on a small patch of grass, but as there were so many of them, space was cramped. Tobin referred to the men having to urinate alongside each other as they were not permitted to get up. Volunteer Frank Henderson also recalled this night at the Rotunda, and stated the men were practically forced to lie on top of each other and they dared not move; he described it as

[245] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 118
[246] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753, Liam Tobin, p. 6 -7

'without an exaggeration as a night of horror'.[247] As a result of being unable to move and the limited space, Tobin developed a cramp in his legs, and when Piaras Béaslaí brought this to the attention of Lea-Wilson, he merely remarked "Let the so and so stay where he is". Tobin then goes on to describe Clarke being stripped and searched. Tobin was not alone in his condemnation of this act, and urged that Lea-Wilson may not have done the deed himself, but as the officer in charge he was responsible for all the ill-treatment that the men suffered. He concluded this account with the foreboding declaration,

> "I know when he refused to allow me to stand up I looked at him and registered a vow to myself that I would deal with him at some time in the future".[248]

Several accounts of the aftermath of the Rising confirm Tobin's description of Lea-Wilson's actions towards Clarke in particular. James Gleeson referred to his 'fun with the captured rebels', and recalled that he stripped and slashed many of them with his bamboo cane, and confirmed that he sealed his fate that night.[249] Frank Henderson also recalled seeing Séan MacDiarmada's walking stick being removed, which he needed due to his gout.[250] Another Volunteer, Fergus Burke also confirmed this by stating that Lea-Wilson did all he could to make trouble for the prisoners, and later 'paid the penalty for his cruelty'.[251]

One account of particular interest is that of Eamon Dore, who claimed that Lea-Wilson had reopened an old bullet wound in Clarke's elbow by roughly taking off his coat. What is significant about his statement, is that he referred to a comrade lying beside him on the grass who said words to the effect of 'if that fellow lives through the war…I will search for him and kill him for this'. Dore confirmed that this particular Volunteer and four others kept this promise. This correlates with the number of people involved in the execution, and so it is probable that the man he is referring to was Tobin. He does not name him directly, simply stating that the man was still alive when he made his witness statement, most likely not wanting to implicate Tobin in the

[247] IE-MA-BMH.WS0249, Frank Henderson, p. 60; IE-MA-BMH.WS1753, Liam Tobin, p. 6
[248] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753, Liam Tobin, p. 6 -7
[249] James Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday*, p. 30
[250] IE-MA-BMH.WS0249, Frank Henderson, p. 60 - 61
[251] IE-MA-BMH.WS0694, Fergus Burke, p. 25

shooting even when so many years had passed, unaware that Tobin would imply his part in the shooting in his own witness statement.[252]

With regards to the planning of the execution, Squad man Paddy O'Daly stated that he knew that several members of the Squad and intelligence staff were involved, and named members such as Pat McCrea, Joe Hyland, James Slattery, Tom Keogh and Tom Cullen; but does not refer to Tobin. Despite being extensively referenced in studies on the shooting, there are some errors in O'Daly's account of the event. He himself admitted he was not present, nor involved in the planning, and the majority of the men he listed as being involved were not, including Tom Cullen and Tom Keogh. He did, however, deny that Lea-Wilson's execution was purely an act of revenge, stating that there were others officers who were just as bad, and concluded that he was mostly likely targeted because of the position he held at the time. He emphatically stated that no man in the Squad shot 'merely for revenge'. However, considering his own Civil War activities, he is not the most reliable source on that point.[253]

Dominic Price claims that Lea-Wilson was part of Captain Hardy's gang operating out of Wexford, and argues that the order to open fire on the target came from Tobin and Frank Thornton as the most senior officers there.[254] Eunan O'Halpin and Daithi Ó Corrain also refer to Tobin's involvement in their recent publication *The Dead of the Irish Revolution*.[255] The OC of the Wexford Brigade, Edward Balfe, would also confirm that the order to carry out the execution came from GHQ, with local officers taking their orders directly from Tobin and Thornton.[256]

Liam O'Leary, adjutant of the Wexford Brigade, went to Gorey to scout the local positions, and the daily habits of Lea-Wilson.[257] The general consensus was that Tobin was the only one in the execution party who could identify him.[258] Another local Volunteer, Sean Whelan, captain of A company in 1st Battalion, stated that the presence of Liam Tobin and Frank Thornton in the area alerted the men to the fact that 'something special was on the political menu', and described feeling 'honoured' at being asked to assist them on the job. Whelan also confirmed that it was Tobin who first recognised Lea-Wilson when they initially saw him in the

[252] IE-MA-BMH.WS0153, Eamon Dore, p. 5
[253] IE-MA-BMH.WS0387, Patrick O'Daly, p. 32 - 33
[254] Dominic Price, p. 118
[255] Eunan O'Halpin and Daithi Ó Corrain, *The Dead of the Irish Revolution*, (United States: Yale University Press, 2020), p. 140
[256] IE-MA-BMH.WS1373, Edward Balfe, p.8
[257] Ibid, p. 14
[258] IE-MA-BMH.WS1276, Liam O'Leary, p. 7

town. It took three days before they were finally presented with an opportunity of carrying out the execution, as they passed him on a number of occasions, but the circumstances were unsuitable for making an attempt on his life.[259]

Whelan provided a detailed account of the execution in his witness statement. He and two other Volunteers, Mick Sinnott and Joe MacMahon, were to assist Tobin and Thornton in this job. The five men spent several days attempting to locate Lea-Wilson based on information that they had been provided with by Eamon Balfe about his routine. He would visit the 9.35 am train each morning to collect his own special mail bag, and buy his morning paper on his walk back to his home on the south side of Gorey.[260] Eventually on the third morning they watched Lea-Wilson depart from the station at the usual time, carrying his morning newspaper with him as he went. The men set up their trap by positioning themselves along a path with a low wall, about 200 yards away from a bridge that he would have to pass on his route home.

Under the pretence that their car had broken down, they waited for him to approach, with Whelan and Thorton at the front of the car pretending to look under the bonnet. Tobin was positioned on the road side of the car, with MacMahon at the back, and Sinnott in the driver's seat. Whelan reported that Lea-Wilson was reading the newspaper headlines 'as he walked towards the place of execution'. As soon as he reached the windscreen they began firing;

> 'When he lifted his eyes from the paper as he was passing our car Thornton and myself [Whelan] fired at point blank range. He dropped the mail bag and the newspaper, covered his head with his hands and started to run towards his house. We blazed away at him as he ran. Tobin was firing from his position on the road. Joe MacMahon jumped out of the car and fired as he ran along the footpath. When the inspector fell dead…he must have been hit at least a dozen times, but just to make sure we hit him again as he lay stretched full length on the footpath. We left him, his mails and his gun to show it was an execution'.[261]

A number of aspects of Lea-Wilson's execution differ from the other shootings carried out during the War of Independence. Firstly, two of the most senior members of the intelligence department were sent on the job, evidently with no back up support from Dublin. Secondly, the shooting itself was more vicious, and admittedly revengeful, than other executions of spies or

[259] IE-MA-BMH.WS1294, Sean Whelan, p. 1 - 4
[260] Ibid, p. 3
[261] Ibid, p. 5 - 6

policemen that had been carried out up to this point. It had been their practice to shoot once or twice at the target's body, and then fire a final fatal shot to the head. According to Sean Whelan, Lea-Wilson was shot at least a dozen times in a frenzy of fire, and then again once he lay on the ground. With this execution, there was almost a celebratory aspect to it, and it definitely did not cause any great emotional upheaval in the way the other shootings did. This leads to the third distinction, that of Whelan's jovial recounting of the event even 35 years after it had taken place.[262] This is only from his perspective, but Tobin's own witness statement also made it clear that they were determined to kill him from that night in the Rotunda. Arguably, Tobin's writing is more emotional when he was discussing Lea-Wilson's activities in the Rotunda than when he recounted the moment he was sentenced to death for his part in the Rising.[263]

The second documented case of Tobin shooting a target was that of Alan Bell, the inspector sent to look into Collins' loan funds. Contemporary accounts detail that both he and Mick McDonnell fired their guns. On 8th March 1920 Bell had opened his inquiry into the Dáil funds, and banks in the city were required to provide documentation when asked about certain accounts. Historian Michael Hopkinson also points to his history as a veteran detective from the Land League days, as well as his involvement in the investigation of the shootings of Lord French and Detective Redmond, which were also carried out by the Squad.[264] Neligan also claimed that Bell was an ex-stipendiary, a paid magistrate, and an ex-district inspector of the RIC.[265]

According to Frank Thornton very little was known about Bell by anyone in Ireland, and he claimed that he was sent to Belfast to obtain a photo of him.[266] Intelligence officer Michael Knightly reported that he was often asked to get photos for the department of men they wanted to find, and said the best picture he could get of Bell was from a newspaper report.[267] On the other hand, according to Paddy O'Daly no one except Tom Cullen knew what Bell looked like, and once they had his address members of the intelligence staff would go out each morning to locate him, but they did not ask why he was to be tracked down and executed.[268] Solicitor Michael

[262] Ibid, p. 6
[263] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753, Liam Tobin, p. 6 -7
[264] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 55
[265] David Neligan, p. 77
[266] NLI MS, 31655, p 9
[267] IE-MA-BMH.WS0834, Michael Knightly, p. 2
[268] IE-MA-BMH.WS0387, Paddy O'Daly, p. 27 - 28

Noyk used to have personal visits from various members of the headquarters staff, including Tobin and Cullen in connection with various IRA activities. One day a message was brought by Tobin to find out about the Crimes Act of 1880.[269] According to Neligan, the Crimes Act gave Bell the power to send for and interrogate bank managers. He also cited this case as an example of one of Collins' 'blind spots' as he had a difficult time in trying to get to Bell.[270]

On the day of the shooting, 26th March, Patrick Caldwell recounted that eight members of the Squad and intelligence staff were told to board a tram that Bell had taken as part of his route to work. Shortly after 9 am Bell left his residence in Monkstown, and boarded the tram to take him to the Castle, and whether due to bravery or naivety, he had no security accompanying him to his destination. As it approached Merrion Road the tram stopped to allow passengers to get off, when witnesses said Bell was forced off by several men pulling him by the arms and shoulders and was then shot. By 10 am an ambulance had been called for him, although it had already been determined that the shots had been fatal.[271] Caldwell stated that the idea was that parties on the lower deck would leave the tram to carry out the execution, and those situated upstairs would prevent any interference from passengers or members of the public.[272] Joseph Dolan, one of the Volunteers involved, claimed it was Tobin and McDonnell who shot Bell, as both men sat opposite him when they boarded the tram. A few minutes into the journey one of them asked "Are you Mr. Bell?", before dragging him off and shooting him as he lay on the ground.[273] Frank Thornton's interview with RTE went into some detail on the motives behind the execution, but he did not mention Tobin by name. However, Lorcan Collins refers to his involvement in the shooting, and as do Darren Kelly and Derek Molyneux in their book *Killing at its Very Extreme*.[274] The coroner's examination confirmed that the shot to the head had been the fatal one, although it has not been confirmed whether it was McDonnell or Tobin who fired this shot.[275]

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[269] IE-MA-BMH.WS0707, Michael Noyk, p. 27
[270] David Neligan, p. 77
[271] "Another Daylight Shooting", *Freeman's Journal*, 27th March 1920, p. 7
[272] IE-MA-BMH.WS0638, Patrick Caldwell, p. 23
[273] IE-MA-BMH.WS0663, Joe Dolan, p. 7
[274] Lorcan Collins, *Ireland's War of Independence 1919 - 1921: The IRA's Guerilla Campaign*, (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2019), p. 130; Darren Kelly and Derek Molyneux, *Killing at its Very Extreme*, p. 203
[275] "Another Daylight Shooting", *Freeman's Journal,* 27th March 1920, p. 7

Bloody Sunday

The most significant day for the intelligence office and the Squad during the War of Independence was Sunday 21st November, or Bloody Sunday as it was later known. Early that morning fourteen members of the British forces were executed throughout the city. Joe Leonard said that on that morning groups of 5 or 6 men were led by a Squad member or an intelligence officer to ensure that they were hitting the correct target.[276] As such it is unusual that Tobin is notably absent from the majority of accounts of that day. Charles Dalton claimed that this had been because Tobin had been suffering with his nerves in the weeks leading up to it. Dalton told Ernie O'Malley this years after the conflict, but did not elaborate on the nature of the illness, or how long he was out of action.[277] More recent studies, such as Michael Foy's work on the intelligence department, also refer to this statement by Dalton.[278]

Despite this, confusion would remain over what exactly Tobin was doing in November 1920, as other contemporaries point to him being seen around known Collins joints in the city on the evening of 20th November, the night before the shootings. Additionally, James Gleeson stated that on 14th November, a week before, Tobin and Cullen were sleeping in Vaughans when a raid occurred, during which they were held up by some of the very men that were to be shot. They were both questioned, but managed to bluff their way out by discussing racing tips.[279] Joseph McKenna and Charles Townshend both mention this in their respective works on the Revolution, with Townshend arguing that this could have been a motivator for Collins in carrying out the shootings as he may have believed that the British secret service were about to 'blow his own organisation apart'.[280] In addition, following on from this raid in Vaughans, Tobin would have been in a position to be able to point out two of the targets to be hit on that morning by sight, and it must be questioned how significant was his nervous situation that he was not involved in the planning of such an important event.

Dalton recounted that he had met a maid called Rosie from Amiens Street, who told him about lodgers she had who were British agents, and that she had brought him the contents of their bins. Later and Thornton pieced the papers together and went about making a list of those who

[276] IE-MA-BMH.WS0547 Joseph Leonard, p. 11
[277] UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17/B/122, Charles Dalton
[278] Michael Foy, p. 177
[279] James Gleeson, p. 122 - 123
[280] Joseph McKenna, *Guerilla Warfare in the Irish War of Independence*, (United States: McFarland & Co, 2010), p. 83; Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence*, (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2014) p. 202

was to be shot.[281] Yet in his witness statement, Dalton said that it was initially Tobin who told him to contact the girl, as she had reported to a Volunteer about some strange residents who were in a block of flats in which she worked, and that it was from this revelation that Collins and GHQ decided a surprise attack would be better than pricking them off one at a time.[282] T. Ryle Dwyer also makes reference to this in his work *The Squad,* stating that Tobin told Dalton to meet the maid, although he claims that the maid's name was Maudie not Rosie.[283] Nevertheless, this implies that Tobin must have been involved in the planning of Bloody Sunday to some extent at least, or perhaps it was the case that his nerves worsened the closer it came to the event itself. These inconsistencies are not necessarily surprising, given the period of time between the event and the statements that were made. Additionally, the credibility of the accounts would be called into question if they were all identical to each other. While the variations are not specifically an issue, however, there are unanswered questions in the literature as to where exactly Tobin was on Bloody Sunday.

Firstly, David Neligan stated in an interview with RTE in 1978 that he had been with Tobin and Cullen on the evening of 20th November, as they all attended a show in the Gaiety Theatre. As the men sat in the box, seated directly across were some of the agents who were to be shot the following day. During this interview, he stated that it was Tobin who produced the list of names that were to be shot, which would indicate that he was involved in the planning.[284] If Tobin was suffering with his nerves as bad as Dalton claimed he was, it would be unlikely that he would be out anywhere on the eve of such an important event, let alone sitting mere yards from two of the intended targets. In their book *Someone Has to Die for This*, Darren Kelly and Derek Molyneux make reference to Dan Breen's comments about admiring Tobin's composure under stressful situations, and Siobhan Lankford would make similar comments about his determined work ethic, adding that he would do a job himself if he had no one else to do it as quickly as he wanted it done.[285] Nonetheless his resilience was frayed and it is worth asking why the department should take such a risk?

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[281] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, p. 114 - 115
[282] IE-MA-BMH.WS0434, Charles Dalton, p. 18 - 19
[283] T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad,* p. 166
[284] David Neligan, Interview by RTE, 27th June 1978, https://www.rte.ie/archives/category/war-and-conflict/2020/1111/1177461-spy-in-the-castle/
[285] Derek Molyneux, and Darren Kelly, *Someone Has To Die For This*, p. 76; Siobhan Lankford, *The Hope and The Sadness*, p. 127

Neligan also claimed in his interview that he had an appointment with Tobin the night of 21st November, but he was unable to make it, so Collins turned up instead because he could not get anyone else to go.[286] Tobin's mental state may account for this absence, however there may be other possible explanations for it. Neligan himself stated that the city was crawling with agents after the shootings earlier that day, so the idea of a man in a nervous state being sent to conduct business with an informer seems questionable. Even if it was presumed that this appointment with Neligan was made a day or two before, it still implies at the very least that Tobin was physically present around the intelligence office, or known joints, in the days or hours leading up to the shooting. In his reference for Volunteer Laurence Nugent's pension application, Frank Thornton also stated that all of the officers involved with Bloody Sunday 'were acting under the direct instructions of Tobin'. It is possible that Thornton meant this last statement within the context of how the department operated more generally as opposed to referring specifically to Bloody Sunday, but given that the participants on the day was the topic at hand, it is safe to assume to some degree that he was talking about Tobin delegating orders to the men on morning of 20th November.[287]

Likewise, despite being the one who originally claimed that Tobin had been suffering with his nerves, Dalton also stated that he had a meeting arranged with him for the 23rd or 24th November, only days after the event in question. He eventually found him in Vaughans, and commented that he saw him again in the office the following morning.[288] He also pointed to another instance of being around Tobin at the end of November 1920, when he stayed for one night in a shared safe house being used by other Volunteers He remembered that evening specifically as he recalled that Tobin was appalled at the conditions that the men were living in, and reported back to Collins that they were in need of proper camp beds.[289] Similarly, William Stapleton said that he met Tobin and Thornton after Bloody Sunday in Oriel Street, as they were using this meeting to recruit him as a member of the Squad.[290] Ulick O'Connor also stated in *A Terrible Beauty Is Born* that Tobin and other members of the brigade staff, such as Georóid

[286] David Neligan, Interview by RTE, 27th June 1978
[287] IE-MA-MSP34REF829, Laurence Nugent, p. 78
[288] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, p. 124 - 127
[289] Ibid, p. 130 - 132
[290] IE-MA-BMH.WS0822, William Stapleton, p. 30 - 31

O'Sullivan, were all standing amongst the crowds on O'Connell Brigade watching the coffins of the men who were shot go by.[291]

The military pension files would provide two of the most important documents in relation to Tobin and Bloody Sunday; they are the applications of Margaret McEntee and Conor Clune (the application having been made by his sister). Both files are crucial because they contain direct input from Tobin himself about what he was doing on the night of Bloody Sunday, a rarity in itself as it is known that he did not like to speak about his intelligence activities. In both references he clearly stated that he was in Vaughans Hotel on the night of 20th November. In Clune's pension file he recounted that he only met Clune on one occasion and that was on the night he was captured, 20th November 1920, stating that he was with Collins at the time as they had an appointment to meet in Vaughans, thus placing Tobin, supposedly suffering a breakdown, in one of the most well known meeting places the night before the events in question (and where he had also been interrogated by two of the targets a week before).[292]

In Margaret McEntee's application she also claimed that Tobin had been in Vaughans that night, and that he, Collins and Georóid O'Sullivan rushed out of the hotel after Clancy was captured, making their way to her flat for refuge. When asked to confirm if this is true or not, Tobin simply stated "that is so".[293] From this point onwards, the question of where Tobin was on the night of Bloody Sunday is no longer based on subjective recounting from second or third parties, as Tobin himself confirmed that he was present in Vaughans, with Collins and other members of GHQ merely hours before the shootings were to begin. It is possible that the significance of Bloody Sunday meant that he was forced to come back to his work despite his serious mental health issues, but it must also be questioned why Dalton stated that he was not around at the time of the planning, when by Tobin's own admission he was. Regardless of the significance of the shootings, however, Tobin would also tell Ernie O'Malley that the arrest and murders of Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy knocked all of the good out of it, and that the intelligence department had no sense of jubilation 'as the enemy had evened up on us'.[294]

Tobin was not alone in facing difficulty with his mental state at this time; intelligence work would often take its toll on many members of the department, despite possible assumptions

[291] Ulick O'Connor, *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, (United Kingdom: Granada, 1981), p. 163
[292] IE-MA-3MSRB283, Conor Clune, p. 34
[293] IE-MA-WMSP34REF60579, Margaret McEntee, p. 53
[294] Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins*, p. 242

that it was less dangerous than the activities of flying columns or gunmen. The shootings on Bloody Sunday in particular would also have an impact on those involved. Price points out that the world of the intelligence officer was perhaps the most difficult and dangerous job that could be undertaken by the IRA, with agents on both sides having to live a double life, and they would often have to socialise with people they would betray or kill, and concluded that it is unsurprising that some people would crack from the pressure of this kind of work.[295] Anne Dolan also refers to how some of the men would hide their stress with drink, and the psychological impact of terror due to the nature of the job.[296]

From 1919 to the truce those working with intelligence and the Squad lived in a constant fear of being captured or shot, with raids occurring daily, and it is clear that in many cases this produced stress and paranoia. Price also refers to the breakdown of Mick McDonnell in April 1920, when he stayed in hospital for 5 weeks. McDonnell would later inform the military pension board that before his service with the Squad he had never been sick in his life, and when he eventually resumed his duties he later got another attack in October 1920. While acting as the leader of the Squad in 1920 he stated that he was 'under very heavy strain, terrible excitement, and had a great deal of worry', and this was attributed as the cause of his poor health in later life.[297] Price's work also highlights how paranoia could be an inescapable phenomenon for the men working under these conditions, citing McDonnell's choice of romantic partner as one example of this. McDonnell had separated from his wife and begun a relationship with a woman whose father was in the DMP. This enraged some officers like Tom Cullen and Tom Kehoe (who was also McDonnell's stepbrother), and led to suspicions that he was no longer a trustworthy comrade. On one occasion Vinny Byrne recounted that Kehoe went looking for the woman with a loaded gun, and although they could not find her, Byrne was sure if he had located her, she would have been shot. Providing this as a reference point, Price concludes that often 'fear and suspicion went hand in hand with the threat of death ever present'.[298] Similarly, in her examination on the shooting of spies during the War of Independence, Anne Dolan points to some of the violent behaviour of the Squad, arguing that at times they went beyond the calls of

[295] Dominic Price, p. 92, 114
[296] Anne Dolan, "The Shadow of a Great Fear: Terror and Revolutionary Ireland", in *Terror in Ireland,* edited by David Fitzpatrick, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2012), p. 29, 32
[297] IE-MA-WDP8548, Michael McDonnell, p. 32 - 34
[298] Dominic Price, p. 114

duty. In particular, she states that Todd Andrews was outraged at the behaviour of some of the Squad men on Bloody Sunday.[299]

Perhaps the most well documented case of the psychological impact of intelligence work was Charles Dalton, who suffered a serious nervous breakdown due to his participation in Bloody Sunday at the age of seventeen. It was not until the late 1930's and early 1940's that the state of his mental health became more serious. His doctors reported on 22nd April 1941 that he was suffering from severe strain and nervous shock 'sustained from a very important period of his life', and had suffered attacks of mental abbreviation. He was found to be experiencing impressions and hallucinations that referred back to those early years, in which he was fearful that he was about to be arrested. Previous reports stated that Dalton had been a patient in St Patrick's Hospital since February 1939, undergoing treatment for a serious mental breakdown, were he was in a constant state of fear of being shot, and reportedly heard voices calling him a murderer. Another report from May of that year indicated he was suffering a mixed psychosis 'which has totally and probably permanently incapacitated him', and he had been subject to alternative moods of depression and excitement. Frank Saurin described one particular incident in Dalton's disability pension application, when he barricaded himself in his home, and crawled up the upstairs, as he believed the house was surrounded. [300]

A letter to his brother Emmett Dalton from Seán Ó Mhurtuile in May 1941 shows that the latter believed Dalton's work with intelligence was the main cause of the breakdown, as he stated,

> 'He never relaxed from duty and kept his mind always on the job…the secret work of the nature he was engaged upon could only be discussed with a few and so many secrets and problems remained sealed up in his mind that on many occasions it was obvious to those close to him that he was showing signs of the strain, particularly during the time he was working in intelligence'.[301]

Several of the men also experienced close calls when it came to raids. In his memoirs, Charles Dalton referred to one night in December 1920 when he was told his home had been raided by the military, and that his brother Emmett and father had been arrested. He reported the raid to

[299] Anne Dolan, "The Shadow of a Great Fear: Terror and Revolutionary Ireland", p. 31 - 32
[300] IE-MA-24SP1153, Charles Dalton, p. 63, 64, 65, 95, 96
[301] Ibid, p. 74

Tobin, who confirmed he knew the raid had taken place because he and Collins had spent a sleepless night in a house overlooking his.[302] The men also faced the reality of what would happen to them if they were captured, particularly by Captain Hardy and his men. Patrick Caldwell recalled the treatment that Joe Guilfoyle experienced at the hands of Hardy during their arrest in 1920. After being separated for a period of some hours, Guilfoyle was brought back to their shared cell, describing to Caldwell how he had been blindfolded at a golf links in Dartry, with Hardy threatening to shoot him if he did not reveal the locations of several wanted men, including his brother Sean Guilfoyle.[303] Joe Leonard would explain in his own witness statement that in order to carry out their work,

> 'we would have to become nigh invisible…with only eyes, ears, legs and hands at any particular place in daylight, as the city seemed to shrink in size and detectives grew on railings, with their attendant touts and spies sprouting in the channels'.[304]

Neligan also made reference to the narrow escape that Tobin and Cullen had the week before Bloody Sunday in Vaughans hotel. He stated that he would often meet both of them together, and they were both badly wanted by the British due to the fact that both Molloy and Jameson had reported on them by March 1920.[305] Despite efforts to capture him, the British were never successful in arresting Tobin, unlike Frank Thornton who was questioned for a period of some days in the lead up to Bloody Sunday. But the constant game of cat and mouse that he and others were forced to participate in from 1919 to July 1921 was not a habit that was easily changed. The transition from Deputy Director of an underground intelligence network to his more public role as a Major General in the new National Army would also present its own challenges.

Conclusion

The intelligence activities did not cease when a truce was reached between the British and Irish governments in July 1921, nor with the Anglo-Treaty negotiations. IRA intelligence merely adapted their practices to focus on a number of different avenues, including former comrades who would speak out against the Treaty after it was ratified in January 1922. This is the role that

[302] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, p. 140 - 141
[303] IE-MA-BMH.WS0638, Patrick Caldwell, p. 28
[304] IE-MA-BMH.WS0547, Joseph Leonard, p. 2 -3
[305] David Neligan, p. 99 - 100

he is most commonly associated with, yet the effects of this work would be carried with him throughout the rest of his life, as the suspicious and cautious nature that came with being an intelligence officer was not easily shaken. After the truce Tobin initially continued as Deputy until at least October 1921, when he appears to have become Acting Director of Intelligence due to Collins' presence in London during the negotiations.

In the past studies have painted a picture of him as almost a glorified office administrator, a tense, nervous character overshadowed by the boisterous, fun loving Michael Collins. This portrayal of him diminishes the social skills required of him to be able to engage with so many of the individuals that he came into contact with on a daily basis, and the ability to think on his feet when a potentially dangerous situation presented itself, as was the case with Molloy. It must also be remembered that Tobin was not merely engaged with intelligence gathering during this period. Interchangeably he was operating as an executioner, office manager, dispatch collector, and arms smuggler, all the while participating in his own espionage work with British secret service agents that involved placing himself in life threatening positions.

Charles Dalton's case is one of the worst examples of the psychological toll that intelligence work took on the mind of the participant, although Tobin was not without his own struggles. In addition to struggling with his nerves in the weeks leading up to Bloody Sunday, it was also known in the family that he slept with a gun underneath his pillow until quite late in life, and for a time he was nervous about driving as he felt this would make him an easier target.[306] This fear of being attacked for his intelligence activities during the War of Independence and the Civil War shows that the mindset of being an intelligence officer was difficult to shake even after decades had passed.

IRA intelligence is a vast and complex topic to discuss within the historiography of the War of Independence. Collections housed in the Military Archives provide an insight into the hierarchy of the individuals involved with its running, and the variety of duties that came under the responsibility of intelligence officers. There are, however, limits to the information that these sources can provide to researchers, and the very nature of the work itself required that certain details and communications between individuals would remain secret. In addition to the material destroyed by the contemporaries throughout the intelligence war, there is the added barrier that any documents alleged to be controversial have often been removed by the archive in question if

[306] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

it is deemed to be against the public interest to be aware of the information. As such, there will always be limitations when it comes to the examination of the intelligence war.

Further problems have been uncovered when it comes to articulating how the intelligence staff operated, due to the various roles of the men involved. Speaking in the 1940's, Frank Thornton admitted that it would probably take several volumes to tackle the topic thoroughly, as 'so many things happened of a minor nature which eventually lead to bigger things', and claimed even he felt that he could not do adequate justice to the subject.[307] Presumably he was referring to the amount of contacts that were being utilised by the department, including post office and telegram workers, policemen, auxiliaries, waiters, and hotel staff. Each connection allowed the web of influence to expand further across the city and county areas, and when taking into account some officers also aided the Squad in executions, and assisted in the transport of arms, it is difficult to clarify the many areas that fell under the scope of 'intelligence'. As a result, researchers have been presented with a narrative that is both extensive in terms of the large network of individuals who were involved with intelligence in some form or another, yet also limited regarding the surviving primary documents, with the more explicit reports or dispatches having long been destroyed to preserve the enigmatic nature of the work. Additionally, despite Frank Thornton providing a significant amount of detail on the intelligence office in his witness statement, he admitted himself that parts of it were compiled in collaboration with Tobin, providing them with time to reflect on what they would discuss and what would be omitted. Tobin was also present as a witness when Thornton donated some of his intelligence papers to the Military Archives in 1951, again presumably to ensure that nothing of a sensitive nature was exposed.[308] Therefore, it is inevitable that there will always remain a gap in the narrative.

Nevertheless there is a potential to partially address this gap by examining the documents that are available to understand the significance of Tobin's role in the intelligence war. This becomes all the more important when considering the fact that Tobin deliberately did not speak about his activities, as he most likely would have been privy to a lot of sensitive information. His refusal to engage with the Bureau of Military History on anything related to the intelligence war is indicative of how much knowledge he had of individuals and events that were considered to be of a more controversial nature, especially in the aftermath of the Civil War. As such, Tobin

[307] NLI MS 31655, p. 1, 24
[308] IE-MA-BMH.WS0510, Frank Thornton, p. 75

himself is very valuable as a source due to his close proximity to Collins in the intelligence war, and a presumption could be made that after Collins, Tobin had the most knowledge of the inner workings of the department and the extent of their contacts.

In addition, there is a limit as to what conclusions that can be derived from contemporary sources, given that the majority of it is based on the word of a number of individuals only, some of which Tobin did not have a good relationship with in later years, such as David Neligan. For example, as previously stated in *The Spy in the Castle*, Neligan referred to attending the party at a loyalist's house, asserting that Tobin reportedly told him it was better not to reveal their identity even after the fighting had ceased. The book portrays Tobin as a man who was weighed down by the burden of keeping confidences for so many decades after the Revolution, with Neligan concluding that towards the end of his life, death came as a relief to Tobin.[309] At the same time however, J. B. E Hittle argues that Neligan made a lot of assumptions about Tobin, particularly regarding how much information Tobin would have confirmed about alleged loyalists working for them. Rather, he concludes that Tobin was foremost an intelligence officer who was unlikely to divulge the secrets of Crow Street to even someone like Neligan.[310]

Although the majority of the content in the Military Archives serves only to give a general overview of IRA intelligence, they still provide an insight into how essential it was for Collins to be able to rely on Tobin in Crow Street while his attentions were focused elsewhere. The content reinforces the idea that while Collins may have been the Director, intelligence included a vast network of people around Dublin that had to be correlated in some form by Tobin, Tom Cullen and Frank Thornton. Seán Ó Mhurtuile's estimation of Tobin's work was captured in Anne Dolan and William Murphy's study of Michael Collins, as he referred to him as 'the most effective intelligence officer the Castle people were up against', and concluded that if it were not for the role that Tobin played in the War of Independence, Collins would not have had a 'shadow of an intelligence war'.[311]

[309] David Neligan, p. 161
[310] J. B. E Hittle, *Michael Collins and the Anglo-Irish War: Britain's Counterinsurgency Failure*, (United States: Potomac Books, 2011), p. 79
[311] Anne Dolan and William Murphy, *Michael Collins: The Man and the Revolution*, p. 95

Part III: Civil War

Introduction

Evidence from The Collins Papers proves that the intelligence staff did not expect the truce to last. Not only did they continue to add to their existing files, they also carefully monitored all references to the ceasefire by the British, and made plans in the event that this should end. This in itself is not surprising, as it would be expected that an intelligence department would operate continuously. Changes did, however, occur with regards to who was a target for Collins and his lieutenants, as the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty meant that they were now anticipating trouble from their own former comrades. The Southern Command would become a particular problem from the early months of 1922, and as hostilities developed into the Civil War in June, it was at this point that Tobin's connections in Co. Cork became highly valuable.

In 1922 the intelligence department had been reorganised as Oriel House, with Tobin charged with setting it up. Reports from Ned Broy would claim that Tobin was not given a very clear brief on which to establish this intelligence service, and it would become common knowledge in headquarters circles that he was struggling to get it running with the same efficiency as Crow Street.[312] Historians such as John Dorney have made reference to Oriel House in their studies of the Civil War, stating that by May 1922 the CID had 50 detective officers, a clerk and 3 drivers, and was under the control of Frank Saurin. The CID (Criminal Investigation Department) would be set up in August 1922, based in Oriel House; it would become known as the 'CID Murder Gang' by anti-Treaty republicans. In the meantime Tobin had been put in charge of the military intelligence section of Oriel House, and so the CID would also fall under his command. This section would be transferred to Wellington and Portobello Barracks once the Civil War broke out.[313]

Essentially all pre-truce intelligence officers, and Squad men, were transferred into Oriel House once the Treaty was ratified, including Charles Dalton, Joe Dolan, Patrick Moynihan, and Frank Saurin, with Tom Cullen and Frank Thornton as Tobin's lieutenants. This was confirmed by Captain Nolan and Broy in their respective testimonies to the inquiry after the army mutiny

[312] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040 Eamon Broy and Captain Nolan Statement 13th May 1924, p. B3 - B6
[313] Gerard Lovett, *Ireland's Special Branch: The Inside Story of their Battle with the IRA 1922-1947*, (Dublin: Eastwood Books, 2022), p. 10; John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin: The Fight for the Irish Capital 1922-1924*, (Dublin: Merrion Press, 2017), p. 37, 112

later in 1924.[314] Oriel House would soon become associated with some of the worst crimes committed by the Free State forces during the war, with numerous anti-Treaty prisoners claiming to have been tortured, while others were killed in custody. Tobin has never been mentioned by name in any of these accounts from anti-Treaty sources, although he has come to be seen as guilty by association, as many of the men responsible for these acts were those who had been in the Squad or a member of the intelligence staff.

During August 1922 Tobin would also be sent to Cork to help Emmett Dalton recapture the city and wider county from the anti-Treaty republicans. After the taking of Cork City, Tobin was moved to his native North Cork, assuming command of Fermoy and its surrounding areas. Throughout this year, as with many others at the time, he experienced some of the most significant losses of his life, namely his brother Nicholas who died in October, and Collins who was famously killed in August. It was also a period when he and the other members of the intelligence staff were forced into the open by becoming members of the new National Army. Now instead of leading a network of intelligence officers he was propelled into the public eye as a Major General, and expected to adapt to this new role within a relatively short period of time.

[314] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040, Eamon Broy and Captain Nolan Statement 13th May 1924, p. A5 and B5

Chapter 5 - Major General Tobin

Introduction: The Truce and Treaty Negotiations 1921

Correspondence between Collins, Tobin and Frank Thornton show that they never ceased their intelligence activities, even creating a new file labelled 'Miscellaneous cases to be dealt with after the Truce'. It contains letters between Collins and his lieutenants from July to December 1921. For instance, disparaging comments by a Sir J. C. Percy regarding support for Sinn Féin were noted by Tobin in September, who quickly obtained personal details of the man, with instructions from Collins to keep the report until 'hostilities are resumed'.[315] Likewise, the intelligence reports that were donated by Thornton included information that had been gathered in 1921 on William Frederick McCoy, the investigation of which lasted until early 1922. McCoy was an Ulster Unionist, a barrister and also a member of the Parliament for Northern Ireland for South Tyrone. The purpose of their investigation on McCoy was that he alleged in 1921 that he had someone in IRA Headquarters in his power. They were also able to obtain a copy of his signature to confirm that he had signed the Ulster Covenant in 1912.[316]

In addition, the collection from Thornton included a memo from Collins asking for an intelligence officer to attend the marriage ceremony of Mr. Eric Hine and Miss Cecile Philippe on 29th October 1921. According to Frank Saurin the bridegroom had been an auxiliary, and it was Saurin who was selected to attend the ceremony to watch for any other members of the military or auxiliaries that might also attend. On 4th August Tobin also managed to obtain a list of names and addresses of all the lady typists still working in the Castle, and asked for enquiries to be made about their backgrounds.[317] Therefore, it is clear that the intelligence staff did not expect the truce to last.

It is unclear what Tobin's personal thoughts were on the truce. Undoubtedly he was relieved at the prospect of an end to his life on the run. According to Piaras Béaslaí, Tom Cullen was left in charge of the intelligence office in Dublin during the Treaty negotiations, as Tobin had accompanied Collins to London as a bodyguard. However, the Collins Papers suggest that Tobin was still very much involved in the running of the department, and from early October 1921 all intelligence officers nationwide were told to address their dispatches to Tobin as the

[315] IE-MA-CP-05-01-18, L File. Miscellaneous cases to be dealt with after Truce, p. 7
[316] IE-MA-BMH-CD-188-01-1103 Frank Thornton Personal Record
[317] IE-MA-BMH-CD-188-01-1103 Frank Thornton Personal Record

Acting Director until further notice. This practice continued until the early months of 1922, with occasional interjections from Collins if the matter was urgent. For instance, dispatches between GHQ and the Western Division show that Tobin was still the main one replying to correspondence in February 1922.[318]

The military pension files provide no option for the applicant to state what active service they were participating in during the period from the truce to the formation of the National Army in early 1922, so Tobin does not disclose what his activities or role was at this time, merely that he was still working with intelligence GHQ and Collins remained his O/C.[319] He was still in communication with those running intelligence in Dublin while he was in London, and this was confirmed in his reference for the military pension of Volunteer Patrick McBride who had been attached to the intelligence department. Tobin confirmed that McBride had been well known to him as he was used as a dispatch carrier during the negotiations, and stated that these frequent overnight journeys in winter were the reason for his eventual decline in health.[320]

During his time in London Tobin carried out duties that were of a similar capacity to Emmet Dalton; that of bodyguard, and generally safeguarding Collins' arrival and departure from Downing Street each day. Tobin, Dalton, and Ned Broy appear to have been the main three that were concerned with ensuring Collins' safety throughout his time there. Precautions were not only taken escorting him to Downing Street, but also for their house in Cadogan Gardens more generally, as the delegation received multiple threats. On one occasion Ned Broy mentioned that an envelope addressed to Collins contained an allegedly disease ridden piece of cloth (although Collins did not appear to take the threat seriously), and at one stage the word 'murders' was painted outside of the house.[321]

In such circumstances, it is clear why Collins decided to bring Tobin to London, as he had already proved to be one of his most loyal and deadliest workers. Emmet Dalton is perhaps the bodyguard that is most well-known to have accompanied Collins, possibly because there are more photographs of the two together. In typical Tobin fashion, he opted to keep a lower profile, with only one photographer managing to capture a photo of him leaning on a car outside of Downing Street, with one hand held up indicating a reluctance to have the photo taken.

[318] IE-MA-CP-05-02-19 Typed communications between 1 Western Division and GHQ IRA, p. 54
[319] IE-MA-W24SP2764, Liam Tobin, p. 8
[320] IE-MA-1D469, Patrick McBride, p. 105-106
[321] IE-MA-BMH.WS1280, Ned Broy, p. 147

Republican activist and delegation member, Kathleen Napoli McKenna, recalled seeing both men standing outside Downing Street waiting for Collins one day, describing Dalton as 'handsome as a Wild West cinemastar', whereas Tobin appeared 'rigid and taut'.[322]

Very little about Tobin's time in London has been documented, with most accounts only mentioning him in passing as being a member of Collins' household staff. Tim Pat Coogan refers to him as being a member of Collin's entourage, acting as security with Dalton.[323] Some of the recent works on the Anglo-Irish Treaty do not mention him, such as Gretehen Friemann's *The Treaty*, and *Birth of a State* by Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks, both of which focus specifically on the features of the Treaty itself rather than the involvement of Collin's household in the negotiations.[324] T. Ryle Dwyer goes into some detail on his time in London in his book *I Signed My Death Warrant*, as the account primarily deals with the negotiations from Collins' perspective. He discusses how Tobin was often travelling in the same car as Collins, and also refers to distinctions made between those staying with Collins at Cadogan Gardens and the other delegates at Hans Palace, commenting that the former were a more 'boisterous, happy group who preferred horseplay to formalities'.[325] Gerard O'Brien also mentions one additional instance when Lord Birkenhead showed Roger Casement's diaries to Collins and that this was witnessed by Tobin, but generally there are very few specific details about his time in London.[326]

As with a lot of aspects of Tobin's activities, more information is available from his contemporaries than historians. Seán MacBride described one interaction in particular towards the end of the negotiations. Though only a young 18 year old Volunteer, MacBride had been part of Collins' entourage in London. In his memoirs MacBride mentioned how he, Tobin, Tom Cullen and others had been staying at Cadogan Gardens with Collins. MacBride said Tobin acted as their direct superior and both he and Cullen were armed when accompanying Collins to Downing Street. He also referred to a disagreement amongst the Cadogan Gardens staff when it was indicated that they could not hope to achieve complete independence, but also stated that Tobin and Cullen took his side in the argument when MacBride urged that absolute freedom was

[322] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 234
[323] Ibid, p. 234
[324] Gretchen Frieman, *The Treaty: The Gripping Story of the Negotiations that brought about Irish Independence and led to the Civil War,* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2021); Michéal Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks, *Birth of the State: The Anglo-Irish Treaty*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2021)
[325] T. Ryle Dwyer, *I Signed My Death Warrant,* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2006), p. 86, 91
[326] Gerard O'Brien, *Irish Governments and the Guardianship of Historical Records, 1922 - 1972*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004*),* p. 174

the only acceptable outcome.[327] Tobin would immediately join the National Forces upon its establishment, and at no point did his support for Collins weaver, from the negotiation table to the ratification in January 1922. However, David Neligan and Siobhan Lankford provided two different perspectives on Tobin's initial opinion of the Treaty in their respective books, with both conversations taking place within days of it being signed in London.

In the *Spy in the Castle* Neligan stated that he saw Collins, Alfred Cope and Tobin at Euston Station along with the rest of the delegation. They told Neligan about the details of the Treaty, and according to him Tobin is reported to have said 'we will have to face our die-hards now'. Neligan claimed to be confused by this statement, and he would comment that this was the first time he heard it used in Irish politics, and it does seem to imply that Tobin was willing to accept the contents of the agreement, and its limitations, at least for a time.[328] If Tobin did make this comment, it is interesting in light of his later attitude towards the Free State government and Army, as he often argued into the 1930's that both institutions had become 'anglicised', and complete independence from Britain would be one of the main focus points for his own political party Clann na nGaedheal.[329]

On the other hand, Siobhan Lankford recounted her own conversation with Tobin in Cork at some point after the signing of the Treaty. Lankford stated that Tobin, Frank Thornton, Tom Cullen, and Joe Guilfoyle were sent to Cork by Collins. They were to contact the First Southern Division, coming with urgent instructions for the release of the London *Times* journalist, Mr A. B Kay, who was being held in Cork due to the remarks that he had made about the Volunteers in his reports. They arrived with the order from Collins to release him, and stopped in Mallow to meet with Lankford on their way. As they were eating breakfast, Tobin questioned her on Liam Lynch's opinion of the Treaty, to which she responded she was unsure as she had not spoken to him yet. According to Lankford, Tobin reportedly said that he felt that De Valera had sent Collins to be the stooge in bringing back an agreement that he knew would not be acceptable, which goes against his attitude towards De Valera when he would later join Fianna Fáil. He went on to state that the discussions over the Treaty debates had gone on too long, and he wished that they would simply let them get back on with the work, and stop all the talking. When questioned by Lankford as to the nature of this future 'work', he claimed that plans had been discussed to go

[327] Seán MacBride, *That Day's Struggle: A Memoir*, (Dublin: Currach Press, 1951), p. 44, 54
[328] David Neligan, p. 152
[329] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925, Courtesy of Brian Hand

abroad in an attempt to break up the rest of the British Empire across the world, starting with Egypt, and even stated that they had met some Egyptian anti-imperialists in London.[330]

This account is purely based on Lankford's own recollections, as was Neligan's, and there is no evidence to suggest that Tobin was making plans to go to Egypt in particular. However, given that her book, *The Hope and the Sadness,* is one of the few works that directly praises Tobin and acknowledges his contribution to the Revolution, it is unlikely that she would mislead the readers in order to portray him in a negative light. His attitude in this account is quite different from the one given by Neligan, as Tobin appears to be much less conciliatory than he did when speaking to Neligan, and comes across as one of the 'die-hards' that he himself cautioned Neligan and Collins against.

The Collins Papers shows that the transition period from the truce to the ratification of the Treaty also posed many problems for the intelligence staff. The reaction to the Treaty of the Cork brigades in particular caused concern for the senior intelligence officers in Dublin. Through contacts from his days in the North Cork area, Tobin was able to maintain communication between the two areas, and keep abreast of the attitudes of particular individuals towards the terms of the Treaty, and any Volunteers who may be likely to take matters into their own hands.

On 16th January three members of the Cork 1st Brigade arrived in Dublin claiming to be on authorised leave for a holiday. At some point during their stay they were arrested outside the Gaiety Theatre, and released later that evening, having had their arms and weapons taken from them. During their visit they had been staying in Vaughans hotel, where Tobin and Tom Cullen had also been staying. The two had become suspicious of the group's motivations behind the visit, as Tobin had reported to Collins that he had received information that the three had travelled there 'on a job' to retrieve motor cars to bring back to Cork. Tobin, Cullen and Collins confronted the Volunteers with the accusation, with one Corkmen stating that Collins was moving his hands in his pockets in such a way as to insinuate that he was armed. Tobin later questioned the men again in their own rooms in the hotel, this time asking them more pointed questions about how they intended to get home, by rail or car, evidently hoping to catch a change in their story. The conversation ended with Tobin remarking to one man, 'I suppose next time you see me in Cork you will plug me', which the men also denied.

[330] Siobhan Lankford, *The Hope and the Sadness*, p. 228-230

Tobin remained tight-lipped about his source of this information, simply telling Collins that it could be awkward if his source were to be revealed if charges were brought against the three men. The accusation prompted an outraged response from the commander of the brigade once the three had returned to Cork, who denied all the claims made by Tobin and Collins, and insinuated that similar treatment may be reserved for any member of the Dublin intelligence staff who appeared in Cork. There is no mention in the correspondence if any motor cars were stolen, or if the Volunteers were there 'on a job'.[331] The situation does however confirm that Tobin must have remained in contact with associates in the Cork area, or possibly members of the brigade itself, given the nature of the information, and Tobin's reluctance to reveal his sources.

While Tobin did not explicitly state his attitude towards specific articles within the Treaty itself, *The Truth about the Army Crisis* was published in the weeks following his involvement in the mutiny in March 1924, and here he made it clear that he saw the agreement as purely a stepping stone, the same view, he argued, that Collins held of it. He detailed how Collins told those men formerly associated with intelligence and the Squad that he did not consider the Treaty to be a permanent solution, and that they would bide their time until they could push for complete independence, and this stance appears to be one of the main motivators behind the mutiny. Likewise, Tobin told Mick McDonnell in March 1926 that the country had been 'sold' in the agreements of the Northern border by the Boundary Commission in 1925, regarding it 'nothing short of treason'.[332] Tobin would also make similar references to the need to continue the fight for a Republic into the 1930's with the formation of Clann na Gaedheal. Although the party was short-lived, and attracted few members, reports of his speeches at their meetings from 1931 to 1932 indicate that at no point had he considered the Treaty to be a permanent fixture in Irish politics, and criticised what he called 'British elements' that remained within the Free State government and the army after Collins' death.[333]

[331] IE-MA-CP-05-02-07 Typed communications between Cork 1 Brigade and GHQ IRA, p. 39-46
[332] *The Truth about the Army Crisis*, p.3; Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 8th March 1926, Courtesy of Brian Hand
[333] "For Freedom's Course A Highway", *Honesty*, 7th February 1931, p. 5

Intelligence and Oriel House

One of the main issues with examining Tobin's role in the period after the signing of the Treaty is that there are often conflicting accounts as to how significant a character he was during this time. This is certainly the case when it comes to looking at Tobin's time as a member of the National Forces. He was made a Major General in early 1922, and so one of the first questions that must be asked is was he really suited to this kind of role? He followed a pattern prevalent at the time, in which men from all backgrounds signed up in their thousands to the Army, fulfilling a need for manpower that was essential at the time. With the War of Independence at an end, the underground intelligence network that had been carefully organised by Collins and Tobin was suddenly propelled into the public arena. Men who had worked with him in intelligence, and former members of the Squad for the most part supported the Treaty, and followed Collins into the Army.

David Neligan claimed that during this period before the Civil War broke out in June, there was very little work for those in intelligence to be getting on with, and Richard Mulcahy would hint that the same men who had proved effective during the War of Independence now became a hindrance to Collins.[334] Historian John Dorney would also make reference to this, stating that the entire leadership of the pro-Treaty commanders was almost exclusively ex-IRA officers.[335] At present there is little detailed information about what Tobin was doing from the period of January to June 1922 in terms of his military activities and his work with government intelligence, other than that he had been given somewhat vague instructions on how to organise Oriel House. He was stationed at Begger's Bush Barracks during this time, when there was not a lot of work for former intelligence officers to do, and this would lead to problems for Tobin in relation to salaries and ranks that his men were unwilling to accept.[336] In terms of his level of command, intelligence officers such as Joseph Shanahan stated that Tobin was the O/C in charge of military intelligence in Oriel House for the time he was employed there until the attack on the Four Courts in June 1922.[337]

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[334] Eunan O'Halpin, "Collins and Intelligence 1919-1923 - From Brotherhood to Bureaucracy", in *Michael Collins and the Making of the Irish State,* edited by Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1998), p. 76; Risteárd Mulcahy, *Richard Mulcahy 1886-1971: A Family Memoir,* (Dublin: Aurelian Press, 1999), p. 202

[335] John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin*, p. 166

[336] IE-MA-AMTY-03-010 Statement from Colonel Costello, Director of Intelligence to the Army Inquiry Committee, 22 April 1924

[337] IE-MA-24SP2326, Joseph Shanahan, p. 29

Former intelligence staff and Squad men did not adapt well to the disciplined and regulated life in the new army. In his study of Collins and his intelligence unit, Dominic Price points out that the task of living in complete secrecy, remaining suspicious of those around you, and also often having to strike up some form of relationship with potential targets, had a severe impact on the mental state of the men.[338] For example, testimony for Dalton's disability pension included a letter from Tobin as his superior officer, and he concluded that his activities for the intelligence department was a contributing factor in his 'recent nervous behaviour', in particular because of the part he played in the executions on Bloody Sunday.[339]

Additionally, in his work *The Irish Counter-Revolution,* John Regan criticises Tobin's conduct during Michael Collins' funeral in August 1922, stating that he did not appear to fit in with the disciplined, bureaucratic officers around him, and casually refers to him as 'the most unsuitable chocolate box soldier'.[340] Likewise, in her study of the mutiny, *An Almost a Rebellion,* Maryann Valiulis argues that not only was he not suited to the role of a disciplined soldier, but that a lot of his later grievances towards the government were due to him being disillusioned about not being given a position of more influence in the Army after the Civil War.[341]

It must be considered how well the intelligence could have been expected to adapt to their new situation. They were no longer conducting their meetings in the backrooms of pubs and side streets, and in the intermediate period between the Treaty ratification and June 1922 at least they did not have the constant fear of being captured, or their premises raided. While their duties and responsibilities may have remained similar, such as gathering information and receiving correspondence, this was now done in their own offices, in a uniform, without the need to make oneself invisible and undetectable, unless the occasion called for it. It would be unfair to categorise Tobin's new role as being rife with paranoia and suspension towards his superiors, but it is clear that elements of his training as Deputy Director were difficult to break. For example, in *The Truth about the Army Crisis* he also referred to the suspicion that dictaphones had been placed in the rooms of himself and his comrades, and they were followed day and night.[342] Similarly, the images and newsreels show Tobin often ducking his head down when he glimpses

[338] Dominic Price, p. 91-92
[339] IE-MA-24SP1153, Charles Dalton, p. 63, 64, 65
[340] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland,* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2000), p. 166
[341] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion: The Irish Army Mutiny of 1924*, (Cork: Tower Books, 1985), p. 32
[342] *The Truth about the Army Crisis,* 1924. p. 7

the camera in front of him. During Collins' funeral, as he and the other pallbearers were carrying the coffin down the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and again as the coffin was being secured to the carriage, Tobin repeatedly turned his head away from the cameraman.[343] Other newsreels show him walking behind others, sometimes with his coat collar turned up, or with his head pointed down to avoid the lens.[344] At the same time, there was an element of pride in their new uniforms, as evidenced by footage taken of Tobin and Cullen with the new Governor General Tim Healy in 1922.[345]

Problems would soon develop between the Collins' faction of the Army and the headquarters staff, as Tobin and his deputies were extremely reluctant to give up control over anything to do with military intelligence. As 1922 progressed into the summer, Tobin would use undemocratic, and somewhat amateurish strategies to tackle these problems. Nevertheless, the fact remains that perhaps the second most significant figure in the underground Dublin intelligence network could not have been expected to embody all of the characteristics of a well adjusted Major General after suddenly being thrust into the public eye.

Correspondence between him and Collins from July and August give an idea of the type of work he was engaged in. From July 1922 onwards Joseph McGrath was named Director of Intelligence, and Tobin then became Deputy once again. He was appointed the intelligence officer for the Eastern Command, and memos from the intelligence department in Portobello Barracks to Collins from July 1922 indicate that this move was made in an attempt to better organise the intelligence service in the new government.[346] Collins tasked Tobin with locating known anti-Treaty men, or placing intelligence officers in locations or events at which they may appear. On 3rd August Collins asked him to look into the arrest of two attendees at Harry Boland's inquest. A couple of weeks earlier on 20th July he had asked Tobin to find someone to attend a Mansion House meeting to make a report on what was discussed, and also to get an intelligence officer to attend the Curragh Races in case any anti-Treaty men should turn up.[347]

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[343] "Funeral of Michael Collins", British Pathe, https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/49608/
[344] "First Senate Meeting (aka Governor General now in residence 1922)", British Pathe, https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/51704/
[345] "Tim Healy's appointment as the first Governor General of Ireland (1922)", British Pathe, https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/151852/
[346] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/4/104, Memo from Office of Director of Intelligence to Michael Collins 25th July 1922
[347] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/4/74, P7/B/4/122, P7/B/4/124

One noteworthy memo between the two is dated 19th July in which Collins asked him about telephone tappings and ordered all letters from important officials to be forwarded on to him.[348]

Richard Mulcahy, conversely, would argue that Collins was frustrated by the ill-disciplined nature of his former intelligence staff, and claimed that he ordered Tobin to go to Cork in August as a means of getting him out of the way.[349] Ernie O'Malley would also state in his own anti-Treaty intelligence report that Tobin was a failure as the enemy Director of Intelligence, and that he is too restless for the job.[350] Col. Charles Russell would also claim that Tobin's rank as Major General was supposed to be acting only, and that there had been some dispute over this as well.[351] On the other hand, from the correspondence between Collins and Tobin during the early days of the Civil War, it is clear that Tobin continued to hold Collins' full trust, despite being made Deputy under McGrath. For example, in the months leading up to the outbreak of the fighting, he would also be tasked with escorting anti-Treaty men back to their local areas if Collins requested a meeting with them.[352] At least until 3rd August 1922 (just days before he left for Cork), he continued to sign his correspondence as Deputy Director of Intelligence, stationed at General Headquarters in Begger's Bush Barracks.[353] However, a memo from Collins dated 2nd August also addressed Tobin as 'Acting Major General'.[354]

Oriel House would later be brought up in the Army Mutiny Inquiry in 1924 when Col. Ned Broy (also associated with intelligence) was brought before the committee to answer questions about the establishment of the department. Broy told the inquiry that about a month after the Treaty was ratified Oriel House was formally opened, but as far as he could see it was merely a place to hold officers for a time before they could go into the Army. Broy was nominally placed in charge of CID in the ordinary crime unit for a period of about two months, during which he stated there was very little work to get on with. With Broy in charge of the CID department, he and the rest of those working in Oriel House were all working under Tobin in

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[348] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/4/124
[349] Risteárd Mulcahy, *Richard Mulcahy (1886-1971),* p. 202
[350] Cormac. H. O'Malley and Ernie O'Malley, *No Surrender Here! The Civil War Papers of Ernie O'Malley 1922-1924,* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2007), p. 309
[351] IE-MA-AMTY-03-035, Verbatim Report of Evidence of Colonel Charles Russell, p. 7
[352] Patrick Murray, "Active Service in Ireland in a Troubled Decade 1915-1925", in *An Irish Quarterly Review*, Autumn 2021, Vol. 10, No. 439, p. 297
[353] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/4/74, Memo From Liam Tobin as Deputy Director of Intelligence, 3rd August 1922
[354] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/4/82, Memo from Michael Collins to Liam Tobin, 2nd August 1922

Begger's Bush, although he claimed that Tobin was actually working as Acting Director of Intelligence, not the deputy, remaining in this post until the Civil War began.

When asked by the inquiry if he thought Tobin was given a fair chance in this post, Broy responded that while he does not believe anyone tried to interfere with him, Tobin tried to make the best of the situation he was presented with, stating that he was eager to 'get the work going', and that they had discussed potential plans for Oriel House during their postings, but it was impossible to make any progress until a proper government was formed. The inquiry on the other hand, took from this statement that the same officers would have felt some resentment towards the Army for not giving them positions of any responsibility.[355] Correspondence between the intelligence department and Collins during the summer of 1922 also indicates that they were having trouble getting officers interested in intelligence work, as the men preferred to be engaged in active duties rather than gathering information.[356] John Dorney would also comment on the effectiveness of intelligence during this period, arguing that it failed to capitalise on the sample information they received, and that Collins would soon express impatience towards Tobin to the point that he ordered military intelligence to be removed from Oriel House on 10th August.[357]

The phrase 'Collins' men' would frequently be used to broadly group all of the intelligence and Squad men together. As early as March 1922 Tobin would face his own difficulties with controlling the men under his command. Due to a combination of impatience at the lack of work to get on with, and grievances at not being given posts of higher rank after their commitment to the war, they corresponded with Tobin and Thornton over the course of the month regarding their rate of pay and rank. Initially their letters to Tobin were respectful as they apologised for having given him the trouble of dealing with their grievances, and they detailed how forty new recruits to the CID were receiving a higher net wage than they were despite their experience with intelligence work. In response they refused to accept their salaries, although they would continue with their work until the issue was rectified. Tobin's response was heavily critical of the officers actions, arguing that ranks, posts and salaries could not be settled at that time because he did not yet know the new army scheme.[358] It is also worth noting that in this correspondence back in March 1922 Tobin was using the rank of Major General. By contrast,

[355] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040 Eamon Broy Statement 13th May 1924, p. B3 - B6
[356] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/4/104
[357] John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin*, p. 350
[358] IE-MA-AMTY-03-010 Statement from Colonel Costello, Director of Intelligence to the Army Inquiry Committee, 22 April 1924

Col. Charles Russell had originally claimed that he was only made an acting Major General in June of that year.[359] As such, regardless of disputes that occurred later of over ranks, Tobin had evidently been using this title since early 1922.

Henry Wilson

The assassination of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson was one of the most significant events in the lead up to the Civil War. Wilson was security advisor to the Northern Ireland government, which had separated from Dáil Éireann officially in 1920 under the Government of Ireland Act. Due to his close connection with Unionist politicians, he was also associated with the sectarian violence against Catholics in the North. On 22nd June 1922 Wilson was returning to his London home after unveiling a war memorial, where the two shooters Reginuld Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan were waiting for him. Several shots were fired as he approached his doorstep. Both men fled the scene afterwards, but due to O'Sullivan's artificial leg, they were soon captured. Although they were definite members of the IRA, following their arrest they would deny having any association with any particular group or organisation, and Reginald Dunne's own statement did not refer to any other Volunteer other than O'Sullivan.[360]

From April 1922 the anti-Treaty IRA had occupied the Four Courts in Dublin, and the shooting of Wilson led the British government to further question Collins' reluctance in dealing with the occupation, although the British would eventually lay the blame for the killing on the anti-Treaty side. Various accounts and theories have surfaced in the passing decades as to how much Collins was involved in the assassination, namely whether he had ordered it after the truce, or if it had been an older order that was carried out by two overzealous Volunteers. Historian Calton Younger would argue that Wilson's shooting was perhaps the last act of Bloody Sunday, as Collins had a mind to execute him months before.[361] Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan would be hanged for the shooting of Wilson, and alleged attempts by Collins' intelligence staff to rescue both of them have confirmed that he was involved at least to some degree. According to Peter Hart one of the staff members sent on this mission was Tobin, although Hart was sceptical about accusations that Tobin had played a part in the planning of the execution.[362]

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[359] IE-MA-AMTY-03-035, p. 7
[360] NLI Ernie O'Malley Papers, MS 10,973 /7/56, Statement by Reginald Dunne, June 1922
[361] Calton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War*, (United Kingdom: Collins Sons & Co Ltd, 1968), p. 314
[362] Peter Hart, "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson", *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 28, Issue 110, November 1922, pp 150-170, p. 162

In his recent work *Great Hatred:The Assassination of Sir Field Marshal Henry Wilson,* Ronan McGreevy includes a statement from Brian Hand concerning proof of Tobin's involvement in the shooting. McGreevy states that Hand informed him that a Commandant in the Military Archives had allowed him to see classified files on Irish military intelligence from the 1940's. This included an affidavit written by Frank Thornton on the shooting of Wilson, with Tobin's signature at the bottom. The Commandant could not show Hand any further details, but essentially confirmed that Tobin had been involved to some degree in the event.[363] This much has never been disputed due to Tobin mentioning it in his later interview with Ernie O'Malley, however the extent of his prior knowledge and his attempts to provide support for the families of Dunne and O'Sullivan afterwards are more open to speculation in the absence of any substantial evidence. McGreevy also makes the point that Cullen and Tobin gave the deeds of a house in Bray to Dunne's parents in 1923, while O'Sullivan's father received a military pension £112 and 10 shillings on his behalf. Mary McGeehin, a friend of Dunne, commented that it was a gift as 'nothing public or governmental could be done for them in the circumstances'.[364]

In *The Irish Counter Revolution*, John Regan cites Peter Hart's article "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson ", arguing that Dunne and Sullivan were acting independently and murdered Wilson in part for his involvement in the Belfast pogrom against Catholics living in the city. Michael Hopkinson, conversely, argues that the shooting 'fits into the wider part of Collins' Northern policy of using aggression against Stormont'.[365] Mary MacGeehin also claimed that Dunne had taken the Treaty side, and that during the early months of 1922 it was common gossip amongst his friends in Cumann na mBan that he was in close contact with Collins and others from the pro-Treaty side. While she made it clear that her information was based on mere rumour at the time, she went on to state that the story they heard was that Dunne was arranging with the Treaty people at the highest level to get rid of Wilson because of his treatment of Catholics in the North, and he was to be rewarded with a high position in the Free State Army.[366] In his 1992 article dissecting the accounts that had been put forward, Peter Hart referred to papers that were found on Dunne and O'Sullivan at the time that

[363] Ronan McGreevy, *Great Hatred: The Assassination of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson MP*, (United Kingdom: Faber & Faber, 2022), p. 382
[364] Ronan McGreevy, p. 334; IE-MA-BMH.WS0902, Mary McGeehin, p. 9; IE-MA-WDP6925, Joseph O'Sullivan, p.41
[365] Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmilian, 1988), p. 191; John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936,* p. 71
[366] IE-MA-BMH.WS0902, Mary McGeehin, p. 5

led the British government to hint at the existence of a conspiracy connecting the IRA executive with the killing, and argued that this was used as the catalyst to force the Provisional Government to take action on the anti-Treaty members in the Four Courts.[367] On the other hand, Keith Jeffrey argues that the shooting was more immediate than planned, pointing out that Dunne and O'Sullivan had no escape plan, and maintains that there is little evidence linking Collins to it. He also refers to a claim made by Denis Kelleher, adjutant of the London IRA, who stated that both men did not plan to kill Wilson, and that the shooting happened spontaneously on the day.[368]

As previously stated Tobin also mentioned the shooting in his interview with Ernie O'Malley, although he did not give details on when the order was given, or his involvement in the planning of it. He claimed that he reported the shooting to Richard Mulcahy, and apparently delighted in informing him 'our lads' shot Wilson. In response, Mulcahy stated that he was going to resign, and when Tobin later reported this to Collins, he was told 'I'll make that alright'.[369] According to O'Malley, Volunteer Joseph Sweeney also told him in later years that he met Collins in Dublin on the day after the shooting, and Collins reportedly told him 'It was two men of ours did it', with Sweeney adding that he had not seen Collins look so pleased since the shooting of Percival Lea-Wilson in June 1920.[370] Historians have argued that Tobin's interview with O'Malley reflects a shortsightedness, and an inability to see what the potential consequences of such an act would be for the Provisional Government and the situation with the Four Courts. James Mackay also refers to Tobin 'jubilantly' reporting the news to Mulcahy.[371]

However, Hart argued that a degree of caution is required when analysing the quote 'our lads', as Tobin may have meant the IRA in general, as opposed to the pro-Treaty side.[372] Questions should also be raised as to why Tobin would specifically inform Mulcahy when it was known that relations between the two (and other members of the intelligence staff) were not good. Allegedly, this originated from the shooting of Alan Bell, and Mulcahy's refusal to shelter Tobin and the other participants in the aftermath.[373] Likewise, regardless of how much he knew

[367] Peter Hart, "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson", *Irish Historical Studies*, p. 151
[368] Keith Jeffrey, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*: A Political Soldier, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 283, 286
[369] UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17/B/94, Liam Tobin, p. 89
[370] Harry. F. Martin and Cormac. K. H. O'Malley, *Ernie O'Malley: A Life*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2021), p. 83-84
[371] James Mackay, *Michael Collins: A Life*, (United Kingdom: Mainstream Publishing Company, 1996), p. 262
[372] Peter Hart, "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson", p. 162
[373] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, *Richard Mulcahy: From the Politics of War to the Politics of Peace 1913 - 1924*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press Ltd, 2019, p. 177

about the order to carry out the shooting, it is also doubtful that Tobin would not have understood the ramifications for such an action taking place at that time. As Eoin Neeson would put it in *The Civil War in Ireland*, the shooting was 'precisely the weapon Lloyd George now needed to put the last ounce of pressure on Griffith and Collins' in relation to dealing with the anti-Treaty's occupation of the Four Courts.[374]

In his work *Michael Collins*, Tim Pat Coogan also refers to Tobin being involved in the planning of the shooting. However, the evidence he submits for this is questionable, as it is largely based on the assumptions of one source. He refers to a female dispatcher Peig Ni Braonain, who worked for Collins as a dispatcher during the Treaty negotiations. She reportedly told her son in later years that a week before the murder she had brought a dispatch to London, and upon arrival gave it to a 'tall man called Tobin', and that she had sensed at the time that the message was from Collins, but this was never confirmed.[375] Coogan was not the first to claim that Tobin was involved in the assassination, as Tobin himself spoke to O'Malley about it.[376] However, there is nothing in Peig Ni Braonain's statement that directly implicated Tobin in the shooting, as the account is entirely based upon presumption on her part. A number of leaders, including Griffith and Collins were in London at the time, and as Tobin had accompanied Collins during the Treaty negotiations it is likely that he did so again in June 1922.[377]

In addition, there is no possible way of knowing that the message in question was specifically related to Wilson. In hindsight, it was reasonable for her to speculate on this as the message was delivered just a week before the shooting. However, the same logic could be applied to other significant events that occurred at the same time. For instance, the message would have been received just under two weeks before the attack on the Four Courts, or alternatively it could have been about the election that would have taken place in the same week, or other matters concerning the North. Despite the presumptive nature of the account, Coogan does not acknowledge its limitations. Peter Hart, however, pointed out that there is no proof that the letter was about Wilson. He took a similar stance in his book *The IRA at War*, arguing again

[374] Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War 1922-23*, (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1966), p. 109
[375] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 44-45
[376] UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17/B/94, Liam Tobin, p. 89
[377] Ibid

that it is third hand evidence and not conclusive because the message could have been about almost anything as several Irish leaders were in London around that time.[378]

In addition, Robert Brennan's witness statement offers some insight into the assassination. During the Civil War he set up the Department of Publicity for the anti-Treaty side, and he claimed a document came to him from their intelligence department stating that two or three days before Wilson was shot 'one or two of Mick Collins' men' were in London and had been in association with Dunne and O'Sullivan. Some years later in the 1930's both he and Tobin were in the United States on business, and Brennan mentioned the document to him, apparently giving Tobin the impression that the anti-Treaty side had seen it before the attack on the Four Courts. Tobin complained about not being given a copy of the document, arguing that they were all supposed to be working together at that point. Based on this interaction, Brennan stated that he got the impression that 'Tobin himself was the man, or one of the men, who had been in London', and that the shooting had been determined earlier on before the truce, but that no countermanding order was given by Collins.[379]

One interesting point is the number of people with connections to Tobin who were alleged to have been involved in the shooting in some capacity. One example is Connie Neenan, who would later work with Tobin in the foreign office of the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes in the 1930's. Neenan had provided a number of different accounts of the shooting. Initially stating that he was in Cork at the time, he later told Ernie O'Malley that he was in London in December 1921, and that Sam Maguire of the London Volunteers informed him that the job was on. Decades later he added to his account, this time claiming that Maguire and Frank Thornton told him the plan was set to carry out the execution, and was sworn to secrecy.[380]

The O'Malley papers in UCD convey a different account from Frank Thornton, who is said to have stated that the order 'to kill Wilson was carried out by those two soldiers of the IRA on the direct orders of their GHQ', although he did not say who gave the order.[381] Tobin and Tom Cullen were allegedly sent on a rescue mission to London to try to break Dunne and O'Sullivan out of prison, to no avail. According to Peter Hart, one person who is supposed to have taken part in this was Dublin Brigade member George White, who also argued that the order for the

[378] Peter Hart, "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson", p. 162; Peter Hart, *The IRA at War: 1916 to 1923*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 210
[379] IE-MA-BMH.WS0779, Robert Brennan, p. 18-19
[380] Peter Hart, "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson", p. 159 - 160
[381] Ibid, p. 160

shooting had been made before the truce. The idea of White being involved with this rescue mission with Tobin is interesting in light of claims that White would make about Tobin saving his life when he was imprisoned for being a member of the anti-Treaty IRA in November 1922. This was the same time that Tobin was Director of Intelligence. White was captured during an attack on Wellington Barracks, along with James Spain, only for the latter to be released and then shot later once he got beyond the gates. Tobin was also involved in defending the barracks against this attack, with himself and James Slattery commanding the return of fire. Spain would later die of multiple gunshot wounds in Meath Hospital. Instead of also releasing White the guards left him behind. It is not clear why he concluded that Tobin was instrumental in keeping him there, but he was given the impression that the act was done to save him from being similarly killed.[382]

Conclusion

By the end of 1921, Tobin was now in the position of having to take on a more public role in the new National Army, while at the same time attempting to maintain the running of his intelligence network. Although it is clear that IRA intelligence did not expect the truce to last, having spent the previous two years on the run, the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the formation of the Provisional Government would present new problems, as the staff now had to learn how to function in a more administrative setting than they had been used to before. Whether Tobin was unsuited to the running of Oriel House, or if he was not given clear instructions on what was expected of him, he would receive considerable criticism for inefficiency during this period. His involvement in the assassination of Sir Field Marshal Henry Wilson highlights how he and his associates found it difficult to evolve from the cloak and dagger behaviours that they had been accustomed to during the War of Independence. While the extent of his participation in the planning of the shooting may never be known, rumours of his connection to it would follow him for years. In addition, the post truce period forced Tobin and the intelligence staff to adapt to the possibility of fighting those who had previously been comrades. As the Civil War erupted in June 1922, loyalties would be tested for Tobin, particularly when he was sent to help recapture Cork in August.

[382] Peter Hart, "Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson", p. 162; IE-MA- MSP34REF4155, George White, p. 14; "Fighting in Dublin: Fierce Attack On Barracks", *Freeman's Journal,* 9th November 1922, p. 5

Chapter 6 - Tobin in the Civil War

Fighting Former Comrades

Many of the people that Tobin befriended during his time in Cork would later take the anti-Treaty side, including Liam Lynch and George Power, as well as many of the women who had worked closely with him. Tobin's early intelligence work in Cork is important within the context of his Civil War activities, as he found that the majority of former allies were now on the opposing side. As one of the leading figures of the Free State forces in Cork, whatever image of the local boy from Mitchelstown was replaced in the eyes of many with the physical representation of someone who had turned against the Republic. From August to October Tobin wrote to his mother that he had met the 'female diehards' and other friends who had known him in the area, reporting to his mother that they remarked with surprise 'Oh Liam are you a free state soldier?'.[383]

In early August 1922 Tobin would be sent on the expedition to regain control of Cork City and its surrounding areas, landing in Passage West and other locations along Cork harbour. At this time Tobin was continuing to work with military intelligence in Oriel House and despite the outbreak of hostilities, he was still experiencing difficulties with establishing a concrete intelligence system along proper military lines. However, John Borgonovo's work *The Battle for Cork* highlights that it was still more efficient than the anti-Treaty intelligence network, and they had been able to gather information on Cork defences from people such as J. J Walsh and his contacts, and also Mary Collins-Powell, sister to Michael Collins.[384] Two vessels, the *Lady Wicklow* and the *Arvonia* made their way to Cork, leaving the North Wall in Dublin on 7th August, eventually landing in Cork the following morning. Emmet Dalton was in charge of the operation, with Tom Ennis as second in command. Tobin was the third general accompanying the force, whom Borgonovo acknowledges was likely chosen for his local contacts in order to establish counter-intelligence in the area; he describes him as one of Collins' most loyal subordinates, and 'one of his deadliest'.[385]

Calton Younger also made reference to Tobin's presence on this expedition, arguing that he was one of the more experienced men there, particularly chosen for his background in

[383] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin, 18th August 1922, Courtesy of Brian Hand
[384] John Borgonovo, *The Battle for Cork July - August 1922*, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2011), p. 77
[385] Ibid, p. 80

intelligence.[386] Dalton also put him in charge of organising new recruits into the National Army.[387] As the vessels approached the chosen landing spot of Passage West Tobin was on board the *Arvonia*, and Dalton would send him ashore on a reconnaissance party with Captain F. O'Friel and 20 other men, the aim being to get an idea of what their reception would be like. It was around 2am on 8th August when they jumped off the lifeboat, with 'each step an act of faith in the unrelenting darkness'.[388] As they were blocked from entering the street by a wall, O'Friel broke a back window of a house fronting Dock Terrace, startling an elderly man who thought he was being attacked. Their target was a local mill that they thought to be occupied with anti-Treaty forces, and made their way from the house. Upon reaching the mill they realised the men had heard the landing and fled, as the evidence indicated a hurried evacuation. Moments after arriving the telephone rang, Tobin answered it, and confidently assured the inquirer that all was well inside the mill. O'Friel then divided his men into patrols around the village.[389]

At the same time Tom Ennis had moved into the pier with his troops, leaving the anti-Treaty side no alternative but to retreat. Fighting would occur as they made their way towards Cork City, with cross river clashes and shooting breaking out at various points along the way. By 10th August they had made their way through Douglas village. By 7.30pm the Army entered the south side of the city, reportedly to the enormous welcome of hundreds.[390] On the same day Tobin wrote a hurried note to Collins at 8pm confirming that Douglas had been taken. He described some of the awful scenes they witnessed, and stated that they came across 'one of our lads dead with his arms above his head'. He reassured Collins that they hoped to be able to organise their networks once they make their way into the city, but urged him that they required arms, ammunition, reinforcements, transport and armoured cars immediately.[391]

A letter from Tobin to his mother indicates that he had arrived in Fermoy by the morning of Tuesday 15th. He reflected that their journey from the city was straightforward apart from one 'small scrap at Rathcormac'.[392] At this point he was in command of the local forces (most likely due to his prior knowledge of the area), with the aim of securing the local towns from the

[386] Calton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War,* p. 411
[387] Sean Boyne, *Emmett Dalton, Somme Soldier, Irish General, Film Pioneer*, (Dublin: Merrion Press, 2014), p. 206
[388] Calton Younger, p. 411
[389] Ibid, p. 411
[390] John Borogonovo, *The Battle for Cork July - August 1922*, p. 86, 112, 120
[391] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/20, Communications with Commanding Officers August 1922, p. 13
[392] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin, 19th August 1922, Courtesy of Brian Hand

anti-Treaty side, and also presumably to re-establish the intelligence network between North Cork and GHQ in Dublin. The *Cork Examiner* reported that most of the anti-Treaty forces had left the area by the time the Army arrived on Tuesday morning, arriving to a welcome reception of 'congratulatory expressions', and relief from the locals, while Pearse Square in Fermoy was 'thronged with enthusiastic well wishers'. Tobin was present on a podium at a meeting in the square that afternoon, and although he was prohibited from making his own speech, he was greeted with a 'hearty welcome'.[393]

Tobin's letters to his mother also contain his perspective on the extent of destruction by the anti-Treaty forces in the area, as he commented that 'the castle [Mitchelstown castle] is destroyed and the barracks and corps all burned'. Despite the seniority of his position, his correspondence also shows that he was able to socialise with the locals in the area, and mentioned people who had been known to the family. He mentioned visiting the Kents, possibly the family of Éamon Ceannt, with whom the Tobin family had a connection through marriage. He also referred to the hundreds of people who had approached him claiming to be relatives, which may have been entirely possible considering his father was one of 17 siblings, although he remarked 'Bloody few of them years ago would claim it'. The correspondence also conveyed a sense of naivety with regards to Tobin's grasp of the situation, as he wrote that he does not 'expect 'the war' will not last much longer'. Although this was not an uncommon belief at the time as the anti-Treaty side had been very unsuccessful up to this point, this refusal to acknowledge the validity of the Civil War is something that Tobin would continue to practise in his correspondence in later decades. He was also critical of some of the die-hards in the area, referring to one man called Jim Burke as a 'bloody fool' for his stance on the Treaty, which ties in with Neligan's account of Tobin's comments about facing 'their die-hards now'.[394]

He solemnly remarked that he had been very busy trying to track down Liam Lynch and George Power, a marked difference in their relationship as former comrades.[395] Years later Dr. Patrick MacCartan (republican, politician and close friend of Tobin) would inform Ernie O'Malley that Tobin had been in touch with Lynch during this period in North Cork through Siobhan Lankford in the post office in Mallow. The exact nature of their relationship at this

[393] "The National Troops Arrival In Fermoy", *Cork Examiner*, 21st August 1922, p. 5
[394] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin 19th August 1922; David Neligan, p. 152
[395] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin, 19th August 1922

period is unknown, but MacCartan told O'Malley that at one stage Lankford informed Tobin that he should avoid walking along the roads at certain times of the day.[396]

Throughout the Civil War Tobin was faced with the prospect of fighting friends that he was now in pursuit of, and also informers who had worked for him during the War of Independence. There is some evidence to suggest that Tobin did make attempts to help them where he could, which would include providing references for anti-Treaty intelligence staff when they were applying for pensions in later on. Seán MacBride also claimed that his relations between the Collins side of the IRA remained friendly after the ratification of the Treaty until the attack on the Four Courts.[397] In her pension application, May Foley (sister of George Power) would state that she continued to carry dispatches for the anti-Treaty side in Fermoy, only to be warned by Tobin in his capacity as Director of Intelligence at the end of 1922, that she needed to be 'extra careful' as her activities were being noticed by GHQ.[398] Interestingly, after Tobin was removed from the position of Director in mid December, his replacement Diarmuid O'Hegarty reported that the post offices had been used extensively by anti-Treaty dispatchers, but they had been ignored by the pro-Treaty intelligence officers until that point.[399]

On another occasion, a childhood friend from Kilkenny, Josephine Clarke had been arrested in 1922 and was taken to Tallaght aerodrome, while her husband lay with his anti-Treaty column in Rathfarnham. She described seeing Tobin, whom she referred to as Billy, 'all decorated in stars and stripes'. According to Clarke, he pulled her to the side, and informed her that he was putting her on the next car leaving the aerodrome so that she may reach her husband and his men, urging her to warn him that he had orders to capture them dead or alive. She concluded, 'I'll remember that to Billy's credit as long as I live'.[400]

Tobin also came into contact with the warder Patrick Berry during the war, Berry having been arrested in 1922. In a reference for Berry's pension application Tobin confirmed that he had been arrested under suspicion of having sympathy with the anti-Treaty side, but claimed that during his interrogation he [Tobin] did not press him too hard due to this pre-Truce service. Correspondence in Berry's pension file also indicates that the two remained on friendly terms

[396] UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17/B/95, Patrick MacCartan, p. 56; Siobhra Aiken, *The Men Will Talk To Me: Ernie O'Malley's Interviews with the Northern Divisions*, edited by Diarmuid Ó Tuama, Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh, Liam Ó Duibar, Siobra Aiken, (Dublin: Merrion Press, 2018) p. 51
[397] Seán MacBride, *That Day's Struggle: A Memoir*, p. 63
[398] IE-MA-MSP34REF31507, May Foley, p. 14
[399] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/87/94
[400] IE-MA-BMH.WS0699, Josephine Clarke, p. 16

after the war.[401] Likewise, George White claimed that Tobin would prevent him from being shot as James Spain had been when he was released from jail.[402]

During the battle of the Four Courts, Tobin would also be the one to escort Liam Lynch to Eoin O'Duffy. Liam Deasy recounted that he, Lynch, Seán Moylan, Moss Twomey and others left their meeting with De Valera at the Clarence Hotel on 28th June, only to be halted by a patrol under Tobin's command while on their way to the train station, and were subsequently brought to O'Duffy at Griffith Barrcks. Deasy recalled that he had often met Tobin before the truce when visiting Dublin, referring to him as 'a man of sterling character and undoubted courage', and in his own book on the period, *Brother Against Brother*, he recounted,

> 'In later years I have often reflected on that meeting on the quays with a friend whom the fortunes of war had placed in a most invidious position. Being a soldier that he was he had no option but to do his duty as he saw it although I am sure his heart was not in it'.[403]

To this end, Tobin does appear to have been reluctant, or at least disheartened, to actively move against former comrades. Another associate, Katherine O'Doherty would also make reference to the execution of Rory O'Connor and the effect that this had on Tobin. O'Connor had been a prominent anti-Treaty member, and on 8th December he, Liam Mellows, Richard Bartlett and Joe McKelvey were sentenced to death. According to O'Doherty, Tobin and O'Connor had been good friends, and it was after this execution that 'Tobin got up against them', meaning the government and Richard Mulcahy in particular.[404] In the days after the executions, O'Connor's brother Fr. Norbert O'Connor wrote to Tobin, consoling him that 'each of us has now a common bond in as much that each of us has lost a brother'. Tobin's brother Nicholas had been killed two months previously.[405]

At the same time, while a lot of Tobin's friends in later years would be from the anti-Treaty side, he did not enjoy good relations with all of them. During the Civil War, Meda Ryan states that Tobin had been sent to speak to Tom Barry on at least two occasions in an

[401] IE-MA-MSP34REF1439, Patrick Berry, p. 12
[402] IE-MA-MSP34REF4155, George White, p. 14
[403] Liam Deasy, *Brother Against Brother,* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1982) p. 48 - 49
[404] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,470/16, Letter from Katherine O'Doherty to Joseph McGarrity, p. 2
[405] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/87, Letter from Norbert O'Connor to Liam Tobin 9th December 1922

attempt to broker peace between the two sides.[406] It is unclear how close the two were during the War of Independence as Barry does refer to Tobin in his book *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, but it is limited to recounting his frequent presence with Collins and others in Vaughans hotel.[407] Tobin can also clearly be seen in Barry's wedding photo, standing next to Tom Cullen and Frank Thornton. With regards to Tobin's connections in Cork County, they were mainly limited to North Cork and the city, not West Cork. Therefore, one might question why Tobin was personally sent on such a mission. Former Director of Intelligence, Professor James Hogan also claimed that it was Tobin who escorted Barry to Army GHQ after the latter was caught trying to get out of the Four Courts.[408]

Their first meeting took place around September 1922, and it did not go well; according to Seán T. O'Kelly it ended in a heated exchange with insults flying between the two as O'Kelly claimed that Tobin had tried to bully Barry and place obstacles in the way of their talks'.[409] According to Ernie O'Malley, Tobin told him about another meeting with Barry when he was in prison during the Civil War, recounting that he had been sent by Mulcahy with fellow officer Christie O'Malley to speak with him. More heated words followed, and an apparent scuffle for a gun occurred during this meeting, which ended with Tobin providing Barry with paper to make a statement. The page had the Provisional Government header at the top, and Tobin himself admitted to Ernie O'Malley that he knew this would 'get his goat'.[410]

In addition, due to his command of Oriel House, and because of their brutal treatment of anti-Treaty prisoners, Tobin has also been associated with these activities, which included the shooting and killing of prisoners. Gerard Lovett argues that the Oriel House detectives acted with the utmost ruthlessness when dealing with the anti-Treaty IRA, with killings carried out by both Oriel House men and Free State troops, or the 'Murder Gang' as they became known.[411] There is no direct evidence that names Tobin as being one of the men involved in these activities, although there can be no doubt that he was aware of them, as a lot of these acts were committed by former intelligence officers and Squad men. John Dorney also acknowledges this, arguing that Tobin is nowhere mentioned as being part of the murder gang, but as at least the informal leader

[406] Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry: IRA Freedom Fighter*, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2003), p. 360
[407] Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days In Ireland*, (Dublin: The Irish Press, 1949), p. 291
[408] "Memoir, 1913-1937", *James Hogan: Revolutionary, Historian and Political Scientist*, edited by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), p. 201
[409] Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland: Revolution and State Building*, (Dublin: Gill Books, 2005), p. 26
[410] UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17/B/96, Liam Tobin
[411] Gerard Lovett, *Ireland's Special Branch*, p. 21

of IRA intelligence, it is unlikely that he had no knowledge of the treatment of prisoners.[412] It may be that he was guilty by association, or for having knowledge of the acts and not taking sufficient steps to prevent them. George White's claim that he saved his life, or Josephine's Clarke' statement that he helped her husband, may not be sufficient against the amount of Free State violence committed during the Civil War. Eunan O'Halpin also criticises him as being among those 'responsible for some of the worst excesses of the Civil War', however, he does not give specific details of these activities, or how Tobin was involved in them.[413]

In *The Singing Flame,* Ernie O'Malley did refer to the acts carried out by the CID and Free State soldiers, and stated 'we had the names of the Free State officers responsible for the murders but we were unable to catch them', and does not mention further details or individuals involved. This is not necessarily evidence of the lack of Tobin's involvement in such activities, as O'Malley would have been aware of the legal implications of providing such names. The closest instance to a direct implication is when O'Malley stated that the barracks were mainly controlled by Collins' former intelligence Squad.[414] Likewise, Todd Andrews would refer to 'trigger happy CID men' who sought to influence the outcome of the election in August 1923, but evidently he did not include Tobin in this category as he would maintain good relations with him throughout the 1930's - 1950's.[415]

While there is no evidence to directly implicate Tobin, nor prove his innocence, in relation to these activities, the fact that he would continue to have friendships and connections from the anti-Treaty side must also be taken into consideration. Hardliners such as Dan Breen are unlikely to have associated with him on a personal level had he suspected he was behind these actions, and Tobin would also have good relations with people such as Leo Henderson, De Valera, Phyllis Ryan and others. At the same time, army intelligence reports in the aftermath of the mutiny in 1924 also made reference to attempts made by Tobin and Charles Dalton to make connections with the anti-Treaty side. The report confirmed that the hardliners refused to have any associations with the 'CID murder gang' in their executive council. Therefore, it would appear that despite maintaining close friendships with some of the anti-Treaty side after the Civil

[412] John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin*, p. 184
[413] Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922*, p. 53
[414] Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame, (*Dublin: Anvil Books, 1992), p. 48, 172, 174, 207
[415] C. S Andrews, *Man of No Property*, (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2001), p. 9

War, there were some who would continue to associate Tobin with these acts, regardless of whether he participated or not.[416]

Director of Intelligence

Tobin would remain in charge of the men in Fermoy until the start of October 1922. The *Cork Examiner* reported his leave on 7th October in rather hyperbolic yet complementary language, commenting on his 'kindness and courage to all persons making inquiries' and how 'the men under him in Fermoy looked up to him with respect and pride'.[417] Sean Boyne, biographer of Emmett Dalton, also states that he was sent home to recover from a bad attack of scabies.[418] Interestingly, Tobin would claim in his pension file that he was told to return to Dublin by Richard Mulcahy who asked him to take over as Director of Intelligence.[419] Many examples of captured anti-Treaty documents can be found in the Mulcahy Papers housed in UCD, including one report from Liam Lynch to his Director of Engineers on 27th November 1922.[420] Photos and dispatches from the anti-Treaty executive council routinely made their way into Tobin's hands, to which he issued instructions on how each should be followed up, much the same as he had done in the War of Independence.[421] In this capacity he was also a member of the Army Council, and as such would have been attending council meetings.[422] This would also go against Mulcahy's claim that Collins had originally sent Tobin to Cork to get him out of the way.[423]

He remained Director of Intelligence until December 1922 when he was replaced by Diarmuid O'Hegarty. Intelligence reports sent to Portobello Barracks become addressed to O'Hegarty from 16th December onwards.[424] Afterwards both Tobin and Tom Cullen were made aide-de-camps to the new Governor General Tim Healy. It is possible that this move was orchestrated to provide the two with jobs sufficiently matched to give recognition to their pre-Truce work, but essentially remove them from having any influence in army or intelligence policies. By contrast, it would also be the move that provided Tobin and Cullen with a location for their IRA Organisation meetings in late 1922. This was an organisation of pre-Truce IRA

[416] IE-MA-CREC-06, General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Intelligence Report 22nd September, p. 4
[417] "Southern Area Command", *Cork Examiner* 7th October 1922, p. 5
[418] Sean Boyne, *Emmett Dalton: Somme Soldier, Irish General, Film Pioneer*, p. 252
[419] IE-MA-W24SP2764, Liam Tobin, p. 60
[420] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/86/255
[421] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/83
[422] IE-MA-24SP2764, Liam Tobin, p. 50
[423] Risteárd Mulcahy, *Richard Mulcah*y, p. 202
[424] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/87/57

men who were troubled by some of the decisions that the Provisional Government and Army were making with regards to the national direction. During the later inquiry into the mutiny in May 1924 Georóid O'Sullivan referred to the organisation as the 'Phoenix Park Cabel', as their new lodgings were located in Phoenix Park at the Viceregal Lodge.[425]

Questions have arisen over how effective Tobin was in this role in an intelligence department that was operating along more administrative lines than Crow Street had been. This is not to imply that pre-Truce intelligence was less organised. However, the establishment of the Provisional Government and official military intelligence meant staff would conduct themselves in a more administrative atmosphere, as opposed to holding meetings in the backrooms of pubs and side streets. Essentially, the department had become more of an established overt arm of the state. Contemporaries argued that Tobin and other intelligence staff had difficulties in adjusting to this before the Civil War began, and things did not improve when Tobin was made Director in October. His skills in organisation and gathering information had not diminished, but his ability to carry out this work in much the same capacity as a public civil servant would lead to further problems even after his removal as Director, namely with the secret meetings of the IRA Organisation that began to take place in late 1922. Essentially, Tobin was much more suited to the intelligence work that was required of him when he was on the run as opposed to one that involved a more bureaucratic approach.

Towards the end of 1922 Tobin had become disillusioned with the direction that the Army and Provisional Government were taking. Connections would be made between his removal as Director of Intelligence and his new role of aide-de-camp to Tim Healy, the implication being that he was disgruntled as having lost such a high-ranking position. However, evidence suggests that the IRA Organisation meetings were at least informally taking place in late 1922 when Tobin still held his position as Director of Intelligence, so there were other reasons behind this feeling of disillusionment.

From a personal perspective, in October 1922 his younger brother Staff Captain Nicholas Tobin had been shot and killed in what would be ruled an accident by an inquest. On 21st October he had been leading a group of Free State soldiers into a raid of an IRA bomb factory in Gardiners Place when Sean 'Flash' Bolger, a fellow Free State soldier, accidentally discharged his weapon while in the main hallway of the house. The bullet ricocheted off the floor, and hit

[425] IE-MA-AMTY-03-030 Gearóid O'Sullivan Statement 6th May 1924, p. 7

Tobin in the heart.[426] It was officially ruled an accident in the inquiry a few days after the event, with the coroner stating that he died from a single gunshot wound to the left breast and a wound in the heart. The Chief State Solicitor reported that it was 'a lamentable and regrettable accident', with the jury finding that no blame should be attached to Bolger as the evidence showed he did not intend to shoot him.[427] But mystery and rumour would surround the tragedy due to Nicholas Tobin's involvement in the Red Cow murders that had taken place in Clondalkin merely 2 weeks previously. On 7th October he had assisted Charles Dalton in the arrest of the 3 young anti-Treaty republicans, Eamon Hughes, Brendan Holohan and Joe Rogers in Drumcondra after they were found to be putting up anti-Treaty posters in the area. They were taken for interrogation at Wellington Barracks, and the three were later found dead with multiple gunshot wounds.

Throughout the decades rumours have circulated whether the death was accidental or not, carried out as a way of preventing Nicholas from speaking about the murders. However, as previously stated, the inquiry found the death to be accidental on Bolger's part, and no further evidence has ever emerged to suggest otherwise. In addition, Liam Tobin also worked with Bolger during his time with the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes in the 1930's as Bolger was employed as Joseph McGrath's bodyguard. Tobin also maintained a close relationship with Charles Dalton after 1922, and worked with him during the army mutiny. When considering Tobin's very public actions during the mutiny because he was concerned about the national direction of the country, it is unlikely that he would have maintained even a working relationship with either man if he had suspected that they had anything to do with his brother's death. According to Brian Hand, as with so many other aspects of his activities during the Revolution, Tobin hardly ever spoke about his brother in the home, an obvious indication of the great pain caused by the death, and it is also worth pointing out that Tobin was the one who had the job of identifying his brother's body. The letters written to his mother while in prison after the Rising continuously refer to all members of the family, particularly Nicholas, as he repeatedly inquired about his health and social life.[428] While he is not alone in experiencing family losses during the

[426] "Shot During Raid", *Irish Independent*, 23rd October 1922, p. 5,
[427] "Evidence at Inquiry", *Evening Echo*, 24th October 1922, p. 2,
[428] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin 5th March 1917, p. 2; Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

Civil War, the timing of his death just weeks before the first IRA Organisation meetings begin to take place gives an indication as to the influences on his mind at that time.

Conclusion

The period from the truce in July 1921 to the end of the Civil War in May 1923 would prove to be a harrowing time in Tobin's life, as was the case with many of his contemporaries who shared similar losses and experiences. He was put into a position where he was hunting down people with whom he had been friends during the previous five years. While there is no direct link between Tobin and the reputation of some Oriel House officers and their treatment of prisoners, it is unlikely that he had no knowledge of such activities. There is, however, testimony that indicates he did make efforts to help his former friends on the other side as much as he could. His letters to his mother from Cork convey his frustration at the situation he was in, and as Liam Deasy would describe later in his own account, it was clear that he had no heart in this fight.

With regards to the execution of Sir Field Marshal Henry Wilson, it is likely that Tobin was involved to some degree, if not in the planning of it with Collins, then in the clear up in the aftermath. There is enough credible primary material to at least indicate that he knew Dunne and O'Sullivan as IRA members in London. However, there needs to be an acknowledgment of the limitations of the evidence put forward to claim that he was definitely involved in the planning of the shooting. The account mentioned by Coogan is the only account that links him to Wilson before the murder, and even this is based on the assumption that the letter handed to Tobin was related to Wilson at all. Richard Mulcahy even claimed in the fallout after the mutiny that he had documentation to prove that Tobin was involved, but this never materialised, and it should also be noted that Mulcahy had been engaging in his own backroom dealings with the IRB as Commander-in-Chief at the time that he claimed to have this information.

On the other hand, it is clear that despite being an effective intelligence officer before the truce, Tobin had difficulty adjusting to the more administrative role demanded of him as a Major General in the National Army. At the same time, Collins never would have sent him to Cork in August 1922 if he did not have complete trust in his ability as an officer. After Collins' death, however, the tensions that had been festering between Tobin and other members of Army GHQ, particularly Mulcahy and Eoin O'Duffy, began to rise to the surface, as Collins was no longer there to enforce the stepping stone argument with regards to the Treaty. While it may not be

surprising that so many of the pre-Truce intelligence staff and Squad members supported Collins after the Treaty's ratification, Tobin would make it clear to Army GHQ in the subsequent mutiny that they wholeheartedly believed that the agreement would only be a temporary solution. Without Collins there to see this through, Tobin and his followers would see themselves as being duty bound to ensure that 'his work' be completed, and would embark on a rather unsophisticated attempt at making President Cosgrave understand this position by sending him a list of their grievances in June 1923. They would do so as members of their newly formed IRA Organisation.[429]

The IRA Organisation continued to meet in the early months of 1923, with reports from military intelligence pointing to them becoming an official group in January 1923.[430] On 25th June they presented their grievances to President Cosgrave and Commander-in-Chief Richard Mulcahy, with Tobin named as the President of the Executive Council. Initially Cosgrave was open to listening to the men, and arranged for a meeting to take place some days later with Mulcahy, Tobin, Frank Thornton, and Christie O'Malley. On hearing their complaints Mulcahy was outraged and left the room. Cosgrave, however, was more conciliatory with them, and persuaded Mulcahy to meet with them again to come to some form of agreement. Members of the IRA Organisation would meet again with Mulcahy in July 1923 during which the latter made several promises to them, including assurances that a committee would be established to look into demobilisation. By October 1923, however, Mulcahy had ceased all communication with them (notably after the August elections), and the eventual committee set up to examine the demobilisation cases of pre-Truce IRA men proved largely ineffective.[431]

[429] *The Truth about the Army Crisis*, p.2
[430] IE-MA-24SP1606, Patrick O'Connell, p. 44-45
[431] *The Truth about the Army Crisis*

Part IV: Army Mutiny

Introduction

The Civil War lasted until May 1923, and fighting between pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty sides resulted in brutal killings, imprisonments and the complete breakdown of former friendships and family relations. From 1922 to 1924 the Free State government had been attempting to validate its position as the rightfully elected representative of the people through elections and a fully disciplined army. In attempting to carry out this process of establishing efficacy in both institutions, the Army in particular would face internal conflicts over the presence of secret societies, with some pre-Truce officers wanting to continue to fight for a full republic. From late 1922 clashes would occur over policies of demobilisation and issues of discipline, as well as facing a leadership crisis in the aftermath of Collins' death. Without Collins to act as a mediator between several cliques, conflict arose as to who had earned the right to have a say in the national policy of the Army and the Irish Free State. Members of the IRB, the pre-Truce IRA, politicians and military officials all attempted to establish their own ideas regarding how and when the fight for a republic should be continued, with membership of these associations frequently overlapping to make matters more complex.

Tobin had formally established the IRA Organisation in January 1923, which was made up of pre-Truce IRA men who had been given roles in the National Army, but who felt that Collins' successors in GHQ did not view the Treaty as the stepping stone in the way that he had. The members were predominantly made up of former Squad men and intelligence officers who had worked under Collins from 1919 - 1921.[432] Historian Maryann Valiulis describes how only certain people who could prove their pre-Truce IRA involvement could become members of the group, as forms would be dispensed for the officer to detail their previous activities.[433] Likewise, Alvin Jackson refers to the IRAO as a 'ginger group' of Collins' Squad men, and argued that they saw themselves as the military guardians of his legacy.[434] Without the leadership of Collins to fall behind, the identity and national aspirations of the Free State would be called into question by Tobin, Tom Cullen, Charles Dalton, and along with other former members of the intelligence

[432] *The Truth About The Army Crisis*, p. 3
[433] Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the Founding of the Irish Free State*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press Ltd, 1992) , p. 202
[434] Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond, (*United States: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 275

staff. They began to hold their secret meetings to discuss their concerns in late 1922, which included the restructuring of the IRB after Collins' death, the IRB's influence on retentions in the Army, the alleged demobilisation of pre-Truce Volunteers in favour of the more suitable ex-British Army officers, and their anxiety that the Treaty would become a permanent fixture.

On 6th March an ultimatum was sent to Cosgrave as President of the Free State government, signed by Tobin and Charles Dalton on behalf of the IRAO. They demanded the removal of the Army Council that included Mulcahy, Georóid O'Sullivan, Seán MacMahon and Seán Ó Mhurthuile, and the immediate suspension of demobilisation. They also reiterated that they viewed the Treaty the same way they claim Collins viewed it; as a step towards complete independence.[435] At the same time several officers refused their demobilisation papers, some of whom had absconded from various barracks with arms and ammunition. Mulcahy would tell the press that arms had been taken from barracks in Gormanstown, Baldonnel, Templemore and Roscommon.[436] In total 88 rifles, 8 lewis guns and 31,000 rounds of ammunition were taken from Templemore; 39 rifles, 14,000 rounds of ammunition and 1 crossley tender was taken from Gormanstown; 3 lewis guns and 1 tender was taken from Baldonnel; and 50 rifles, 3,400 rounds of ammunition, 41 grenades and 1 grenade rifle was taken from Roscommon. Further attempts were made at stealing rifles and ammunition from Gorey and Clonmel barracks, but the officers were either halted or the arms were quickly recovered.[437]

Cosgrave viewed the ultimatum as a challenge to the government, and arrest warrants were issued for Tobin and Dalton. Pádraig Ó Caoimh points out that the fallout from the ultimatum did not reach the general populace, the anti-Treaty republicans, the neutral IRA or the ordinary rank and file soldiers, mainly due to a 'lack of interest'. It was estimated that there were a maximum of 100 officers involved. He argues that the 'clumsy campaign' should have been easy for the government to put down, especially when considering how little support they had from the rest of the Army. Instead it led to a power struggle between the Executive Council and Army GHQ that would result in the removal of the Army Council and Mulcahy's resignation.[438]

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[435] Dáil Debates 11th March 1924, Vol. 6, No. 25
https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Dáil/1924-03-11/speech/40/
[436] 'Challenge to the Government', *Irish Times,* 15th March, p. 9
[437] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/196, Memorandum 11th March 1924
[438] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, *Richard Mulcahy: From the Politics of War to the Politics of Peace 1913 - 1924*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press Ltd, 2019) p. 197

While it may not have been a physical military challenge for the government, it definitely exposed the political weakness of the new state.

As the General Officer Commanding the Forces, Eoin O'Duffy reported to Cosgrave that in total 96 officers had resigned, a further 6 deserted, and confirmed that none of them had handed in their revolvers. These included Tobin, Charles Dalton, Tom Cullen, Frank Thornton, Christie O'Malley, Vinny Byrne, Patrick 'Speaky' Griffin, James Slattery, Pat MccCrea and Ben Byrne, all of whom had been intelligence officers or Squad men during the War of Independence.[439] It should be noted that Cullen was in London at the time that the ultimatum was sent but he gave his resignation to Cosgrave on 11th March, citing the arrest warrants of Tobin and Dalton as the reason behind this.[440] In addition, the fallout from the mutiny would lead to arguments that suggested that the IRAO were frustrated at not having Collins there to look after their economic interests. However, it should also be noted that the same men experienced virtually no financial security in the years of the War of Independence.

In the days after the ultimatum was sent raids and searches were carried out in the homes of those who sympathised with the IRAO, including the home of the Minister for Industry and Commerce Joseph McGrath. Additionally, owing to Mulcahy's handling of the situation in the lead up to the mutiny, Eoin O'Duffy was put in control of the Army. Despite this change, there were still disagreements as to how the mutineers should be dealt with. The Executive Council stated that those officers who took arms would be released on parole if they returned what was taken, whereas Mulcahy wanted them charged under the Defence Forces Act. In the meantime, McGrath was instructed by Cosgrave to inform Tobin and Dalton that they would not be arrested, but nevertheless they remained in hiding. In his study *Richard Mulcahy: From the Politics of War to the Politics of Peace*, Ó Caoimh examines the debate by the two sides on how best to reprimand the mutineers, and points out that Cosgrave eventually decided to allow them all to surrender with the stolen arms by 20th March on the condition that they would be released under open arrest after their parole was granted. However, Ó Caoimh is critical of Cosgrave's use of the term 'parole', as he argues this led the mutineers to believe that charges would be pending, whilst also being sufficiently vague enough to allow Mulcahy and Georóid O'Sullivan to agree

[439] IE-MA-CREC-06, General O'Duffy's Army Report 1924, p. 1, 10
[440] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/196

that it was not a pardon.[441] Other theories would circulate about Cosgrave due to this handling of the mutiny. One particularly ludicrous claim was that he had deliberately arranged for the ultimatum to be set to get rid of Kevin O'Higgins, or that his illness during March was 'diplomatic' in order to avoid dealing with the IRAO.[442]

Orders were given to raid Liam Devlin's pub on 18th March when it was discovered that an IRAO meeting was underway. This move would eventually lead to the resignations of the Army Council, and while some members of the IRAO were captured, including James Slattery, Patrick McCrea, Christie O'Malley, Joseph Dolan and Ben Byrne, Tobin and Charles Dalton managed to escape over the rooftops. According to Dan Breen (a sympathiser with the mutineers) Mulcahy had sent out 6 lorries of troops and had a firing squad picked out.[443] Government reports stated that 7 revolvers, 1 automatic and 50 rounds of ammunition were found on those men arrested.[444] Tobin was highly critical of this move in a letter to Mick McDonnell in May 1925, as he stated that a truce had been reached between the IRAO and the government before the raid, and claimed that both sides had agreed not to take any offensive action during this period. This, he argued, was broken by Mulcahy's actions in raiding Devlins pub.[445] Several homes were searched in the hopes of locating Tobin and Dalton, including Tobin's own family home on Munster Street, but they were never captured.

On 12th March during a Dáil session Cosgrave had called for an inquiry to be held to examine the events leading up to the mutiny, and he would set out clear terms of reference on what their objective was. In a session of the Dáil the previous day Joseph McGrath had made charges of 'mudding, mismanagement and incompetence' in relation to promotions in the Army, and asked the deputies, press and public to refrain from forming an opinion of Tobin and Dalton before he could bring forth all of the facts. The inquiry was detailed to examine the processes of demobilisation, the criteria for retention, and to investigate if IRB influence played a part in securing these fixtures.[446] The terms of reference were laid out by Cosgrave as follows;

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[441] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 204; UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/248, Executive Council Meeting 14th March 1924
[442] Michael Laffan, *Judging W. T. Cosgrave: The Foundation of the Irish State, (*Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2014),p. 193
[443] IE-MA-BMH.WS1739, Dan Breen, p. 33-34
[444] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/196, Memorandum 19th March 1924
[445] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell, 4th May 1925, p. 2
[446] Dáil Debates 11th March 1924, Vol. 6, No. 25, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Dáil/1924-03-11/speech/44/ ; UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/248/198

> 'To enquire into and report to the Executive Council upon the facts and matters which have caused or led up to the indiscipline and mutinous or insubordinate conduct lately manifested in the national Army and generally to investigate and report upon the state of discipline prevailing amongst all ranks in the Army and any facts or circumstances adversely affecting discipline…And to enquire and report whether the discontent amongst certain officers and men shown in the recent threat of mutiny and insubordination is justly and fairly attributed to 'mudding, mismanagement and incompetence' in the administration of the Army'.[447]

Not confined to examining the causes of the mutiny, the inquiry was also tasked to look into the existence of secret societies in the Army, as it emerged that a contributing factor to the crisis had been the reorganisation of the IRB by Mulcahy. As such, in order to understand Tobin's motives behind mutiny, it is crucial to examine the actions of Mulcahy and the Army Council in this revival from the time of Collins' death. The steps taken by the IRAO in attempting to dictate army policy indicates how unsuited some of the men were to peacetime army life. At the same time, however, Mulcahy's actions in reinforcing the IRB presence in the Army were also problematic in terms of the democratic procedures of the new state, so it is necessary to focus on the statements that he made to the inquiry regarding his part in the lead up to the mutiny.

Pádraig Ó Caoimh also points out that Cosgrave said the terms of reference would not be extended to include the sending of the ultimatum itself. As a result the inquiry was limited on what it could achieve.[448] Therefore, Cosgrave's own role in events was not examined closely. Initially Mulcahy left the room during the first meeting with Cosgrave and the IRAO, but later agreed to make himself available to the men in an attempt to hear their complaints. His son Risteárd Mulcahy would refer to the IRAO in his father's memoirs as Collins' 'merry collection of subordinates'.[449]

The inquiry took place from April to June 1924. During this time the committee held 41 meetings and examined 27 witnesses. High court judge James Meredith acted as Chairman, although it is interesting to note that Professor Eoin MacNeil had been the original choice.[450] The rest of the committee members were Deputies P. McGilligan, Major Bryan Cooper T.D, and D. J

[447] IE-MA-AMTY-03-072 Correspondence with the President
[448] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 211
[449] Risteárd Mulcahy, *Richard Mulcahy 1886-1971: A Family Memoir*, p. 47
[450] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/248, Executive Council Meeting 15th March 1924

Gorey T.D. Mr. Gerard Fitzgibbon KC, Mr. Martin Maguire of Corrigan & Corrigan Solicitors, and Mr. Cecil Lavery were also present at these proceedings as they were there representing Richard Mulcahy, Georóid O'Sullivan, Seán Ó Mhurthuile and Seán MacMahon. Former Director of Intelligence Professor James Hogan would state that it was a painful process, and that one cross examination for a witness could go on for hours.[451] By the time the inquiry had ended, Mulcahy and the Army Council had received most of the blame for the mutiny and how it played out, despite it not being considered a very significant threat at the time. Michael Hopkinson, for instance, would refer to it as a 'damp squib'.[452] Cosgrave, however, would largely escape unscathed. John. P. Duggan argues that the government's actions in sacking the Council gave the impression that they condoned the mutiny, while Michael Laffan points out that while Cumann na nGaedheal and the government were weakened by the mutiny, Cosgrave as President remained in charge.[453]

In the days immediately after the ultimatum was sent newspapers across the country attempted to distinguish rumour from fact. Evidently Tobin had not anticipated that Cosgrave and Mulcahy would publish the ultimatum in the newspapers so quickly.[454] The *Sunday Independent* was the first to report on the matter on 9th March, detailing a statement that had been made by the government issuing the orders for the arrest of Tobin and Charles Dalton, stating that they had been charged with mutiny. Richard Mulcahy had made a statement on the evening of the 8th March, that read,

> 'Two army officers have attempted to involve the Army in a challenge to the authority of the Government. This is an outrageous departure from the spirit of the Army. It will not be tolerated. Particularly it will not be tolerated by the officers and men of the Army who cherish its honour'.[455]

The article then asserted that the likely cause of the trouble was the recent 'reorganisation scheme drafted by the Army authorities' and also hinted that Tobin and Dalton had been

[451] "Memoir, 1913-1937", *James Hogan: Revolutionary, Historian and Political Scientist*, edited by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, p. 199
[452] Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 266
[453] John. P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army, (*Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 1991), p. 135; Michael Laffan, *Judging W. T. Cosgrave*, p. 197
[454] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2, Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff, 13th March 1924
[455] "Charge of Mutiny", *Sunday Independent*, 9th March 1924, p. 1

demobilised as well, which was not the case.[456] There were, however, changes made to the ranks of some members of the IRAO, including Major General Tom Cullen who had been made colonel.[457] The rhetoric of the article is hyperbolic, yet vague when describing the events of the night of 8th March. It mentioned that on Friday evening (7th March) a 'rumour reached the city' in connection with a rejection of demobilisation orders at Templemore barracks, and described the scene of 'large numbers of armoured cars and machine guns' being dispatched from Army GHQ to restore order in the barracks. Following this, 'extraordinary military activity' was reported to have occurred in various parts of Dublin as troops led raids on several homes in search of Tobin and Dalton, with 'the guards being strengthened' in some barracks and all leave being cancelled immediately. The article painted a picture of a government that was not anticipating any such threat from the men in question.[458] The mutiny may have puzzled the public, and some of the politicians not previously associated with the IRB or the IRA, but it was not a spontaneous event. It had been slowly building up over the course of several months, from even before Collins had died in August 1922. London based newspaper *The Morning Post* asserted that such a split had been inevitable since the signing of the Treaty.[459]

Historian John Dorney argues that there had actually been three antagonistic groups in the pro-Treaty side; the IRB and Army GHQ with Mulcahy, the IRAO with Tobin, and finally Kevin O'Higgins and his problematic relationship with Mulcahy. He concludes that the tension had been brewing between them throughout the Civil War, but that the ongoing fighting prevented any confrontation at that time.[460] Pádraig Ó Caoimh also argues that Mulcahy had been anticipating that the IRAO would take some kind of action as he had cut off communication from them in August 1923, and that he had been aware of possible trouble since January of 1924.[461] Kevin O'Higgins, on the other hand, dismissed the affair as a faction fight 'between two letters of the alphabet'.[462]

Representing the opposing end of the political spectrum, the *Belfast Newsletter* reflected much of what had been printed the previous day by the *Sunday Independent,* quoting

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[456] Ibid, p. 1
[457] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/248
[458] "Charge of Mutiny", *Sunday Independent,* 9th March 1924, p. 1
[459] IE-MA-AMTY-05-005, *The Morning Post* 14th March 1924
[460] John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin*, p. 362
[461] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 192
[462] Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Fein Party, 1916-1923*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 22

'extraordinary military activity in Dublin', and claimed that the cause of the mutiny was demobilisation by Tobin's own admission. O'Halpin also points out that the mutiny aroused fears from the Unionists in Belfast as their grievances were based on 'unfinished national business'. Regarding the recruitment of ex-British military officers into the Army, the article stated,

> 'General Liam Tobin was one of those who set themselves against the introduction of more efficient officers who had had wider experience in the Great War and did not belong to the cast of the IRA. He has more influence among the lawless elements in the Army, and may cause trouble if not apprehended'.[463]

While the other national papers were not so overt in implying that Tobin personally posed a threat to the state, the article was typical of some of the statements that would later be made to the inquiry. Problems with discipline and the idea of IRAO officers being unable to adapt to the role expected of a peacetime army would become the focus of the inquiry. These ideas would later be prevalent in secondary studies on the mutiny, such as in the works of Donal Corcoran, who concludes that the mutiny only served to show the strength of the state.[464] Likewise, Michael Laffan would argue that the government's greatest triumph, the consolidation of Irish democracy, was illustrated by the mutiny'.[465]

Recent literature on the early years of the Free State has tended to focus on the theory that the IRAO was motivated by desires to have positions of higher ranks in the aftermath of officer demobilisation, but some studies do not go into extensive detail on the background of the IRAO. *The War For Ireland* by Gerry White, Brendan O'Shea, and Peter Cottrell merely refers to Tobin being a spokesman for the IRAO to protect their interests within the Army.[466] Conversely, Diarmuid Ferriter argues that while the mutineers were resentful about the lack of government initiative concerning the dismantling of the Treaty, their concerns also reflected jealousies about promotions.[467] Richard Mulcahy later referred to their actions as 'the bluff of children', while Maryann Valiulis argues that 'in reality they wanted to discuss their lack of

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[463] "The F.S Army Mutiny", *Belfast Newsletter* 11th March 1924, p. 10; Eunan O'Halpin, "A Greek Authorian Phrase? The Irish Army and the Irish Crisis, 1969-1970", in *Irish Political Studies*, 23:4, 475-490, p. 22
[464] Donal Corcoran, *Freedom to Achieve Freedom: The Irish Free State 1922-1932*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2013), p. 98
[465] Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 433
[466] Peter Cottrell, *The War for Ireland 1913-1923*, (United States, Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 220
[467] Diarmuid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000, (*United Kingdom: Profile Books, 2005), p. 302

power in the Army'.[468] Paul Taylor would also argue this point, stating that the IRAO was formed because the members were aggrieved at former British Army officers being given more job opportunities at their expense.[469] Other prominent contemporary figures also criticised their actions, including the sister of Terence MacSwiney, and staunch republican, Mary MacSwiney. She told the editor of *Eire The Irish Nation* that the mutineers only 'discovered the absence of an Irish interpretation of the Treaty when it became a question of emolument for themselves', and referred to the IRAO as a 'factious organisation'.[470]

While this view of the origins of the mutiny is present throughout the literature, it is quite narrow, particularly ignoring the failures of Mulcahy, Cosgrave and other members of Army GHQ in the lead up to March 1924. For example, Padraic O'Farrell claims that the mutiny began with the ultimatum.[471] By contrast, much of the primary documentation from the Army Crisis Inquiry Collection in the Military Archives conveys a more complex situation, which involved the IRB presence in the Army, issues with discipline, and problems caused by demobilisation policies in early 1923. In contrast to O'Farrell, John Regan concludes that the ultimatum sent by the IRAO represented not only mutiny, but 'the collision of two competing interpretations of the Treaty and the struggle for supremacy of revolutionary over constitutional ideals'.[472]

During the inquiry there were also debates on when the IRAO started to meet as a group, with some contemporaries making the distinction between informal meetings taking place at the end of 1922, and when they officially established themselves as the IRAO on 29th January 1923. Those within Army GHQ tended to focus on the latter; historians and contemporaries alike have accepted this as well. Despite this, Lieutenant General Seán Ó Mhurthuile told the inquiry that Army intelligence reported that they had begun their meetings in December 1922. This timeline is important when examining the origins of the IRAO and the reorganisation of the IRB, and the extent of their impact on distrust in the Army.[473]

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[468] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051 Verbatim Report of Evidence of General Richard Mulcahy, p. D8; Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion*, p. 37

[469] Paul Taylor, *Heroes or Traitors? Experiences of Southern Irish Soldiers*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 232

[470] "Miss MacSwiney Puts Two and Two Together for the Irish Times", *Eire The Irish Nation*, 5th April 1924, p. 3

[471] Padraic O'Farrell, *The Seán MacEoin Story, (*Dublin: Mercier Press, 1981), p. 93

[472] John Regan, "The Politics of Reaction: The Dynamics of Treatyite Government and Policy, 1922-33", in I*rish Historical Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 120, (1997), p. 555

[473] Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion*, p.32; IE-MA-AMTY-03-029 Statement submitted by Lieutenant General Seán Ó Mhurthuile to the Army Inquiry Committee, p. 3-5

In their final report, as well as the Chairman's own personal report on the findings (which was not published), the committee members were heavily critical of Mulcahy's role in the meetings that had taken place between him and the IRAO, and despite their refusal to attend the inquiry, Tobin and the IRAO faced similar criticism.[474] In terms of the impact of the inquiry, and the overall response towards it, Mulcahy described feeling humiliated at having his actions within the Army being called into question after his service in the War of Independence. Similar views were held by MacMahon, Ó Mhurthuile and O'Sullivan.[475] Others were willing to help with the inquiry, with Kevin O'Higgins making a particularly detailed statement, as did David Neligan, Col. Charles Russell, and others who were highly placed to provide details on the presence of both the IRB and IRAO. One statement that is noticeably absent, however, is that of Cosgrave, presumably due to his position as President.

Tobin and the other mutineers refused to take part in the inquiry, with the closest thing to a representative being that of Joseph McGrath, who was one of the first to come before the committee. Initially he stated that he would take part, but that he needed evidence provided by Tobin and the others to do so. Tobin and his followers, however, refused, and as a consequence McGrath informed the committee that he could not take part either.[476] In May 1924 Tobin and the IRAO would publish their own account of the mutiny in *The Truth About The Army Crisis*, clearly making sure not to refer to the situation as a 'mutiny'. It detailed the IRAO's account of events from early 1923 onwards, and stated that they felt that if they acknowledged the inquiry then they would be giving the government the opportunity to make fools of them again. One particularly noteworthy point is made in the foreword by Tobin himself,

> 'Do not be deceived by any reshuffling which has taken place into thinking that wrongs have been righted. The names of the members of the Army Council have been changed - the anti-national spirit remains unchanged. The betrayal continues.'[477]

[474] IE-MA-AMTY-04-002 Army Inquiry Committee Report of the Committee Saturday 7 June 1924
[475] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, Statement submitted by General R Mulcahy to the Army Inquiry Committee, 29 April 1924 and 2 May 1924, p. 1; IE-MA-AMTY-03-004 Verbatim Report of Evidence of Messrs. Sean McMahon, Gearóid O'Sullivan and Seán Ó Mhurthuile, 12 April 1924, p. 3
[476] IE-MA-AMTY-03-006 Verbatim Report of Evidence Richard Mulahy, Seán Ó Mhurthuile, Sean MacMahon and Georóid O'Sullivan Tuesday April 15th 1924, p. 3-4
[477] *The Truth About The Army Crisis*, p. 15

Therefore, it is clear that at least Tobin as an individual was not motivated by any personal grievance against Richard Mulcahy, or disappointment at taking orders from another leader after the death of Collins. From his point of view the problem was not about personal grudges or ambitions for positions of greater influence, and this must be remembered when examining the mutiny and the Army Inquiry Papers. Ultimately, the inquiry succeeded in bringing to light a lot of the backroom activities that had been taking place since the start of the Civil War to the sending of the ultimatum in March 1924, and the involvement of Army GHQ, secret societies, and politicians in this mutiny.

Chapter 7 - The Origins of the Army Mutiny

Grievances of the IRAO

According to multiple witnesses in the inquiry both the IRAO and IRB were operating within the Army from late 1922. Their existence was commonly regarded as an open secret. On 25th June 1923 Tobin and IRAO representatives met with Cosgrave and Mulcahy to read out their list of grievances. They reiterated that they accepted the Treaty as a stepping stone in the same way Collins had, and that Mulcahy's staff had been hostile to them since the death of Collins. They claimed that the Army was not a 'national army' as it was made up of 40% former IRA men, 50% ex-British officers and 10% former civilians (the majority of whom they claim had previously been hostile to the national ideal). It is important, however, to note that these figures do not appear to have been based on any kind of statistical assessment, but rather mere estimations and guesswork by the IRAO leadership. They demanded a committee be set up to look into demobilisation cases of pre-Truce men, and argued that they should have a 50% representation on this committee. Finally they asked for discussions to take place on the composition of the Dublin Command, the Secret Service Department, and the appointment of the DMP commissioner.[478] They concluded this manifesto with the foreboding message,

> 'It is time that this state of affairs ended, we intend to end it. Unless satisfactory arrangements are come to between us our organisation will take whatever steps they consider necessary to bring about an honest, clearer, and more genuine effort to secure the Republic. It is not our intention to cause any rupture which would give satisfaction to the enemies of Ireland. We ask the C in C to meet our efforts in the same spirit which he would have regarded them in 1920 and 1921'.[479]

The document was met with outrage by Mulcahy, who argued that it created an atmosphere of tension, whereas Cosgrave was more willing to engage in discussions.[480] The rhetoric in the manifesto was a combination of reassurances of their well meaning, yet also threatening in its aim to make both men understand that they do not regard the gun as being out of Irish politics. Although they asked for discussions to voice these concerns, they also stated that they intended

[478] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 77
[479] IE-MA-W24SP1606, Patrick O'Connell, p. 46
[480] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195

to keep their oath to the republic 'Treaty or no Treaty - this is our position exactly'.[481] While the mutiny was eventually put down with relative ease, historians such as Thomas. E. Hachey and Lawrence. J. McCaffrey state that the ultimatum was a startling development even in the chaotic days of post-revolutionary Ireland, and despite being short-lived, the threat that it represented to the life of the young state cannot be overestimated.[482]

There are two known documents written by members of the IRAO, the first being the pamphlet *The Truth about the Army Crisis*, and the second *A Brief History of Events*. The latter details the official establishment of the group as the IRAO on 29th January 1923.[483] By July 1924 then Director of Intelligence, Michael Joseph Costello, was able to send a copy of *A Brief History of Events* to the Chief of Staff, marking it secret and personal.[484] Attendees at this first meeting included Tobin, notably Emmett Dalton (not Charles Dalton), Tom Cullen, Tom Ennis, Christie O'Malley, Seán O'Connell and Joseph O'Reilly. At the second meeting on 2nd February Tobin was appointed chairman, Tom Cullen was made organiser, and a policy was agreed upon to,

> 'Get in touch with all IRA men serving in the National Army and if they believed in our ideals to link them together in an Organisation which when strong enough would demand a strong voice in Army policy with a view to securing complete independence when a suitable occasion arose. It was also decided that members of the new Organisation would make every effort to get control of the vital sections of the Army and oust those undesirable persons out who were and are holding these positions'.[485]

The goal for the IRAO was to get enough men to join them so that they would have significant numbers to have a say in army policy, and they were prepared to resort to force if necessary. They met again in April at which time it was decided that 'demands' would be sent to GHQ staff to outline their objections to the IRB and demobilisation policies. It was noted that Paddy O'Daly was present at this meeting, and despite not being in favour of contacting Army GHQ, he reassured the rest of the members of the IRAO that 'we could rely on him to stand by us in whatever action we decided to take'.[486] This admission about O'Daly's involvement is interesting in the context of later accusations made by revolutionary Kitty O'Doherty to Joseph McGarrity.

[481] IE-MA-W24SP1606, Patrick O'Connell, p. 46
[482] Thomas. E. Hachey & Lawrence. J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience Since 1880*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 150
[483] Ibid, p. 44
[484] IE-MA-AMTY-02-002, Army Crisis Early History
[485] IE-MA-W24SP1606 Patrick O'Connell, p. 44
[486] Ibid, p. 45

In a letter to McGarrity after the mutiny, O'Doherty alleged that O'Daly informed Mulcahy about these meetings as a means of silencing further questions about his involvement in the atrocities that had taken place in Kenmare in May 1923.[487] In *The Truth about the Army Crisis* Tobin defended the motives of the organisation, arguing that it was set up as a genuine effort to use the ideals of Collins and bring them to a conclusion.[488]

Demobilisation

Maryann Valiulis points out that demobilisation was a sensitive and dangerous task, especially considering that the government had not yet demonstrated its control of the Army. On the other hand, she focuses on this policy as being the catalyst of the mutiny, asserting that 'professionalisation' and demobilisation were its immediate causes, and arguing that all leaders of the old were 'antagonistic' to the new leadership after Collins death, and that many of those who had served in the IRAO were not suited to the bureaucratic role of a peacetime army where the acceptance of authority was paramount.[489] Others, such as Thomas. J. Morrissey reached similar conclusions, arguing that the report on further demobilisations that was published on 6th March caused the crisis.[490]

Demobilisation did not hold as much significance for the inquiry when it came to the rank and file of the Army, as Mulcahy stated that these were carried out without any trouble; most of these soldiers would not have been IRB men.[491] The demobilisation of officers was the key turning point in this scheme, as problems began to occur with how they were being retained and who was making the decisions. From the outset Mulcahy admitted that it was not a popular policy, but that it had to be implemented in order to decrease the size of the Army. Schemes for demobilising the rank and file were carried out fairly quickly after the Civil War ended. By April 1923 Mulcahy stated that there were approximately 52,000 in the national forces and this was to be reduced to 30,000 by January 1924, with further reductions expected in the spring of 1924 to eventually bring the total number in the Army down to 17,000. He described the process as being

[487] NLI MS 17,470/16, Letter from Katherine O'Doherty to Joseph McGarrity
[488] *The Truth About The Army Crisis*, p. 4
[489] Maryann Valiulis, "The Army Mutiny of 1924 and the Assertion of Civilian Authority in Independent Ireland", in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 93 (1983), p.358-359
[490] Thomas. J. Morrissey, *A Man Called Hughes: Life of Seamus Hughes,* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1991), p. 179
[491] IE-MA-AMTY-03-031 Statement (Part III) submitted by General Richard Mulcahy TD to the Army Inquiry Committee

one that involved a board of GOCs that would make retentions based on reports made on the men, and urged that efficiency and discipline were at the forefront of the minds of the board members when making these decisions.[492]

Further problems arose when it came to the case of the retention of Paddy O'Daly. His retention and his position as GOC, despite his involvement in the Kenmare and Ballyseedy incidents in 1923, were cause for outrage amongst politicians and officers alike. Also, as GOC, he was on the board that was to decide on retentions. It is understandable why some officers who had been demobilised because they were classified as inefficient would become angered at having someone with O'Daly's reputation standing over those decisions. Pádraig Ó Caoimh concludes that having him on the demobilisation board was a 'serious mistake', and one that 'gave the IRAO further cause for grievance, not to say a modicum of credibility, each of which increased the momentum towards mutiny'.[493]

It must be noted, however, that Richard Mulcahy seemed to be more acutely aware of the practical implications and problems that would inevitably arise out of demobilisation in comparison with other politicians. According to his son Risteárd Mulcahy and historian Donal Corcoran, Mulcahy had asked the Dáil for finances to employ the demobilised men in afforestation and building schemes in the aftermath of the Civil War, and also argued that the reason he waited so long to implement demobilisation for officers was because they may face increased dangers if they were sent back into civilian life at home so soon after the fighting had finished.[494] At a meeting between Cosgrave, McGrath and Mulcahy in January 1924, Cosgrave also urged that they should be fast in giving the supplementary grants to demobilised men, and that they should not scruple over the cost.[495] Plans for demobilisation were drawn up in the early months of 1923, and the process began in mid 1923.[496]

Tobin, however, would question why demobilisation was necessary, given the stepping stone argument regarding the Treaty. In *The Truth about the Army Crisis*, he stated,

> 'The argument has been made that men who were suitable for service in a volunteer force fighting the British are not necessarily suitable to be officers in the national army…such an argument reveals the slave

[492] Ibid
[493] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 187
[494] Risteárd Mulcahy, p. 193; Donal Corcoran, *Freedom to Achieve Freedom*, p. 96
[495] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/322, Memo from a meeting between Richard Mulcahy, Joseph McGrath and William Cosgrave, 26th January 1924, p. 1
[496] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058

> mind. It might pass if the Army is to exist for peace purposes only. The Army may have vital work yet to do for the nation…is the independence of Ireland to be secured by eliminating from the Army the soldiers who brought it within our grasp? There is the unity of Ireland and full independence still to be achieved'.[497]

The presumption of demobilisation being an inevitable course of action within the Army has also not been discussed to a great extent in the literature on the mutiny. Studies by John Regan, Maryann Valiulis, and Michael Hopkinson state how this was a natural conclusion after the end of the Civil War. Michael Hopkinson argues that for the survival of the new state it was important that loyal troops take over where possible, and so it was necessary to establish an army.[498] Also, in her biography of Mulcahy, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, Maryann Valiulis notes that previously the focus for recruitment had mainly been on their pre-Truce service in the Volunteers and whether or not they supported the Treaty.[499] The idea of demobilising the Army after the Civil War made logical sense in terms of no longer requiring manpower on such a large scale, particularly in light of financial strains on the new state. However, this does not take into consideration that support for the pro-Treaty side was based on this stepping stone approach that Collins had essentially sold to his men, and it should not be surprising that some of those who worked closest with him were unhappy with the implementation of demobilisation.

Even IRAO critic Col. Charles Russell told the inquiry that the men were badly treated by the government. He stated that the large number of officer demobilisations in the second half of 1923 had a severe impact on the financial situations of the men in question, pointing out that they were not put into a scheme or alternative government department, despite Mulcahy's attempts to make provisions.[500] Correspondence between some of the officers and the Military Pensions Board from 1924-1925 also suggests that the supplementary grant that was to be given to demobilised officers was often not made readily available to them until some months after they had left the Army. Former Squad man William Stapleton stated in July 1925 that he was depending on his pension for income, as driving a taxi only gave him a salary of £1 a week.[501] Others stated that some men were given only two days' notice to leave the barracks and received

[497] T*he Truth About The Army Crisis,* p.11
[498] Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War*, p. 60-61
[499] Maryann Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, (1992), p. 202
[500] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p. G5
[501] IE-MA-24SP6854 William Stapleton, p. 61-62

no pay for a number of weeks.[502] Former Captain Martin Nolan also gave a grim perspective of the financial situation that demobilisation left the officers to contend with. Speaking to the inquiry from an exacerbated position, he reported that the Free State government made no effort to help those who had been demobilised in terms of employment, and claimed the government did not care if the old Volunteers starved.[503] Undoubtedly Tobin and other IRAO men would have been keenly aware of the financial strains on pre-Truce Volunteers.

The fact that demobilisation was accepted as the natural foregone conclusion by the government at the end of the Civil War is representative of the larger problems at work between the IRAO, Cosgrave and Mulcahy. From the point of view of the IRAO, this was a deviation from what they considered to be Collins' plan to carry on the fight for complete independence. During the IRAO's first meeting with Cosgrave and Mulcahy, Tobin argued that large numbers of officers with excellent records were demobilised without getting a fair opportunity to prove their fitness in the commissioned ranks or even non-commissioned ranks, while the Army became studded with officers who not only had no national record, but were also ex-British Army officers. According to him, in a large number of cases these officers also held hostile views to the true national outlook. In this first meeting Tobin reassured both Mulcahy and Cosgrave that the IRAO saw themselves as soldiers, but that they wanted to see an army, 'necessarily reduced in numbers, but not an army weakened in its personnel strengths'. This indicates that Tobin was not opposed to demobilisation in general, but rather in the way he viewed it being unfairly implemented.[504] The IRAO also alleged that not only were former British officers given preference, but that this also included former British Secret Service agents. Charles Dalton would provide Mulcahy with further details on this during their meeting on 7th July 1923.[505] Cosgrave would agree to their demand for a committee to look into cases of pre-Truce officers, but the effectiveness of this committee would later be questioned by the inquiry, despite Joseph McGrath's presence on it.

[502] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040 Verbatim Report of Evidence of ex-Captain Martin Nolan, Colonel Broy, Professor James Hogan and ex-Captain James Corcoran, p. D8
[503] Ibid, p. A1-A2
[504] *The Truth About The Army Crisis,* p. 7-11
[505] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 84

Discipline

The inquiry was also detailed to investigate the extent that discipline in the Army contributed to the mutiny. Kevin O'Higgins, Col. Charles Russell, Col. Michael Joseph Costello, and Georóid O'Sullivan as Adjutant General all made statements to the effect that they had been made aware of problems in various barracks in Dublin, particularly in relation to former members of Collins' intelligence staff. This was seconded by Cahir Davitt, (circuit court judge of the republican courts, and son of Michael Davitt) who claimed that from early on in 1922 the men 'formed a sort of class apart and were not remarkable for being amenable to discipline'.[506] According to Georóid O'Sullivan, Collins was constantly having to reassure them that they would be alright, frequently making promises of jobs and security.[507] However, Peter Hart also discussed Collins' tendency to bring his other friends with him as he rose up the ranks, commenting that this also included members of the Provisional Government cabinet and Army GHQ.[508]

It was discovered that David Neligan (Director of Intelligence from September to October 1923) had made reports on the activities of the Dublin Command, which he submitted to Seán MacMahon, then Chief of Staff, and also reported the matter to Kevin O'Higgins. The reports detailed acts of drunkness, violence, and fighting on the streets. Likewise, O'Higgins spoke of the inexperience of officers who were used to fighting in the guerilla tradition, and stated that the DMP had complained to him in September or October 1923 of unacceptable behaviour from the officers. No names were mentioned in the reports.[509]

Likewise, C. H. Bretherton, writing in 1925, stated that the Tobin group 'complained that the IRB and its pals were getting all the cushy jobs, while they - the real pistol heroes - were left out in the cold, and further that the 'constitutional republican' aims of the Army were being ignored.[510] Mulcahy in particular would argue that many of the pre-Truce men were not suitable to life in a peacetime army, and as they were faced with the controversial task of demobilisation in late 1923, a lot of the former IRA men with pre-Truce service were sent back to civilian life.[511]

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[506] IE-MA.BMH.WS1751 Cahir Davitt, p. 108
[507] IE-MA-AMTY-03-030 Statement submitted by Lieutenant General Gearóid O'Sullivan to the Army Inquiry Committee 6th May 1924, p. 7
[508] Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins*, p.418
[509] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058 Army Inquiry Evidence (Kevin O'Higgins), p. A9
[510] C. H. Bretherton, *The Real Ireland*, (London: A&C Black Ltd, 1925), p. 87
[511] IE-MA-AMTY-03-031 Statement (Part III) submitted by General Richard Mulcahy TD to the Army Inquiry Committee

As the officer in charge of Griffith Barracks, Col. Russell also claimed to have witnessed many threatening attacks directed towards ex-British Army men by former 'Collins men'. He mentioned reports of men shooting off locks in the barracks sleeping quarters, and firing shots into rooms where the occupant would be sleeping.[512] In one of his statements to the inquiry Russell even made the argument that some of the men indulging in this behaviour appeared to be suffering from some kind of shell shock.[513] Russell did not mention Tobin specifically with regard to these activities, but previously he had stated that discipline was an issue with the men who would eventually go on to form the IRAO.

Russell referred to one particular disagreement that occurred in June 1922. Eoin O'Duffy had been nominated as Chief of Staff, a move that was opposed by Tobin, who argued that O'Duffy did not have enough experience of working with intelligence during the War of Independence. To express his opposition, Tobin invited members of the Army GHQ to the Gresham Hotel, where he made a vote of no confidence against O'Duffy. Although he was unsuccessful, O'Duffy was eventually not given the position, but Russell claimed that it was the first instance of ill-feeling between former intelligence officers and the Army.[514] Similarly, Russell confirmed that Tobin felt that pre-Truce intelligence officers were not getting jobs sufficient to their expertise and experience.[515] This incident with O'Duffy reflects the growing tension that was arising between former intelligence staff and senior officers within the Army such as O'Duffy and MacMahon. It is also noteworthy because it confirms that this atmosphere was brewing even before Collins died. Historian Joseph Lee also pointed this out, arguing that Tobin and Collins' men were becoming restive to the declining demand for their specialised services by mid 1922, and concluded that they were increasingly isolated after Collins' death.[516] Likewise, John Dorney acknowledges that a significant problem was that Mulcahy did not have the same relationships with the intelligence men that Collins did, and by the end of August he would grow tired of the 'Tobin crowd's secrecy, clannishness, and inefficiency'.[517]

Georóid O'Sullivan also reported that from early 1922 some of these men had proved that they were opposed to authority. Again, he did not provide any names, only stating that a good

[512] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p. D4-D5
[513] Ibid, p. A2
[514] IE-MA-AMTY-03-035 Verbatim Report of Evidence of Colonel Charles Russell, p. 6
[515] Ibid, p. 3
[516] Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society,* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 97
[517] John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin*, p. 351

many of those who had been in the Dublin Brigade before the truce would not have been in the Army at all but for Collins' influence.[518] Likewise, contemporary Frank O'Connor would state that it would be impossible to exaggerate the genuineness and depth of Collins' attachments to his old comrades, enemies and friends'.[519] O'Sullivan confirmed Col. Russell's claims that after Collins died the officers who had been causing problems in 1922 then banded together in his absence. This collective mentality was then only strengthened when the IRAO began to hold its meetings in late 1922 (although he stated he is unsure when this occurred) as those that he referred to as the 'ungovernable elements' of the Army were driven to Tobin, Cullen and their supporters.[520]

Historians have also discussed this unsuitability of officers in the Free State Army. Katie Lingard refers to the difficulties with maintaining control and discipline within the Volunteers from the time when the Dáil was suppressed in 1919, but that this degree of autonomy was necessary in guerilla warfare for the fighting to be effective.[521] Likewise, Michael Laffan argues that the aim of demobilisation was to weed out those who were more suitable to guerilla campaigns than a peacetime army, and also acknowledged that some of the mutineers had experienced difficulties with suitability during Collin's lifetime.[522] More specifically, John Regan points to the false image that was portrayed by Collins during Arthur Griffith's funeral, arguing that Collins wanted to convey an image of a disciplined and legitimate army.[523]

Much attention has been given to the unsuitability of the intelligence staff and Squad in particular. Tom Garvin asserts that the Volunteer recruits were generally of poor quality in 1922, but that the Dublin men in particular were seen as 'poor specimens'.[524] Similar sentiments are shared by Eunan O'Halpin, who argues that Collins' men in intelligence expected recognition for the risks they had run in the War of Independence, assuming that this would be in the form of senior postings in intelligence. However, 'they were doers, not organisers or analysts' and they were unsuitable for the 'bureaucratic environment of a strictly military intelligence

[518] IE-MA-AMTY-03-030, p. 7-8
[519] Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow*, p. 276
[520] IE-MA-AMTY-03-030, p. 7
[521] Katie Lingard, "Physical Force within the Bounds of Political Constraints", in *Years of Turbulence,* edited by Diarmuid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan, (Dublin: UCD Press, 2016), p. 125 - 126
[522] Michael Laffan, *Judging W.T. Cosgrave*, p. 190
[523] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936,* p. 164, 171
[524] Tom Garvin, 1*922: The Birth of Irish Democracy*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996), p.128

headquarters'.[525] Alternatively, Calton Younger argued that Collins was concerned with the efficiency of the National Army, and wanted it filled with men whose ways he knew and upon whom he could rely.[526] It is also worth noting that British Army officers were known for their acts of ill-discipline as well, many of whom had suffered shellshock from World War I. Therefore, the notion that the pre-Truce IRA were unsuited to army life because of their experience as guerilla fighters alone is misleading, as poor discipline was a common phenomena in many British officers too. What does make the Irish Free State distinctive however, is the fact that it was a young state trying to establish itself.

With regards to the IRB presence in the Army, the inquiry was presented with the difficulty of having no member of the IRAO there to take part. There were, however, testimonies from other officers confirming that suspicions regarding the IRB had been running deep within the Army, particularly regarding promotions and retentions. Mulcahy would claim that the reason behind the IRB revival was to stop the anti-Treaty side from gaining control of it. He argued that this did not begin until June 1923 at a meeting with the Executive Council, whereas Seán Ó Mhurthuile claimed to have begun to revive it around September 1922 when he took over Michael Collins' papers.[527] Kevin O'Higgins told the inquiry that as a member of the Executive Council he was present at the June 1923 meeting, but argued that it was mainly about the IRB, when originally Mulcahy had approached them about the need to discuss a letter from Tom Barry regarding a ceasefire.[528] Mulcahy faced opposition from O'Higgins and other members of the Council, including Eoin MacNeil, who did not want to have any secret societies in the Army, fearing its impact on discipline.[529] Therefore, to get an understanding of why the mutiny occurred it is necessary to examine both the IRAO and the IRB within the Army, as both were secret societies that affected discipline.

There is no record of any discussions on the IRB reorganisation in any of the Executive Council meeting reports from June 1923, which is not surprising considering the confidentiality that surrounded both organisations.[530] In a letter to Chairman James Meredith on 26th April

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[525] Eunan O'Halpin, "Collins and Intelligence 1919-1923 - From Brotherhood to Bureaucracy", in *Michael Collins and the Making of the Irish State*, p. 76
[526] Calton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War*, p. 423
[527] IE-MA-AMTY-03-053 Verbatim Report of Evidence of Colonel S Woods, Professor E MacNeill and Richard Mulcahy, p. A10 - A11; IE-MA-AMTY-03-030, p. 7
[528] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058, p. C4
[529] IE-MA-AMTY-03-053, p. A11
[530] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/247

1924, Cosgrave stated that it would be against the interests of the public and the government to publish the meetings of the Executive Council, or indeed any legal advice that they may have been given when reaching a decision.[531]

The inquiry tried to determine if the IRB influenced promotions and retentions in the Army through the demobilisation process, as officers had accused the GOCs of all being IRB men when they were on the demobilisation board, although they were never able to produce evidence to prove it. Col. Russell would also tell the inquiry that GOCs could not be relied upon to make good recommendations for retentions.[532] Regardless of opposition from the Executive Council in June 1923, Mulcahy told his fellow Council members, and the inquiry, that he never allowed the IRB to cut across military authority, stating that any men attending meetings did not do so in the capacity as army officers.[533] Nevertheless, another officer Jepson O'Connell recalled the period in 1923 when he became aware that secret societies were operating in the Army, going so far as to suggest that the mutiny was inevitable when societies of such a nature were present in any national forces.[534]

Mulcahy also told the inquiry about a meeting of the GOCs that had taken place in November 1922, where one commanding officer reported to Cosgrave that his officers wanted to know if they will go for a full republic or not, a question which Mulcahy said was of no surprise to Cosgrave. Following on from this, Mulcahy received a letter from another GOC in May 1923 stating that he could expect trouble from the men in his command, as they were convinced that the Free State would be the final settlement.[535] This highlights how the feelings of dissatisfaction towards Army GHQ and its policy towards the Treaty was not confined to the IRAO, nor did they instigate it with the beginning of their meetings in December 1922.

Additionally, while the government's response to the IRAO's ultimatum was undoubtedly justified, the inquiry would reveal the mistakes made by leading military figures in the months leading up to the mutiny, especially Mulcahy. By agreeing to meet with the IRAO throughout the summer of 1923, and appearing to address their concerns, he was effectively admitting that the IRB reorganisation had had an impact on the running of the Army. As Mulcahy would argue

[531] IE-MA-AMTY-02-001 Army Inquiry Committee, Letter from William Cosgrave to J.C Meredith 26th April 1924
[532] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p. B1
[533] lE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 8-9
[534] IE-MA-AMTY-03-033 Verbatim Report of the Evidence of Colonel Jepson O'Connell, p. F12
[535] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 3

himself, in no other country would such demands by officers be tolerated, yet in this case the Commander-in-Chief appeared to be obliging towards them.[536]

Meetings from June - July 1923

On 6th June 1923 Tobin, as president of the IRAO Executive Council, sent a letter to Cosgrave requesting a meeting to discuss their concerns.[537] They received a response to this request from Cosgrave on 20th June, and subsequently met with them on 25th June.[538] Cosgrave, Mulcahy, Tobin, Frank Thornton and Christie O'Malley were all present, the latter 3 representing the IRAO. Despite leaving the first meeting outraged, Mulcahy agreed to meet with IRAO representatives again on 7th July and 13th July. Following this he also sent a letter to Tom Cullen on 27th July confirming that he would be willing to discuss any concerns regarding demobilisation policies with 3 representatives from the IRAO. When a follow up letter was sent to Mulcahy by Christie O'Malley in August, he abruptly cut off all communication, and even informed that inquiry that the sending of such a letter by O'Malley was improper. He argued that the communication broke down due to their 'childish insincerity' and emphasised that he was not the provocator of such letters, arguing that it would not have been profitable for him to have such covert contact with the IRAO.[539]

Mulcahy commented on the behaviours of each of the IRAO men present at their first meeting with Cosgrave, portraying a scene of backroom negotiations taking place as they attempted to discuss how the Army should be directed. For instance, Mulcahy referred to the officers each taking a cigarette from Cosgrave as if to insinuate that such a move validated their claims. He went on to state that Tobin was 'hard and bitter', Thornton 'talkative and argumentative', and O'Malley was aggressive.[540] Both the Chairman James Meredith and Deputy Fitzgibbon asked in what capacity had Mulcahy entered the meeting on 25th June; as Commander-in-Chief or Minister of Defence?[541] He responded that he only operated as Richard Mulcahy in those meetings.[542] This would be taken with some scepticism by Chairman Meredith who argued in his own report that any military action taken against the IRAO in these early

[536] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051, p. D4
[537] NAI, Department of Taoiseach /3/s3678A
[538] *The Truth Behind the Army Crisis*, p. 4
[539] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051, p. E8 - E10; UCD Archives Richard Mulcahy Papers P7/B/195
[540] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 13
[541] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051, p. D4
[542] IE-MA-AMTY-03-052 Verbatim Report of Evidence of Mr John Cullen and General Richard Mulcahy, p. E6

stages of the meetings would undoubtedly have been taken by Mulcahy in a 'different capacity'.[543]

At the second meeting on 7th July 1923 Joseph McGrath continued to act as a mediator between Mulcahy and the IRAO, although Mulcahy stated that he only continued to liaise with the group because the President asked him to. Also present were Seán O'Connell, Charles Dalton, Christie O'Malley and Frank Thornton. During this meeting Dalton presented a list of British Secret Service men allegedly working in the Army. Of particular interest was Sgt. McKenna, who he claimed had been second in command of the British Secret Service in Ireland, and who now worked in Transport in Portobello Barracks, and Capt. Johnton of the Adjutant General's Office, who had been in charge of the dispatches for Dublin prior to the truce. In the case of Johnton they argued that he was presently in charge of the Central Registry Office where all letters and correspondence were opened and read. They also named Lieutenant Pritt who was stationed in the Curragh; he had previously been an intelligence officer in Claremorris, with Dalton claiming he had still had the information that he had compiled on local IRA men in the West.[544] Military intelligence reports would later obtain samples of forms that the IRAO had circulated amongst its members, the purpose of which was to gather information on those holding ranks and positions for which they were not suited, and these were categorised as ex-British, ex-civilian or IRA.[545]

Also during this meeting Frank Thornton argued that men who had nothing to do with intelligence before the truce were now running it and that their men were not given a chance. They confirmed what Neligan said about members of the Dublin Command being moved around a lot during the fighting in the Civil War, and that they were not given any positions when they returned to Dublin. Thornton also emphasised to Mulcahy that it was not about rank but influence. The IRAO representatives argued that there were other IRA men who could easily hold these positions, such as Joseph Dolan, Tom Ennis, James Slattery or Pat McCrea, whom they referred to as 'outstanding Dublin men who have not been fixed up'.[546]

According to Mulcahy, at the end of the second meeting McGrath said that things would quieten down now as the men 'had let off some steam', in an apparent attempt to persuade

[543] IE-MA-AMTY-04-003, p. 24
[544] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 20-21, 81-84
[545] IE-MA-AMTY-02-002 Army Crisis Early History
[546] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 20-21, 81-84

Mulcahy that this cooperative approach was a better alternative to military action against the group. While Mulcahy made it clear that inference could not be tolerated by Army GHQ, he did tell the IRAO members present that they could approach him with grievances, whether through representatives or as a group, and that some form of committee to look into demobilisations would be set up to look into individual cases.[547]

The third meeting took place on 13th July with Tom Cullen and other members of the IRAO, including James Slattery. Mulcahy defended the decision to have ex-British servicemen in the Army, and argued that the tone of the meeting was once again aggressive.[548] Both Chairman Meredith and Deputy Bryan Cooper questioned Mulcahy as to what his motives were in continuing to engage in discussions with the IRAO, when he previously made it clear that he did not agree with their method of airing their grievances. Based on Mulcahy's own recountings of the meetings, the inquiry concluded that the group took Mulcahy at his word that he was prepared to work with them. Mulcahy countered this claim by stating that while he did agree to meet with them to discuss their complaints, he merely listened and did not make any promises with regards to retentions, promotions or demobilisation.[549]

On 27th August 1923 Christie O'Malley wrote to Mulcahy in the capacity as secretary to the IRAO and provided 3 names to be their representation on the demobilisation committee, a letter that Mulcahy ignored, but which Deputy Bryan Cooper pointed out showed that the attitude of the IRAO remained unchanged by the end of the summer of 1923.[550] In addition, O'Malley had also sent a letter on 7th August clarifying issues discussed at the third meeting on 13th July, to which Mulcahy responded on 11th August confirming that he had received it. On 16th October another letter was sent to Mulcahy by O'Malley, this time outlining the names of soldiers about to be demobilised whose cases needed to be brought before the committee. Yet this time, Mulcahy stated that he regarded such correspondence to be inappropriate and ought not to have been written. The Chairman, however, argued that there is no reason that Mulcahy would not have expected such a letter to be sent to him, as he gave the IRAO the impression that he was willing to work with them, which he subsequently did by setting up the demobilisation cabinet

[547] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051, p. D1, E2, E3, E8, E9, E10; *The Truth About The Army Crisis*, p. 6
[548] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 23
[549] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051, p. D6, E7, E8, E12
[550] Ibid, p. F2

committee on 26th November.[551] From a political point of view, it appeared that Mulcahy was buying time before the August elections.

Mulcahy also repeated the claim that he did not believe that the IRAO represented any real danger to the state or the Army, and confirmed to the inquiry that he never disclosed his meetings with them to the Executive Council.[552] He also stated that he received intelligence reports in October 1923 that documents were circulating amongst members of the IRAO in barracks, but he did not take action as he felt that there was no present danger, anticipating that the new organisation scheme would be ready by December and demobilisation would be under way.[553] This also contradicts what David Neligan told the inquiry. Neligan stated that in his capacity as Director of Intelligence from September to October 1923 he reported the existence of the IRAO to Mulcahy, and that they often spoke on this matter together. Despite this, Neligan said that no definite steps were ever taken to handle their grievances, and although he could not be sure that Mulcahy had already met with them, there were rumours circulating that the meetings in June and July had taken place.[554]

With regards to the threat that the IRAO posed, according to an anti-Treaty intelligence report from May 1924, Mulcahy is also alleged to have implied that Tobin and McGrath were involved in the shooting of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson in June 1922, and that Mulcahy's attempts to bring the IRAO under control was the real cause of the trouble between them and the Army. The same report also alleged that all members of the inquiry received death threats from 'McGrath's crowd'. There is no way to substantiate these claims, however, the implication conveys a very real threat to the government.[555]

Another anti-Treaty report claimed that the IRAO had extensive plans to take over the government and Army by force, including alleged plans to kidnap Cosgrave or Governor General Tim Healy, allegations that the Tallaght Air Squadron was at Tobin's disposal and that he was planning to use it to bomb Merrion Street. The report also stated that there was a chance that men such as Ernest Blythe, Kevin O'Higgins or Gearóid O'Sullivan may be shot. Tobin himself admitted in a letter to Mick McDonnell in 1925 that he did not speak to O'Sullivan, but there is

[551] Ibid, p. F2; UCD Archives Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195, Letter from Christopher O'Malley to Richard Mulcahy 16th October 1923
[552] IE-MA-AMTY-03-053, p. D1
[553] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195
[554] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p. T&U5
[555] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/1, IRA Memo 29th May 1924

no evidence to suggest that he was planning to kill him, or any of the others named. Interestingly, the report also named David Neligan as being one of the most dangerous men to the IRAO, who had worked closely with Tobin previously, but who Tobin apparently no longer had any dealings with. It is implied that this was due to Neligan's part in the treatment and killings of prisoners in Kerry during the Civil War.[556] According to Alvin Jackson, the Army command had tapped a telephone exchange used by the IRAO, and this was how they discovered the details of the meeting in Devlin's pub on 18th March. It is possible that the meeting was called to discuss matters of this nature, but it is not clear what the source is for this phone tapping claim.[557]

Tobin was also accused of being involved in a shooting at Cobh Pier days after the raid at Devlin's. On 21st March a group of 50 British soldiers and civilians had arrived in Cobh when they were fired on by men in a Rolls Royce with two Lewis machine guns. The result was that eighteen people were injured and one killed. Tobin emphatically denied this accusation, and referred to the shooting as a 'cowardly act'. There are suspicions that the shooters intended to exploit the mutiny in order to provoke the British Army into action, as one of the men in the car allegedly shouted 'Up Dalton!'.[558] Tobin would also sue *The Sunday News* for printing an article implying that he was involved, and was eventually granted damages and an apology by the newspaper.[559]

In addition, the most damning document for Mulcahy was the letter that he had sent from Portobello Barracks to Tom Cullen on 27th July, in which he stated that he would be prepared to meet with the IRAO to discuss their complaints. The letter stated:

> 'I am quite prepared to deal directly at any time, with any 3 representatives of those I have recently met, for the consideration of any representatives they may wish to make on matters which are considered vital to the progress of the army on national lines with a review to the complete independence of Ireland…it being understood that this is, of necessity, a personal and private arrangement and not indicative of sectionalism of any kind in the Army…I am quite prepared to see any individual of those I have already met who may wish to make any

[556] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 4876/2, IRA Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff 13th March 1924
[557] Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*, p. 275
[558] "Cowardly Act", *Liberator* 25th March 1924, p. 3
[559] "Apologies and damages from English Newspaper", *Southern Star* 30th May 1925, p. 7

representations in this matter…and that I am quite prepared, after the recent discussion, to accredit all concerned with having absolute honesty of purpose and ideals'[560]

Kevin O'Higgins informed the inquiry that by Mulcahy sending this letter to Cullen he was essentially accepting the idea of the Army leading people politically rather than serving the people militarily. The letter would later be read out by McGrath at one of the IRAO's meetings. O'Higgins argued that by expressing that he would meet them to talk of the reorganisation of the Army, Mulcahy was effectively admitting that officers may be politicians.[561] Seán MacMahon also argued that as far as he was concerned he regarded the grievances expressed by the IRAO as more of a governmental problem rather than an army one, but acknowledged that he was made aware that Cosgrave was in correspondence with Tobin in relation to these issues.[562] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, on the other hand, argues that nothing in the correspondence between Mulcahy and the IRAO could possibly have caused the latter to consider the matter closed, and concluded that the letter sent to Tom Cullen 'marked a breakthrough for them'.[563]

Result of the meetings

The demobilisation committee promised to the IRAO was formed in November 1923, with the aim that most applicants should be heard by mid January 1924. The members of the committee were Eoin MacNeil, Joseph McGrath, and Ernest Blythe, and some GOCs who also looked into the cases presented to them. On 9th November 7 officers from the Curragh had refused their demobilisation papers, arguing that they had taken an oath to the republic, and claimed during their court martial that they were advised by Tobin and the IRAO in their actions. Within a fortnight 50 more officers of the Curragh also refused their papers. Apparently growing tired of being stonewalled by Mulcahy, Joseph McGrath then claimed that the IRAO had informed him that more groups were going to protest their demobilisations. Critically, on 6th December he received a written guarantee from Cosgrave that the findings of the committee agreed to by Mulcahy would be binding.[564] Despite this Ernst Blythe wrote to Chairman Meredith on 15th April, stating he never felt that such a committee would be able to reinstate many of the demobilised officers, but that in an Executive Council meeting in November 1923 McGrath had

[560] *The Truth Behind the Army Crisis*, p. 5-6
[561] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058
[562] IE-MA-AMTY-03-047 Verbatim Report of Evidence of General Sean McMahon, p. A7
[563] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 182
[564] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 190, 191, 195

warned the other members that 'serious trouble' would occur if something were not done to try and reinstate suitable officers.[565] From January onwards a joint committee was set up to review demobilisation cases, on which all GOCs were members, as were those on the Defence Council. The aim was to have all officers notified of their demobilisation by the end of February 1924.[566]

Pádraig Ó Caoimh discusses the effectiveness of the demobilisation committee in his recent study on Mulcahy. On 24th December the committee met with Mulcahy to clarify how the applicants would make a claim to have their demobilisation reconsidered, and it was decided to invite each claimant to submit written particulars of their previous military service together along with two referees. These would then be given to Mulcahy to compare with their original demobilisation reports, and in total 60 forms were sent to him by 17th January 1924. On 3rd March the two sets of forms were sent back, and final decisions would not yet have been made by the committee when on 22nd February Mulcahy presented the Executive Council with the figures and job allocations of the new military scheme. Additionally, between October and February 940 out of 1,007 pre-Truce officers were demobilised. Ó Caoimh concludes that this limited the prospects of the reinstatement of the 60 men and the IRAO knew it, and as a result 'they were left with the unpleasant conclusion that Mulcahy had deliberately frustrated them'.[567] Despite the committee's limitations, records from Executive Council meetings in February 1924 do indicate that some former Squad members were being considered for further appointments, including Vinny Byrne, Paddy Griffin, Joe Dolan and Seán O'Connell, although they all appeared to have supported the mutineers in their actions.[568]

The Chairman asserted that Mulcahy blocked any action of the committee, that he held up cases until it was too late to do anything about the demobilisation in particular applications, and that the publication of the demobilisation lists on 29th February 1924 meant that there was no time for the committee to take any action to block it. Mulcahy denied all of these charges, instead downplaying the role of this committee by claiming that they only considered a few cases, and pointed out that the Executive Council had approved the lists published on 29th February.[569] The inquiry also failed to uncover that Mulcahy appeared to have been anticipating

[565] IE-MA-AMTY-02-001, Army Inquiry Committee, Letter from Ernst Blythe to J. C Meredith 15th April 1924
[566] IE-MA-AMTY-03-031
[567] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 191
[568] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/248
[569] IE-MA-AMTY-03-052, p. A7

some form of retaliation from the IRAO for the failures of the committee and the breakdown in communication, as pointed out by Ó Caoimh. He argues that the Mulcahy Papers housed in UCD show that Mulcahy felt confident that he would be able to dispense with the IRAO problem on his own terms, and began to 'make military preparations to deal with them' by mid December 1923 by calling the GOCs together and urging them to be on the watch for the presence of unknown officers in their barracks. On 9th January Mulcahy was informed that the IRAO would soon surprise certain barracks, and remove rifles and ammunition in order to lay down demands on the government. Ó Caoimh also points out that Mulcahy received a letter from Michael Brennan on 19th January informing him that IRAO had allegedly discussed plans for shooting prominent people at a recent meeting. These claims are similar to those made in the anti-Treaty intelligence reports.[570]

Therefore, Ó Caoimh argues that Mulcahy had changed his opinion that the IRAO were no great threat, and even considered that they could be a greater obstacle than the anti-Treaty side. On 19th December Mulcahy also informed the Army Council that precautions should be taken against 'mutinous inroads'.[571] By sending their ultimatum to Cosgrave on 6th March, Ó Caoimh argues that Tobin and Dalton preempted GHQ's intended orders to demobilise further pre-Truce officers, and thereby effectively 'bringing to a climax a process of complaint which had commenced semi-casually in the new year, become more focused during the summer, and begun to acquire a potentially serious edge to it by the autumn'. The subsequent actions by Mulcahy, he concludes, accidentally brought 'an end to the 6 year period of dominance of the IRB within Army GHQ'.[572]

The IRAO's aims, however, were not realistic with regards to wanting to push forward for a republic, particularly after the effect of the Civil War on the population. At the same time, it is important to note that in his letter to McDonnell in 1925 Tobin claimed that they had made attempts to talk to Mulcahy in late 1922, and to convince him of 'the danger of allowing the real republican ideal to die out', and reportedly begged him to 'pull things together before it was too late'.[573] This claim is extremely significant when examining the motives of the mutineers, as it adds credibility to the IRAO's assertion that the ultimatum was sent only after they made

[570] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 192
[571] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 192; UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195
[572] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 196
[573] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925, Courtesy of Brian Hand

exhaustive attempts to convince Mulcahy and Cosgrave that complete independence should be the final goal. However, according to Mulcahy the straitjacket of the republic was imposed by the policies and rhetoric of the Sinn Féin movement and De Valera's immediate reaction to the Treaty. He argued in later years that complete independence was not attainable at that time, and his son Risteárd also referred to the 'myth of the republic' over the 'achievable reality of a constitution encompassing self-determination'.[574]

Nonetheless, there is no evidence to suggest that the IRAO was not genuine about their complaints about the Treaty becoming permanent. Historian Eoin Neeson pointed out that Collins had sold the idea of the Treaty to many of his supporters based on this stepping stone approach, convincing them that they had the freedom to advance towards independence.[575] Similarly, Mark Tierney argues that their ultimatum specifically referred to Collins' ideals, as does *The Truth About The Army Crisis*.[576] The military intelligence reports show that forms circulated by the IRAO had also taken care in the selection of its members, with one form stating that the deciding factor in allowing someone to become a member was 'their past and present outlook from a National point of view'.[577] Tobin also repeatedly referred to this intention of the IRAO in his letters to Mick McDonnell, asserting that they wanted to fight for the honour of the country and their dead comrades.[578] Rather than push for independence, Tobin argued in *The Truth About The Army Crisis* that there was an immediate hostility shown to them (Collins' former intelligence men), both openly, and in secret in the Army, and at some point a policy was accepted of either placing them in 'show positions' outside the Army or of giving them positions with no influence or power to carry out Collins' work.[579]

Conversely, Maryann Valiulis argues that in their first meeting with Cosgrave, the IRAO had disguised their demands 'in the rhetoric of Republican nationalism' by using the stepping stone argument, implying that the government had betrayed this ideal.[580] Moreover, Todd Andrews reached a similar conclusion, calling the stepping stone argument 'fair', but argued that after Collins died it was no longer a realistic objective, as Tobin and Thornton 'found out to their

[574] Risteárd Mulcahy, p.175
[575] Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War*, p.75
[576] Mark Tierney, *Modern Ireland Since 1850,* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1978), p. 186
[577] IE-MA-AMTY-02-002
[578] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925
[579] *The Truth Behind the Army Crisis,* p. 3
[580] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion,* p. 51

cost'. Thus, while he does appear to sympathise with their dissatisfaction at not achieving the ultimate goal, he also highlighted the problematic issue of attempting to carry on the work of a man who was no longer there to spearhead it.[581]

It must also be noted that Tobin admitted himself in his letters to McDonnell that he and the IRAO were not above using physical force to make their position clear to the government, albeit perhaps not to the extreme that the anti-Treaty reports suggest he was. Tobin referred to his exasperation at the failings of the meetings with Mulcahy, stating that they felt they had no alternative but to send the ultimatum, with the full understanding that if the government did not accede to their demands 'there was nothing left to do but fight'. At the same time, his sentiments towards the Treaty remained consistent, indicating that his own personal gain was not at the forefront of his act of mutiny against the government.[582] Likewise, at a reunion of friends and comrades of Collins organised by the IRAO in August 1924, Tobin reiterated these sentiments, stating that Collins had tried by every means to reunite the national ranks, and argued that had he lived he would have succeeded.[583] Eventually, IRB veteran John Devoy would sum up his own feelings on the matter, writing in support of Tobin in 1924; 'The man, or men, who will restore solidarity will accomplish more for Ireland than any man or body of men, of this generation'.[584]

Equally, if the IRAO can be accused of trying to speak for Collins and the Irish public, so too can the members of Army GHQ and the government ministers, as French documents recently uncovered by Jerome aan de Wiel suggest that Collins was prepared to keep fighting for a full republic even after the Treaty was ratified. The files show that Ginger O'Connell made two trips to France, the last of which was in February 1922, with a view to sending Irish officers to French military academies for aviation training purposes. Aan de Wiel argues that this episode reveals above all that some in Ireland were not ready to meet the obligations of the Treaty, including some of those who signed it. He points out this was a flagrant contradiction to Article 5 of the Treaty', which stated 'defence by sea of Great Britain and Ireland shall be undertaken by His Majesty's imperial forces' and also Article 7B. While it is unlikely to ever be known who was behind these visits, he argues that Collins 'emerges as a likely suspect'.[585] By the same tone,

[581] C.S. Andrews, *Man of No Property*, p. 7
[582] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925
[583] "The Life Aim of Michael Collins", *Irish Independent*, 25th August 1924, p. 6
[584] IE-MA-AMTY-05-004 Article by John Devoy re: Military Discipline reference Army Crisis 1924
[585] Jerome aan de Wiel, "French Military Intelligence and Ireland 1900-1923", in *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2011), p. 63-64

Tobin stated to McDonnell that the death of Collins finished anything', and in the same letter acknowledged that he wanted out of politics after the fallout from the mutiny.[586]

The IRAO's perspective on their meetings with Mulcahy would be made clear in *The Truth about the Army Crisis*. Tobin argued that they got no guarantee from Mulcahy that 'anything would be done to put things right'. Following on from the perceived failings of these initial meetings, and regarding the situation as being serious, the IRAO gathered together a representative meeting of officers from all parts of the country, which met on Sunday July 22nd. A letter was then sent from the IRAO to Mulcahy on 25th July asking for written assurances of agreements reached at their meeting on 13th July. In accordance with the letter that had been sent by Mulcahy to Cullen on 27th July, they appointed 3 officers for representation on the demobilisation committee, but Tobin claimed that the matter ended there, and no result was reached, and stated that 'reluctantly we came to the conclusion that any further meetings would see no useful purpose'. He also stated that Mulcahy promised them that they would be given representation on the governing body of the reorganised IRB. Although this last claim was never discussed by any of the witnesses during the inquiry, according to Tobin, this promise was broken by a member of the Army Council.[587] In his letters to McDonnell, Tobin stated that the intention behind the first meeting on 25th June was to point out to Cosgrave and Mulcahy where they were leading the country, and bitterly concluded that 'we might as well have been talking to a lot of deaf men'.[588]

Involvement of politicians in the mutiny

Throughout the inquiry Mulcahy made it clear that he also blamed certain politicians for the outbreak of the mutiny. In his first full statement made on 29th April, his sentiments towards the IRAO were joined by his anger towards what he referred to as outside influences on the group. He argued that certain politicians in the government had influence over the mutineers, although he does not name any of the individuals other than Joseph McGrath. The Chairman did point out that at one time Mulcahy implied that McGrath had been helpful in dealing with the IRAO, however, Mulcahy argued that McGrath became a spokesperson for them, referring to a meeting

[586] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 8th March 1926, Courtesy of Brian Hand
[587] *The Truth Behind the Army Crisis*, p. 5; UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B195, Letter from IRAO to Richard Mulcahy 25th July 1923.
[588] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925, Courtesy of Brian Hand

on 4th July 1923 that he, McGrath and Cosgrave attended. According to Mulcahy, during this meeting McGrath had told them that the IRAO felt neglected and that they were put in positions that they were not suitable for, and that he felt he had a right to make an exposure of this treatment.[589] Mulcahy also stated that during the same meeting McGrath confirmed that he wholeheartedly supported the IRAO.[590] Likewise, Seán Ó Mhurthuile told the inquiry that those who were behind the mutiny had been helped and supported by politicians, but he did not mention names either.[591] Mulcahy also stated that he believed that McGrath was with them before the meeting with Cosgrave on 25th June 1923. He claimed that the grievances expressed by the IRAO alone would not have been enough to result in the mutiny; it was the support of politicians for these men that helped to bring it about.[592]

In a rare moment of correlation between the two, Kevin O'Higgins also stated that he believed that there was a 'well regimented section giving support to the mutineers' from the political perspective, although he did not say if this brought about the mutiny. For instance, he stated that he was not aware of the fact that McGrath had intervened on behalf of the IRAO to Cosgrave, or that McGrath and Cosgrave had met to discuss the matter. However, he was quick to point out that Mulcahy also kept the issue from the Executive Council.[593] John Dorney also argues that generally relations between O'Higgins and the IRAO were better than they had been with Mulcahy.[594]

Tobin also spoke about the government making fools of the IRAO throughout the course of their meetings with Mulcahy, and stated this is why they refused to take part in the inquiry. He also mentioned that the removal of the members of the Army Council did not solve the problem, as it was clear that the Treaty would continue to remain a permanent fixture. He confirmed that Cosgrave sent them a communication on 6th December 1923 marked confidential, which stated that the demobilisation committee would hear and investigate on request any cases of men who had been demobilised who had pre-Truce service, and who wished to have their cases heard.[595] The document was published in their pamphlet, and stated that,

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[589] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 14
[590] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers P7/B/195
[591] IE-MA-AMTY-03-029, p. 14
[592] IE-MA-AMTY-03-049 Verbatim Report of Evidence of Professor James Hogan, p. K4
[593] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058, p. D11, E6, E7
[594] John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin*, p. 362
[595] *The Truth About the Army Crisis*, p. 6

> 'Having investigated such cases as are out before this committee…cases will be heard of valid complaints against officers alleged to be unworthy of holding commissioned or non-commissioned rank.'

They sent a reply on 10th December from Charles Dalton to McGrath as a member of the demobilisation committee, informing him that in order to prevent further delays they will agree to this proposal of a committee, with a view to the following;

> 'A) 'By the proposals we understand that a committee of the Executive Council will immediately be set up and establish the necessary machinery to enable them to get details as to what the personnel of the future Army is to be and also get particulars of the IRA officers already demobilised'.
> B) 'That the findings of the committee are behind the Army authorities'.
> C) 'That the findings arrived at in the cases of undesirables will be as binding as the cases referred to in paragraph A'.

Tobin concluded that they did believe that this committee actually met, and that it called for certain information, but that it was stalled by Mulcahy and all progress ended there.[596] It was at this point in February 1924 that they realised that more drastic action was called for. All correspondence between the IRAO and Mulcahy regarding this committee was published in *The Truth about the Army Crisis*.[597]

Conclusion

With regards to Tobin's allegations that ex-British Army officers were retained at the expense of former pre-Truce men, Cahir Davitt argued that the IRAO contemplated using this argument of ex-British officers to compel the government to mould its policy according to their views. He claimed that they thought it essential that the Army should, as far as possible, 'be officered by members of their own organisation or at least by men who shared their views or were in general sympathy with them'.[598] Eoin Neeson also made reference to the recruitment of ex-British servicemen in his 1966 work, *The Civil War 1922-23*. He stated that on the first day of recruitment the queues formed outside the centres and they were unable to deal with the number of applicants. By contrast, anti-Treaty men refused to accept them into their ranks.[599]

[596] Ibid, p. 7
[597] *The Truth About The Army Crisis,* p. 5-10
[598] IE-MA-BMH.WS1751 Cahir Davitt, p. 107-108
[599] Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War*, (1966), p. 131

Maryann Valiulis and John Regan both point to the fact that there was a surplus of inefficient officers after the Civil War, and that demobilisation was inevitable. Similarly Col. Russell placed great emphasis on the claim that the IRAO men did not follow discipline, frequently causing problems in Griffith barracks, and that they tended to band together when one of them was in trouble.[600] Regan is also critical of Tobin's inability to adjust to the lifestyle of a disciplined army. As previously stated he refers to him as a typical 'chocolate tin soldier' during the procession at Arthur Griffith's funeral. At the same time, the credibility of this depiction is questionable given that the officer Regan is referring to in the photo of the funeral is actually not Tobin at all; he was in Fermoy at the time.[601] Alternatively, Calton Younger offered a different perspective when describing Emmett Dalton's mission to retake Cork from the anti-Treaty side in 1922. While he also pointed out that many of the men sent with Dalton were inexperienced, with some having to be taught how to load their guns during the voyage from Dublin, he also mentioned how one of the most experienced men on the voyage was Tobin.[602]

Similarly, Valiulis describes the members of the IRAO as being made up of two factions, 'Dublin men (gun men) and let down officers and western officers', arguing that the first group were Collins' own gunmen, all of which were 'bitter' and 'fanatical', including Joseph McGrath.[603] While it should be remembered that her thesis was written from the perspective of Richard Mulcahy, she does point out that the IRAO demanded power within the Army and criticised them for threatening armed rebellion.[604] Tobin himself would admit to Mick McDonnell only a year after the mutiny that they had been prepared to use force if the government did not respond to their ultimatum.[605] On the other hand, McGrath bizarrely attempted to convince the Executive Council that the ultimatum should not be taken literally as they did not intend to overthrow the government.[606]

At the same time, Valiulis does not take into account the testimony from Michael Joseph Costello, who stated that there was evidence that the taking of arms from barracks such as Templemore, was done against the expressed wishes of Tobin.[607] Tobin would also tell the

[600] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 86
[601] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936:*p. 164, 166
[602] Calton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War*, p. 410 - 411
[603] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion*, p.33-34
[604] Ibid, p. 56
[605] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925
[606] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 201
[607] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/25, Army Committee Enquiry, April 28th May 1924, p. C.7

Liberator on 25th March that he had arranged with McGrath to have the arms and ammunition returned to the barracks around Dublin, and said that he wanted the opportunity to tell the people of Ireland that the mutineers had been acting solely in their interests.[608] Additionally, historian Terence Dooley would conclude that the mutiny was not a political move as such, but more of a way of alerting the government to the grievances amongst many pre-Truce officers.[609] However, despite the return of most of the stolen arms, anti-Treaty intelligence reports maintained that Tobin still had an arms dump in Dublin, as well as a number of Ford vans and cars at their disposal.[610]

Furthermore, as previously stated, in March 1922 Tobin and Frank Thornton had their own experience of dealing with ill-disciplined officers. The men, which included Charles Dalton, had begun to write to their immediate superior, then Thornton as Commandant, voicing their objections to not having been given clear ranks yet, and protested that some officers who had similar duties were being paid more. Thornton reported to Tobin that the men were refusing their salaries and that they wanted some form of direction in relation to what their ranks would be. The overall message was one that conveyed that they were not satisfied with how they had been treated in consideration of their efforts during the War of Independence.[611]

In response, Tobin acknowledged the problems facing the men, as he himself had been given a very abstract brief on how to set up Oriel House as the military intelligence department. In this instance, however, Tobin made it clear that he 'does not and will not stand for the men refusing their salaries', and ironically stated that he regarded it as an act of mutiny against the Army. He went on to state that the men are expected to adopt the same attitude towards their salaries and payment as they did before the truce, and made it clear that ranks could not be defined at such an early stage.[612] This exchange is interesting considering Tobin's role in the mutiny, and also highlights that Tobin was not given to indulging acts of ill-discipline from men under his command. It is also worth noting that the grievances mentioned are related to salaries and pay, which are again dismissed by Tobin, as he argued that the men must continue on regardless and accept the situation for now.

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[608] "Major General Tobin", *Liberator* 25th March 1924, p. 3
[609] Terence Dooley, *The Land for the People: The Land Question in Independent Ireland,* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), p. 86
[610] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2, IRA Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff, 13th March 1923
[611] IE-MA-AMTY-03-010
[612] Ibid

This image of Tobin stands in direct contrast to the one which would be cultivated of him in the aftermath of the mutiny; that of a disgruntled officer of former importance who was motivated by his own personal desire for influence. Another critical point to remember is that Tobin was Director of Intelligence when the IRAO began to unofficially meet to discuss their dissatisfaction with Army and government policy in late 1922. Therefore, at the time that these initial discussions were taking place, Tobin held the highest rank he obtained throughout all his years of involvement in the fight against the British. John Regan also refers to November - December 1922 as the starting point for these meetings. He states that there is a document in the Sean MacEoin Papers entitled *History of the Irish Republican Army Organisation* indicates that it was at this point that Tobin got some senior officers and Treaty politicians together to discuss 'pro-British tendencies' in the Army. However, the only limitation with this source is that he does not specify if he is referring to the MacEoin Papers in UCD or the National Library of Ireland.[613] Additionally, even after he was made aide-de-camp to Governor General Healy, Tobin was still living in the Viceregal Lodge in Phoenix Park. Accordingly, an argument could be made that he had more to gain financially by saying nothing to Cosgrave or Mulcahy about his concerns over the Treaty. His friend and associate, Dr. Patrick MacCartan would also write to William. J. Maloney mere days before the mutiny occurred, and claimed that Tobin was then earning £1,000 a year which he was willing to discard.[614]

It must also be noted that motivations for financial gains, and desiring more influential positions and ranks are not mutually exclusive. Michael Laffan does acknowledge that the IRAO was formed to advance their interests and counter the lingering influence of the IRB in the Army Council, which they were particularly resentful of.[615] It was never denied by the IRAO that they wanted more of a say in how the Treaty was being handled, feeling entitled to have an input in the direction of the national agenda. However undemocratic this may have been, it is not the same thing as asking for higher ranks for better salaries. The letter that Tobin sent to the men under his charge in March 1922 reflects his attitude towards making financial sacrifices during the War of Independence; Tobin made it clear to the men under his command that he expected them to carry on with their duties regardless of financial hardships or personal dissatisfactions.[616]

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[613] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 165
[614] NLI Patrick MacCartan Papers, MS, 17,675/5/6, Letter from Patrick MacCartan to William J Maloney, 4th March 1924
[615] Michael Laffan, *Judging W. T. Cosgrave*, p. 190
[616] IE-MA-AMTY-03-010

Likewise, Kevin O'Higgins countered what many had said about the demobilisation scheme in early 1924, and actually claimed that the men who would be prominent in the mutiny 'were well placed and treated' in the scheme, to the point where it looked to him as though Mulcahy had been trying to buy off the mutiny, but 'the price was not high enough'.[617] To this end, a similar claim was made by Katherine O'Doherty in letters to Joseph McGarrity (Tyrone native and prominent republican then living in the United States) in the aftermath of the mutiny. According to O'Doherty, several offers of money were made to Tobin in order to get him to drop the issue; all such offers, she claimed, were rejected by him. It should be noted that O'Doherty was a friend of Tobin's, but nonetheless this casts doubt on the argument that Tobin sought a more prestigious position in the Army.[618] This argument that they were motivated purely by financial gain is another example of how simplistic the narrative surrounding the mutiny has been.

In all private correspondence between the IRAO and Mulcahy, and in all public statements made by the group, there is a consistency in their stance that the Treaty was not to be permanent, and Tobin argued that they saw the Army becoming,

> 'largely officered by and recruited from ex-British soldiers, some of whom had fought against us in the War of Independence, and by ex-civilians who had never struck a blow for Ireland when her liberty was to be won, and who had been still and hostile to the national ideals…We saw in the national army men who had been active British secret service agents…Seeing these things, the comrades of Michael Collins, and men of the old IRA met together to decide on the best means to bring these facts before the government; and we organised ourselves so that we could speak with the necessary authority as representing the old soldiers of the nation and a considerable number of officers in the army'.[619]

Anne Dolan also refers to the speech made by Eoin O'Duffy in Béal na Bláth in 1924 at the second anniversary of Collins' death, when he referred to discipline being paramount to the dead leader in an attempt for the Free State government to claim his image in the aftermath of the

[617] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058, p. F6
[618] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,470/16, Katherine O'Doherty to Joseph McGarrity
[619] Ibid, p. 4

mutiny.[620] One thing that must be taken into consideration at this point however, is that no one truly knew what Collins was thinking except Collins himself, and it is equally evident that he was careful about who he shared information with. In their final report, the inquiry would conclude that the mutineers were concerned with having no power in the Army, although they did not distinguish between influential or financial gain. Rather they recognised that reporting their grievances to Cosgrave, and their subsequent dealings with Mulcahy, had resulted in them feeling betrayed by the Army and the government, which increased their discontent.[621] In Tobin's own words, he defended the actions of the IRAO, stating that 'it would be our effort to make Ireland, not to break it' and that it was their ambition to 'humbly' be allowed to continue Collins' work.[622]

[620] Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory 1923-2000,* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 59
[621] IE-MA-AMTY-04-002, p. 15
[622] *The Truth Behind the Army Crisis,* p. 2-3

Chapter 8 - Army Inquiry Findings

Timeline of IRAO & IRB

Tensions had been brewing between the IRB and the IRAO since 1922, and the question of who was the provocator and the retaliator is an important point to consider. As with most of the evidence submitted to the inquiry, the details of how and when each organisation originated (or was reorganised in the case of the IRB) were subject to opinions, estimations, and personal recollections. Variations in dates and perspectives were frequently an issue that the inquiry had to recognise. In later years Mulcahy even denied that there had been a clash between the IRB and any other section, concluding that this was a figment created by Tobin and utilised by O'Higgins.[623] Nonetheless, the inquiry attempted to determine the origins of the two secret societies, neither of which should have been in the Army of a newly formed democratic state. For example, the revived Constitution of the IRB continued to state that its Supreme Council was 'the sole Government of the Irish Republic until Ireland's complete independence was achieved.[624] However, the question of which organisation was formed first remains an important element to discuss within the context of the origins of the mutiny.

As the IRAO members did not take part in the inquiry, the reorganisation of the IRB became more of a focal point of its investigation. Col. Charles Russell had claimed that the IRB was formed first, and then the IRAO followed to counter this. He argued that Tobin and the former intelligence staff were unhappy at not being included in this revived IRB, despite, he argued, none of them being senior members of it in pre-Truce days. According to Russell, in June 1922 Tobin voiced concerns that the men who had previously worked under him had complaints about their ranks. He recalled one occasion when Tobin specifically told him that he and the other men had been left out of the IRB, as Russell had been joking with him about attending a meeting.[625] Mulcahy was later challenged by McGrath on this point during their meeting with Cosgrave on 4th July 1923, to which he responded that if there were communication difficulties in relation to the reorganisation of the Army it was due to problems with Tobin's personality.[626]

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[623] Risteárd Mulcahy, *Richard Mulcahy 1886-1971: A Family Memoir,* p.201-202
[624] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/437, Draft of Constitution of the IRB 23rd May 1923
[625] IE-MA-AMTY-03-035, p. B6
[626] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195, Draft of Constitution of the IRB 23rd May 1923

Maryann Valiulis supports this view that the IRB revival occurred first, and points out that those behind it didn't believe officers from intelligence 'had previously held sufficiently important positions within the IRB to warrant their inclusion'. This was not the perception of the IRAO, as she argues that they took it as a signal that GHQ was hostile to them.[627] By contrast, Ernie O'Malley contradicted this view, stating that the mutiny had threatened for some time, and that it was an off-set from the men of the IRB and the supreme court of the brotherhood. He claimed that ranks had been formed in the 'secret oath - bound society', and that the men who would take part in the mutiny had objected 'to the anglicization of their army'.[628]

The inquiry committee, on the other hand, claimed that they had received evidence that the IRAO began organising first. Russell would then explain that these men may have been moving in the same circles in the Army since the autumn of 1922, but that they were not officially organised as the IRA Organisation at this time. He described the first steps of their organising taking place in the ViceRegal Lodge and Griffith Barracks, and indicated that Tobin chose the Lodge because it was located in Phoenix Park and it made it harder for others to see the officers coming and going.[629] Other witnesses placed a similar emphasis on the actual formation of the IRAO only taking place in January 1923.[630] Both Mulcahy and Ó Mhurthuile referred to initial talks about the revival of the IRB taking place around September of 1922, before the beginning of the IRAO meetings at the end of 1922, and Georóid O'Sullivan also denied that the IRB was revived in response to the IRAO.[631]

Eoin MacNeil and Kevin O'Higgins, however, confirmed that a meeting of the Executive Council was called to discuss the IRB being reorganised, but that this would not take place until June 1923. MacNeil stated that several discussions on the reorganisation took place in meetings of the Executive Council, as both he and O'Higgins had been opposed to the idea. By Mulcahy's own admission, however, discussions around the revival had taken place in September 1922, thereby confirming that he and the other organisers only told the rest of the Executive Council about their plans months later. In one of his statements to the inquiry Mulcahy included a letter from Ó Mhurthuile dated 31st August 1922, in which Ó Mhurthuile referred to holding a meeting

[627] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion,* p. 33
[628] Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame, 1936*, p. 268-269
[629] IE-MA-AMTY-03-035, p. C3-C4
[630] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 14
[631] IE-MA-AMTY-03-030, p. 7

of ‘the organisation’, meaning the IRB. The issues to be discussed in the meeting involved what was to be done with the IRB in the aftermath of the death of Collins.[632]

Mulcahy then stated that he spoke with Ó Mhurthuile and MacMahon on this issue of the IRB again on 4th June 1923, when they received the Cork letter from Barry about a possible surrender of arms.[633] No information was provided on what actions took place between September 1922 and June of the following year. But his emphasis on September 1922 as a starting point for the revival is significant nonetheless as this was before military intelligence first reported that the IRAO began to meet to discuss their grievances.[634] Mulcahy stated that he does not think it is necessary to focus so much on the date of the revival, and even rejected the use of the term ‘revival’ itself as he argued the IRB was never broken up, and defended his actions stating that there was no reason to not retain members of the IRB in the Army under such circumstances as they faced during the Civil War.[635] In addition, another Director of Intelligence, Michael Joseph Costello, even claimed that he heard rumours in late 1922 that it had been reorganised, although he found no concrete evidence of this.[636] This goes against what David Neligan would tell the inquiry, as he stated that the IRB revival took place in early 1923, and that it was common knowledge in the intelligence department that the IRB existed in the Army.[637]

Another common theme that appears in the statements given to the inquiry is a differentiation between when the IRAO began to meet to discuss their dissatisfaction with Army policy at the end of 1922, and when they established themselves as the IRA Organisation in January 1923. Whether the IRB reorganisation or the IRAO meetings took place first is significant because if moves were made to revive the IRB first it would add credibility to Tobin’s argument that their actions were partially retaliatory, as they saw the completion of Collins’ stepping stone policy fading away.

By contrast, Kevin O’Higgins argued that the IRAO were formed first and then the IRB, and admitted he had been receiving information of the meetings taking place in the Viceregal Lodge (and their subsequent meetings taking place in Portobello Barracks) within the first 6 months of 1923. Evidently he chose not to differentiate between when the informal meetings

[632] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 3-4
[633] Ibid, p. 4
[634] IE-MA-AMTY-03-029, p. 3-5
[635] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051, p. A6
[636] IE-MA-AMTY-03-010, p. 12
[637] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p. S5

began in late 1922 and when they officially became the IRAO.[638] O'Higgins went on to argue that he believed Mulcahy and the Army GHQ felt that they were being challenged from below.[639] Professor James Hogan was Director of Intelligence from April to September 1923, and in August of that year he wrote to Seán MacMahon as Chief of Staff and reported these meetings in the Lodge. According to Hogan, junior and senior officers from all over the country had been attending, although he estimated that they had only been having them since May or June. The fact that the role of Director of Intelligence changed six times between 1922 and 1924 no doubt also hindered the accuracy of the information gathered on the IRAO and its meetings.[640]

Additionally, Mulcahy stated that the IRAO's manifesto was read to both him and Cosgrave at their first meeting on 25th June 1923. The manifesto specifically mentioned wanting to discuss the reorganisation of the IRB, as they felt that the motive for the revival was to act to undermine them.[641] As previously stated, Mulcahy told the inquiry that he spoke with Ó Mhurthuile and MacMahon on 4th June 1923 on matters relating to the revival of the IRB in the Army. However, the IRAO only wrote to Cosgrave asking for a meeting on 6th June, merely 2 days after Mulcahy claimed to have spoken with both men. Eoin MacNeil had also stated that several Executive Council meetings took place in June in relation to the IRB, not just one.[642] By this timeline, Mulcahy was in the middle of trying to convince the Executive Council that the revival was necessary. How then were Tobin and the IRAO able to write to Cosgrave requesting a meeting to discuss the IRB presence in the Army on 6th June? They also stated in *A Brief History of Events* that they had decided back in April to send these demands to GHQ.[643] The IRB was clearly listed in their manifesto read out to Cosgrave and Mulcahy at their first meeting on 25th June.

These discrepancies between what information Mulcahy had shared with the Executive Council, and what he had been working on with MacMahon and Ó Mhurthuile behind the scenes provides a major problem with trying to examine why the mutiny occurred. In order to get to the motives behind one mutinous act by Tobin and his followers in the IRAO, the previous unethical actions by the Army Council must also be acknowledged. Mulcahy would admit that the

[638] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058, p. E5
[639] Ibid, p. G6
[640] IE-MA-AMTY-02-001, Army Inquiry Committee, Letter from James Hogan to Sean MacMahon 7th August 1923
[641] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 11
[642] IE-MA-AMTY-03-053, p. A10 - A11
[643] IE-MA-W24SP1606, Patrick O'Connell, p. 44

Executive Council meetings were confidential, and at several times in the proceedings of the inquiry, members of the Council highlighted this by refusing to speak on issues that would break this confidence. Therefore, if Tobin and the others did not hear about it from a council member, the only other explanation for their knowledge of the IRB is that it was common talk in the Army. Other witnesses would also claim that this was the case, notably Jepson O'Connell who confirmed that it was widely known amongst officers.[644] Therefore, definite moves to revive the IRB must have taken place before June 1923. The continuous inconsistencies provided in the statements inevitably raise credibility issues when trying to establish a timeline of events leading up to the mutiny. These kinds of unanswered questions may not be atypical when it comes to the IRB, but the contradictions are not generally acknowledged in the literature on the mutiny, with a tendency to accept Mulcahy's perspective on events.

Inquiry conclusions on discipline

In his 1988 work *Green Against Green*, Michael Hopkinson refers to a statement that MacMahon had made as Quartermaster General in 1922; 'we had got officers and other people who never got out of the back room or the cellar and the old way of working that we had in 1921...we found it very hard to get some of them out of it'.[645]At the same time, it is also worth mentioning that in 1923 Dáil Éireann refused to pass an act that forbade membership of secret societies in the Army, with General Mulcahy commenting to the inquiry committee that it was thought to be 'too soon to consider' this kind of act.[646] In relation to the IRB presence in the Army, Professor James Hogan stated that as long as the Army had such a political mind, 'you can have no state', and thus by extension you cannot have a disciplined force that is completely subservient to the state.[647]

Extending on from suspicions surrounding the IRB, two of the most infamous incidents to affect discipline and obedience involved Paddy O'Daly and his activities in Kerry. He participated in the Ballyseedy massacre and Kenmare incidents in 1923. Mulcahy however, was reluctant to pass judgement on O'Daly. In the case of Kenmare, where two daughters of a local doctor were beaten and abused by 3 Free State officers (one being O'Daly), it was concluded that

[644] IE-MA-AMTY-03-022, p. 9
[645] Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 61
[646] lE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 9
[647] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040, p. D6

there was not sufficient evidence to court martial him, despite opposition from O'Higgins and Cahir Davitt. O'Higgins told the inquiry that this had a significant demoralising impact on Army morale, and it left the forces exposed to criticism from those who would argue that O'Daly's IRB membership protected him from facing any punishment. He went on to state that he believed that the Kenmare assault 'went to the root of things' with regards to the origin of the mutiny and suspicious feelings towards Army GHQ, as it appeared that O'Daly had gotten away with it.[648] Jepson O'Connell further explained the disastrous impact that Kenmare and O'Daly's actions had on discipline. Reflecting on a period after the Kenmare inquiry when he witnessed O'Daly being greeted by commanding officers at a sporting event in Croke Park, O'Connell claimed that it had the effect of conveying the message that there was one rule for the common soldier and one rule for senior officers, and the response towards O'Daly in the aftermath of Kenmare 'made decent officers blush in shame'.[649]

As previously stated, a claim was made in relation to this by Katherine O'Doherty in a letter to Joseph McGarrity in 1924. In it she alleged how an insider in the Dáil informed her that O'Daly had originally been a member of the IRAO, or at least attended its early meetings in late 1922, and the *Brief History of Events* compiled by the IRAO confirms this. She detailed how rumours were spreading that O'Daly informed Mulcahy and other members of Army GHQ on the IRAO meetings and the discussions that had taken place, and this is the real reason that he was not court-martialed for the Kenmare case.[650] O'Daly made a statement to the *Irish Independent* on 11th March, denying any association or sympathy with the IRAO, and argued that his resignation from the Army had nothing to do with the mutiny.[651] Some historians also make reference to O'Daly's presence with the IRAO, such as John Dorney, although he indicates that he remained with the organisation.[652]

Ultimately, however, with regards to discipline the inquiry stated that they found the behaviour of the IRAO to be unacceptable, and made it clear that officers trying to dictate to Army GHQ and the Free State government was incompatible with the codes of discipline expected from officers. Thus the inquiry made a direct link between discipline and the actions of

[648] IE-MA-AMTY-03-058, p. G4
[649] IE-MA-AMTY-03-022, p. 5
[650] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,470/16, Letter from Katherine O'Doherty to Joseph McGarrity
[651] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/195; "Letter From Gen O'Daly", *Irish Independent* 11th March 1924, p. 7
[652] John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin*, p. 27

the mutineers, and acknowledged that the previous acts that had taken place in Griffith Barracks contributed to the outbreak of the mutiny. They also concluded, however, that the actions of the IRAO intensified when the IRB was revived, as they believed it was directed against them.[653] In his separate report Chairman James Meredith made it clear that he did not condone the mutiny. Despite this, while he did recognise that there was no evidence that the IRB attempted to direct policies of demobilisation, he argued that its very presence in the Army 'loosened the hold on discipline' through the suspicion that it did dictate policy.

Inquiry conclusions on demobilisation

James Meredith was also interested in the demobilisation committee that was promised during Mulcahy's meetings with the IRAO, as some witnesses placed importance on the rapid pace in which demobilisation has been carried out, and the problems this posed for those being disbanded. Seán Ó Mhurthuile claimed that he always recognised the danger of speedy demobilisation and the potential consequences of sending men back to civilian life with no work or employment. Despite recognising that the process was inevitable due to the surplus, Ó Mhurthuile also admitted that the speed with which demobilisation was carried out contributed to the outbreak of the mutiny, as it bred discontent and brought more support to the IRAO.[654] Historian Adrian. J. English would reach a similar conclusion in his study *Irish Army Orders of Battle 1923-2004*, as he states that the main cause of the mutiny had been this fast rate of demobilisation.[655] Many officers only received a couple of weeks notice that they would be demobilised, and were forced to either find new living accommodations, or else return home to possible hostilities from anti-Treaty fragments left in the area.[656] Mulcahy would later tell his son that 'I fell down in not forcing them to realise that better', and remarked on the stultifying effect on the cabinet of being confined to government buildings during the early months of the Civil War.[657]

David Neligan also informed the inquiry that he believed that the GOCs were given too much control and influence over demobilisation matters, and that it was widely known that they attended IRB meetings. He stated that there was a general feeling that they had more regard for

[653] IE-MA-AMTY-04-002, p. 8-9
[654] IE-MA-AMTY-03-029, p. 16
[655] Adrian. J. English, *Irish Army Orders of Battle 1923-2004. (*United Kingdom: Tiger Lily Publishing, 2005), p. 9
[656] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040, p. D12
[657] Risteárd Mulcahy, p. 192-193

personal relationships than records of officers.[658] He admitted that he could not point to a case where he saw definite evidence where an officer was retained due to IRB membership, although he did give an example of a case where a former IRA man was demobilised because he had lost sight in one eye during the Civil War. The committee questioned whether this would not be sufficient reason to demobilise the officer in question, but Neligan argued no, as he was an inspection officer.[659] Likewise, Professor James Hogan would tell the inquiry that while he also could not find any evidence that the IRB influenced decisions on demobilisation, it was nonetheless common knowledge in the Army that all GOCs were IRB men. This coupled with inaction on the O'Daly case in Kenmare led to non IRB officers concluding that the organisation did have an influence on retention.[660] Captain Martin Nolan also described how it was common talk and accepted as truth that the GOCs would push particular men, and that there were thousands of instances of this in Dublin, Claremorris and the Curragh.[661]

There was also the issue that not only was O'Daly retained in the Army, but he was made a member of the Demobilisation Board. Effectively, O'Daly now held a position that allowed him to judge the suitability of officers, only months after his involvement in the outrages in Kenmare and Ballyseedy.[662] Mulcahy defended this move by stating that an 'unanswered charge was not sufficient' to condemn O'Daly, and argued that those who would have benefited from his presence on the board would have been the mutineers themselves as they were former comrades.[663] Mulcahy also addressed rumours regarding O'Daly attending early meetings of the IRAO, confirming that he had indeed done so before the Kenmare inquiry, and admitted that he had 'special knowledge' of the group. Although this does not prove any wrongdoing on O'Daly's part, it gives plausibility to what Katherine O'Doherty alleged in her letter to Joseph McGarrity.[664] Additionally, according to an anti-Treaty intelligence report from May 1924, McGrath had intended to ask a question in the Dáil as to why O'Daly had allegedly received £2,000 from the government.[665]

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[658] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p. O1
[659] Ibid, p. P2
[660] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040, p. D3
[661] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040, p. A1
[662] IE-MA-AMTY-03-022, p. 9
[663] IE-MA-AMTY-03-052, p. B4
[664] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,470/16, Letter from Katherine O'Doherty to Joseph McGarrity
[665] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2, Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff May 1924

With regards to the IRAO's claim about ex-British officers in the Army, Col. Russell told the inquiry that this was an exaggeration, and utilised by them for propaganda. Furthermore, he argued that it was a common practice to assume that such officers were inevitably more suitable to their posts compared to former Volunteers.[666] Neligan would support this argument that their presence was exaggerated, as he stated that many of these officers were also demobilised along with pre-Truce men. While acknowledging that this line of argument had been used as a stick to beat Army GHQ with to a certain extent, Neligan recognised that the pre-Truce officers also fared badly as far as demobilisation was concerned, stating that in many cases this was due to poor education on their part.[667]

The report from the inquiry concluded that education and qualifications were considered along with pre-Truce service when it came to demobilisation. Despite this, the committee also argued that the time between the end of the fighting and the start of demobilisation was too short, and that not enough time had passed for non-political and purely soldier types to form in the Army. Overall, however, they concluded that the Army tried to deal with demobilisation fairly. In relation to the charge of mishandling, mudding and incompetence from Joseph McGrath, they had no concrete evidence of IRB influence over promotions, retentions or demobilisation, although they agreed that the natural suspicions that resulted from the IRB revival 'undermined the confidence in impartiality of Army Commands'.[668]

[666] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p.D4
[667] IE-MA-AMTY-03-036, p. P2
[668] IE-MA-AMTY-04-002, p. 6, 14, 15

Conclusion

The inquiry report concluded that there was enough evidence to suggest that the mutineers as a group were in some form of existence informally at least before the outbreak of the Civil War, as they had become a problem for Collins in terms of placing them in suitable positions. They concluded that after Collins died the men who would form the IRAO began to move closer together to protect their mutual political and personal goals.[669] In his own report James Meredith stated that he believed that the IRAO became an official group on 29th January 1923 and that their first meeting was held on 2nd February.[670] This would be confirmed by the mutineers themselves in *A Brief History of Events*, with Tobin and Cullen being made chairman and organiser respectively at this meeting.[671] Pádraig Ó Caoimh also points to the structures of the IRAO being quite similar to Collins' IRB constitution of February 1922.[672] John Regan reaches a similar conclusion in his book *Irish Counter Revolution*, arguing that in order to prevent the IRB from falling under the control of the anti-Treaty it had been resurrected by senior members of the GHQ staff in late 1922, and that it is likely that this move was in response to Tobin's attempt to create a new IRB organisation within the Army.[673]

The question of which organisation was formed first holds significance for the literature, as it has the potential to affect the credibility of arguments made as to why the mutiny occurred. With regards to the motives of the mutineers, or the IRAO, the literature has been fairly critical of their actions, with arguments being made that they were former Collins' men who were unhappy about having to take orders from other senior officers.[674] Maryann Valiulis refers to Collins having been the 'unifying figure' and the link to the intelligence unit in GHQ. Without him, she concludes that some members of his unit felt abandoned, with no one to look after their interests at GHQ or in the IRB after it was revived.[675]

However, the IRAO first began to meet before officer demobilisation policies had been implemented. Once again, this means that they were meeting to discuss their supposed dissatisfaction with their positions at a time when Tobin himself was Director of Intelligence.

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[669] IE-MA-AMTY-04-002, p. 7
[670] IE-MA-AMTY-04-003, p. 6
[671] IE-MA-W24SP1606 Sean Patrick O'Connell, p. 44
[672] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 175
[673] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 166
[674] Maryann Valiulis, "The 'Army Mutiny' of 1924 and the Assertion of Civilian Authority in Independent Ireland," p. 358
[675] Maryan Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion*, p. 32

Regardless of the reasons why he was removed to the post of aide-de-camp to the Governor General, he held this rank from October to at least early December 1922.[676] As previously stated, Regan claims that military intelligence reported November - December as when these meetings began.[677] It is also worth noting that Mulcahy admitted that Paddy O'Daly, who then held a position as a GOC, was also present at some of these early meetings.[678] Therefore, the argument that they were disgruntled at being demobilised is too simplistic.

There is no doubt that demobilisation and the revival of the IRB exacerbated their grievances during 1923, but the point is that the initial concerns appear to have been focused on the position of the Treaty and Collins' view of it as a stepping stone. Regardless of how close they were to him personally, and despite their obviously mutinous actions, they were not a group within the Army who believed that the fight was truly settled. Consequently, it is of critical importance to try and establish when exactly the IRAO was formed, and if it was indeed formed before the IRB was reorganised. In addition, one line of argument that is also downplayed in the literature is the fact that both the IRB and the IRAO were secret societies in the Army that should not have been there, and so the blame of the mutiny solely on the IRAO is not reflective of what actually took place in the months leading up to it. Much was also made during the inquiry of the IRB appearing to be practically non-existent in the Army at the end of 1922, with Professor James Hogan arguing that it should have been allowed to die a natural death.[679]

James Meredith would write in his own report that he felt that the presence of the IRB contributed to the mutiny in some way, arguing that Mulcahy's position as Commander-in-Chief was compromised by his being involved with the IRB. In light of demobilisation and the belief that the GOCs were IRB men making decisions on who should be retained, he claimed it is easy to see why suspicion spread in the Army.[680] To acknowledge the problems that the IRB presented in relation to discipline and morale is not to downplay the impact that IRAO also had on the same issue, as it is clear that democratic procedures were not followed in the airing of their grievances to say the least. It also cannot be ignored that weapons and ammunition were taken by some of the mutineering officers in March 1924. Meredith was equally critical of the IRAO and

[676] IE-MA-W24SP2764 Liam Tobin, p. 48-60
[677] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 165
[678] IE-MA-AMTY-03-021, p. 13
[679] IE-MA-AMTY-03-040, p. B11
[680] IE-MA-AMTY-04-003, p. 13

their actions in addressing their grievances to Cosgrave, and stated that such dictation could not be accepted.[681]

The inquiry would also conclude in their final report that the IRAO believed that Mulcahy had tricked them during their meetings with him, and reiterated that Mulcahy should have informed the Executive Council about these meetings, as well as keeping them informed on the reorganisation of the IRB earlier than he did.[682] Meredith would also state that he believed Mulcahy's letter to Tom Cullen on 27th July was consistent with his previous attitude towards working with the IRAO. He went as far to suggest that the letter gave the impression to the IRAO that Mulcahy would go behind the back of the Cabinet and join with them. Ultimately, he would conclude that it was no surprise that the IRAO felt tricked by Mulcahy when he did not respond to their letters by October 1923, and while he does not condone the mutiny, he argued that after sending the letter to Cullen Mulcahy needed to deal with them in a more direct manner.[683]

Some historians have highlighted the mistakes made by Mulcahy in his attempt to handle the IRAO in his own way. Maryann Valiulis argues that the IRAO received nothing but encouragement from these events.[684] Meanwhile, Ferghal McGarry argues that while the significance of the mutiny remains disputed, and contemporary public opinion may have been sympathetic to O'Higgins, his reaction to the mutineers' demands was 'conciliary' as well.[685] Jason. K. Knirck also concludes that the mutiny allowed O'Higgins to purge the last remaining members of Collins' entourage out of the Army and government.[686] Gretchen. M. MacMillan would reach a similar conclusion, arguing that the mutiny meant the defeat of the two groups most associated with Collins.[687]

By contrast John Regan argues that the purpose of the initial meeting on 25th June 1923 was to outline the essential grievances of the group - ostracism by the GHQ staff, suspicions surrounding the IRB, and the promotion of ex-British officers over pre-Truce men.[688] But he also claims that the mutineers 'challenged the meritocratic and apolitical principles which the

[681] IE-MA-AMTY-04-003, p. 29
[682] IE-MA-AMTY-04-002, p. 15-16
[683] IE-MA-AMTY-04-003, p. 1,16
[684] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion,* p. 47
[685] Ferghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: A Self-made Hero.* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 133
[686] Jason. K. Knirck, *Women of the* Dáil*,* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p. 14
[687] Gretchen. M. MacMillan, *State, Society and Authority in Ireland,* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1993), p. 207
[688] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, p. 166

government applied to its bureaucracy' in attempting to base recruitment on political outlook.[689] However, not all of Army GHQ's actions were democratic and 'apolitical' in this period. Paddy O'Daly's position on the demobilisation board is just one example of this. In addition Maryann Valiulis describes how in this first meeting the IRAO 'wrapped themselves in Collins' mantle, and then proceeded to launch what seemed to be the real purpose of the meeting - a scathing attack on the Army in general and on Mulcahy and his staff in particular'.[690] This, however, is a narrow summary of the grievances that were listed by Tobin in the document, and diminishes the question as to why such a meeting was necessary in the first place, and the detrimental effect of having not one but two secret societies in the Army.

One of the most crucial moments in the immediate aftermath of the mutiny was during a Dáil session on 11th March when Cosgrave dismissed any claims that he had been involved in any talks with officers regarding Army policy. It is also worth noting that this statement was a shortened version of the original draft which he prepared, as the Executive Council (which included Mulcahy) removed parts of it.[691] Based on the accounts of these meetings with the IRAO, Cosgrave may not have been present in all of them, but the implication from Mulcahy is that they had his blessing. Therefore, the statements that Cosgrave made were not true. He had been in the initial meeting with them on 25th June 1923 and was very aware of the rest of the meetings that took place.

Maryann Valiulis also refers to a meeting that the Free State government had on 11th March. Its purpose was to discuss and evaluate the government's policy towards the mutineers, and it lasted 6 hours. During this time McGrath argued it was not a mutiny at all 'but rather a dispute between two rival secret organisations, the IRAO and the IRB', which sparked a lengthy debate on the role of secret societies in the Army. The IRAO also claimed that on the same day MacMahon had requested to meet Tobin, but they would only agree to do so if he had the power to discuss Army affairs. In the end the meeting never happened, but Valiulis reasons that he may have been offering to meet Tobin in an IRB capacity, and if they believed Mulcahy was head of the IRB, not MacMahon, then they may not have understood this.[692] This incident is symbolic of

[689] John Regan, "The Politics of Reaction: The Dynamics of Treatyite Government and Policy, 1922-33", p. 559
[690] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion*, p.38
[691] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/248/195
[692] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion*, p. 55-57

the difficulties of trying to navigate between two secret societies, both of which had the potential to do damage to the newly founded state.

The August 1923 election is also a factor to consider in the origins of the mutiny. Cosgrave was aware of the potential danger that the IRAO would pose for the Free State government so soon after the end of the Civil War. One person who allegedly had read the pamphlet published by the IRAO was W. B Yeats, and although it does not prove sympathy with their actions, it nonetheless explains why there may have been fears over the group going public with their grievances or gaining support from prominent figures.[693] Pádraig Ó Caoimh argues that Cosgrave may have agreed to meet the IRAO to discuss their grievances in the first place due to fears that they may eventually put up a candidate for future elections, however, he also acknowledges that Cosgrave came across as 'heroic' in his address to the Dáil on 11th March.[694] In a diary entry made on 20th June, before their first meeting with the IRAO, Mulcahy stated that Cosgrave voiced these concerns to him, fearing that they could organise themselves and gain sympathy from the public.[695] Additionally, Jesse Tumblin argues that Cosgrave had an inability to fully escape the powers of militarism in the new state, while Bernadette Whelan asserts that the mutiny revealed the extent of the fighting amongst Cabinet members that had lingered into 1925.[696]

Valiulis is also critical of the secrecy that surrounded the meetings between Mulcahy and the IRAO, describing the actions of the government in this regard as being reminiscent of the worst features of political backroom dealings.[697] Likewise, Peter Karstein in his 1999 study *Civil Military Relations*, calls the government 'unwise' in sanctioning such meetings as it raised the mutineers' hope for possible change, and when this did not materialise they became increasingly dissatisfied. [698] Furthermore, Ó Caoimh's argument that Cosgrave hid behind 'the technicality' that he was dealing with McGrath as Minister for Industry and Commerce and not the IRAO, is an accurate synopsis of the President's attitude towards the crisis. [699]

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[693] W. J McCormack, *Blood Kindred: WB Yeats: The Life, the Death, the Politics*, (United Kingdom: Pimlico, 2005), p. 227
[694] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 176, 200
[695] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/322, Diary entry Richard Mulcahy 20th June 1923
[696] Jesse Tumblin, *The Quest for Security: Sovereignty, Race and the Defense of the British Empire, 1898-1931, (*United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 247; Bernadette Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland: From Empire to Independence 1913-1929, (*Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), p. 528
[697] Maryann Valiulis, *Almost a Rebellion*, p.61-62
[698] Peter Karsten, *Civil Military Relations: Military and Society,* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 1999), p. 42
[699] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 203

Like Ó Caoimh, Pádraig Yeates is another historian who has not been so quick to sidestep Cosgrave's role in the mutiny. In his book *A City in Civil War*, he argues that Cosgrave's statements to the Dáil were a strange way of reassuring the deputies, while also putting Mulcahy in a very difficult position.[700] Professor James Hogan was also critical of Cosgrave at the time of the mutiny, recalling that 'always when the storm came he dropped it', and felt that Mulcahy should be pitied not blamed.[701]

Additionally, due to the small number of mutineers, the lack of extensive support for the IRAO, and the wariness of a war torn population, the mutiny appears to have been one last attempt at getting the government to recognise their grievances. With regards to its impact, historians such as Donal Corcoran argue that the effect was minimal, and claims that the mutiny 'showed the strength of the regime rather than its flaws', as the soldiers obeyed the politicians, and very little violence actually occurred'.[702] On the other hand, in this biography of Dan Bryan, historian Marc McMenamin argues that it was the biggest challenge that the new state had faced at that point. Indeed, it is clear that fears of potential support were enough to convince Cosgrave that the meetings with the IRAO were necessary.[703]

Mulcahy also stated that he did not consider the IRAO to be a very serious threat in the summer of 1923.[704] In his recent work *Between Two Hells,* Diarmuid Ferriter refers to the mutiny as a 'remarkably audacious' move, although he acknowledges that there were more complex issues going on behind the scenes, including Kevin O'Higgins' desire to sideline Mulcahy, while also criticising the meetings with the IRAO as he argued it allowed them to believe that they had a sympathetic ear.[705] Meanwhile, an anti-Treaty intelligence report from 13th March 1924 informed the Chief-of-Staff Frank Aiken that they had received information that Tobin had been touring the country organising his supporters for the last 2 months, but that any plans that they had for a potential government take over will only be a framework and will undoubtedly be lacking in real enthusiasm. It concluded that most of the officers involved acted on 'purely selfish motives' and 'will hardly do more than talk big'.[706]

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[700] Padraig Yeates, *A City in Civil War: Dublin 1921 to 1924,* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillian, 2015), p.285
[701] "Memoirs, 1913-1937", *James Hogan*, p. 198-199
[702] Donal Corcoran, *Freedom to Achieve Freedom*, p. 98
[703] Marc McMenamin, *Ireland's Secret War: Dan Bryan, G2 and The Lost Tapes, (*Dublin: Gill Books, 2022), p. 15
[704] IE-MA-AMTY-03-051, p. D7-D9
[705] Diarmuid Ferriter, *Between Two Hells: The Civil War*, (United Kingdom: Profile Books, 2021), p. 169-171
[706] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2, Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff, 13th March 1924

The mere fact that Mulcahy agreed to engage in any kind of discussions with the group after leaving the room during the first meeting conveys that this was not a situation that either he or Cosgrave took lightly. Undoubtedly both men were concerned with the possibility of the IRAO gaining support from the remaining die-hard Republicans, especially as Tobin and Cullen would have mixed with them several times over the course of the War of Independence. One example of this was Dan Breen, who later claimed in his own memoir that he had been involved in the mutiny as a 'go-between' between the anti-Treaty side and the IRAO, and although he does not go into the specifics of his role, the implication was that he was in contact with Tobin in some form.[707] Dan Breen would also refer to Mulcahy's order to have Charles Dalton and Tobin arrested in Devlin's pub in the days after the ultimatum was sent. This brought up another significant problem for the government, as the order was apparently given without O'Duffy's authority, pointing to a feeling of urgency on Mulcahy's part in trying to place the two in custody. Tobin also claimed that a private truce had been agreed between the mutineers and Cosgrave, stating that this took place a day or two after the ultimatum was sent, but that Cosgrave later broke it, and that it was during this period that the raid on Devlin's was carried out. He argued this point in his letter to Mick McDonnell the year after the mutiny, concluding that 'Mulcahy's treachery in raiding Devlin's only goes to prove the type of man he is'.[708]

Equally, despite informing the inquiry that he did not take the threat seriously in mid 1923, the day after the ultimatum was sent Mulcahy told the Dáil that there were officers in Cork who had also considered refusing their orders, but claimed that this did not happen as it was clear that it was not going to get the support they had expected. He portrayed this as an example of how minimal the threat from the IRAO was, but the very fact that such an attitude was felt in the Cork barracks highlights how the Army policies were being perceived by officers at the time. Despite arguing that the mutiny was knocked on the head by the army commanders, Eunan O'Halpin acknowledges that it was nonetheless a 'watershed' moment for the new state.[709]

Reports given to Mulcahy in early 1924 also convey that the IRAO did have some influence around different barracks in the country. One meeting is alleged to have occurred in Gurteen, Sligo in January, during which it was discussed how all of the old Western Command

[707] IE-MA-BMH.WS1763 Dan Breen, p. 33
[708] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925, Courtesy of Brian Hand
[709] Eunan O'Halpin, "Politics and the State 1922-32", in *A New History of Ireland Vol.VII*, edited by J. R. Hill, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 103

are in some society that is seeking to 'turn down the present government' and that it originated in the Curragh.[710] Pádraig Yeates also concludes that there were in fact more mutineers than Mulcahy cared to admit, adding that a number of them were senior officers.[711] It may not have been a threat physically, but nonetheless it exposed the cracks in the Free State's armour as Mulcahy and Cosgrave both worked to reassure the Dáil that order had been completely restored, while simultaneously reading out a list of arms, ammunition and armoured cars that had been taken from barracks across the country.[712] In the aftermath of the inquiry Professor James Hogan would state that the battle was not yet won, and 'if there is one problem that should be dealt with without a moment's delay it is the Tobin problem'.[713]

It is also worth noting that in his own statement to the inquiry, Michael Joseph Costello stated he had documents showing the connection between Dáil members and the mutineers, but that they should be reserved in the interest of the intelligence department, stating that he needed to safeguard his sources.[714] Pádraig Ó Caoimh also points out that Costello was aware of the fact that the Curragh camp was the most receptive place for the IRAO message.[715] Military intelligence files also reveal that a governing body had been elected by the IRAO during one of their meetings in early 1923, the purpose of which was to organise the information on different sections of the Army that was coming into clubs or units in each area.[716]

Anne Dolan's reference to the memorial unveiling at Béal na Bláth in 1924 serves as a suitable summary of the varying and mounting tensions that had been building up for two years, with the spirit of Collins apparently at the centre of most of it. She argues that the IRB, the IRAO, O'Higgins, Mulcahy, and McGrath, had each summoned a version of Collins to their side during the mutiny, but made particular mention of the speech Eoin O'Duffy made at this location. In an attempt to discredit the actions of Tobin and the mutineers, she argues that O'Duffy claimed the memory of Collins for the 'disciplined', 'loyal' officers of the Irish Free State. Essentially, he hinted that by questioning the demobilisation policy and sending the ultimatum, the mutineers had questioned the government's commitment to Collins' stepping

[710] UCD Archives, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/322, Report dated 23rd January 1924
[711] Padraig Yeates, *A City in Civil War*, p. 285
[712] "Challenge to the Government", *Irish Times*, 15th March 1924, p. 9, https://www.proquest.com/hnpirishtimes?accountid=14504
[713] "Statements to the Committee of Inquiry into the Mutiny", *James Hogan: Revolutionary, Historian and Political Scientist*, edited by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), p. 225
[714] IE-MA-AMTY-03-010, p. 11
[715] Pádraig Ó Caoimhe, p. 183
[716] IE-MA-AMTY-02-002

stone approach to the Treaty, and thereby questioned the government's loyalty to Collins. In essence, she states that the IRAO had challenged the Free State's commitment to nationalism. This speech was the government's response to being branded traitors in Collins' name.[717] Tom Garvin also alludes to this in his book *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, arguing that Collins kept so many strings in his own hands that when he was killed there 'was some prospect that the pro-Treaty government would disintegrate'.[718]

Finally, the mutiny occurred for a number of reasons, and there is no evidence that Tobin's actions were motivated by personal gain; if anything the opposite is true as he placed his Major General rank in jeopardy just by voicing his grievances. The historiography has focused too much on the actions of the IRAO only, and Tobin and Dalton in particular, and has not given enough attention to the failings of Mulcahy and others within Army GHQ in the aftermath of the Civil War. Rather than highlighting the unsuitability of pre-Truce officers for a peacetime army, the mutiny exposed the fragility of the newly formed Free State in the aftermath of the war, as evidenced by the fact that Mulcahy and Cosgrave felt that they had to even meet with the IRAO representatives at all. It also conveyed the opposing views on how to deal with the Anglo-Irish Treaty after the death of Collins, with each side believing their reasoning to be the more realistic approach than the other. Overall, the mutiny contributed to the sense of distrust and bitterness in post Civil War Ireland, despite arguments that its impact was minimal at the time. Pádraig Ó Caoimh would conclude that it was a 'bloodless protest rather than a violent coup d'etat', asserting that it was not the intention of the IRAO to seize control of the Army or government. Rather, he argued,

> 'They wanted to persuade the bulk of the army to back them and by that means, not so much to overthrow the government as to redirect it towards achieving two goals, goals allegedly having been cherished by Collins and now forgotten… an all Irish army and an all island republic'.[719]

The mutiny provided a complicated ending to the Revolutionary years of the state. It was not a spontaneous event, but rather the result of many months of meetings and discussions between Cosgrave, Mulcahy, Joseph Mcgrath and the IRAO representatives, during which time the latter

[717] Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War*, p. 59-60
[718] Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics,* 2nd Ed (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1983), p. 147
[719] Pádraig Ó Caoimh, p. 198

were dealt with in a very evasive manner by Mulcahy. Indeed, his own accounts of the meetings convey how Mulcahy was pressing for time, all the while Cosgrave had full awareness of the promises that were being made to the IRAO. The IRAO were then able to reproduce all of the correspondence between themselves and Mulcahy in *The Truth About The Army Crisis*, including the most important piece of evidence of all, the letter sent by Mulcahy to Cullen on 27th July. This letter essentially confirmed to the IRAO that their demands would be met, the same demands that only a few weeks previously had caused Mulcahy to abruptly leave the room during their first meeting with Cosgrave. It is undeniable that the IRAO acted in a wholly undemocratic manner by expecting to have influence over the government and Army policy, and they would admit themselves that they were prepared to use physical force if necessary. Ultimately, however, the mutiny never should have been allowed to ferment for so many months, and a more direct approach by both Cosgrave and Mulcahy was required from 25th June 1923. Their conciliatory actions from the beginning are enough to prove that they did regard the IRAO as a potential threat to the new state.

Part V: Post Army Mutiny and Later Life

Chapter 9 - Tobin after the Revolution

Introduction

Tobin was allowed to quietly resign from the Army in March 1924, the government having decided that it was best not to arrest either him or Dalton for their part in the mutiny, although this did result in conflict between Cosgrave and Mulcahy on how harsh the punishment should be. The fact that Tobin was also allowed to withdraw his supplementary grant and 3 month salary as a result of his resignation added salt to this wound. He resigned on 28th March, although he did encounter some difficulty when it came to receiving all of his financial entitlements from that resignation.[720] Tobin stated in his letters to Mick McDonnell in 1925 and 1926 that not only did the IRAO and the government reach an agreement in the days after the ultimatum was sent, he also stated that after the raid on Devlin's pub several other agreements were made. He did not go into specific conditions of these agreements, only that they all eventually came to nothing. He did, however, state that Republican supporters Judge Colohan and John Devoy intervened during Devoy's visit to Ireland from the United States in July 1924, and claimed that both men fixed up a meeting with Cosgrave, but when Colohan left Ireland Cosgrave went to the South of France and the agreement once again feel apart with no explanation.[721] Michael Hopkinson also refers to this support and financial assistance that the IRAO received from republicans in the United States, including Devoy, Colohan and Joseph McGarrity.[722] This association between Tobin and McGarrity in particular would continue after the eventual split in the IRAO.

The IRAO after the mutiny

The Free State Army intelligence had been split into two sections in 1922; a political and a military section. As a Director of Intelligence and a member of the Army Council Tobin would have been familiar with both, and his resignation did not diminish the military intelligence's interest in him. From 1924 to 1926 intelligence kept close tabs on Tobin and other key mutineers, obtaining information about their meetings and any support that they were getting from the

[720] IE-MA-W24SP2764 Liam Tobin, p. 23
[721] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925
[722] Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 253

United States. While Tobin remained President of the Executive Council of the IRA Organisation, it is doubtful how much input Thornton would have had at this stage, as he was still recovering from the serious wounds he received while in Cork in August 1922, and his contributions were likely to have been limited to recruiting members from different counties. Dan Breen would also become more involved in their attempts to secure more support for the IRAO, be it political or militarily. Crucially, from 1924 to 1926 the IRAO would communicate with members of the anti-Treaty side, while also maintaining contact with influential figures such as John Devoy in the United States.[723]

In addition, intelligence reports also named Sam Maguire in London as one of their supporters, no doubt viewing this connection as a potential threat in terms of securing arms from overseas. For example, in June 1924 it was reported that Maguire had been involved in a meeting of the IRAO in Trim, Co. Meath, of which sixteen others were present, including Dalton. The aim at this time, according to intelligence, was to set up a 'genuine IRA national army' and demobilise all the ex-British Army officers from the forces.[724] Gerard Noonan makes a brief reference to this in his study *The IRA in Britain*, confirming that Maguire had returned home from London at this time, and was dismissed from his job in the post office for his support of the mutineers.[725]

Furthermore, an intelligence report from 21st April 1924 stated that in the weeks after the mutiny, despite being allowed to resign, there was increased activity from the mutineers in the form of meetings and attempting to organise recruitment. Despite the claims from the government a month previously that there was little support for the mutiny, the same report also stated that a Comdt. William Ashton was the leader of the 'Tobin section' in the Curragh, and that he had considerable influence there. Meetings would continue in the usual haunts such as Devlin's pub in Dublin, and other public houses in Tipperary and Munster, and there were also reported sightings of mutineers around government buildings. At this point the mutiny had failed to achieve influence over the government, but there were still fears that their recruitment could lead to further problems for the state, particularly with regards to their connections with the anti-Treaty side.[726]

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[723] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 12th June 1924, p. 5
[724] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 8th September 1924, p. 14
[725] Gerard Noonan, *The IRA in Britain, 1919-1923: In the Heart of Enemy Lines,* (United Kingdom: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p. 322
[726] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 21st April 1924, p. 2-4

Later reports in July 1924 confirmed that the IRAO still had officers in the Army passing information to them, although admittedly it was difficult to prove which ones were cooperating with them. In addition, copies of these same military reports were made available to the IRAO, with the group having secured a typist in a garda station, just as the intelligence staff had done with Ned Broy years previously.[727] Likewise, one anti-Treaty intelligence report claimed that Tobin had an excellent system of intelligence set up around him, and that he was aware of every move that the government made.[728] Undoubtedly, this claim is hyperbolic to some degree, as the IRAO were not aware of Mulcahy's plans to raid Devlin's pub.

Government reports in May 1924 confirmed that Tobin and the other leaders of the mutiny were trying to recruit more members to their organisation, but admittedly with less success. Allegedly they had approached people in Cork, including ex-army men, members of Cumann na nGaedheal, neutral IRA men, and personal friends of Collins, with the intention of holding a meeting on how to remove the Treaty. Crucially, their informants reported that during this meeting the IRAO announced that it was their intention 'to capture the Army within the 6 months by enrolling as many as possible of the old IRA officers, NCOs and men'. It was this point on the use of physical force that appears to have caused the eventual split between the militarist and political members of the IRAO, the latter hoping to use Joseph McGrath to further their political standing.[729]

By June reports indicated that the IRAO were still trying to undermine the discipline of the Army, claiming that there are few posts in the state where the troops have not been approached by ex-officers'. While the overall influence of the group never proved to be a great threat physically, it was necessary to keep some officers under observation, and military intelligence urged that the matter be dealt with severely so that 'mutiny will never again raise its head in the National Army'.[730] One report included a statement from a correspondence between an ex-army man and his superior officer, in which the former complained that the state was not acting with sufficient urgency to address unemployment amongst former IRA men, claiming that 'any little eruption' will be disastrous for the government.[731]

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[727] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 5th July 1924, p, 25, 26
[728] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2, IRA Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff, 13th March 1924
[729] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 7th May 1924, p. 3
[730] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 5th July 1924, p. 26
[731] Ibid, p. 26

There was also a labour aspect to the IRAO that was allowed to develop after the mutiny, possibly with the aid of Joseph McGrath, who took on a more influential role within the organisation. While recruiting around the country the IRAO were also concerned with establishing clubs for discharged officers, and at the time of the intelligence report in May 1924 an unemployment bureau was being set up for the dual purpose of uniting the groups, and of providing work for those who needed it. However, while the intelligence reports stated that the IRAO were still not getting as much support as they would like, they also urged that the state should take steps to secure employment for former IRA men in such cases.

The question of whether members of the IRAO should accept their supplementary grants was also up for discussion at meetings. This presented quite a dilemma for Tobin and the other leaders, as the goal to undermine the Army's authority still seemed to be at the forefront of their agenda, yet the financial state of ex-officers could not be ignored. One anti-Treaty report from April 1924 also referred to Tobin's instruction to his followers that they should refuse their grants. Similar meetings also addressed the possibility of further demobilisations, with the understanding from military intelligence that such an action 'would result in a fresh accession of strength to their forces', and during a meeting in Devlin's pub in May it was decided that any officer receiving an offer of reinstatement back into the Army should report it first to Tobin to receive further instruction.[732] By September 1924 they had conceded that all resigned or demobilised officers who were members of the IRAO should apply for and accept all supplementary grants that they were entitled to.[733]

As time went on the reports began to convey divisions in the IRAO, with three groups being identified. There was the McGrath group who were focused on political action, the militant group who 'rely more on the gun as an effective weapon', and a third group who was comprised of men who had been promised that more progress would have been made by their actions in the mutiny, and were now only 'hanging on in a listless kind of fashion'. Despite the claim that there was a military element to the organisation's structure, intelligence reports also stated in June 1924 that Tobin had issued further instructions to have all arms and ammunition taken by the mutineers returned to the barracks. However, immediately following this instruction Charles Dalton personally visited the areas concerned and advised the mutineers to retain the arms, and

[732] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 7th May 1924, p. 2, 3, 5, 6; NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/1, Memo Dated 7th April 1924
[733] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 8th September 1924, p. 14

was partly successful in this in areas around Roscommon and Tipperary. It is not clear if there was any particular conflict between Tobin and Dalton specifically, although this does further indicate that divisions were emerging between different sections of the IRAO, as some members felt that the group was making no progress, and this would only continue into 1925 and 1926.[734] In late June there were also accusations that senior members of the group had attempted to distribute copies of *The Truth about the Army Crisis* to Garda stations in districts around Dublin.[735]

The intelligence reports also mentioned attempts at communication between Tobin and the anti-Treaty IRA. Historian Mel Farrell also refers to these reports, arguing that Tobin had agreed to work with them if they took seats in the Dáil, and agreed to fight for a republic through constitutional means, which would also involve them accepting the legitimacy of the Cumann na nGaedheal government.[736] In the initial aftermath of the mutiny, despite support from individuals such as Dan Breen, the reports portray a distrust amongst the leaders of both factions, reporting that the IRAO had only cautiously 'sounded out the possibility of fusion', but with the condition that Tobin and his followers subscribe to the republican doctrine.[737] By September 1924 discussions between the two continued but no agreement had been reached. Conflict is also reported to have arisen because McGrath refused to hand over documents that were supposedly in his possession, the kind that would be embarrassing for the government, including material relating to the boundary negotiations and the assassination of Henry Wilson. Tobin and Joe Dolan reportedly also met some anti-Treaty men in Howth around the same time, and intelligence reports from early 1925 stated that some of the more disruptive elements of the IRAO had been selling guns to them.[738]

A report to the IRA Chief-of-Staff Frank Aiken on 7th April 1924 estimated that McGrath planned to harass the government to get them to resign, with the intention that Tobin would control the men in a new government that would be formed later on. While it is highly unlikely that such an event would have taken place, the report is consistent with those made by the military intelligence in that they also acknowledged that the IRAO lacked funds and support,

[734] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 12th June 1924, p. 4, 5, 6
[735] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 5th July 1924, p. 25
[736] Mel Farrell, *Party Politics in a New Democracy: The Irish Free State, 1922-1937*, (Springer International Publishing, 2017). p. 133
[737] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 5th July 1924, p. 25
[738] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 8th September 1924, p. 12, 13;
IE-MA-CREC-07 Army - Reports of Chief of Staff (January-December 1925), Report March 1925

and were anticipating further financial help from supporters in the United States, such as John Devoy.[739] Further reports sent to Aiken on 29th May also referred to the allegation that Mulcahy was willing to reveal details on Tobin's involvement in the Henry Wilson shooting.[740] When considering the fact that Mulcahy threatened to resign after Tobin told him 'our lads' did the shooting in June 1922, it is possible that Mulcahy had some further information regarding Tobin's involvement. In addition, another report from 5th April claimed that someone had tried to poison 5 Tobinites in Portobello Barracks 4 months before the mutiny. Again, it is not possible to determine if this claim was true, although it is not mentioned in any of the statements or claims made by the IRAO; the most outlandish allegation that the IRAO made was that dictaphones had been placed in their rooms.[741]

Another rumour in circulation at the time amongst the anti-Treaty IRA was that Tobin had become a member of their Executive Council. During a meeting held by the 1st Battalion Dublin No. 1 Brigade Council, one of the members demanded to know if there was any truth in this, apparently refusing to cooperate on other issues until the matter was cleared up. Similarly, Frank Aiken reportedly was very reluctant to have anything to do with Tobin, although some meetings did take place between them. Thus, despite having supporters from the anti-Treaty side, the IRAO and its leaders remained a source of conflict for them.[742] In the immediate aftermath of the publication of the ultimatum, Frank Aiken also wrote to the editor of *Sinn Féin* stating that 'neither of these men have any connection with the Irish Republican Army'.[743] The hardliners also strongly objected to having any member of the former Oriel House 'murder gang' in any position of authority within the executive, particularly Charles Dalton due to his connection to the Red Cow Murders in October 1922.[744] There were also some objections from the IRAO men, including McGrath; although he allegedly wanted to work with the anti-Treaty side, he was said to be irritated by their supporter, Mary MacSwiney, and her speeches against the government, considering them too radical.[745]

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[739] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/1, IRA Memo to Chief of Staff 7th April 1924
[740] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/1, IRA Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff 29th May 1924
[741] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2, Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff 5th April 1924
[742] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 8th September, p. 16, 17
[743] *Sinn Féin*, 22nd March 1924, p. 5
[744] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 22nd September, p. 4
[745] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2 Memo 5th April 1924

With regards to what political objectives the IRAO hoped to achieve, military intelligence hinted at the possibility of Tobin standing for a seat in North Mayo in the next election. Newspaper *Eire The Irish Nation* reported in July 1924 that the 'Republican campaign is progressing steadily' in the area, and that the population had begun to look for alternative choices to the Cumann na nGaedheal party. McGrath by this stage had organised the National Group, to contest elections and was himself a deputy for North Mayo.[746] An article in the *Freeman's Journal* also suggested that Tobin had been nominated as a candidate for McGrath's new party.[747] In addition, there were rumours that they enjoyed popular support in Kilkenny due to the influence of a Father Gibbons, whose brother was a member of the Cumann na nGaedheal government. The same report stated that the organisation received $10,000 from Judge Colohan in the United States, and there is little doubt that John Devoy's *The Gaelic American* was on their side.[748] By September 1924 it was decided to send an emissary to the United States to collect funds for the IRAO, with estimates of $2,000 being collected, and plans to have the members pay small subscriptions to defray the expenses of running county boards, clubs etc.[749] Anti-Treaty intelligence also reported this in April 1924, claiming that McGrath and Tom Cullen had returned from London with money from Colohan and Devoy for financial aid for the men demobilised and fighting elections.[750]

At the end of 1924 the monthly intelligence reports revealed that distrust was increasing between the military and political factions of the IRAO, with more militant followers such as Dalton and James Slattery criticising McGrath's failure to achieve any of the political promises that he had made to them, and more and more there was a growing disillusionment amongst members. This would inevitably affect how much of an impact the IRAO would have.[751] McGrath would resign his position in the government in October 1924, and on this occasion Tobin would opt to speak to the press himself. He told the *Irish Independent* that further discussions on possible agreements between the government and the IRAO had taken place, but alleged that once again Cosgrave 'was not to be relied on'. He again emphasised that their goal was to 'establish, peaceful, progressive and persistent steps to independence', and also added that

[746] "Mayo Free State Indecision", *Eire The Irish Nation*, 19th July 1924, p.3
[747] "Mr. Liam Tobin Named", *Freeman's Journal,* 21st June 1924, p. 7
[748] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 12th June 1924, p. 5
[749] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 8th September 1924, p. 14; Report 30th September 1924, p. 12
[750] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/1, IRA Memo 5th April 1924
[751] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 22nd September 1924, p. 4

it was their wish to see the introduction of history in schools that would outline the reasons for the acceptance of the Treaty. It is also worth noting that he again asserted that there were 'anti-Irish' elements still in positions of influence in the government and the Army, and claimed that these same influences had brought on the crisis in March. This is significant as it further conveys that Tobin did not see the removal of Mulcahy and the Army Council as the final solution to the national problem, proving that the mutiny was about more than Tobin's men versus Mulcahy's IRB.[752]

In May 1925 Tobin wrote to Mick McDonnell that McGrath had resigned his position in the government against his wishes. Instead, he argued that McGrath had wanted to start the new National Party and that the IRAO had promised him their support in this, to which Tobin stated, 'again we backed a loser'. He went on to tell McDonnell that the party had planned a conference for that month to lay out their policy, although he dejectedly concluded, 'To tell you the truth I am fed up with everything, as much as that I can see no hope in any action, political or otherwise'.[753] In his book, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, Diarmuid Ferriter refers to John Regan's argument that radicals on the pro-Treaty side were still thinking in a mode of revolutionary politics which the Civil War had negated, and this appears to be an obstacle for the IRAO's development.[754]

Despite this, the meetings of the IRAO would continue into 1925, with one report on 11th March commenting that Tom Cullen was still residing in the Viceregal Lodge in Phoenix Park.[755] As this was the location of the first meetings of the IRAO, and intelligence reports indicated that men were often spotted coming in and out of the grounds at night, Cullen was eventually asked to leave in July, but not without allegedly making threats that he would have revenge on the people who forced him out.[756] Feelings of disillusionment continued towards McGrath for his failure to fulfil supposed political promises, which included giving the IRAO more of a fixed status, and members complained of attending meetings that were merely 'semi-pride' in nature.[757] Around the same time Katherine O'Doherty again wrote to Joseph McGarrity confirming that there had been bickering between Tobin's men and McGrath.[758] Support

[752] "Ex-General Tobin: Statement of his views", *Irish Independent* 31st October 1924, p. 7
[753] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell, 4th May 1924, Courtesy of Brian Hand
[754] Diarmuid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, p. 302
[755] IE-MA-CREC-07 Army - Reports of Chief of Staff (January-December 1925), Report 11th March 1925
[756] IE-MA-CREC-07 Army - Reports of Chief of Staff (January-December 1925), Report 22nd July 1925
[757] IE-MA-CREC-07 Army - Reports of Chief of Staff (January-December 1925), Report March 1925
[758] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,470/15, Letter from Katherine O'Doherty to Joseph McGarrity

gradually moved towards Sean Milroy as the political representative instead of McGrath, while the more militant section, which included Tobin, Dalton, Thornton and Sam Maguire, began working independently on IRB lines to increase support, and continued to organise secret clubs.[759] Anti-Treaty intelligence reports from April 1924 also claimed that Joseph O'Reilly (then aide-de-camp to Cosgrave) had also been spotted outside an IRAO meeting that was taking place in Vaughans hotel.[760] The reports from March 1924 also claimed that Tobin still had arm dumps in Dublin.[761]

What little backing the IRAO did have, however, eventually weakened to the point that the organisation was of no great significance outside of Dublin, as the low morale continued due to little improvements made either on a political front, or from employment perspectives. Eventually, as the members realised that they needed their pensions more than the organisation, and with no apparent political mandate, attendance at meetings decreased and the IRAO could do little but declare their opposition to the government. Its failure to set any realistic objectives with regards to the elections and or obtaining political legitimacy was characteristic of men who were used to handling situations with use of force.

In the early months of 1925 Tobin wrote to the Board of Assessors concerning his own military pension, complaining that he had still not received his payment for both the grant and 3 months salary. On 13th January he refused to attend a meeting with the Board, instead wanting clarification on whether it was their intention to pay him the amounts due, and in a second letter dated the same day he explained that he will not appear before them until he has received a response to the first query. In the same correspondence he also wondered if he would also be disqualified from his own pension. This was evidently settled as he eventually agreed to meet with them in April, although the later months of that year were also spent clarifying what was the highest rank that he held. Originally given a rank of Major General and a pension of £280 annually, this was later increased to £350 by 1926 after the Board received references to confirm that he had been Director of Intelligence and a member of the Army Council in late 1922.

[759] IE-MA-CREC-07 Army - Reports of Chief of Staff (January-December 1925); Report April 1925; Report July 1925
[760] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/1, IRA Memo 2nd April 1924
[761] NLI Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and the Ryans of Tomcoole Papers, MS 48,476/2, Memo from Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff, 13th March 1924

Ironically, he also included Mulcahy as a reference for this claim, but it is not known if one was forthcoming.[762]

In an unusual move Tobin would join Fianna Fáil upon its formation in 1926, and would form good relations with De Valera from this point on. This is significant for two reasons. The first is that the party was more or less exclusively associated with those who had taken the anti-Treaty side, and so Tobin is an anomaly in this sense given his pro-Treaty stance and support of Collins in 1922. It could be seen as a way of cementing his break from the government, the Army and Cumann na nGaedheal, while continuing to honour the memory of Collins at annual commemorations. Secondly, this association with De Valera is intriguing within the context of a claim that would be made by Connie Neenan in the 1930's regarding Tobin working for Fianna Fáil as an intelligence officer.[763]

At the same time, a newspaper dispute over military pensions would also suggest that Tobin was not above criticising members of the party when he felt the need called for it. The pension rates given to those who had fought in the Revolution would become a contentious issue, and Civil War divisions remained visible in the discourse surrounding them. In March 1928 Tobin published his response to a circular that he had received regarding alleged Fianna Fáil attacks on the pensions. The letter called for a meeting of all pension holders to discuss what should be done, to which Tobin (by now a supporter of Fianna Fáil and De Valera) confessed he initially thought the invitation was a hoax or an 'attempt by some humorist to wax sarcastic at the expense of the ex-National Army men'. By 1928 Tobin had arguably become more accustomed to speaking publicly on such matters, and evidently had become more confident in airing his personal views in such a public way, and asked the newspaper, *Honesty,* to publish his entire response to the circular. He accused the author, Pádraig Ua Dalaigh, of trying to make use of the 'unfortunate unemployment and distress prevailing upon' IRA men, and claimed it was 'yet another effort to salt the wounds caused by the unfortunate split that has destroyed the hopes of every honest Irishman', before concluding that despite his views he was not prompting hostility towards any particular political party.

[762] IE-MA-W24SP2764 Liam Tobin, p. 54
[763] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,539/4, Letter from Connie Neenan to Joseph McGarrity 27th January 1934

He also referred to a comment made by an attendee of the meeting that was published in *The Nation*, alleging that the IRA accepted 'blood money'. Tobin launched a hard hitting attack on both the newspaper and its editor, stating,

> 'Neither I nor my comrades have ever drawn 'blood money', nor is there the least likelihood of we ever 'fighting for our pensions'. I can assure the Editor of the *Nation* that as in the past, so it will be in the future; we will be honoured in again taking our place and our share in the dangers when (if ever) the liberties of the Irish people are in danger. I trust that if this occasion arises, Mr O'Kelly, accompanied by his colleagues, on both political parties, will be found somewhere nearer the fighting zone than is generally the case with statesmen'.[764]

Clearly Tobin was unhappy with the issue of the pensions becoming politicised, as can be seen in later years when he provided references for former intelligence officers who later supported the anti-Treaty side. In general, throughout the 1920's he does appear to have a certain amount of contempt, or at least impatience, for political solutions to problems that he clearly regarded as being more military in nature. This newspaper correspondence also highlights how disillusioned he was in the aftermath of the Civil War, often not even referring to it in these terms, instead opting to call it the 'conflict', as evidenced in his reference for Siobhan Lankford's pension.[765] In the years immediately after the Revolution, the goal of complete independence was never far from his mind, and he used various means to tackle this, including starting his own party Clann na nGaedheal, and maintaining contacts with the IRA and Clann na nGael in the United States.

Employment and Commemorations

After resigning from the Army Tobin and the other mutineers were forced to look elsewhere for employment, with Todd Andrews pointing out that at least Thornton could go to the New Ireland Assurance Company formed in 1918, whereas Tobin had nowhere to go.[766] Tom Cullen would go on to open a betting shop in their old office at 3 Crow Street, while Tobin eventually opened the Gresham Hire Motor Service, a garage located on Thomas Lane, just behind the Gresham Hotel. In a letter written to McDonnell on 8th March 1926 he stated that he had been in business for

[764] "Recent Old IRA Conference and a Letter", *Honesty,* March 24th 1928, p. 9
[765] IE-MA-MSP34REF29397 Siobhan Lankford, p. 67
[766] C. S Andrews, *Man of No Property*, p. 7

about six months, meaning he opened the business around September - October 1925. He stated that he had been doing fairly well in this venture, as he had made some good connections, hoping to receive much business from tourists in the summer months.[767] It functioned as a taxi service, a garage and also allowed customers to hire motor cars overnight for longer journeys, with the option of hiring a chauffeur for the trip. It is noteworthy that military intelligence reports on the IRAO from September 1924 also referred to their need for cars to transport high-ranking members around the country, and alleged that the group intended to repaint and number the cars as required.[768] As such, the need for a trustworthy and reliable car hire service was possibly Tobin's motivation in opening the business

Tobin ran this business until approximately the early 1930's, and during this time he also appeared to have used its central location to organise meetings of old comrades who shared similar distaste for the direction that the Free State government was headed. These would include Piaras Béaslaí, Charles Dalton, and other former intelligence men from the War of Independence. Despite being out of the Army since early 1924 Tobin still continued to be involved in politics, eventually starting Clann na nGaedheal around 1931, and also organised meetings to discuss the current political situation. To this end, the garage provided a convenient location for comrades to leave messages with him, to pass on correspondence concerning their availability, and also allowed him to use the Gresham Hotel to hold some of these meetings.

Part of the reason behind such meetings was to organise monuments and commemorations for comrades who had died. Tobin's attitude towards how the war unfolded was already clear from his actions in the mutiny, and this would only increase as the decades passed on. While he remained quiet on many of the aspects of the Civil War, one element that was of great importance to him was the remembrance of fallen comrades.

One significant loss for Tobin at this time was that of Tom Cullen, who had drowned in a lake in Lough Dan, Co. Wicklow in 1926. A memorial committee was established in 1927 with the purpose of erecting a monument at his graveside, with members including Tobin, Béaslaí, Dalton and the usual former intelligence staff. In January 1927 both Tobin and Béaslaí issued a letter stating that a committee 'representing the former friends and comrades of the late Major General Tom Cullen' had decided to erect a celtic cross in his memory, and as such a

[767] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell, 8th March 1926, Courtesy of Brian Hand
[768] IE-MA-CREC-06 General O'Duffy's Army Reports 1924, Report 8th September 1924, p. 15

subscription list had been opened for its funding. Any subscriptions were then forwarded to Tobin and Béaslaí as the heads of the committee, with the forwarding address listed as the Gresham Motor Hire Service.[769] An attached letter to the circular stated that the aim was that the memorial 'will be worthy of the man and the ideals to which he dedicated his life', and acknowledged the financial difficulties that many former IRA men found themselves in, but asked that all efforts be made to secure the £150 needed for the sculptor. Here again Tobin's garage is of central focus when organising such a collection, and the letter concluded by asking the recipient to call at the premises to confirm that they have received it. It is also clear from the correspondence that the mutineers continued to use their military titles, and this was repeated in public as the decades progressed.[770]

The celtic cross, standing 12 feet high, was unveiled at Cullen's gravesite on Sunday 19th June 1927, displaying both Irish and English inscriptions, and after a recitation of the rosary and the Last Post, it was unveiled by Tobin, who delivered a speech that was a combination of nationalism and grief for a lost friend. In a rare public display of emotion, the normally reserved Tobin declared how,

> 'No more unselfish a man or better friend has it ever been my lot to meet. The manner of his death shocked us. We can hardly even yet realise that Tom has gone. I think I can claim to know what Tom stood for. For years he had been my best friend and constant comrade'.[771]

However, he was also quick to use this opportunity to speak about the divisions that had resulted from the Civil War, and urged reconciliation in order to secure Ireland's future,

> 'I am certain, despite the feeling of depression that has set in amongst those that believe in the separation of this country from England, we will see the completion of Tom Cullen's work. We may differ at times as to the best method of reaching the common goal, but we realise that our ultimate object is the same. We will lose no opportunity of advancing the cause of Irish freedom and for all who strive for the same objective we have nothing but goodwill. If all parties cooperate in this spirit, the future of Ireland is now safe'.[772]

[769] NLI Piaras Beaslai Papers, MS 33,947, Letter From Tom Cullen Memorial Committee 18th January 1927 (1)
[770] NLI Piaras Beaslai Papers, MS 33,947, Letter from Liam Tobin and Piaras Beaslai 18th January 1927 (2)
[771] "Fitting Tribute to a Brave Comrade", *Honesty* 2nd July 1927, p. 4
[772] Ibid

Despite the unveiling taking place three years after the mutiny, it is no surprise that he and others in his circle of former comrades (at this stage those who had supported the mutiny, as well as some anti-Treaty men) were not opposed to using such an event to draw attention to the fact that their work was not completed. Charles Dalton also wrote a letter to Béaslaí dated June 1928 inviting him to a meeting of the Cullen Memorial Committee to be held in 'the garage' to make arrangements for the first anniversary of the erection of the cross. This is another indication that the location of Tobin's business was ideal for maintaining connections between the various former IRA men, and the fact that letters were also being sent with this address in the header implies that it was considered a hub for communication between them.[773]

Another significant commemoration was arranged for Tom Kehoe, a former Squad man, who had been killed in 1922 during the Civil War. Tobin would have worked closely with him during the pre-Truce period, and his close friend, Mick McDonnell, had been Kehoe's stepbrother. A memorial to Kehoe was unveiled by Tobin in November 1924, with Béaslaí making a speech to the crowd gathered in Knockananna, Wicklow. The cost of the memorial was £600 in 1923 money, a fortune for the time.[774] The newsreel from the day shows that once again the usual former intelligence staff were in attendance, including Tom Cullen, Frank Thornton and Vinny Byrne of the Squad. Also visible in the footage is Kehoe's mother, who can be seen turning to Cullen for comfort during the unveiling.[775] Military intelligence were also watching this unveiling closely, noting that Tobin, Cullen, James Slattery, Pat McCrea and others went to Knockananna in September 1924 to make final arrangements for the monument. According to the intelligence report, on their travels they also met with American Judge Mary O'Toole for the purposes of informing her of their side of the mutiny. Appearing to be impressed with their actions, the report also stated that she promised to take their statements to the press in the United States from which she was sure they would receive support. Again, this indicates that Tobin and his associates were not above using such commemorations as a means to spread their ideas about reconciliation and pushing for complete independence.[776]

[773] NLI Piaras Beaslai Papers, MS 33,947, Letter from Charles Dalton to Piaras Beaslai 1st June 1928
[774] Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War,* p. 138
[775] "Comrades Tribute (1924)", British Pathe, https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/51037/
[776] IE-MA-CREC-01 General Military Reports (1923-1924), Report November 1924

The footage from Kehoe's memorial unveiling also highlights a turning point in Tobin's role in the revolutionary period, as up until this point he had kept an extremely low profile due to the nature of his intelligence work, and there are very few accounts of him ever engaging in political discussions with comrades before the end of 1922. From the period of early 1924 to the early 1930's, Tobin had taken on a more overtly political role. His activities with Clann na nGaedheal would see him engaging more in public debates and participating in speeches and commemorations. He was also briefly on the committee organising the funeral of John Devoy in 1929. The extensive committee was made up of largely pro-Treaty supporters such as Georóid O'Sullivan and Seán McGarry, but it also included Kathleen Clarke and Tom Barry, with Joe McGrath, Frank Thornton and Tobin representing the 'mutineers' standpoint. Evidently the purpose was to show that all parties could contribute and agree on the planning of the funeral for such a well respected figure, but this did not stop disagreements occurring over whether the Free State government and Army should be official representatives at the funeral.[777]

Clann na nGaedheal

In 1931 Tobin and his associates would form Clann na nGaedheal. From this point onwards he adopted a more political approach to expressing his argument on the importance of complete independence, and also reconciliation between both sides. Despite holding meetings that expressly discussed the political and national future of the country, they did make it clear that they were non-political, and did not have any intention of standing for election. Historian Brian Hanley discusses the political ideologies of the party, arguing that the aim was to bring unity between both sides of the Civil War, although he points out that it represented a lot of pro-Treaty officers who felt betrayed by the Free State government.[778] From this perspective, it is hard to estimate what the group hoped to achieve other than perhaps a more credible means of expressing the same views that initiated the mutiny.

The party was established around the same time as the 15th anniversary of the Easter Rising, and involved many of the same individuals who had taken part in the mutiny. Although similar to the IRAO in that no member stood for election, by late 1932 it had local council representatives in Dublin, Sligo, Roscommon, Limerick, Clare, Dundalk, Longford, Wicklow,

[777] NLI John Devoy Funeral Committee 1929, MS 50,153, Notebook Funeral Committee
[778] Brian Hanley, *The IRA, 1926-1936,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), p.111

Kildare, and Westmeath.[779] Early on in its formation, Frank Thornton was named the Chairman, and in an attempt to explain their aims, he declared that they were not politicians but Irish patriots, and were determined to see that patriotism would dominate politics in Ireland just as it was doing in 'every other normal minded country in Europe'.[780] Later in July 1932 Tobin released a further statement to the press that the group was made up of pre-Truce IRA men, with the object to secure unity between all Irishmen. Rather than actively taking part in national politics, the group was made up of the former militarist elements of the IRAO, and their activities were largely confined to commemorations and meetings to discuss the national direction of the country. The same statement was communicated to the *Irish Press* in 1932, as Tobin stated that the Clann was non-party and non-political, as its members believed that until complete independence was achieved 'its energies should not be dissipated in party wranglings.[781] Despite these well meaning sentiments, it is clear why some members of the former IRAO had become dissatisfied with the group's lack of political foresight, and at no point did they offer any practical solutions as to how independence may be achieved. Their statement continued,

> 'In this time of national crisis, Clann na nGaedheal again calls on all old comrades of the pre-Truce IRA to come together in defence of their country, and thus show to the people by their splendid example that we are now, as ever, ready to take our stand in defence of the people's liberties…the Executive Council of the Clann na nGaedheal, in special meeting assembled, pledge our loyalty and support to the government in whatever action they take in securing for our country its full independence'.[782]

A poster for the party proclaimed that they 'stand for the complete independence of Ireland', calling on the people to help 'to reunite the various elements which constituted the pre-Truce Irish Republican Army and associate forces to aid in fostering the ideal of Irish Independence'. This can be seen through the involvement of people such as Leo Henderson in the organisation, who had taken the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War.[783] There also appeared to have been an

[779] "Ban On Imperialism", *Irish Press* 14th December 1931, p. 4
[780] "For Freedom's Course a Highway", *Honesty* 7th February 1931, p. 5
[781] "Stand By Government"*, Irish Press* 20th July 1932, p. 7
[782] Ibid, p. 7
[783] Poster By Clann na nGaedheal, Juverna Press, Ltd, Dublin, Courtesy of Brian Hand

anti-Communist element to it, despite calls for all national and labour organisations to unite under the common goal of independence.[784] Although not surprising for the time and the fear of communist influence in Ireland, their policies make it clear that their primary focus was on nationalism. In addition, there is no indication in any public report or article that women were ever members; in newspaper reports between 1931 - 1932 the group is broadly addressed as men of the pre-Truce IRA, with some pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty members.

A meeting was held in early February 1931, and reportedly its attendees were 'local, but representative of all Dublin and of men who fought shoulder to shoulder against British imperialism up to the Truce'. Upon entering the meeting hall the reporter stated that he saw 'scores of men who had been prominent in the greatest and most successful fight for Ireland's freedom', with more than 200 in attendance. Tobin opened the meeting, and congratulated the committee of the Dublin pre-Truce IRA on bringing the old guard together. He stated he was glad to see that the 'Clann was becoming a great force, and rallying the country once more to the faith and objectives of Wolfe Tone, Emmet, and Pearse'. In the aftermath of the mutiny Tobin heavily criticised the government's unwillingness to remove all British influence from Ireland, and the formation of Clann na nGaedheal appears to have given him a more authentic platform to outline this argument than the mutiny did. According to the article published in *Honesty*, Tobin preached of his faith in the men before him, arguing that they had proven 'the strength of Ireland's prowess as a united people', and that,

> 'In that gathering he saw the only real hope for the future and the only real force for the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland. They may have differed in the past but they now realised their mistakes and were prepared to work for the completion of the work to which they had pledged their lives from early manhood'.[785]

Next, Thornton addressed the meeting, also acknowledging that many in attendance took the anti-Treaty side. He further condemned the continuing link between the Irish and British governments, and made it clear that the organisation was determined to alter these conditions. He claimed that any political achievements made up to that point, and the progress that could be made in the future, likewise depended 'upon the spirit and determination of the IRA'. Such a

[784] "Stand By Government", *Irish Press* 20th July 1932, p. 7,
[785] "For Freedom's Course a Highway", *Honesty* 7th February 1931, p. 5

speech suggests that there was a militant aspect to Clann na nGaedheal, although there is no evidence that they participated in any activities under the then leading IRA members, such as Seán MacBride or Maurice Twomey. Rather, this reference to the IRA is possibly a continuation of their arguments surrounding the mutiny, in that they felt that those who had helped to bring the state into existence should be the men who hold the influential positions within it. In the same speech, Thornton made reference to the work of the Clann in trying to find employment for its members over the previous months, and an important aspect of this was that they are working together with people who they had disagreed with over the Treaty 'to regain control of Ireland for the Irish people and for the cause of Irish nationalism'.[786]

The account by *Honesty* paints an idyllic picture of Volunteers uniting under the common goal once more to remove all traces of British imperialism. It summarised that 'one looking upon such a living picture of virile Irish patriotism could feel despondent about the future of our country'. The reality was much more problematic, as the term 'pre-Truce IRA' came nowhere near to representing the many different factions, groups, and individuals who would all lay claim to what it meant to be a republican. With less than a decade after the Civil War's end, old tensions were made readily clear as definitions of republicanism, service, duty and and even what it was to be a Volunteer, were hotly debated in the press columns during the 1931 Easter Rising commemorations, often descending into petty accusations and personal feuds.

In 1931 Clann na nGaedheal held their own commemoration of the Easter Rising, during which they reached their own conclusions as to what constituted a 'republican'. This drew criticism from those who could not so easily forget that Tobin and his supporters in the mutiny had originally been in favour of the Treaty. By this point the majority of Tobin's friends were from the anti-Treaty side, as he was then known to refer to the pro-Treaty side as 'awful Staters'. This would include Kevin O'Higgins and David Neligan, according to his grandson Brian Hand.[787] During this commemoration Tobin reportedly stated that there was nothing ambiguous about their aims, that they stood for the complete independence of Ireland under a Republican form of government, and that this commemoration was a sign of the awakening of the old Volunteer spirit of comradeship, a call to stop and consider where Ireland stood and those who professed to serve her'.[788] Here again, Tobin's speeches were mainly focused on sentimentality,

[786] Ibid
[787] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[788] "The Real Spirit of 1916"*, An Phobhlacht* 2nd May 1931, p. 5

almost clinging to the idealised, heroic picture of the Volunteers that had at least existed for him before the Truce. The Clann's political stance can best be analysed in conjunction with a series of debates between Tobin and Maurice Twomey that were published in *An Poblacht* in May 1931. Not only do the debates focus on what direction the IRA was taking, but significantly, who was deemed worthy to call themselves a republican.

An Phoblacht published the statements made by Tobin and Leo Henderson at the commemoration, which included references to the purpose behind the Rising and the national direction at the time. Wreaths were laid at the Republican and 1916 plots, as well as the grave of Michael Collins. On 2nd May 1931 Maurice Twomey reacted to claims made by Leo Henderson about the sole purpose behind the Rising being to get the British out of Ireland. Rather Twomey argued that it was also about giving equal rights and opportunities to all citizens of the country, and stated that republicans like Henderson and Tobin now realise that freedom from Britain did not mean freedom for each citizen, concluding that Henderson showed how out of touch he was with these statements.[789] Similarly, on 16th May, Twomey criticised a claim that service with the IRA prior to the truce was an essential qualification for membership of the Clann, quipping that if this is true then such a limitation means that the organisation would not last long. He also pointed out that former membership of the IRA was no guarantee of present beliefs and actions, and further criticised their statements as focused only on the political separation from Britain. He concluded that 'this is the sort of shallow reasoning that made the Treaty possible', and that the prevalent economic issues of the struggle cannot be ignored as they affect all citizens.[790]

In a joint statement by Tobin and Leo Henderson, the Clann representatives responded to Twomey, particularly addressing the statements made in relation to their ignorance of economic problems. They also claimed that *An Phoblacht* did not print their original statements made at the commemoration despite being sent a copy, and further claimed that their initial response to Twomey's statements had been suppressed. They referred to their 'objection to the exploitation of the insurrection for the purposes of communist propaganda', at which point the exchange became more personal between the two factions. They continued that any attack on the Clann is obviously welcomed by *An Phoblacht,* and that the recent issues dedicated to printing such attacks 'shows no indication of the intelligent development of thought which Mr. Twomey claims

[789] Ibid
[790] "Aims of Easter Week", *An Phoblacht* 16th May 1931, p. 5

for his party', and rather self-righteously declared that the Clann 'cannot be party to correspondence of this nature'. Their response concluded that they had hoped that their public declaration of allegiance made at the republican plot would have been welcomed by every sincere republican, and boasted that they had 'ample evidence' that it was.[791] Thus, having proclaimed that they only regarded supporters of their organisation to be 'sincere republicans', it is clear that pre-Truce IRA men were anything but united in their national outlook.

The allegation behind the use of the term 'Communist' was not lost on Twomey. In his final response he stated that;

> 'The latest from Tobin and Henderson is a futile contribution to a discussion on republican policy. I think I am entitled to doubt if the body responsible for it has ever given any serious thought to this important subject. They have switched off suddenly and now try to start a controversy with you on petty, irrelevant points'.[792]

Frank Ryan's biographer, Seán Cronin, states that Tobin and Henderson had also taken issue with statements made by Twomey that Irish unity should include an overthrow of all imperialist exploiting agencies and institutions. According to Cronin, both men argued that Twomey was 'grafting Communistic principles into Irish nationalism.[793] In condemning them for claiming to make an authoritative statement on the aims of the revolutionary movement, Twomey also took aim at their previously pro-Treaty stance. *An Phoblacht* also responded to the accusation that they had suppressed anything from Clann na nGaedheal, stating that any statements were from public speeches made by the group at the commemoration.[794]

Twomey was not the only one to respond to the Clann's statements about the purpose of the Rising. One letter from former Volunteer Mick Fiztpatrick questioned what would happen if unity were achieved between pre-Truce Volunteers and their associates, or at least those who have ceased to serve imperial interests. While his criticism is less hardline, he quoted Patrick Pearse when making the point that 'it is not enough to say that 'I believe' unless one can say 'I serve', and he questioned if the country went to war, would it be the Volunteers or the National Army that they would join again? Another letter by Mary MacSwiney (writing as Máire nic

[791] "The Aims of Easter Week", *An Phoblacht* 30th May 1931, p. 3
[792] Ibid, p. 3
[793] Sean Cronin, *Frank Ryan: The Search for the Republic*, (Dublin: Repsol, 1980), p. 171
[794] "The Aims of Easter Week", *An Phoblacht* 30th May 1931, p. 3

Suibhne) criticised the Clann for honouring Collins' grave as well as others at their commemoration, which included the grave of Cathal Brugha. Both McSwiney and Brugha's wife condemned 'men presuming to honour him' while they had remained loyal to Collins, the man they argued caused his death, and the deaths of his associates. She questioned how can men who claim to be imbued with the spirit of 1916 honour Collins in the name of the Volunteer spirit of comradeship?[795]

Alternatively, an argument could be made that this desire to honour both Brugha and Collins indicated a sense of progression and a tolerance of both viewpoints on the Civil War. The decades after the war saw many subsections form between the old Volunteers, to the point when it was no longer just a case of pro and anti-Treaty sides; these included those who had been IRB members, IRA men under Seán MacBride, mutineers, those who were members of the Dáil, and also those who found themselves working alongside Joseph McGrath in his 'labour' ventures. Mick Fitzpatrick's final words provide a summary of an outsider's perspective of Clann na nGaedheal at the time,

> 'I personally admire those who when they discover they have acted wrongly admit it. I know it is the policy of republicans to strengthen their ranks and win back those who were lost through the treaty and its disastrous consequences. It was a pity Clann na nGaedheal did not give evidence of a 'come back' by participating with us, serving volunteers in the national commemoration on Sunday'.[796]

There may have been an element of trying to build bridges behind the establishment of Clann na nGaedheal, and an acceptance that there was a need to move on to try to come to some sort of solution around the question of complete independence. However, the mutiny of 1924 already showed that Tobin did not suit the role of the politician well, and this can be seen in a lot of the material that he published in the newspapers. At times he indicated that his views are representative of all pockets of the IRA at this point, again from the standpoint that those that worked closely with Collins knew his intentions for the Treaty. This would bring him into conflict with other leading republicans, including family members of former comrades, such as Mrs. Cathal Brugha.

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[795] "Aims of Easter Week", *An Phoblacht* 16th May 1931, p. 5,
[796] "The Real Spirit of 1916", *An Phoblach*t 2nd May 1931, p. 5

One aspect of Clann na nGaedheal that was made clear, however, was their displeasure with the continued presence of British influence in Irish affairs, and they called for the 'de anglicisation' of the nation's politics and culture. This cultural nationalist notion of removing all British influence from Ireland appeared to have been a substitute policy adopted by many former IRA men who were dissatisfied with the limits of the Treaty. This included the more strategic political elements such as the British' retention of the Treaty Ports, as well as attacks on Irish culture. Tobin would be critical of his former colleagues in his letters to Mick McDonnell, again claiming the situation leading up to the mutiny did not resolve itself with the removal of the Army Council, and commented that 'then we had a crowd who turned out worse than any'. He specifically named Eoin O'Duffy, Seán MacEoin, Dan Hogan, and Eoin MacNeil as being some of the most deserving of this criticism, and remarked that they all 'suffered from swelled heads…trying to act the smart set'. He implied that they had succumbed to the temptations of power in the new government, and his criticism included their alleged participation in 'dancing jazz, all the latest USA rags, dress suits, mess uniforms, following the hounds', etc., before dishearteningly stating 'it would make you ashamed to think that as a people we can forget ourselves so easily'.[797] Likewise, one Clann na nGaedheal meeting in December 1931 saw a resolution being passed 'calling for the suppression of all organisations that were based on loyalty to a foreign country', and called for the removal of all displays featuring the Union Jack, including Armistice commemorations, and requested that all programmes for places of amusement conclude with the singing of the Soldier's Song.[798]

While Clann na nGaedheal's activities were largely limited to participations in commemorations and meetings to discuss the national question, this policy of de-anglicisation is potentially one of the reasons why Tobin eventually gravitated towards De Valera and Fianna Fáil when the party was established in 1926. Interestingly, Paul Bew claims that De Valera was the only beneficiary of the mutiny as he was able to look at the disagreements taking place within the government from the outside, and the fallout most likely did influence Tobin's move towards De Valera.[799] Much has been made about this switch in support from what was perceived to be Collin's side, i.e, the Free State government, to the opposing side headed by De Valera. On the other hand, the situation is not as clear cut as Tobin simply moving from one side of the Civil

[797] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 4th May 1925
[798] "Ban On Imperialism", *Irish Press* 14th December 1931, p. 4
[799] Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006,* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 446

War to the other. From the start of the fighting in 1922 he had retained his friendships with a lot of the anti-Treaty side, and most of his circle, whether it be friends, colleagues, or political associates, were predominantly from the anti-Treaty side. This move to the opposing side has not gone unnoticed by biographers of his contemporaries. In his study of Kevin O'Higgins, John McCarthy makes reference to Tobin and Joseph McGrath's ability to make fast friends with 'old antagonists', especially due to both of their associations with Oriel House in the Civil War.[800] Conversely, it is also worth noting that in March 1940 Tobin participated in a meeting with about 200 others at the Mansion House, although the purpose of this meeting is unclear. Among those who attended were Frank Thornton, Eoin O'Duffy, and Peadar O'Donnell, and despite the movement not having a significant impact, it nonetheless indicates that at this point Tobin was willing to engage with those who held different political opinions from him. The main policy of this movement was the ending of partition and the establishment of an all-Ireland Republic.[801]

Controversies in the 1930's

The 1930's were also a controversial period in Tobin's life for quite a sinister reason, arguably more so than any of his activities during the Revolution or in the subsequent mutiny. The aspiration to completely remove the British from Ireland remained at the forefront of his thinking. To this end the rise in power of the National Socialist Party in Germany seemed to pique the interest of some of his comrades, and possibly provided an opportunity to form an alliance against Britain if war was to break out. Some of his associates were known for their pro-facism ideologies, including Joseph McGarrity in the United States, and there was a pro-German element to this as well. McGarrity was an Irish republican living in the United States by the 1920's, and having become dissatisfied with the lack of progress towards achieving complete independence, was beginning to advocate the use of force in Ireland by the 1930's.[802]

According to Brian Hand, Yann Goulet, the French pro-Nazi painter, was a visitor to the Tobin household during the early 1930's, allegedly because it was thought that this would bring in the French nationalist support as well. Another visitor was Eduard Hempel, German Minister to Ireland from 1937 to 1945. Although Hempel is regarded by some to have been a reluctant

[800] John Patrick McCarthy, *Kevin O'Higgins: Builder of the Irish Free State,* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p. 157
[801] "Conscription Advocated By New Group"*, Irish Press*, 4th March 1940, p. 3
[802] Marie. V Tarpey, "Joseph McGarrity, Fighter for Irish Freedom," *Studia Hibernica*, no. 11 (1971): 164–80, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20495986, p. 176

supporter of the Nazi party, Hand argued that it is possible that they thought that the Nazis were something that they could deal with at a later stage once they had achieved full independence, and from a separatist point of view, who else was so well positioned to help them take on the British? This connection between Ireland and Germany had been present since the planning of the Rising, but the Nazi party brought a more sinister aspect to this 'alliance', and they were extremely naive in deciding to support this side of the political spectrum. To what extent, if any, Tobin himself supported this right-wing ideology is not clear, and it is possible that he felt that this was merely a means to an end to finish the work that they had started in 1916. However, that did not stop the government from placing spotters on the home of Tobin, Dr Patrick MacCartan and Dan Breen, which included having their phones tapped.[803] Studies focusing on Ireland's relationship to the Nazi Party have never referenced Tobin by name, including *Resistance* by Brian Gallagher, *Hitler's Irishmen* by Terence O'Reilly, or Gerry Mullins' *Dublin's Nazi No.1: The Life of Adolf Mahr*.[804] Therefore, with no documented evidence to support these claims it is not possible to disprove them or not. However, the idea that he was associating with people such as Hempel raises questions regarding claims that Connie Neenan would make about Tobin acting as an intelligence officer for De Valera during the 1930's.

In the early 1930's Tobin also became employed with the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes run by Joseph McGrath, which would provide him with an income that was larger than he had ever experienced previously, substantial enough to build a house in the middle class area of Merrion Avenue, Blackrock. He worked in the Hospital Trust located at Earlsfort Terrace as Head of the Foreign Office, again working closely with many who had also been involved in the War of Independence, including Charles Dalton would also find work there as a circulating manager.[805] Tobin's duties included how to coordinate and manipulate these Irish separatist organisations in the United States and in Britain to sell the sweepstake tickets. The first one they started was by Dr. Patrick MacCartan to give a pension to Mrs Pearse in 1927, mother of Patrick Pearse, to save St. Enda's School. This got a massive response from organisations across the U.K and United

[803] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[804] Brian Gallagher, *Resistance*, (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2019); Gerry Mullins, *Dublin's No.1 Nazi: The Life of Adolf Mahr*, (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2007); Terrence O'Reilly, *Hitler's Irishmen,* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2008)
[805] Marie Coleman, *The Irish Sweep: A History of the Irish Hospital Sweepstake 1930 - 87*, (Dublin: UCD Press, 2009), p. 31

States. At one point there was also flooding on the sweepstakes site to wash away a lot of files, with Marie Coleman arguing that this was done deliberately in order to avoid paying taxes.[806]

The idea was to get Irish networks and organisations to support the sweepstakes. Seán Russell, then leader of the IRA, reportedly went on a tour of all republican groups in the United States during the 1930's, and became frustrated to find out that most of the organisations there were all involved in sweepstakes. Tobin made at least one trip to the United States in his capacity as Head of the Foreign Office, but more than likely two trips were made. The first is mentioned in his pension file in August 1933 when he wrote to the Pension Board asking for his money to be paid to wife in his absence. The *Irish Independent* reported in December of the same year that he and his wife had arrived in Cobh on the SS Manhattan, making it just under 4 months that he spent there.[807] Connie Neenan also referred to meeting Tobin and Patrick MacCartan in New York in late 1933, the purpose being for him to secure a job for Joseph McGarrity with the sweepstakes.[808] A photo exists of him, his wife Mona, and Neenan on board the SS Manhattan as well.[809] Marie Coleman argues that the purpose of one of these trips was for Tobin to investigate claims of the circulation of fraulet tickets. However, according to Todd Andrews, Joseph McGrath refused to see Tobin upon his return to Dublin, and Coleman would conclude that McGrath perhaps preferred not to know the outcome of the investigation.[810]

One of the most significant connections that Tobin ever made was with Joseph McGrath, who had previously supported him throughout the mutiny, and also appeared to have been involved in the Gresham Motor Hire Service to some degree. Tobin was also made the godfather of his eldest son, Seamus McGrath. Tobin's activities in the United States are shrouded in mystery and supposed illegal dealings due to the risks that had to be taken in order to sell the illegal sweepstakes tickets. Coleman points out that by 1934 the United States Post Office announced that $3 billion had been subscribed to foreign lotteries over a 3 year period. She also argues that despite the United States outlawing the importation of lottery material, the sweepstakes would make £3 million a year from its American customers.[811] Fellow historian Diarmuid Ferriter states that 1,500 people were acting as agents for the sweepstakes in the

[806] Ibid
[807] IE-MA-W24SP2764 Liam Tobin, p. 65; *Irish Independent* 13th December 1933, p. 7
[808] Memoirs of Connie Francis Neenan 1916-1920s, 1939-1940, p. 81, Publications.corkarchives.ie, Accessed 27th February 2023, https://publications.corkarchives.ie/view/162923590/81/
[809] Private photo of Liam Tobin and Connie Neenan, Courtesy of Brian Hand
[810] Marie Coleman, *The Irish Sweep*, p. 129
[811] Ibid, p. 111, 114, 116

United States from 1934 to 1940, and points out that the charity was 'plagued by scandal, skulduggery, forgeries and gangsterism', as not enough of the money raised went to the health services, while the founders became millionaires.[812]

One of the ways that the sweepstakes would advertise was through the use of films, paying movie makers in Hollywood to mention the tickets on screen. Interestingly, one of the people who featured quite prominently in much footage of the sweepstakes was Sean 'Flash' Bolger, the officer who had accidently shot Tobin's brother during a raid in October 1922. Bolger acted as the personal bodyguard of Joseph McGrath, and reportedly carried a Switz Western revolver while carrying around a briefcase of sweepstake money.[813]

Although there can be little doubt as to the disparities between the money received by the Irish Hospital Trust compared to the money that McGrath personally made, the sweepstakes would allegedly be used for more illegal activities concerning the IRA and shipments of arms. In June 1921 police forces in Hoboken, New Jersey, halted a shipment of 495 Thompson machine guns that Joseph McGarrity had purchased with the permission of Collins. They were seized, and eventually McGarrity started a legal challenge in the 1920's to get them back. He was finally given the guns back on 21st September 1925.[814]

Once the guns were retrieved they were stored in a warehouse in Manhattan with Connie Neenan. A receipt from 1934 for the use of such a warehouse is amongst the McGarrity papers in the National Library of Ireland.[815] Throughout the 1920's and 1930's they were able to ship 600 machine guns to Ireland, and historian Patrick Jung estimates that they made up the bulk of machine guns that existed in Ireland in 1998, when his study was published.[816] It has also been suggested that when the Bogside and Falls Road areas erupted in 1969, the machine guns that can be seen in footage from the time were the same guns that McGarrity bought.[817]

One man involved with the production of Irish films, Eric Boden, also worked with the sweepstakes, told Brian Hand that he had good memories of Tobin's work in the West Coast of

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[812] Diarmuid Ferriter, *Between Two Hells*, (United Kingdom: Profile Books, 2021), p. 173
[813] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[814] Marie. V Tarpey, "Joseph McGarrity, Fighter for Irish Freedom,", p. 172; NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,530/30, Typescript Copy of Document detailing seizure and release of 600 Thompson Machine Guns, September 1st 1934
[815] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,540/1, Receipt for Storage At the Manhattan Storage Warehouse Company By Joseph McGarrity, 1934, https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000611487, Accessed on 9th September 2023.
[816] Patrick Jung, "The Thompson Machine Gun in Ireland During and After the Anglo Irish War: The New Evidence, in *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society in Ireland*, Vol. XXI, No. 84, Winter 1998, p. 209
[817] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

the United States. He was involved in the sweepstakes syndicate, and was constantly on the run from the FBI, detailing how their flat would be raided and they had to hide papers and flush out the illegal tickets down the toilet. Allegedly, this continued until they managed to get a decent double agent in the FBI. Boden described Tobin being in Hollywood at the time because he was trying to get advertising for the sweepstakes.[818]

However, Tobin's activities with the sweepstakes would abruptly finish by the 1930's, as a row between McGrath and Tobin led to him resigning his position. One rumour was that the fight had been caused by Tobin calling Frank Saurin, (another associate from the War of Independence who found work in the sweepstakes) 'a holy joe', or some such rivalry, with McGrath allegedly taking Saurin's side in the argument. The notion of such a benign insult leading to such a large-scale fall out between the two seems highly unlikely, especially when considering the high stress situations both men found themselves in during the mutiny. While the real reason behind the rift may not be known, a more plausible explanation may lie in an allegation made by Connie Neenan in a letter to McGarrity.

In 1934 Connie Neenan wrote to McGarrity claiming 'Liam T has accepted a post as executive capacity with the intelligence forces of the Fianna Fáil administration'. He also claimed that Tobin had instructed one mutual acquaintance to inform Neenan of this move, which may be possible.[819] On the other hand, it would be out of character for the normally discreet Tobin to do this, and it is important to note that there is no documented evidence of Tobin working for De Valera in this capacity. In addition, if it is true, it also remains unclear as to why Tobin would ever divulge this to Neenan, particularly because Tobin famously never spoke about any of his intelligence work. However, within the sphere of intelligence, it would not be unreasonable for Tobin to be mixing with this community of republicans to let De Valera know what is going on, particularly when considering their associations with the German nationalists. Conversely, Neenan is not considered to be a reliable source due to conflicting accounts that he presents of other incidents during the Revolution, although it is true that Tobin was acquainted with him during his time with the Hospital Sweepstakes.[820]

Additionally, one claim made by Tim Pat Coogan could be relevant to this allegation that Tobin was working as an intelligence officer for De Valera. In his biography of Collins, Coogan

[818] Ibid
[819] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,539/4, Letter from Connie Neenan to Joseph McGarrity 27th January 1934
[820] Private photo of Liam Tobin and Connie Neenan, Courtesy of Brian Hand

claims that when the change of government happened in 1932 Tobin was brought in to destroy files on the Civil War and the death of Collins, and cites a memo from Desmond Fitzgerald, (which De Valera reportedly took a photo of) as the source of this information. No memo was ever found, although Coogan also states that an associate, Dr. T. P O'Neill, saw the memo, and O'Neill confirmed as such. With no access to the source, it cannot be determined for certain whether Tobin carried out this job or not, but it is an unusual claim to make in light of what Neenan said about De Valera employing him as an intelligence officer. If the files were destroyed then this would have occurred in 1931 or 1932, but Neenan didn't make his claim until 1934. It is also unusual that the Cumann na nGaedheal government would trust Tobin to carry out this task, particularly in light of his actions with the mutiny. While Coogan suggests that the reason Tobin was asked to do it was because of his 'unique intelligence experience', nevertheless the lack of access to the memo leads to questions around the credibility of his claim.[821] One other possibility was that Joseph McGrath asked him to do this, as he was reportedly close with members of the government at the time, and this was also a period when he may have needed legislation passed for a bill in relation to the sweepstakes.

While there is no proof of Tobin working as a double agent for De Valera in the 1930's, after leaving the sweepstakes in 1938 he would become appointed Superintendent of the Oireachtas in 1940.[822] Although this post was not as covert as previous intelligence jobs, part of his duties were to ensure the security and smooth running of Leinster House, and to this end, it is not a massive leap from intelligence work. He had to keep up-to-date with all of the daily operations of the Oireachtas, accommodating visitors, and maintaining the high level of security required for such an institution. His capabilities in this regard are obvious from the incident with Dan Breen bringing his 'racing friend' on to the premises during World War II, who Tobin immediately recognised as being a former target that Breen had attempted to shoot so many years before.[823]

Conclusion

There were many controversial aspects to Tobin's post-revolutionary life, and as with many of the figures from the period, there were numerous layers to his character. Some of his

[821] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 418
[822] "New Superintendent of the Oireachtas",*Irish Press,* 4th November 1940, p. 7
[823] IE-MA-BMH.WS1739 Dan Breen, p, 28

relationships from the war remained solid throughout the rest of his life, whereas others dissolved, as was the case with David Neligan and Joseph McGrath. What makes Tobin distinctive, however, is that he was a significant, high-ranking figure who did not follow a clear-cut path in the decades after the Revolution. After initially taking the pro-Treaty side, he later found cause to support De Valera through Fianna Fáil. By making such a move it is evident that Tobin was not one to allow Civil War divides to completely dominate him. While criticisms could be made that he switched to what he perceived to be the winning side after the mutiny, or that he was looked after by De Valera by becoming Superintendent of the Oireachtas, it also must be remembered that Tobin was willing to end his association with McGrath. His position with the sweepstakes arguably offered him just as much financial security as the role of Superintendent did.

As with many of his comrades, Tobin settled down into normal family life by the time he was in his mid 30s, and his later life undoubtedly provided much needed stability in a stark contrast to his years on the run from the British. In October 1929 Tobin married Monica Higgins of Infirmary Road, Dublin, quite close to his own home at 24 Munster Street. His pension file indicates that he remained at his family address until around the time that he was married, and later moved into a house at Castle Avenue, Clontarf around 1933, before eventually moving into their final home, 'Clolefin' Mount Merrion Avenue in 1939 (named for his paternal homestead near Mitchelstown).[824] In typical Tobin form, the wedding was a small, private affair with just a few guests, with Frank Thornton acting as his best man.[825] The marriage produced two daughters, Máire born in 1931 and Anne born in 1939. Although he would be described as serious, and strict disciplinarian, according to Brian Hand he was also very supportive towards his daughters in their education and career goals.[826]

Tobin would not have considered his family to be a marginal aspect of his life, and it is clear that he did not allow his intelligence work to impact the family domain. Like so many of his contemporaries he never discussed his activities during or after the Revolution, particularly those relating to intelligence, spies, and also his brother, Nicholas. Others, such as Frank Thornton, were more generous with their papers and stories, but in the case of Tobin it can only

[824] IE-MA-W24SP2764 Liam Tobin
[825] *Evening News* 29th October 1929
[826] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

be speculated that the nature of his work with intelligence prohibited him from divulging too much, especially when those who had been involved were still alive.[827]

While many of Tobin's friends in later life had been from the anti-Treaty side, some of the hardliners, such as Maurice Twomey, would forever associate him with the actions of Oriel House. He would have regular table tennis matches with Seamus Woods and Todd Andrews in his home, and Dan Breen was also a frequent visitor. He maintained close connections with Frank Thornton throughout his life, with his daughter Anne eventually marrying Frank's son Padraig, and named Frank godfather to his eldest daughter. In addition, despite his fall out with Joseph McGrath in the late 1930's, the two eventually reconciled in the 1950's, although the same cannot be said of Frank Saurin. He also remained close friends with Phylis Ryan, wife of Seán T O'Kelly, who he had also worked with during the Treaty negotiations in London.[828]

Tobin also supported a lot of the former intelligence staff who had taken the anti-Treaty side when it came to applying for their pensions. In the case of Thomas Newell, both he and Frank Thornton wrote several letters to the Board of Assessors arguing that he deserved the same rank as given to those who had done similar work but had taken the pro-Treaty side.[829] They made similar petitions for Ned Kelleher and Patrick Kennedy, two members of the intelligence staff that also joined the anti-Treaty side. Kennedy was originally given a grade E rank 4 in 1937, and asked both men to provide a reference confirming that he had completed the same standard of work as the other staff members, to which Tobin agreed that the rank was not satisfactory in view of his pre-Truce service.[830] Another intelligence officer who took the anti-Treaty side was George Fitzgerald, who claimed he was arrested in December 1922, but was quickly released the following month due to 'old associations' not wanting to detain him; presumably the work of Tobin in his last days as Director of Intelligence.[831]

In the late 1950's he helped to organise retreats at Milltown Cemetery in Dublin, through the help of Jesuit priests there, the idea being that men from both sides would come together to hold discussions on religion as a way of building bridges.[832] Reconciling the events of the Civil War was something that played on Tobin's mind, and this is evident from his associations with

[827] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[828] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[829] IE-MA-MSP34REF8996 Thomas Newell, p. 40, 50
[830] IE-MA-MSP34REF1549 Patrick Kennedy, p. 61
[831] IE-MA-MSP34REF17182 George Fitzgerald, p. 14
[832] "Death of Maj-Gen Liam Tobin", *Irish Independent* 1st May 1963, p. 12

such retreats, and he frequently vocalised his sorrow that it had unfolded as it did. There can be no doubt that his name was associated with Oriel House and the atrocities that were inflicted on the captured republicans, whether directly through his own actions, or indirectly through men under his command. But his ability to maintain links with both pro and anti-Treaty men is significant, as it is unlikely that many of them would have associated with him at all in later years if they strongly believed he had been involved with killing or torturing republicans.

With regards to the psychological impacts affecting former IRA men, in comparison to some of his comrades Tobin appears to have emerged rather unscathed by this. However, within a short period of time he lost several people that he had been close to, including Collins and his brother within 2 months of each other, and then Tom Cullen 4 years later. He was by no means an anomaly in this regard, as certainly many others experienced losses that were just as significant, and worse. Instead Tobin's trauma appears to have been manifested in his continued silence on the period for the remainder of his days. When compared with more severe physical and physiological cases such as Charles Dalton's, Tobin seems to have been able to compartmentalise his experiences during both the War of Independence and the Civil War. However, at the same time, he also slept with a gun under his pillow in later life. Given that Civil War rivalries are still debated today, it is understandable why Tobin felt he may be targeted due to his role with intelligence and the knowledge that he had obtained during that time, and this is potentially another reason why he was reluctant to speak about the period to anyone. Joseph E. A. Connell Jr also refers to this in his recent work, *The Terror War*, concluding that this silence was a pattern with most men who had played a part in intelligence gathering and assassinations.[833]

Tobin would also experience a lot of illness in his life, at least partially as a result of the hard living that he was subjected to in prison in 1916, as well as his years on the run during the War of Independence. He would reportedly suffer from very serious nosebleeds during the war, and had to take leave of rest to recover. His poor diet at the time, and years of smoking also resulted in stomach problems later on in life, eventually having to have part of it removed.[834] David Neligan's reference to him being an invalid to whom death came as a relief was undoubtedly an exaggeration, but reports from family members confirm that he was very unwell

[833] Joseph E A. Connell Jr, *The Terror War: The Uncomfortable Realities of the War of Independence*, (Dublin: Eastwood Books, 2021), p. 182
[834] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022

throughout most of his later years, and eventually retired as Superintendent to the Oireachtas in 1959 at the age of 64.[835] Not confined to his later years, at particular intervals he would suffer from illnesses which affected his daily life. For instance, in March 1935 he was also 'laid up' for several months, which made him unable to work or deal with any correspondence for some time.[836]

On 30th April 1963 he died at home with his family, and despite his position as the effective leader of the mutiny, he was given a military funeral by the state, complete with volley shots, along with the title of Major General on his headstone. Several members of the government were present, including President De Valera, Seán MacEoin, and Frank Aiken, representing both sides of the Civil War. Numerous former Squad men were also in attendance, as well as former intelligence staff from the War of Independence. He is buried in the republican plot at Glasnevin Cemetery, directly beside Frank Thornton, who would die in late 1965. In terms of his feelings on the Ireland that they had fought for, family members believe that, despite never seeing complete separation from Britain, he was content with the achievements that Ireland had made by the 1960's.[837] Nevertheless, Siobhan Lankford had claimed that Tobin's motto had been 'Arms are the badge of free men; he who is unarmed will soon be in chains'.[838]

Ultimately, Liam Tobin is most closely associated with IRA intelligence in the historiography of the Irish Revolution, yet the specifics of his duties have remained unexamined in any great detail. He has become a reference point for many historians covering the period, with only those who probe further into the intelligence war in Dublin giving him considerable attention. Furthermore, his rank as a Major General in the Civil War, and an instigator of the Army Mutiny, have not generated sufficient interest to warrant a detailed analysis from his point of view thus far. He was a supporting character at some of the major events during the Revolutionary period, and no study or biography has been forthcoming. Yet, the unanswered questions that surround his work to this day is proof of Tobin's success as an intelligence officer. Historians may rightly or wrongly critique his actions during the Civil War and the mutiny, but this thesis has attempted to portray the complicated and convoluted nature of both these events in Tobin's life. Despite his self-controlled nature and constant refusal to speak on the period, the

[835] David Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, p. 161, and *Cork Examiner* 31st December 1959, p. 6
[836] IE-MA-MSP34REF1439 Patrick Berry, p. 41
[837] Brian Hand, via MS Teams Interview with author, 25th July 2022
[838] Siobhan Lankford, *The Hope and The Sadness*, p. 127

following lines written to Mick McDonnell in 1926 convey the personal sorrow with which he looked back on the Revolution,

> 'To think of the old crowd, the 'Big Fellah' and the times we had makes one bloody mad, twas all so futile. His death finished anything not alone in our time but for generations to come'.[839]

[839] Letter from Liam Tobin to Michael McDonnell 8th March 1926

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine the multiple roles that Major General Liam Tobin played throughout the Irish Revolution, particularly his contribution to IRA intelligence during the War of Independence. This fits in with the growing interest in specific individuals involved with intelligence, as the literature has begun to focus on dispatchers, post office workers, and particularly the role of women in intelligence gathering. Studies by Liz Gillis, Darren Kelly and Derek Molyneux, and Joseph E. A Connell Jr have recently examined how IRA intelligence functioned at a more micro level, and as such a study of Liam Tobin fits into the wider literature emerging on the topic of intelligence.[840] Moreover, in the last decade studies by Dominic Price, Michael Foy and T. Ryle Dwyer have devoted more recognition to Tobin's contribution to the intelligence war in Dublin.[841]

Due to his role as Deputy Director of Intelligence, a study of Tobin is also necessary to fully understand how intelligence functioned in Dublin, specifically at 3 Crow Street. All information coming into the office from officers and informants was given to Tobin to be filed and categorised, and then presented to Michael Collins in the evening. It is clear that the hierarchy operated from Collins down, with all major decisions being made by him alone, including all decisions related to executions of suspected spies and informants. However, it was Tobin who was managing the office on a daily basis in Collins' absence, and he was the main figure communicating with the intelligence officers and dispatchers.[842]

Additionally, this thesis aims to convey the more complex issues relating to the outbreak of the Army Mutiny in 1924. With regards to the literature on the mutiny, one element that has been neglected thus far is the timeline of events from the IRAO's perspective, particularly their meetings with Mulcahy in June and July 1923. Critically, it is also necessary to examine the roles that both the IRAO and the revised IRB played in the outbreak of the mutiny, because in order to understand the motives of the IRAO as a secret organisation within the Army, it is also necessary to examine the unethical actions of Mulcahy, Cosgrave, the IRB, and the Army Council.

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[840] Derek Molyneux and Darren Kelly, *Killing at its Very Extreme;* Joseph E A. Connell Jr, *The Terror War;* Joseph. E. A. Connell Jr, *The Shadow War*; Liz Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution 1913-1923*, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2014)

[841] Dominic Price, *We Bled Together*; Michael Foy, *Michael Collins' Intelligence War;* T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad: And the Intelligence Operations of Michael Collins*

[842] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: The Man Who Won The War*, p. 62

With regards to available primary material, two of the most important documents examined are *The Truth About The Army Crisis* and *A Brief History of Events,* both of which were written by the IRAO and Tobin. They remain two of the few publicly accessible documents that he contributed to, in addition to his witness statement. As such an examination of these sources is important in order to understand why the mutiny occurred, particularly because they contain details of the timeline of IRAO meetings, and copies of the correspondence between the IRAO and Richard Mulcahy.[843] The witness statement provided by Tobin to the Bureau of Military History in the 1950's is also of great significance because it is written by Tobin alone, however, it does have its limitations as a source due to the fact that it was composed thirty years after the events took place, and Tobin was careful not to include any details regarding his intelligence activities. By contrast, however, both of the IRAO documents were written at the time that the mutiny occurred.

In addition, there is an extensive amount of primary material on Tobin available in the Military Archives in Dublin. This institution was extremely valuable for gathering information for each section of the thesis, including the Bureau of Military History, the Military Service Pension Files, the Civil War Reports, and the Collins Papers. Each of these collections are referenced extensively throughout the thesis, as the witness statements and pension files were significant in conveying a picture of Tobin's duties as Deputy Director of Intelligence. Also of critical importance were the Army Inquiry Collection, as they offered detailed accounts from several witnesses involved in the mutiny, and although there are inconsistencies with many of these testimonies, they remain useful in piecing together a timeline of events leading up to the ultimatum being sent in March 1924.

Likewise, the Mulcahy Papers housed in the UCD Archives provide accounts of further meetings between Mulcahy, Cosgrave and Joseph McGrath, and in turn convey how Mulcahy's attitude towards the IRAO and the threat they posed changed over the final months of 1923. The O'Malley Notebooks also contained several interviews with contemporaries of Tobin, and crucially, the collection includes two interviews that Tobin himself carried out with O'Malley, which provide a sense of his reactions to particular events, including Bloody Sunday.[844] In addition, further key primary material relating to the mutiny includes the Ryan's of Tomcoole

[843] Liam Tobin, *The Truth about the Army Crisis;* IE-MA-W24SP1606 Patrick O'Connell,
[844] UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17/B/94, P17/B/96

Collection in the National Library of Ireland, as it contains reports made by anti-Treaty IRA men in relation to the IRAO's activities. This element of the mutiny has not been examined in the literature before, and as such, the reports indicate that it was not only the Free State forces that were critical of the IRAO and their lack of any coherent strategy after the mutiny.

Undoubtedly, some of the most significant primary material was also provided by Brian Hand in the form of the letters that Tobin wrote to family and friends from 1916 to 1926. Due to the biographical format of the thesis, it was important to examine the personal side of Liam Tobin, and these letters give a rare glimpse into his own views on nationalism and his feelings about particular individuals, such as Richard Mulcahy. The main correspondent in these letters was his mother, who he wrote to frequently during his time in prison from 1916 to 1917, and also while in Cork during the Civil War. In addition, his letters to former Squad leader Mick McDonnell from 1925-1926 are useful when examining his mindset in the post-revolutionary years, as they portray a dejected Tobin who was frustrated at not being able to achieve complete independence from Britain. At the same time, the letters to his mother give a sense of the private side to Tobin, and they provide a different image of a man normally considered to be uptight and tense. As such, these letters and the interview provided by Brian Hand are invaluable contributions to this study of Tobin's role in the Irish Revolution.

With regards to the structure of the thesis, it is divided into five sections, each focusing on a different period in Tobin's revolutionary life, which are then further subdivided into nine chapters. Although the sections on intelligence and the mutiny are undoubtedly the largest, rather than limit the thesis to an examination of these events, the aim was to convey Tobin's nationalistic development, and also emphasise that he remained present in old IRA circles throughout the 1940's and 1950's. Chapter one serves as an introduction to Tobin's family influences that may have impacted his views on nationalism, as well as discussing his participation in the Easter Rising in the Four Courts with C Company of the Dublin Brigade. At this stage Tobin was a low rank and file Volunteer, although his earlier activities with anti-conscription rallies resulted in him being grouped with other significant organisers of the Rising. His witness statement to the Bureau of Military History is the main source used in this section as he provided quite a detailed account of his involvement in the fighting and his treatment after the surrender of arms.[845] While there is also no indication of him being involved

[845] IE-MA-BMH.WS1753 Liam Tobin

in any intelligence activities during this time, he did make significant connections during his stay in prison (particularly Lewes prison), which included individuals such as Harry Boland and Piaras Béaslaí.[846] Therefore, this introductory chapter on Tobin's background helps to develop an understanding as to why he joined the Volunteers in the first place.

Tobin's role as Deputy Director of Intelligence is the focus of section two, and as such it is the second largest of the thesis. Comprising three chapters, it begins with Tobin's initial introduction to intelligence duties after his release from prison, particularly his activities in North Cork, Tipperary and Limerick. This discussion of his early activities indicates that he developed a reputation as an efficient intelligence officer fairly quickly after being released from prison in 1917. At the same time, it must also be noted that his activities in Munster were sporadic throughout the War of Independence, and so while his contemporaries in North Cork do recount being in contact with him during this period, his main focus was in Dublin.

Of particular importance in this section is Tobin's management of the office at 3 Crow Street by constantly organising all of the information that they received from intelligence officers, and delegating Collins' orders to the Squad. Critically, it must be understood that those working in the office reported directly to him, and the witness statements and military pension files confirm this. Likewise, the role of women in the intelligence war is examined in this section. While undoubtedly there were countless women who aided intelligence gathering throughout the country, the thesis deals specifically with those that Tobin interacted with on a weekly basis, with the intention being to highlight that he was at least aware of the value of women in intelligence gathering, and that he maintained a high level of respect and appreciation for their work.

Lastly, this section examines Tobin's interactions with various spies during the War of Independence, with particular discussion on those that sought out Tobin specifically, including Bernard McNulty, also known as 'Molloy', who became fixated on capturing Tobin in March 1920. Tobin's role in the executions of spies and members of the British forces is also discussed, as it is important to understand that at times he would be accompanying the Squad to help in identifying the target, but there are other instances when he was a shooter. It can be confirmed that he had actually fired a gun in the executions of Percival Lea Wilson and Alan Bell in 1920,

[846] Letter from Liam Tobin to Mary Agnes Tobin 5th March 1917, Courtesy of Brian Hand.

and although it is possible that he was involved in more executions as a gunman, there are no documented records of them.

Furthermore, this section also establishes Tobin's location on Bloody Sunday, as previously there had been uncertainty as to what role he played in the planning of it. His own statement in Margaret McEntee's pension file, however, clarifies that he was in Vaughan's Hotel on the night of 20th November, and therefore was not out of action due to his nerves as was previously thought to be the case.[847] It is unclear why Charles Dalton would later inform Ernie O'Malley that Tobin had been out of action in the week leading up to the shootings, but it is now undeniable that he was physically present with Collins in Vaughans the night before. This is also significant because it is one of the rare instances of Tobin discussing his intelligence activities, although when asked to confirm if he was at Vaughans he merely confirmed 'That is so'.[848]

Tobin's participation in the Civil War is examined in the third section, which is made up of the fifth and sixth chapters. In this section the focus changes to his more public position as a Major General in the National Army, and his activities in North Cork in the summer of 1922. Previously little had been known about what precisely Tobin had been doing from 1922 to 1923, only that he had been given the rank of Major General, and that he was eventually replaced as Deputy Director of Intelligence in July 1922 by Joseph McGrath. However, as this period would be scrutinised by the Army Inquiry in 1924, it was important to clarify what activities he had been involved in, and when. Crucially, while he was removed as Deputy Director of Intelligence, this section discusses how Tobin was briefly made Director by Richard Mulcahy in October 1922.[849] This fact alone highlights that Mulcahy at least must have had some respect for him as an intelligence officer, despite his failings at establishing Oriel House along official lines.

In addition, one of the most significant parts of this section is the examination of relationships that Tobin had with former comrades who took the anti-Treaty side, which is particularly interesting when considering that the majority of them remained friendly with him after the Revolution. Although it is not the intention to overlook the treatment of anti-Treaty prisoners by men working under Tobin, it is nonetheless interesting that no accounts refer to him personally when discussing their experiences. Private letters sent to his mother from Cork and contemporary accounts in the Military Archives also indicate that Tobin did try to help former

[847] IE-MA-WMSP34REF60579, Margaret McEntee, p. 80 - 82
[848] Ibid
[849] IE-MA-W24SP2764, Liam Tobin, p. 60

comrades where he could during the Civil War, and as such this provides an insight into his frame of mind in the months leading up to the formation of the IRAO in late 1922.

Section four is the largest part of the thesis as it covers the Army Mutiny of 1924, and is made up of two chapters on the origins of the crisis, and the findings of the Army Inquiry. It was the most challenging in terms of the extensive amount of primary material available from testimonies in the Army Inquiry files in the Military Archives. In particular, it was important to examine the initial meetings that had taken place between Cosgrave, Mulcahy and the IRAO in June and July 1923, and the subsequent meetings between Mulcahy and the IRAO. Previously, it had been accepted that Mulcahy had been too conciliatory with the IRAO in his handling of the situation in general. However, this section examines the more complex reasons as to why the mutiny occurred, as well as the actions of Cosgrave as President. Additionally, this section presents a timeline of IRB and IRAO activity in the army from late 1922, which provides clarification on what motivated the IRAO to send the ultimatum to Cosgrave in the first place. Of particular significance is the fact that Tobin did not lay the blame for the mutiny on Mulcahy alone, again indicating that complete independence was at the forefront of Tobin's mind when it came to the mutiny.[850]

The final section examines Tobin's later life after the Revolution, and consists of the last chapter which presents a brief synopsis of the years after the mutiny to his death in 1963. The opening of this chapter explains what happened to the IRAO after 1924, and details how military intelligence continued to monitor them until 1926. *The Truth About The Army Crisis* details Tobin's aims regarding continuing the fight for complete independence, and while these sentiments appear to be genuine, the divisions that materialised in the IRAO were the result of no clearly defined goals amongst the group, and no definitive leader.[851] In addition, the purpose of this final chapter is to highlight that Tobin remained in prominent republican circles despite the fallout after the mutiny, and although he established the short-lived Clann na nGaedheal, it is clear that he was not best served as a politician. In a final show of disillusionment with the government, he threw his support behind Fianna Fáil by 1926; this is made all the more intriguing by Tim Pat Coogan's claim that he destroyed files for the Cumann na Gaedheal government in 1932.[852]

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[850] *The Truth about the Army Crisis,* p. 2
[851] *The Truth about the Army Crisis,* p. 2-4
[852] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 418

Briefly this section also discusses Tobin's involvement in other forms of employment, including the Hospital Sweepstakes and his own car hire service. Both would see his continued association with fellow mutineers until the late 1930's when he left the Sweepstakes. The more controversial aspects of Tobin's later life are also examined, such as his alleged associations with fascist politicians from France and Germany, although there is no documented evidence corroborating this. Of particular significance, however, is the allegation by Connie Neenan that Tobin was employed as an intelligence officer for Fianna Fáil, and thus ultimately De Valera.[853] While acknowledging that there are some doubts regarding Neenan's reliability as a source, nevertheless it is an interesting line of enquiry to further examine, especially when taking into consideration that Tobin was much more efficient as an underground intelligence officer than an official one working in a bureaucratic setting.

Ultimately, despite the significant role that he played from 1916 to 1924, there has never been a detailed study of Liam Tobin in the historiography of the Revolution. As stated previously, part of the reason for this could be because Tobin was reluctant to discuss any details about his intelligence work, and preferred not to speak on Civil War divisions while he was alive. On the other hand, the primary material available in the Military Archives alone is sufficient to construct a study of his activities during the War of Independence, such as his duties in the office at 3 Crow Street, the spies that he came into contact with, and key events that he was present at. Beyond acknowledging that he was Deputy Director of Intelligence and an organiser of the mutiny, no in-depth analysis of his contributions has been forthcoming. Regardless of this oversight in the narrative, contemporary proponents and critics alike were more outspoken in their praise for the part that he played. Dolan and Murphy refer to Seán Ó Mhurthuile's praise of Tobin's skills as an intelligence officer, and as such it provides a suitable closing for this study; without Tobin, Collins would not have had a 'shadow of an intelligence war'.[854]

[853] NLI Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,539/4, Letter from Connie Neenan to Joseph McGarrity 27th January 1934
[854] Anne Dolan and William Murphy, *Michael Collins: The Man and the Revolution*, p. 95

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