

Proefstuderen Geschiedenis

24 maart 2023



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Introductie

Een student Geschiedenis vertelt hoe jouw eerste jaar bij deze opleiding er uit zal zien.

Hoorcollege

Titel

Nederlandse Geschiedenis

Korte omschrijving

Het hoorcollege Nederlandse Geschiedenis op de proefstudeerdag geeft een indruk van de manier waarop het vak in de afgelopen eeuw is veranderd van aard en perspectief, en laat dit zien aan de hand van voorbeelden uit de geschiedenis van de Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) en de West-Indische Compagnie (WIC).

Docent: Prof. dr. Michiel van Groesen (m.van.groesen@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Michiel van Groesen is hoogleraar Zeegeschiedenis aan de Universiteit Leiden en één van de vaste docenten van het hoorcollege Nederlandse Geschiedenis in het eerste jaar van de opleiding Geschiedenis. Hij is gespecialiseerd in de geschiedenis van de West-Indische Compagnie en is de auteur van het boek *Amsterdam's Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil* (2017).

Werkcollege 1

Titel

Algemene Geschiedenis

Korte omschrijving

In deze werkgroep gaan we aan de slag met twee bronnen over *The Proclamation* waarin de Ierse staat wordt uitgeroepen na de Paasopstand (1916).

Docent: Dr. Joost Augusteijn (j.augusteijn@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Dr. Joost Augusteijn studeerde geschiedenis aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam waar hij ook promoveerde (1994) op de geschiedenis van het Ierse Republikeinse Leger. Vervolgens werkte hij als docent moderne Ierse geschiedenis aan Trinity College, Dublin en Queen's University, Belfast. In 2000 werd hij benoemd tot Assistant Professor in European History aan de Universiteit Leiden, sinds 2014 is hij universitair hoofddocent aan het Instituut voor Geschiedenis.

Werkcollege 2

Titel

Sociale Geschiedenis

Korte omschrijving

In dit college gaan we ons bezighouden met de historisch-demografische veranderingen die zich in Nederland (en het noordwesten van Europa) hebben voorgedaan in de laatste twee eeuwen. Het gaat dan vooral om de spectaculaire daling en beperking van het kindertal per ouderpaar en de toename van de levensduur; processen die zich in de verschillende delen van ons land (provincies, regio's, stad en platteland) niet in identieke vorm en gelijk tempo hebben voorgedaan. Mede hierdoor ontstonden grote regionale verschillen in de samenstelling en omvang van huishoudens, en in de gezondheid en levenskansen van mannen, vrouwen en kinderen. Deze demografische processen hebben bovendien een nauwe relatie met meer algemene sociale, economische en culturele veranderingen die Nederland in de afgelopen eeuwen heeft ondergaan. In het college gaan we specifiek kijken naar het wel en wee van baby's en kleine kinderen, waarom we zo graag naar 'sterfte' kijken, en welke bronnen historici hiervoor tot hun beschikking hebben.

Docent: Dr. Evelien Walhout (e.c.walhout@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Dr. Evelien Walhout, als universitair docent verbonden aan de Leidse universiteit, is historicus en gespecialiseerd in historische demografie en gendergeschiedenis. Momenteel verzorgt ze vooral onderwijs in de Bachelor Geschiedenis over onder meer epidemieën in het verleden. Daarnaast doceert ze enkele methodologische vakken zoals digital history, statistiek en oral history. Naast onderwijs doet ze, in opdracht van de Tweede Kamer, onderzoek naar gedwongen binnenlandse adopties in Nederland in de jaren vijftig tot tachtig. Ze promoveerde op een onderzoek naar de link tussen religie, regio, ziekte en zuigelingensterfte in Nederland in de negentiende en vroeg-twintigste eeuw.

Q&A

Heb je nog vragen over de opleiding? Dan kan de student die hier allemaal beantwoorden!

Voorbereiding

Lees voor het werkcollege Algemene Geschiedenis de volgende Wikipedia pagina (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proclamation_of_the_Irish_Republic) en bijgevoegd artikel.

Lees voor het werkcollege Sociale Geschiedenis bijgevoegd artikeltje over regionale en sociaal-economische verschillen in kindersterfte in Nederland, in de periode 1812-1912. In het college gaan we samen bespreken waarom onderzoek naar gezondheid en sterfte in het verleden relevant (en ook leuk) is, en hoe historici dit doen. Dit doen we aan de hand van het samen bestuderen van oude bevolkingsregisters en doodsoorzakenregisters.

The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare, 1916-1921

ALTHOUGH guerrilla warfare, in one form or another, is a phenomenon of great antiquity, only in recent generations has it moved dramatically into the public eye. Its status has changed; from the last resort of the defeated, or the anarchic resource of the bandit (a pejorative sense still evident in the writing of Mao Tse-tung), it has become the most advanced method of political mobilization for revolution. Theories of guerrilla warfare are common property, and can be reduced to fairly simple formulae – perhaps to one word, diffusion. Diffusion in space, in that the conventional military principle of the concentration of force is replaced by dispersion, and diffusion in time, in so far as rapid military decisions thus become impossible, and an indefinite time-perspective is adopted. The purely military effects of guerrilla warfare will usually be seen as subordinate to its political and psychological effects. Victory is achieved not so much by knocking the enemy's sword from his hand as by paralysing his arm. On the question whether guerrilla war can by itself be the means of defeating a strong and determined enemy, views differ. Eastern theory, exemplified by Mao and Giap, has tended to see it as no more than a transitional phase, which must give way by degrees to conventional open war. Westerners have perhaps been more inclined to believe that the moral effect of guerrilla struggle can be sufficient to overcome governments, at least those dependent on public opinion.¹ Either way, a substantial body of theory has been elaborated, and is deployed as a basis for action. One may conclude that the most striking change that has overtaken guerrilla warfare in the last century has been the transition from instinctive activity to planning based on theory. Like it or not, modern guerrilla fighters cannot help being more self-conscious than their forebears. However spontaneous and idealistic it may remain, guerrilla warfare has become a species of science, calling for objectivity on the part of its practitioners, and giving all guerrilla struggles a tendency towards universality. This self-consciousness can, if it leads to too great a reliance upon theory, have fatal consequences.

It might be argued that consciously modern guerrilla methods first emerged successfully in Ireland, where, between 1917 and 1921, a subversive movement grew up from grass roots and fought its

1. Most notably in the works of Che Guevara and Régis Debray. The most recent and wide-ranging survey of guerrilla theory and practice is W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (London, 1977).

way to the substantial achievement of its political programme. The Anglo-Irish war is often seen as prototypical of the 'war of national liberation', and the Irish Republican Army as paradigmatic of the modern guerrilla organization.¹ Such views must be open to doubt. Until recently, analysis of the Republican structure, policy and methods has been based on somewhat inadequate evidence – very largely the published memoirs of participants. Assumptions about the orderly planning and development of the Republican campaign have been made which would seem to owe more than a little to hindsight.² In the light of the archival material now available, it is worth re-examining the IRA and asking how far, and by what means, a characteristically modern approach to guerrilla war did in fact develop during this period.

Until after the failure of the 1916 Rising, Irish separatists, with notable exceptions such as James Fintan Lalor, had little time for the guerrilla idea. From this standpoint, the significant thing about the Rising is not that it failed, but how it had envisaged succeeding. Its martyrogenic and blood-sacrificial qualities have tended to obscure the fact that most of the leaders of the Irish Republican Brotherhood had not planned to fail: they worked within a venerable tradition of European revolutionary thinking, that of the insurrection organized and unleashed by a small and dedicated, often clandestine, group. The mass of the people were expected to answer the call at the critical moment, though few groups took much trouble to increase the likelihood of this by means of systematic grass-roots organization or politicization. The élitism of such 'insurrectionists' received some justification from the repeated success of Parisian revolts, but after 1871 the increasing sophistication of military technology made contests between regular armies and popular forces more unequal than ever before. In spite of the sophisticated theories drawn from the Paris Commune, barricade fighting was effectively finished, and the ideas on street fighting produced by James Connolly in the light of the 1905 Russian revolts were only superficially more viable.³ It might be argued that an old-style revolutionary group did succeed in Russia in 1917, but the circumstances were unusually propitious. Such was not the case in Ireland the previous year. The racial antagonism upon which –

1. See, for instance, T. Bowden, 'The Irish Underground and the War of Independence 1919–1921', *Journal of Contemporary History*, viii (1973).

2. Such is, perhaps, the case with Florence O'Donoghue's biography of Liam Lynch, and his 'Guerrilla Warfare in Ireland 1919–1921', *An Cosantoir*, xxiii, May 1963.

3. J. Connolly, 'Street Fighting – Summary', *Workers' Republic*, 24 July 1915. The insurrectional theory – or instinct – was opposed by one IRB leader, Bulmer Hobson, who advocated a fighting style based on Lalor's ideas. When Connolly told him that Ireland was a 'powder keg', he retorted that 'if he must talk in metaphors, Ireland was a wet bog'. Despite support from J. J. O'Connell (one of the few members of the Volunteer Executive with military experience), Hobson was easily outmanoeuvred. See, *inter alia*, Hobson and McGarrity MMS, National Library of Ireland, MS 13168–9.

rather than social conflict – Irish opposition was founded, was then at a low ebb. The only prospect of building up revolutionary consciousness lay in a protracted struggle, a guerrilla campaign in the twentieth-century sense. The IRB, however, were still living in the nineteenth. Their view of the people's role in revolution was Mazzinian – a powder keg which would erupt when the flame of revolt was kindled, a cathartic force rather than the semi-passive element which the people were to become in Mao's imagery – the water in which the rebel fish could survive for as long as might be necessary.

In 1916 the most elementary guerrilla methods were eschewed in favour of the seizure and static defence of a few big buildings. Countess Markievicz's construction of trenches on St Stephen's Green is justly notorious. Tragi-comedy apart, this mentality led to real lost opportunities, particularly the failure to disrupt British communications between Kingstown and Dublin. The rebel leaders lived in hourly expectation of risings throughout the country. A few outbreaks, as anachronistic as Dublin's, did occur, notably in Galway; but only one local commander, Thomas Ashe in northern County Dublin, adopted what might be seen as a new style of warfare. Clare was quiet, alleging confusion of orders. So was Cork, and the reasons later given by Thomas MacCurtain are interesting. He argued that: (a) only 80 Volunteers out of an enrolled membership of almost 2,000 were prepared to stand by their leaders to the end; (b) the amount of arms and ammunition in Cork county, if concentrated in the city, would have lasted only twenty minutes.¹ It is instructive to reflect upon what might have been done with such forces a few years later, when they would have been diffused through the county, not concentrated for a stand-up fight in Cork city.

In one sense, in the light of their political effect, the military failures of 1916 were unimportant, but this should not obscure the fact that they were failures. Since the proponents of 'physical force' were still committed to violence as the only thing which would finally break Britain's grip on Ireland, the rapidity with which the risings were crushed posed a real problem. Any future action along the same lines would, as the British authorities assumed, meet the same fate.² As a result, the revival of Sinn Féin after 1916 was associated with a huge increase in political rather than military activity. By the end of 1918, as one famous Tipperary rebel put it, 'the Volunteers were in great danger of becoming merely a political adjunct to the Sinn Féin organization'.³ From the point of view of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the national movement had got

1. Kathleen Keyes McDonnell, *There Is a Bridge at Bandon* (Cork, 1972), p. 103.

2. Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919–1921* (London, 1975), pp. 3, 6.

3. D. Breen, *My fight for Irish Freedom* (revised edition, Tralee, 1964), p. 38.

out of hand, and was passing into the control of non-IRB men like Griffith, de Valera and Brugha. It was this, rather than any theorizing about future military possibilities in the wake of the Rising, which led to the guerrilla initiative of 1919. Although it has been argued that Volunteer leaders consciously adopted the idea of prolonged struggle, detailed research suggests that local realities and traditions loomed largest in the process of 'taking to the gun'.¹ Political dispute, family rivalry, instinctive opposition – in effect a sort of social banditry – provided the motive force. The means were dictated by circumstance. Slender resources created the style of warfare, rather than a conviction that it held a real hope of ultimate success.

The campaign of violence which opened sporadically in the first six months of 1919 was unattractive to most 'political' Sinn Féiners. The general boycott of the Royal Irish Constabulary which had begun in 1918 was reconcilable with Sinn Féin's belief in civil resistance, but the shooting of policemen at Soloheadbeg on 21 January 1919 was not. The coincidence of this event and the first meeting of Dáil Éireann can be misleading: as Dan Breen's account shows, it was entirely fortuitous, since the Soloheadbeg attack had been attempted several times before. And although the Volunteers henceforth claimed that they were the legally-constituted army of a lawful state (and some units began to style themselves 'Irish Republican Army'), their connection with the Republic represented by Dáil Éireann was tenuous. They resisted the oath of allegiance to the Dáil which Brugha, as Minister of Defence, sought to impose; they tended to resist, indeed, all central control, especially political control, and there was a long delay – until April 1921 – before the Dáil took public responsibility for their actions.² In reality the physical force men acted independently, compelling moderates to move towards their extreme position, and so regaining their grip upon the independence movement as a whole.

As it developed, the IRA, as the Volunteer movement will henceforth be called (although many units did not employ the new title), followed out patterns inherent in its structure. The sporadic opening of the campaign of violence was a function of wide local variations in organizational strength and attitude. The campaign, if the word is applicable at this stage, was an affair of local companies, which generated themselves spontaneously out of or alongside the Sinn

1. For a very illuminating study of County Clare in this period, see D. P. B. Fitzpatrick, *Irish People and Politics*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1974, esp. ch. 6.

2. Even then, as Kevin B. Nowlan has pointed out, 'it did so in a rather unusual, almost circumspect manner' (T. D. Williams *et al.*, *The Irish Struggle 1916-1926*, London, 1966, p. 73). The general attitude of the IRB was well expressed in a document (dated March 1919) captured by the police in August 1919, accepting the authority of the Dáil as long as it stood for complete independence. Public Record Office, London, Colonial Office papers, reports from RIC County Inspectors, C.O. 904 109. See also *infra*, p. 341.

Féin clubs. These were grouped into battalions, which were grouped into brigades – normally one, sometimes two or three per county – but the larger formations were more or less fictional at first. Officers were supposed to be elected, but most of them tended to ‘emerge’ in line with their local status.¹ Election, where used, tended (as it always does in armies which are not in action) to produce popular, easy-going, ineffective officers, who frequently ‘kept their areas quiet’ and out of the conflict.² Although central control over appointments was to increase later, many lazy or incompetent commanders survived throughout the period, and it was largely a matter of chance if officers displayed initiative and determination. This was important, because the performance of IRA units in 1920–1 depended on their initial impetus in 1918–19: thereafter no amount of prodding from above could spur on slow starters to make up lost ground.

The IRA was self-taught, with a noticeably conventional tinge imparted by Great War veterans.³ This was as clear in the rigid hierarchical structure it created on paper as it was in its day-to-day penchant for close-order drilling and parade-ground formations. It was redeemed from these anti-guerrilla tendencies by the organic flexibility of its companies, and by a certain adaptability in the face of plain facts. Nothing is more indicative of the spontaneity of local units than the fact that they were substantially financed by membership subscriptions. General Headquarters (GHQ), which superseded the old Volunteer Executive in March 1918, expected payment for such supplies as field equipment and training manuals. Right up to the Truce, units were expected to be financially self-sufficient, though their sources of money became less spontaneous as their needs mounted. A report from the 3rd Ulster Division in August 1921 pointed out that a GHQ order to furnish a flying column had placed a serious strain on the already weak finances of the Belfast Brigade, 75 per cent of whose members were out of work. The Division itself had gone into debt to procure equipment for making grenades.

As you can understand it was always with great difficulty we were able to raise sufficient funds to keep the work of the Army going in this area. I intend after the Truce to strike a levy through the Division but I candidly believe that its enforcement will be difficult.

There are numerous cases in the Belfast Brigade of officers and men who would require financial assistance as under ordinary circumstances they would have to emigrate for work elsewhere. I have given this

1. Fitzpatrick, p. 304, suggests that most local officers ‘in effect . . . appointed themselves’. For formal Volunteer constitution, see Townshend, p. 18.

2. Comments of GHQ Organizer, Cavan Brigade, 22 Feb. 1921. Mulcahy papers, University College Archive, Dublin, P7/A/1 (hereafter Mulcahy MSS).

3. Fitzpatrick, p. 305.

assistance sparingly as best I could in some cases but much more yet remains to be done.¹

The social basis of the IRA is a subject that was for a long time ignored, so that the vague remarks of two early writers, Sir James O'Connor, who spoke of 'a couple of thousand Irish peasants and shopboys', and W. Alison Phillips, who wrote that the great majority consisted not of farmers or petty tradesmen but of 'shop assistants and town labourers', had something of the quality of pioneering hypotheses.² It is not yet possible to be much more precise. Surviving nominal rolls of units in Dublin suggest that both overstressed the role of shop-assistants, while being largely correct about the working-class complexion of the rank and file. In the provinces, farming backgrounds clearly predominated, especially amongst officers, though there appears to have been a substantial increase in the proportion coming from middle-sized (20–50 acres) rather than large (over 50 acre) holdings. Outside the farming group, men from shops and trades tended to be replaced by labourers.³

This social structure did not generate a progressive social ideology. The socialistic 'Democratic Programme' adopted at the first Dáil was already an emasculated version of the original draft prepared by the labour leader Thomas Johnson, and any lingering ideas of a socialist land settlement were scotched by the Dáil Land Courts set up in May 1920, one of whose main objects was to retain the sympathy of landowners and head off the possibility of an agrarian war. While one should not underestimate the sincerity of many republicans' belief in the ideal, if vague and primitive socialism of 'Ireland free and Gaelic', even men of the modern left who worked within the IRA, such as Liam Mellows, the Director of Purchases, followed the example of Connolly and subordinated the struggle for socialism to the struggle for 'freedom' – that is, nationalism. The IRA's task was thus simplified, since it had a ready-made ideological constituency. Its propaganda needed to be nothing more than an increasingly strident repetition of ancestral hatreds, an atavistic chauvinism whose political bankruptcy only became fully apparent

1. O.C. 3rd Ulster Division to Chief of Staff, 16 Aug. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/21. Emigration was impossible during the Great War, and was heavily discouraged thereafter by the Republic. For payments by local units see, e.g., Adjutant General to Acting Brigade Commandant, East Waterford, n.d. (early 1920). General Collins papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Pos. 916, A/0491 (hereafter Collins MSS).

2. W. A. Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland* (London, 1923), p. 176; J. O'Connor, *A History of Ireland 1798–1924* (London, 1925), p. 315.

3. For instance, the nominal roll of the 2nd Battalion, South Dublin Brigade shows that, about the time of the Treaty, of the 57 members of C Company, 5 were shop assistants, 9 gardeners, 10 labourers, 4 clerks; D Company's 72 members included 2 shop assistants, 18 gardeners, 28 labourers and 1 clerk; while F Company had no less than 20 labourers out of a total of 31 – though it boasted 2 farmers, 1 medical student and 1 post office telephone supervisor. Collins MSS, Pos. 921. Fitzpatrick, pp. 307 and 337, has tables analysing the Clare IRA by occupation groups.

in the generations which followed the Treaty. The IRA worked hard at preaching nationalism, but it did not develop the strict linkage between military activity and political education which was to become so strong a feature of later guerrilla movements.

The main struggle of the IRA in the first instance was to arm and train itself. Each unit had to do this on its own, before it could think of undertaking any recognizable military operations, and for many units the securing of weapons was the be-all and end-all of revolutionary activity. In advanced areas such as Dublin, Cork and Clare, the initial processes were adequately completed by the winter of 1919–20. Elsewhere progress was slower. Ernie O'Malley, then a GHQ Organizer in Tipperary, reported in December 1919 that

Officers or men have not the faintest idea or at most only a very faint idea of military work in general. They know very little of the organization and systematic training necessary to turn out an efficient soldier. Military propaganda is necessary. Already I have instructed officers to court-martial men who have missed more than three consecutive parades.¹

Although we may detect in this report the influence of conventional military ideas, it is clear that great efforts were needed to overcome inertia, ineptitude, and fear. It was necessary to ensure that the fear behind was greater than the fear in front: a battalion commander in Londonderry later wrote that

In the beginning of 1920, I had a company of about fifty men, and was the only functioning unit in the city, twenty-five per cent of these I held together by means of threats etc., the remainder were particularly unenthusiastic.²

The most common type of military action for these embryonic forces was, inevitably, the arms raid, and the most frequent targets were the big houses of landowners. Possession of even a handful of weapons made it possible to snipe at RIC posts, thus forcing the police to concentrate and reducing their capacity to prevent further arms raids. Such raids produced shotguns and revolvers, with which most IRA units became well supplied. Revolvers were also comparatively easy to smuggle into Ireland, thanks in part to the amazingly lax British customs controls. The real problem was in obtaining rifles, on which any serious operations would depend: for these it was necessary to attack the RIC (who did not, in fact, carry service rifles until mid-1920, when their Martini-Henry carbines were replaced by Lee-Enfields), or, more ambitiously, the armed services. Perhaps the most dramatic raid took place at Collinstown airfield in March 1919, when 75 rifles and 4,000 rounds of ammuni-

1. O'Malley to Capt. G. Plunkett, 5 Dec. 1919. O'Malley papers, U.C.D. Archive P17 A/1 (hereafter O'Malley MSS).

2. Lt. Sheerin, 'Record of Derry City Battalion, Derry Brigade'. Collins MSS A/0464/j, Pos. 915.

tion were captured; the RAF guards were bound and gagged, and ten vehicles were crippled to prevent pursuit. Elsewhere, the temporary seizure of a light naval vessel in Bantry Bay on 16 November was the take-off point for the west Cork IRA, as one participant recorded:

The period of raiding for mails, raiding houses for arms etc. had passed, with the Ross Canadian rifles and plenty of ammunition bigger game was hunted; the attacks on barracks and ambush phase was about to begin. One mistake we made, however; a three inch gun mounted on the bow deck we could, I think, have brought with us. The moral effect of having it would have cleared every police outpost in West Cork, but the step from no rifle to a three inch gun was too great to contemplate.¹

As for attacks upon the army, the most famous of them, Liam Lynch's raid at Fermoy in September, was productive of weapons as well as psychological effect.

After 1919 pickings were harder. Rebels faced a stiff fight for rifles, unless they could purchase them, either abroad or in Ireland. Rather surprisingly, the army itself continued to be a useful source, whether through sheer carelessness in the safeguarding of arms, or through the commercial proclivities of soldiers who were prepared to risk their lives to sell weapons. IRA units in west Cork, for instance, procured rifles, ammunition, and even a machine gun, from Ballincollig barracks as late as the spring of 1921.² More frequently, arms were bought abroad, either by the GHQ Director of Purchases, or by agents of the more active units – sometimes in competition. The result of all these processes was wild inconsistency in local arms holdings. One company in county Cork might have four rifles and another might have twenty, while in county Clare an entire brigade might not muster ten. Temporary transfers of rifles were unusual, and could not in any case remove a sense of inferiority in weak units, which sent up a perpetual cry for arms. GHQ, however, tended to supply only those units which were already showing signs of purposeful activity, a form of incentive which created something of a vicious circle.³ For many would-be rebels, rifles seem to have been a psychological precondition of action. Another problem which was never really solved was the provision of grenades and mines. These could be manufactured, though with irregular results. A typical collection of home-made

1. Collins MSS A/0394/xvi, Pos. 915.

2. Capt. Séan Collins Powell, 'Notes on the Anglo-Irish Conflict, for 2nd Bureau, GHQ'. Collins MSS, Pos. 921. J. O'Dwyer of A Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, recorded that some soldiers at Ballincollig were executed for trading with the IRA. For British army problems with safeguarding of arms see, *inter alia*, File 52/786, PRO, War Office Papers, W.O. 35 180 part I.

3. See, e.g., South Roscommon Brigade IRA to GHQ, 26 Mar. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/38.

grenades, captured in Dublin in November 1920, was analysed by the Royal Engineers, who found them primitive, effective in a confined space, but with inconsistent detonators; they were 'not safe if stored in damp places', and 'very dangerous to strip'.¹ The construction of mines, vital for bigger operations, was much more difficult, and even an efficient unit like Tom Barry's column was dogged by mine failure throughout the war.

Alongside organization and armament, as the foundations of a guerrilla campaign, modern theory would place the creation of a comprehensive intelligence system.² The IRA's achievement in this sphere is legendary – in both senses of the word, as it now seems. Most commentators have taken more or less at face value the Republican claim that the Irish people substantially backed the rebel forces. Their co-operation, whether a result of national enthusiasm or of fear of the IRA's reputation for omniscient and ruthless punishment of 'spies and informers', created an unbridgable 'intelligence gap' between rebels and government, ensuring that the former worked in the light of comprehensive information, the latter in the dark.³ This idea is in need of re-examination. In the first place, the organization and functioning of the intelligence service within the IRA was far from faultless. This may have been due in part to the IRA's general irregularity of structure, though it should be pointed out that the British army, which was very regular, suffered similar problems. It is clear that GHQ was slow to appreciate the need to have specialist intelligence officers in all battalions, and orders to this effect were not issued until December 1920.⁴ Thereafter, the inertia of many local units remained an insuperable obstacle to a comprehensive service of intelligence. As late as March 1921, GHQ produced a scathing criticism of its rural forces, which had, it said, 'in general a very faulty grasp' of this subject. 'Men who clamour for arms', it added, 'neglect this branch which they can perfect unarmed'.⁵ This is certainly borne out by a reading of surviving flying column reports and other local records.

Even the most celebrated achievements of IRA intelligence were not without flaw. The apogee of the organization was Michael Collins' own network in Dublin, which was responsible for the

1. Note by R.E. on bombs found by 25th Brigade in slag heap at Crumlin Brick Works, 8 Nov. 1920. W.O. 35 70 (Dublin District HQ File).

2. B. H. Liddell Hart, foreword to Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (London, 1962), p. xv.

3. Townshend, pp. 62–63 broadly accepted this interpretation. Bowden, 'The Irish Underground', *loc. cit.*, is pretty well pure panegyric in this respect.

4. Piaras Béaslaí, 'How It was Done: IRA Intelligence', in *Dublin's Fighting Story 1916–21* (Tralee, 1949), pp. 198–200. See also the vague instructions relating to 'the objects of the Intelligence Service' in an IRA document of Nov. 1920. P. and C. Police Reports, no. 5. State Paper Office, Dublin.

5. GHQ IRA, 'Serious Deficiencies in Country Units', Mar. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/III/17. Cf. also Chief of Staff to South Wexford Brigade, 13 May 1921. *Ibid.*

assassination of twelve British officers on 'Bloody Sunday' (21 November 1920). According to the IRA, these were members of a secret service group which was about to put Collins' organization 'on the spot'; while the government, displaying the characteristic administrative mentality, denied that any of them were connected with secret service work, which was not going on anyway. More detached verdicts have usually fallen somewhere between the two, but the most recent reappraisal, by Tom Bowden, substantially accepts the republican interpretation. After an examination of the service records of most of the victims, he concludes: 'Given the professionalism of his organization and the quality of his information there was a specific reason for the presence of each man on Michael Collins' list'.¹ But these things can no longer be accepted as 'given', in the light of Collins' own evidence about the 'specific reasons' in the case of Captain MacCormack. Mr Bowden lavishes considerable speculative attention on this mysterious Veterinary Corps officer, who had recently arrived from Egypt – 'a focal point of special intelligence operations' – and was shot in the Gresham Hotel, 'an expensive place for an ex-Captain of the RAVC to take up residence', as Mr Bowden remarks. Was he perhaps a germ warfare specialist?² If he was, Michael Collins was not aware of it, however. In a private note on a letter of protest from MacCormack's mother, he demolished the official Republican account thus:

With reference to this case, you will remember that I stated on a former occasion that we had no evidence that he was a Secret Service Agent. You will also remember that several of the 21st November cases were just regular officers. Some of the names were put on by the Dublin Brigade. So far as I remember McCormack's name was one of these.³

Belief in the professionalism of Collins' organization, and the quality of his information, can hardly survive this.

The acid test for a guerrilla movement is the closeness of its relationship with the ordinary people. The organization's own service of information should combine with a huge flow of intelligence material from outside, supplied by a sympathetic public, so that the disparity of power between government and insurgents is redressed by the capacity of the latter to pinpoint their targets for attack and to avoid unwanted encounters. An 'intelligence gap' of this sort was felt to exist by the British in 1920, but it narrowed rather than widened as time went by. In the spring of 1921, British operations became more and more successful, especially in Dublin.

1. T. Bowden, 'Bloody Sunday – A Reappraisal', *European Studies Review* 2, no. 1 (1972), p. 39.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 38–39. Bowden repeats and extends this analysis in 'Ireland: the Impact of Terror', M. Elliott-Bateman *et al.*, *Revolt to Revolution* (Manchester, 1974).

3. Mrs K. MacCormack (her spelling) to Irish Free State Government, and notes by Mulcahy and Collins, 28 March and 7 Apr. 1922. Collins MSS A/0535, Pos. 921.

Elsewhere, Ernie O'Malley's 2nd Southern Division admitted in August that for twelve months past the IRA had been 'steadily losing its grip of the towns and villages'.¹ British intelligence remained imperfect, but the link between rebels and people was evidently loosening. A long, rambling history of a Tipperary flying column indicates an unsatisfactory position in this pioneering rebel county. It is punctuated with such remarks as:

we got this information some time later. . . . It was also expected that the enemy would be informed of our movements at Barne and would muster in overwhelming numbers. . . . Luckily they began to move off in Clerihan direction, probably having received intelligence of No. 1 Col's movements in that direction . . . but unfortunately before intelligence could reach column they had returned to their barracks . . . this was another incident where any little previous knowledge of the enemy's movements would have afforded a possible victory for the column. . . . Our move seemed to be anticipated . . . something seemed to have gone wrong and no enemy showed up . . . the convoy unexpectedly arrived. . . .²

The only safe areas for this column appear to have been the Galtee mountains and the Nire valley – outside the brigade area. The highlight of the column's campaign was in fact a hairsbreadth escape from a British search, hiding all day in a ditch while British officers stood a few yards away, scanning the fields with binoculars. It finally selected its route of escape from the search cordon by 'trusting to luck'.

Other examples of the relative blindness – in some cases helplessness would hardly be too strong a word – of IRA units can be found in surviving records of the Mid-Limerick, Mid-Clare, Wexford, Roscommon and Monaghan brigades. A rather desperate Cork No. 2 Brigade column report in early January 1921, speaking of the hostility of farms at which the column had billeted, asked 'What is to be done with such people?'³ It seems legitimate to conclude that public co-operation was far from wholehearted. In common with most subsequent guerrilla forces, the IRA did not hesitate to employ terrorism as a means of rectifying this situation, and Tom Barry freely admitted that exemplary executions were increasingly necessary in 1921. But even his crack Cork No. 3 column seemed unable to staunch the flow of information to the Crown forces. In May 1921, for instance, it reported that an ambush had been betrayed and that it was 'unable to trace the informer'.⁴ In the same month a brigade of 1st Northern Division admitted to being mercilessly harried by

1. 2nd Southern Division Orders, 26 Aug. 1921. UCD Archive, O'Beirne Ranelagh papers, Pg.

2. History of Tipperary No. 2 Brigade Flying Column. O'Malley MSS P17 E/94.

3. Active Service Section, Cork 2nd Brigade to Brigade Headquarters 22 Jan. 1921. RIC Reports, Jan. 1921. C.O. 904 114.

4. Cork No. 3 Brigade War Diary, 14 May 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/20.

British 'drives', adding 'We seriously suspect those giving information, but can obtain no proof whatever'.¹ The legendary omniscience of the IRA begins to seem more and more mythical, a myth whose importance for the security and survival of the republican army is obvious enough.

Surveying the organization and development of the IRA up to 1921, it is hard to accept Mr Bowden's assertion that it was 'unified, cohesive and ready for action by the middle of 1919'.² Rather the converse seems to have been the case: the IRA was marked by the irregularity and separation of its units, many of which never became ready for serious action. This does not make it impossible to speak of a 'guerrilla campaign' developing, but it should make us sceptical of a theoretical unity and cohesion retrospectively imposed by the IRA command. This command, dealing with an army which was in large measure self-created and self-sustaining, made constant and strenuous efforts to break down local independence and to regularize the hierarchy of control. This imitation of the incumbent régime has been a feature of most subversive movements, and it has obvious risks in terms of stifling initiative and spontaneity.³ Beyond a certain point, central operational control of guerrilla warfare is nonsensical, but this point must be a matter for empirical experiment. Within the IRA it is evident that there was tension between the strong centrifugal tendency of the local units and the growing centripetal drive of GHQ. The latter impulse culminated in 1921, and gave rise to most of the IRA's theories of guerrilla action, but until then the major evolutionary stages of the campaign were spontaneous and unplanned.

The first of these, the transition from arms raids to attacks on RIC barracks, became significant in the winter of 1919-20. In spite of their name these barracks were usually no more than substantial houses, occupied by eight or twelve policemen (the smaller police posts were abandoned before mid-winter). Although fortified with iron shutters and a few sandbags, their field of fire was often obstructed by neighbouring buildings, and they were fairly simple to approach. Nonetheless, a serious night assault (the timing dictated both by the need for concealment and by the availability of men who were at work during the day) was a demanding business, and few were pressed to the surrender or destruction of the barrack. It is often argued that these targets were chosen for consciously political reasons, but it is plain that they offered the most obvious

1. 1st Brigade, 1st Northern Division to Chief of Staff, 22 May 1921. *Ibid.* P7 A/II/20.

2. Bowden, 'The Irish Underground', p. 16. O'Donoghue is more cautious, speaking only of 'a measure of cohesion' (*ubi supra*, p. 294).

3. The principle of reciprocity between insurgents and governments was suggested by Peter Paret in his *Internal War and Pacification. The Vendée, 1789-1796* (Princeton University, Research Monograph no. 12, 1961).

chances of tactical success, and were thus all but inevitable.¹ Likewise the second major stage, the creation of full-time fighting units – ‘flying columns’, or, in IRA officialese, Active Service Units – was a natural response to difficult circumstances. Until mid-1920 nearly all IRA men remained in their normal occupations, and only a few of the most wanted leaders had been forced to go into hiding or ‘on the run’. But with mounting military pressure, especially after the Restoration of Order Act came into effect, these numbers increased dramatically, and it became necessary for fugitives to band together for protection.² Several of the most famous columns had already formed when GHQ picked up the idea, and the spread of the concept thereafter was probably due less to GHQ orders than to its inherent appeal, both functional and romantic. Every brigade, indeed every battalion worth its salt wanted to have one, and by early 1921 an enormous number of columns existed. Most of them did little more than exist. This proved disappointing to GHQ, but the local units were giving expression to what has become a paramount dictum of modern guerrilla war, that the primary task of the guerrilla fighter is to survive.³ In principle the emergence of the columns made feasible a type of operation – the ambush – which required long and thorough preparation. In practice the obstacles to mounting a successful ambush were so great that very few columns overcame them; surviving reports of units operational during the winter of 1920–1 paint a bleak picture of widespread ineffectiveness and failure.⁴ GHQ, taking the activities of a few outstanding columns as the norm, tried hard to impose uniformity of standards and procedures, but to little avail: success or failure was determined by local conditions.

A shift in the pattern of activity, away from operations such as attacks on barracks and towards what the IRA journal *An t-Oglách* called ‘small jobs’, became evident in 1921. Although GHQ encouraged this emphasis, one suspects that this merely reflected its realization that most units would never be able to do much more than carry out minor raids on post offices, or individual assassinations. To take one notable feature of the campaign in its last twelve months,

1. O’Donoghue is guarded on this, though the assumption of a grand policy is almost universal.

2. Michael Brennan of East Clare remarked that the flying columns were a ‘purely spontaneous development which arose directly from the prevailing conditions’. Fitzpatrick, pp. 328–32, argues that the paramount need was for self-preservation.

3. Compare Tom Barry’s remark that the objective was ‘not to fight but to continue to exist’ (*Guerrilla Days in Ireland*, Tralee, 1949, p. 26) with Che Guevara’s ‘the essential task of the guerrilla fighter is to keep himself from being destroyed’ (*Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 20).

4. See, e.g., report of GHQ Staff Captain on Tipperary no. 1 Brigade ASU, to Chief of Staff, 14 Feb. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17. This officer finally disbanded the column because of its ineffectiveness. Cf. Notes on IRA movements in 6th Division Area, in Weekly Situation Report, Commander-in-Chief Ireland to Cabinet, 30 Apr. 1921. CAB. 24 C.P. 2911.

the so-called 'offensive against communications', in its commonest form this amounted to blocking roads (by felling trees or digging trenches) and breaking bridges – operations that any local company, however weak, could undertake. Their military value was correspondingly slight except where they were planned in co-ordination with a flying column, which might benefit from confining the Crown forces to certain roads suitable for ambushes. Opinions of the policy varied. Many people regarded it as a waste of energy, since the army or police simply rounded up a number of civilians and forced them to repair the damage. In some areas, though, it was indispensable. In April 1921 a Clare brigade commandant argued thus:

I have been absolutely impressed with the utter impossibility of campaigning under present circumstances in level country unless the roads are made impassable. No power on earth could save a column from a big encircling movement from different points starting fairly early in the day if the roads are open.¹

Other units found that the policy could be an actual disadvantage, having the same effect as the ambush campaign, forcing the British to strengthen their patrols. As one rueful report said,

The result of this intensive road trenching was only to increase the numbers of enemy lorries (*i.e.* in each patrol) and the sending of an armoured car ahead to reconnoitre.²

On the whole, its main value in less active areas was probably in providing some sense of participation. Another aspect of the 'offensive', stemming more directly from GHQ planning, and very unattractive to the British, was the shooting of transport mules, which were held to be more valuable to the army than soldiers. Such attacks occurred mainly in Dublin, and animal lovers will perhaps be glad to know that they were not always straightforward. According to one report,

While in the act of shooting the mules, one of the mules started kicking and rearing up and knocked the Parabellum out of the man's hand, which went off when it hit the ground, slightly wounding him in the thigh, it is only a flesh wound and he got away alright.³

Still, the policy succeeded in that its secondary aim was to compel the army to employ extra troops to guard its transport. Armed escorts commenced on 26 April, urged by their General to 'defend

1. O.C. East Clare Brigade to Chief of Staff, 29 Apr. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/18.

2. Notes on Tipperary No. 2 Brigade Flying Column. O'Malley MSS P17 A/12. Cf. Cork no. 2 Brigade to Chief of Staff, 3 Mar., and Mid Clare Brigade to Chief of Staff, 11 Apr. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17.

3. O.C. no. 4 Section ASU to Dublin City Brigade, 12 Apr. 1921. In reports from Brigades, Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/39. For the evaluation of mules see *An t-Og/ach*, 3 June 1921.

the animals to the utmost'.¹ There was also a plan to infect army horses with glanders, which seems to have come to nothing. Curiously little was done in the way of sabotaging motor transport or other material of war, though of course this was normally under more substantial protection.²

The overall military position of the IRA by this time is not easy to assess. The regular exercise of British administrative authority had certainly been crippled, but for those of its members who thought in terms of driving the British into the sea, the IRA was still at square one. It could scarcely hope to take on its adversaries in anything more than platoon strength, and that only in a few areas. Columns, or groups of columns, of more than forty or fifty men were uncommon, yet they sapped the energy and resources of their counties and pushed local companies into decline.³ It is possible, from surviving headquarters records, to sketch the situation in a marginal county, such as county Clare. Traditionally one of the most disturbed counties of Ireland, Clare had become relatively peaceful in the early years of the Great War, but plenty of material for friction remained. The spontaneous regeneration of the Volunteers began early after 1916, and fierce local rivalry forced GHQ to accept the creation of three brigades, one for each of the most thrusting Clare families, the Brennans, Barretts and O'Donnells.⁴ The western (O'Donnell) brigade was much the weakest in arms, barely mustering ten service rifles (see table), and never rose above this problem. A memoir by Liam Haugh of the flying column remarked that a certain demoralization and 'operational torpor' descended on the brigade in September 1920, when the brigade training camp at Tullycrine was raided.⁵ There was obvious British intelligence penetration of the area in 1921, and a GHQ inspecting officer found in July that many of its units still lacked an intelligence specialist, and were neglecting fundamental work. Indeed, Haugh's main contribution to the overall history of the war is his lively description of one of the basic facts of life for men in active service units, the disease of scabies (otherwise known as the 'Republican itch').⁶

The mid-Clare brigade was commanded throughout the struggle, with one interlude in spring 1921 when he was suspended for displaying 'want of judgment', by Frank Barrett, a traditional Fenian

1. Dublin District War Diary, 17 and 26 Apr. 1921. W.O. 35 90/2.

2. *An t-Oglach*, 3 June 1921, belatedly pointed out the value of material targets. The Dublin 'Shell Factory', in fact a vehicle store, was burned on 4 June – and was certainly one of the best-chosen targets of this period. Report, Adjutant General to Chief of Staff, 17 June 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/19.

3. Fitzpatrick, pp. 331 ff.

4. E.g. Collins to Austin Stack, 28 Nov. 1918. NLI MS 5848; Fitzpatrick, p. 312.

5. History of W. Clare Bdc., L. Haugh to Col. O'Carroll, 2nd Bureau, Dept. of Defence, 12 June 1934. 25 pp. typescript in NLI Pos. 915.

6. *Ibid.*, and Organizer's Reports, W. Clare Bdc., 8 July 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/23.

who was still ordering drilling with pikes as late as December 1919.¹ The brigade was quite successful in the early stages of the conflict, and amassed a useful armoury (see table). But its operations became

TABLE
IRA arms holdings in County Clare

	Quantity of weapons	Quantity of ammunition
<i>West Clare Brigade</i>		
Rifles: Short-Magazine Lee-Enfield .303 in	8	275
'Howth' Mauser (single shot) .9 mm	2	9
Mauser (magazine) .765 mm	2	140
miniature .22 in	2	100
Shot guns: double-barrelled	24	1500
single-barrelled	36	
Revolvers: .45 calibre	48	279
Automatics: ditto (Colt)	3	48
Parabellums (short)	2	11
<i>Mid Clare Brigade</i>		
Rifles: Short-Magazine Lee-Enfield .303 in	48	2000
Carbines: Martini-Henry .303 in	48	
Rifles: miniature .22 in	3	300
Shot guns: double-barrelled	80	100
single-barrelled	100	
Revolvers: .45 calibre	50	200
Grenades	43	—

Source: Reports from GHQ inspecting officers to Chief of Staff, 1 October 1921. Mulcahy papers A/II/26.

somewhat stultified after the dramatic and celebrated ambush at Rineen in September 1920, in which six RIC, including a District Inspector, were killed, and five rifles captured, an event which led to still more dramatic and celebrated police reprisals. An RIC barrack was captured (with help from an inmate) in October, but by November failures became more frequent. An attempted ambush that month is typical: according to his report, the Brigade Commandant 'anticipated' that a party of Auxiliary police would move out from Killaloe via Tulla; an ambush was carefully prepared, but unfortunately 'the enemy came to Ennis via Limerick, Newmarket-on-Fergus and Clarecastle', rendering the attempt nugatory.² By this time a strongish column of 40–60 men existed, but early in 1921 it was divided into four groups, one attached to each local battalion.

1. Chief of Staff to Acting O.C. Mid-Clare Bde., 4 Apr. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17. Brigade Order, 4 Dec. 1919, Frank Barrett's dispatch book, quoted Fitzpatrick, p. 326.

2. Mid Clare Brigade, General Orders no. 14 report, Nov. 1920, p. 2. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/38.

This did not bring any obvious improvement, and after reading the brigade's February report, Mulcahy commented that

There really is nothing in it to indicate that the intelligence of forty companies was actively and efficiently at the disposal of four fairly substantial columns.¹

Either there was a lack of energetic leadership, or the organizational infrastructure was inadequate to sustain the fighting formations. The brigade subsequently reported operations such as:

March 29th. A party of the 4th Battn. visited Lahinch in vain for two military officers who were reported to have been there the previous day.

March 31st. Battn. 1. Dog licences to the amount of £10.19s.0d. seized from C. P. S. Crusheen.

2nd Battn. 18 riflemen in 3 sections of suitable men to attack enemy RIC who may come out from Tormaclare Bks. Result – no RIC came out.²

Was this incompetence, or did it mean that the Crown forces were on the defensive? Mulcahy took the former view. On the basis of the following month's report, he observed that there had been

constant watching for the Enemy in a district in which there is almost daily activity on the part of the latter, yet contact with the Enemy is only established on three days in the month.³

The unfortunate commander finally admitted that

our intelligence is very faulty, especially in Ennis – the key to enemy activity in this area. The few reliables that Ennis has produced have been compelled to go 'on the run'.⁴

East Clare was the most successful of the three brigades. As against the disadvantage, which it shared with the others, of the flat and open Clare countryside, less than ideal terrain for skirmishing, it had the advantage of determined and able leadership. Michael Brennan was removed from command in 1919 because his ideas were too warlike for GHQ's taste (he was replaced by his brother Austin),⁵ but he continued to play a central role as both flying column commander and Chairman of Clare County Council. His dash and enterprise in the early stages were largely responsible for the brigade's useful armament of 73 rifles; his column was one of

1. Chief of Staff to O.C. Mid Clare Brigade, 4 Apr. 1921. *Ibid.* P7 A/II/17.

2. Mid Clare Brigade, War Diary, Mar. 1921. *Ibid.* P7 A/II/38.

3. Chief of Staff to O.C. Mid Clare Brigade, 23 May 1921. *Ibid.* Fitzpatrick argues that Mulcahy was unfair to Mid Clare, and it is probably true that it was no worse than most brigades.

4. O.C. Mid Clare Brigade to Chief of Staff, 28 May 1921. *Ibid.*

5. Fitzpatrick, p. 134.

the first to emerge, spontaneously, in 1920, and was continuously active thereafter. In April 1921 a joint operation was organized, involving an expedition to west Clare to attack Crown forces in Kilmush.¹ The success of such a venture obviously marked out east Clare as the focal point for the proposed Western Division, and Michael Brennan was appointed to command this new formation. It is noteworthy, however, that the division was paralysed from the start by the refusal of Mid-Clare to co-operate: local rivalry, so often the stimulus to IRA militancy, also imposed strict limits on its development.²

Nobody was more conscious of local inconsistencies in the IRA's performance than GHQ in Dublin, and in 1921 strenuous efforts were made to translate into reality the image, so brilliantly projected by republican propaganda, of an insurgent nation. While Collins continued to build up the muscle of the IRA, dealing out praises and rewards for success, and fulminating against failure, Mulcahy laboured to regularize and integrate its multiform, disparate components, and to elaborate a total strategy. In the forefront of these efforts was the attempt to regulate and improve the quality of local officers, whose ineffectiveness often paralysed whole brigade areas. Because of the sturdy independence of local units, the removal of established, influential officers could be a long and painful business. From very early on, staff officers were sent out from Dublin to assist, and to some extent oversee, the organization of provincial forces. Such men often went on to become divisional commanders, but their powers remained limited: persuasion and goodwill worked better than the direct exercise of authority.³ Many local officers, including a number of brigade commandants, were dismissed during the conflict, but as late as June 1921 the sacking of an influential local chief like Paddy Cahill of Kerry No. 1 Brigade could produce severe crises, both within the brigade itself and in Dublin. There were still limits to GHQ's powers of interference, and this was one of the reasons why the flying column concept proved so attractive to the central staff. An ambitious memorandum of April 1921, defining the function of Active Service Units, stated that these were 'not only a standing force of shock troops, they are also training units – and it is this that is their most important function'. All officers in each brigade should undergo a period of service in the ASU, and then

1. O.C. East Clare Brigade to Chief of Staff, 8 Apr., and operation report 29 Apr. 1921. According to this, West Clare was 'a district of great possibilities', with 'fine men, very few capable officers, and practically no arms . . . a fairly good local organization as proved by the splendid manner in which they have destroyed the roads'. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/38.

2. Reports on 1st Western Division, *ibid.* P7 A/II/25.

3. Organizers who became divisional commanders included O'Malley (2nd Southern) and McCormack (3rd Southern). O'Malley never seems to have fully integrated into his area, however.

If an Officer proves unequal to the command of his small group in the A.S. Unit he can be reduced, because the probability is that he would not prove equal to the larger command outside the Unit. The Unit is a testing and a teaching force where those fit for leadership get practice, and those unfit are found out before they have a chance of making blunders on a big scale. It is quite invaluable for 'vetting' Officers if properly administered.¹

Unfortunately for GHQ, although many flying columns did become ruggedly professional forces, their professionalization did not imply centralization – if anything the reverse. Nonetheless, GHQ's efforts continued, and their scope is indicated in a note by the Director of Organization in March 1921, pointing out that he was now dealing direct with 100 units and 32 organizers, as compared with only 45 units and 4 organizers during the previous summer. The involvement, he said,

includes dealing with monthly reports from all units, alterations and ratifications of officers of all ranks, general discipline, records and numerous other matters.²

Predictably, perhaps, the purpose of this note was to request extra staff – a full-time Assistant Director at £6 a week, and a secretary at £3 10s. This burgeoning bureaucracy is an interesting phenomenon. The explosion of paperwork – local reports were required with increasing frequency, and in multiple copies³ – is a boon to the historian, but it was a rather dangerous asset for a secret organization whose headquarter offices were constantly harried by military raids. It is not entirely clear what virtues Mulcahy saw in the keeping of comprehensive records, to outweigh their potentially disastrous effects: one senses a belief that regular administration at the top would create regularity below, or, if not, at least make the IRA feel more like a proper army.

Since GHQ could never hope for absolute control, it had to content itself with exhortation. This it did first of all by way of the journal *An t-Oglách* (The Volunteer), which was circulated fortnightly until April 1921, and thereafter weekly, mixing practical advice (on everything from fire and movement to the setting of booby traps, and even hygiene and the care of footwear) with general spirit-raising optimism ('the enemy is feeling the strain on his resources' . . . 'the Republic of Ireland IS and WILL BE'). In this journal, and in an ever-increasing number of staff memoranda, a

1. GHQ IRA, Director of Training, Training Memorandum no. 2, 'Function of A.S. Units', 23 Apr. 1921. O'Malley MSS P17 E.30, Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17.

2. Director of Organisation to Chief of Staff, 10 Mar. 1921. *Ibid.*

3. Organisation Department, General Instructions. *Ibid.* Cf. Tipperary No. 3 Brigade, East Limerick Brigade and 2nd Southern Division papers, Mar.–July 1921, O'Beirne Ranelagh MSS.

theory of guerrilla warfare emerged. It emerged piecemeal, but the pieces finally formed a considerable, if unsystematic, body of doctrine. In August 1920, for instance, while talking about the importance of the 'stronger will' in airy terms borrowed from Foch, *An t-Oglách* declared

We are carrying out a well-considered plan of campaign in which the object is to harrass and demoralize the enemy without giving them an opportunity to strike back effectively. We realize that it is far more profitable to *kill* for Ireland than to die for her. In short we are turning to account one lesson of Irish history – the mistakes of '98.¹

It was in the same vein, perhaps, that GHQ began to encourage smaller operations in 1921. In April of that year, Mulcahy wrote to one of his brigade commanders,

There seems to be in Fingal too much tendency to make everything a 'Brigade Job'. Delegation of authority to at least Battalion Commandants must be practised. It is certain that chances must be occurring constantly of small enterprises in various localities, which are lost by over centralisation. The cumulative effect of numerous minor operations will give all the desired results. There is nothing gained by hoping against hope for chances of big coups, whereby real small chances pass unheeded.²

There is more than a passing resemblance between this and the formulation later employed by Liddell Hart:

a multiplicity of minor coups and threats can have a greater effect . . . than a few major hits – by producing more cumulative distraction, disturbance and demoralization among the enemy, along with a more widespread impression among the population.³

The GHQ memorandum already referred to, on the function of Active Service Units, also anticipated Liddell Hart's concept of 'ubiquity combined with intangibility' when it argued that

They are large enough to take care of themselves in all ordinary circumstances. But they are not – and were never meant to be – suitable for operations on a mass scale. Handiness and mobility should be their characteristic marks, and in dealing with their transport and supply the need for mobility must be steadily kept in mind. 'Everywhere all the time, but nowhere at a given moment' – that must always be the motto.⁴

This perspective was not, however, entirely typical of IRA thinking. The temptation of planning 'operations on a mass scale' was not easy to withstand, and GHQ embarked on a line of thought – or

1. *An t-Oglách*, vol. ii, no. 17, 15 Aug. 1920.

2. Chief of Staff to O. C. Fingal Brigade, 6 Apr. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17. For an example of more specific criticism and advice see Staff comments on Report of attempted ambush at Coolavokig, 25 Feb. 1921. *Ibid.* P7 A/II/38.

3. Liddell Hart, *op. cit.* p. xiv.

4. Memorandum cited p. 336 n. 1 above.

dreaming – which was rather more ambitious, not to say grandiose. *An t-Oglach* hinted at this when it said that the aim of the guerrilla campaign was actually ‘to destroy the enemy as an effective military force’, though apart from some fairly ambitious ideas on how to counter the bigger British ‘drives’ in 1921, it tended to keep its sights low.¹ All the same, it shared the conceptual armoury which led Mulcahy to tell Michael Brennan on one occasion that ‘the people had to be educated and led gently into open war’.² An interesting light on GHQ thinking is shed by a document of March 1921 entitled ‘The War as a Whole’. This divided Ireland into four areas: (i) the ‘War Zone’, (ii) the secondary country areas, (iii) Dublin, and (iv) Ulster. The first of these, defined as the counties Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, and, above all, Cork, would require a ‘liberal proportion’ of available arms supplies, because it contained the highest concentration of enemy forces. However:

On the other hand the geographical circumstances of the War Zone render it impossible ever to secure a decision within it. It is a secondary theatre, though a most important one. So long as we can make the enemy exert himself greatly, without seriously draining our resources or weakening our striking power elsewhere, fighting in this area pays well . . . But suppose the feeding the battle in the War Zone resulted in a real deprivation of other areas, then it would mean that the Enemy had secured the initiative and was making us conform to his strategy. It is important not to lose sight of this question of exact balance.³

Aside from the dubious implications of the term ‘decision’ here, the idea that the level of activity in Cork was a function of central planning decisions was pure self-deception. The terms in which the Dublin area was analysed were still more doubtful.

In one vital respect the present struggle differs from any other military attempt to obtain the Independence of the Country – for the first time the National Military Command is securely established in Dublin. On every former occasion from King Edward Bruce onward the English hold on Dublin was never seriously challenged, and in the long run this hold on the capital turned the scale. Therefore, the grip of our forces on Dublin must be maintained and strengthened at all costs, and our forces there must be reinforced by strong flanking units to bring the Capital into closer touch with the Country . . . It cannot be too clearly stated that no number nor any magnitude of victories in any distant provincial areas have any value if Dublin is lost in a military sense.⁴

As for Ulster, this was described as a ‘vital bridgehead’ for the

1. *An t-Oglach*, vol. iii, nos. 13, 15, 17 June, 1 July 1921. The available evidence does not point up any connection between Childers’ Boer War experience and IRA guerrilla thinking, though it is hard to believe that none at all existed.

2. Fitzpatrick, p. 314.

3. GHQ IRA, Staff Memorandum, ‘The War as a Whole’, 24 Mar. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17.

4. *Ibid.*

English now that they had 'lost Dublin' – meaningless abuse of military terminology. The IRA were well established in the capital, but in no sense had they taken control of it.

There followed a series of strategic memoranda couched in similar terms, and linked to the most ambitious of Mulcahy's attempts to restructure the IRA – the creation of divisional commands. In April 1921 the 1st Southern Division was established under the commandant of Cork No. 2 Brigade, Liam Lynch; by the summer, there existed, on paper at least, three southern, one western, one midland, one eastern, and five northern divisions. Their *raison d'être*, according to Mulcahy, was

the necessity for harmonising the nature and direction of operative [*sic*] activity in adjoining Brigade Areas which are so placed as to influence the Military Situation in one another.¹

The divisions were a contentious matter from the start, and without entering too deeply into a discussion of their feasibility it has to be said that, notwithstanding *An t-Oglách's* brave assertions, they were not much of an asset. They were just too big, too ambitious for their actual resources.² And if GHQ's strategic memoranda for them were intended as real operational plans, their role must be still more questionable. The most sensible of these memoranda was, appropriately, that for 1st Southern Division. 'It is useful to get these things down in writing', Mulcahy wrote to Liam Lynch, arguing that this outweighed the 'accompanying danger that if any of this material falls into enemy hands it discloses our mind fairly completely to them'. The memorandum re-stresses that greater 'profit' is to be obtained from an aggregate of minor operations than from a few major ones.

It is not very important what post is attacked, nor when, nor how often an attack shall take place – the great thing is to have every attack that is made successful.³

It also emphasizes the importance of urban areas in a logistic sense.

The fact is: our War is distinct from all other Guerilla Wars in this respect – it is the Guerilla War of a civilised modern people; and it would be a great mistake to willingly abandon any warlike resource placed at our disposal.⁴

1. Chief of Staff to O.C. Cork No. 2 Brigade, 13 Apr. 1921. *Ibid.*

2. Tom Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Tralee, 1949), pp. 148–50; E. Butler, *Barry's Flying Column* (London, 1971), pp. 140–1. In view of Barry's well-known opposition, it is interesting that after a preliminary conference of the southern brigades Liam Lynch reported to Mulcahy that only Cork No. 1 had opposed the Divisional scheme. (O.C. Cork No. 2 Brigade to Chief of Staff, 12 Mar. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17).

3. Chief of Staff to O.C. 1st Southern Division, 25 Apr., and personal note attached. *Ibid.* P7 A/LL/18.

4. *Ibid.* Cf. memorandum to 1st Eastern Division: 'In a war in the middle of the twentieth century it would never do to allow ourselves to be shouldered out from the towns. Towns have stores of modern resources that country areas do not and these we must have as fully as can possibly be obtained.'

Oddly, however, there is no specific analysis of the political importance of the cities. The memorandum takes refuge in such phrases as 'gripping the enemy by the throat' (curiously reminiscent of Lloyd George), and speaks of 'investment Zones' which are to be 'drawn as tight as possible' around enemy headquarters so as to leave them 'no elbow-room'. These seem to be intended in a physical, not psychological, sense.

The memoranda for other divisional areas, especially in the north, contain a more fantastic strain. It was, perhaps, not unrealistic to advise that 'When it is a question of attacking agricultural interests, those should be selected which would have the largest effect in the direction of causing unemployment in the towns'; or even to say that to interrupt the main railway line north of Newry 'reduces Belfast to the status of a provincial centre and reduces greatly the amount of harm it can do to Ireland as a whole'.¹ But what is one to make of the observation that 1st Northern Division 'menaces the western flank of Carsonia (the Republican name for the Six Counties) along its entire length', or that an 'advance' from Donegal to Omagh would 'outflank the disaffected territories in the Foyle Valley from the south'? The use of the military concept of flanks here is quite irrelevant and misleading, as is the notion that 2nd Northern Division should try to 'split' the two brigades of the British division in Ulster, thus 'threatening the rear of the Derry Brigade, which is engaged in facing frontally our forces in Donegal'.²

Little of this accords with the fundamental spirit of modern guerrilla war – 'war without fronts', in which, as Vo Nguyen Giap later put it, 'the front was everywhere, it was nowhere'. The most favourable construction that one can put on these inflated documents is that GHQ was preparing for some sort of transition towards open warfare. It is, however, hard to see that such a transition was remotely within the IRA's power in 1921. The increasingly copious and detailed reports for the early summer underline more starkly than ever the contrast between the activities of a few brigades (mainly in Cork, Kerry and Dublin) and the rest. Much in evidence were narrow escapes by individuals or units involved in encounter fights (that is to say, unplanned clashes) with Crown forces, a strong indication of the inadequacy of IRA intelligence, and the improvement of British counterinsurgency techniques. And while *An t-Oglách* stridently reiterated that IRA morale was buoyant, the reports give a rather different impression. Indeed, at the end of March GHQ was driven to the grim conclusion that

The death penalty should be inflicted for the graver class of crimes if the situation calls for it. Quite lately there have been some cases of desertion,

1. GHQ IRA, Memorandum for 4th Northern Division. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/17.

2. *Ibid.*, 1st and 2nd Northern Division.

and unless disciplinary measures are taken there is a good prospect of large numbers running away in the Western areas. It is absolutely essential to stop this rot.¹

A flurry of activity took place around this time in a few counties which had previously been quiescent, such as Mayo and Sligo, but it proved illusory. At first GHQ became quite excited, thinking that the long-awaited national upsurge had begun, but these areas soon relapsed into their former somnolence.²

It was a clearly-felt need to 'deliver a smashing blow', to re-establish the Republic's psychological position, which brought together military and political leaders for a joint planning meeting at No. 40, Herbert Park, Dublin in April 1921.³ Already, personal animosities within and between these groups were causing difficulties. The continued survival of the IRB as a sort of state within the state represented by the Dáil was at the root of the dangerous tension inside the IRA command, where Cathal Brugha never managed to assert his authority over his nominal military subordinates, Collins and Mulcahy. Collins' position as President of the Supreme Council of the IRB, together with his prodigious energy and capacity for work, made it difficult to fit him into a regular governmental hierarchy. He and Mulcahy in effect ran the IRA as a private empire – Mulcahy even refused to work with the official Deputy Chief of Staff appointed by Brugha.⁴ De Valera's announcement, at the end of March, that the Dáil accepted responsibility for the actions of the IRA, can be seen as something of an admission of defeat by the 'politicians', who had not achieved any real control over the Republican military forces. The Herbert Park meeting was the nearest they came to this. The army accepted de Valera's choice of targets as either Beggar's Bush Barracks (the Auxiliary headquarters) or the Custom House – a choice betraying more than a tinge of the 1916 spirit. A feasibility study by the Dublin Brigade came down inevitably (and significantly) against Beggar's Bush, though the eventual operation, the burning of the Custom House on 25 May, proved to be as disastrous as anything that might have been anticipated from bearding the 'Auxies' in their den. The

1. GHQ IRA, Staff Memorandum, 'The Question of a Disciplinary Code', 30-Mar. 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/16.

2. See Chief of Staff to O.C. West Mayo Brigade, 25 May 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/18. Also Mulcahy's notes on P. Béaslaí, *Michael Collins*, p. 234. *Ibid.* P7 D/I/67.

3. These included de Valera, Brugha, Collins (Dáil Finance Minister and IRA Director of Intelligence), Austin Stack (Minister for Home Affairs, appointed as Deputy Chief of Staff by Brugha but ignored by Mulcahy), Mulcahy, Gearoid O'Sullivan (Adjutant General) Liam Mellows (Director of Purchases), Béaslaí, and J. J. O'Connell (Mulcahy's own appointee as Deputy Chief of Staff). Collins MSS, Pos. 921.

4. Some of the acid correspondence between Brugha and Mulcahy remains in the Mulcahy MSS. The best published account of the internal schism is in L. Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground. The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976) though it is to be hoped that J. O'Beirne Ranelagh's as yet unpublished work will clarify this difficult subject still further.

Dublin Brigade lost 100 men in one day – a figure unheard-of since the Rising – and though Republican propaganda made a brilliant job of portraying the operation as a body blow against the government, this did not alter the unfortunate reality of the situation.

Less Pyrrhic, and more damaging in effect, was the burning of the so-called ‘Shell Factory’, actually a vehicle store, early in the next month. But the real force of the IRA campaign by this time derived not from big, centrally-planned strokes, so much as from the accumulation of ‘small jobs’. In the first six months of 1921 the IRA consistently increased the monthly total of actions despite a marked decline in certain types of dangerous and demanding operation. In general terms one could say that quantity replaced quality. Comparing the two-year period from January 1919 to December 1920 with the six-month period from January to July 1921, we find an increase in the number of raids on mails from 959 to 1,305, and in raids on rate collectors’ offices from 23 to 99; and while the number of occupied police barracks *destroyed* plummeted down from 23 to 2, the number damaged (which could include mere sniping) leapt from 54 to 213 – an effective increase of 1,600 per cent.¹ This tendency may have been, in part, a result of the internment of many of the most active IRA leaders and men, which had reached a total of over 4,000 by the beginning of July, including 19 brigade commanders, 90 battalion commanders, and 1,600 company officers. The IRA had no difficulty in keeping up its numbers, but some of the losses were perhaps difficult to replace in terms of quality.² Still, no matter how they were achieved, the mounting totals of outrages had a marked political and psychological effect on the British, which was documented in a series of pessimistic military memoranda in May and June. The official mind had more or less reached its sticking-point, so that a relatively insignificant military event, the derailing of a troop train carrying the king’s cavalry escort back from the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament, proved decisive.³ But if British determination had been undermined by the moral attrition of guerrilla warfare, the attrition

1. Irish Office records. There is no agreed set of statistics: the RIC figures (given in graph form in Townshend, p. 123) are rather larger than those reported to the Cabinet by the Irish Office (Townshend, Appendix V), but the relationship is generally consistent. Raids on mails were always a significant component in outrage totals: 332 out of 2431 incidents up to Aug. 1920; increased to 169 out of 594 in Jan. 1921; 106 out of 333 in Feb., 158 out of 266 in Mar., and 284 out of 413 in Apr. (Irish Office figures, CAB. 24 and 27).

2. Figures in Townshend, Appendix XII. One might of course argue that the men whom the British succeeded in interning were often the least rather than the most capable.

3. There is a highly clinical account of this operation (which must have been peculiarly gruesome, in that it involved the death or injury and subsequent destruction of eighty horses) in a report from 1st Northern Division to Chief of Staff, 30 June 1921. Mulcahy MSS P7 A/II/21. For the British reaction see C. J. C. Street, *Ireland in 1921* (London, 1921), p. 80.

had also gnawed away at the Republican side. There was no shortage of gloom there too, and much of it, unexpectedly, was to be found amongst the GHQ staff. The arguments later propounded by Collins and Mulcahy in favour of the Treaty were based on the belief that the IRA had reached its limit, a limit at which, as Mulcahy pointed out, it could do no more than take on a moderate-sized British post. That this observation came as a candid, even bitter admission might be puzzling to a modern guerrilla theorist, and the explanation must lie in the contrast between extravagant hopes and modest reality. The scale of the ideas developed by GHQ led almost inevitably to disappointment, and even to an underestimation of the actual achievements and basic strength of the IRA.¹ Further, the concentration on Dublin, almost obsessive in some of Mulcahy's memoranda, could only lead to an exaggeration of its difficulties. All the available evidence suggests that the Crown forces were more successful in Dublin than anywhere else in Ireland, and that in the spring and early summer of 1921 they were putting the Republican headquarters under very heavy pressure. The IRA campaign as directed by Mulcahy and Collins was thus increasingly imperilled, and their defeatism can be seen as a function of their centralizing urge.

In sum, it is necessary to question the common assumption that between 1919 and 1921 the IRA became a tightly organized, militarily efficient, and consciously revolutionary force, enjoying a close, not to say symbiotic, relationship with the Irish people, and pursuing a distinctively modern strategy of protracted war. This assumption has recently been re-stated thus: 'By 1920 the Irish were a people in arms, committed to the IRA which itself was a highly disciplined guerrilla army'.² What the evidence suggests, by contrast, is that right up to the Truce most IRA units were weakly organized, marginally effective, and by no means in full sympathy, or even contact, with the ordinary people. The overall structure of the army was marked by wild inconsistencies in strength, standards, and control. Its military position was in many ways, and especially in relation to its own ambitions, far worse than most commentators have thought. Psychologically and politically its position was better, but one must question whether many of its members understood themselves to be waging a political war. The sort of arguments employed by opponents of the Treaty in 1922 suggest that a belief in the possibility of purely physical victory persisted to the end.

This is not necessarily an adverse reassessment. The irregular

1. Fitzpatrick, p. 343, is surely right in saying that GHQ, 'drunk with its own propaganda, was asking for what was impossible', and in stressing that the rural IRA by then consisted of 'small knots of fighters', guarding their territory, secrets and rifles with fierce jealousy against any intruder.

2. Bowden, 'Ireland: decay of control', *Revolt to Revolution*, p. 227.

performance of the IRA sprang from its spontaneous generation at grass-root level, and such spontaneity was, and is, the very essence of guerrilla struggle. Its piecemeal development is a good deal more interesting and instructive once the impossible exaggerations of Republican propaganda are pared away. The army of the Republic was a curious compound of the admirable and the unpleasant – the chivalrous soldier and the cruel killer, the selfless patriot and the swaggering jack-in-office, the devout Catholic and the self-conscious martyr. Its campaign was as much a matter of myth as of reality, and in the end the myth overcame all practical failings. As O'Malley remarked, the folk imagination could give the smallest action a 'heroic and epical' quality, and the saga concealed many acts of cold-blooded violence, cowardice and betrayal. The IRA was heir to a tradition of agrarian terrorism, a succession of secret societies to which it remained akin, and its elemental quality was one of its main sources of strength.

How should such an organization be controlled? General Giap later posed the question, 'Can we say that guerrilla warfare does not require severe discipline?', and his answer was 'Of course not'. Initiative and flexibility were vital, but 'a centralized leadership and a unified command at a given degree always proved to be necessary. He who speaks of the army speaks of discipline'.¹ The problem always lies in finding the correct 'degree'. The IRA general staff laboured to achieve a balance between initiative and control, although the variability of its local forces led it, perhaps, too far in the direction of centralization. At the same time, it was able to foster a sense of identity and purpose, and to project an image which had real political impact. There were plenty of people ready to believe *An t-Oglách's* claim that

The Volunteers of Ireland have made history both from the political and the military point of view. They have brought the practise of guerilla warfare from a casual thing to science, and in that science have exercised a trained and disciplined skill which has revealed unsuspected possibilities to the student of the science of war.²

It has been argued here that the IRA's campaign was much more casual than scientific, and that its discipline and skill have been seriously exaggerated. Moreover, the political position of the IRA within the Republican structure was fraught with the most dangerous possibilities. The failure to subordinate the army to a single legi-

1. Vo Nguyen Giap, 'People's War, People's Army', *The Military Art of People's War* (New York, 1971), p. 112.

2. *An t-Oglách*, vol. iii, no. 7, 6 May 1921. The journal could not resist adding that 'They have this advantage that though they fight by guerrilla methods, they are a highly disciplined and organised Army acting methodically and in concert under one supreme command.'

itimate authority, and to eliminate the influence of the IRB, undermined from an early stage the chance of securing acceptance of the eventual Anglo-Irish settlement and of avoiding civil war. Notwithstanding its faults, however, the Republican campaign still commands attention as a remarkable pioneering endeavour. If the reasons for its achievements were not entirely understood, either by the IRA itself or by others, those achievements could be used to establish a new framework for resistance against imperial power. To that extent, at least, *An t-Oglách* was right.

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CHARLES TOWNSHEND

Regionale en sociaal-economische verschillen in kindersterfte, 1812–1912

Het geluk van borstvoeding

Voor de dood is niemand gelijk. Artsen in de 19e eeuw wisten al dat de verschillen in sterftecijfers tussen arm en rijk erg groot waren. Het besef vormde de basis voor hun pleidooien voor hervorming van de volksgezondheid. Gezondheid behoorde geen voorrecht te zijn van de hogere standen, maar een recht van allen.

Op basis van het bestand van de Historische Steekproef Nederlandse bevolking (HSN) was het mogelijk de sterftekansen in de provincies Friesland, Utrecht en Zeeland voor de gehele 19e eeuw naar regionale en sociaal-economische verschillen te analyseren.

Surrogaten

De Friese arts Ph. Kooperberg constateerde in Leeuwarden in 1888 grote verschillen in het grootbrengen van kinderen naar sociale klasse. In de hogere standen domineerden goede en moderne opvattingen over de opvoeding van kinderen. 'Bij voorkeur zoogen ze zelve hare kinderen, en, zoodra de krachten het eenigszins toelaten, bemoeien zij zelve zich veel met alles, wat het kind aangaat.'

Voor de burgerstand was er nog veel te winnen. Het 'dicht inbakken in luiers wordt nog zeer dikwijls toegepast, evenals het met zorg afsluiten van lucht'. Borstvoeding was ideaal, maar de burgervrouw haastte zich altijd 'andere voeding in den vorm van papjes hieraan toe te voegen. Bij gemis aan moedermelk wordt veel aan allerlei surrogaten gedaan.'

Het slechts gesteld was het met de opvoeding in de werkende stand. Kooperberg trof onder hen 'een volkomen gemis aan kennis op het gebied der kinderopvoeding. Alles wat grootmoeder, moeder, buurvrouwen en oude bakkers voorprevelen, wordt gretig op het kind toegepast, terwijl de raad van deskundigen zeer dikwerf in den wind wordt geslagen. Het te gronde gaan van het groote getal kinderen beneden het eerste levensjaar vindt zeer waarschijnlijk in deze klasse voor het grootste deel plaats.'

Tweedeling

Tot ver in de 19e eeuw is in Nederland sprake van een scherpe tweedeling van het sterfteniveau. Voor het land als geheel kwamen in deze periode gemiddeld bijna negentien van alle honderd levendgeboren kinderen in het eerste jaar te overlijden. Hoge sterfteniveaus werden aangetroffen in de westelijke kustgebieden en langs de grote rivieren, relatief lage in de hoog gelegen gebieden in het noorden, oosten en zuiden van het land.

In streken met relatief hoge zuigelingensterfte als Zeeland, Zuid-Holland, het zuidelijk deel van Noord-Holland en het westelijke gedeelte van Utrecht lag de zuigelingensterfte op

25 procent.

Zeer lage sterfteniveaus waren er in het oostelijk deel van Friesland, het westen van Groningen, het oosten van Overijssel en het zuiden van Noord-Brabant. Hier stierven er van de honderd geborenen minder dan tien in het eerste levensjaar. In de laatste decennia van de 19e eeuw veranderde dit patroon en ontstond de situatie zoals die vandaag de dag nog steeds bestaat. Vanaf 1900 zijn het vooral het noordoostelijk deel van Noord-Brabant, bijna geheel Limburg en delen van Gelderland die een relatief hoge zuigelingensterfte hebben. Relatief gunstige cijfers komen nu juist voor in Zuid- en Noord-Holland, Zeeland en het westen van de provincie Utrecht, terwijl Friesland gedurende de gehele 19e en 20e eeuw goed scoorde.

Sterftekansen

In het eerste levensjaar liepen de pas geborenen een zeer groot risico op overlijden en gedurende een groot deel van de 19e eeuw was er in dat opzicht ook van geen verbetering sprake. Integendeel, tot het midden van de eeuw werd de situatie van de pasgeborenen alleen maar slechter. Het percentage kinderen dat binnen een jaar na de geboorte stierf, nam in Friesland toe van circa tien in de eerste helft van de 19e eeuw naar bijna veertien voor kinderen geboren tussen 1860 en 1880. De hoogste niveaus voor Zeeland werden gehaald in de periode 1850–1859 en voor Utrecht in de periode 1870–1879. Pas vanaf 1880 treedt er in alle provincies een sterke daling van de zuigelingensterfte op.

Wellicht nog belangrijker dan de veranderingen in de tijd zijn de verschillen tussen de provincies. Voor de laagste niveaus moeten we in Friesland zijn, voor de hoogste tot 1860 in Zeeland. In het begin van de 19e eeuw stierven er in Utrecht in het eerste levensjaar per honderd geborenen vijf tot acht kinderen meer dan in Friesland. Dit verschil liep in het midden van de 19e eeuw op tot 12 tot 14 per honderd geborenen. Ten opzichte van Friesland is de situatie in Zeeland zelfs catastrofaal. Tussen 1812 en 1860 stierven er in Zeeland in het eerste levensjaar tweeënhalve zoveel kinderen als in Friesland.

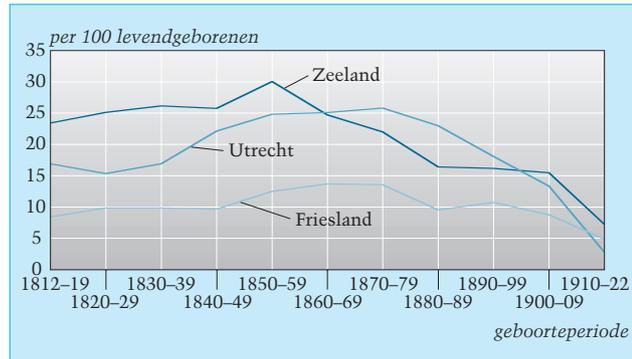
Ook voor de kinderen die het eerste jaar haalden, bleven de sterfterisico's groot. Voordat ze vijf jaar oud waren was opnieuw een aanzienlijk deel van de geborenen gestorven. Ook in deze leeftijdsgroep was er tot 1870 van een langzame maar zekere

stijging van de sterfteniveaus sprake, met name in Zeeland en Utrecht: van elke honderd kinderen van één jaar oud stierven er in deze provincies omstreeks 1870 15 à 16 vóór ze hun vijfde verjaardag hadden bereikt. In Friesland lag dit cijfer tussen 6 en 8. Na 1870 begon het cijfer in Zeeland en Utrecht sterk te dalen en in het begin van de twintigste eeuw hadden deze provincies hun achterstand op Friesland zo goed als ingehaald.

Proletarisering

Naast het doorslaggevende effect van de provincie kwamen uit de analyse ook effecten van de sociaal-economische positie naar voren, zowel bij de sterfte bij de zuigelingen als bij de één- tot vijfjarigen.

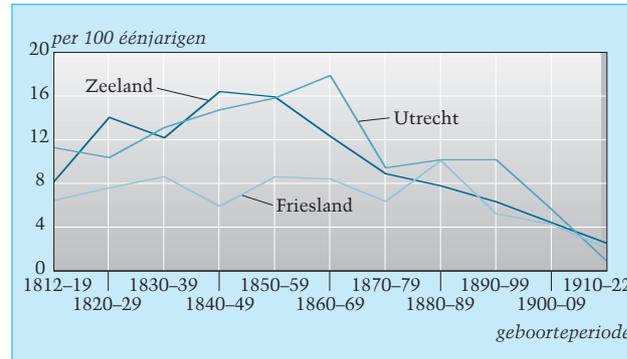
Zuigelingensterfte per provincie en geboorteperiode



In Zeeland kenden de kinderen van losse en ongeschoolde arbeiders een hogere sterftkans dan de kinderen uit alle andere onderscheiden groepen. Bij de grote burgerij en bij de groep van geschoolden en beambten waren deze verschillen echter te klein om significant te zijn.

Ook in Utrecht scoorden alle sociaal-economische groepen beter dan de groep van omgeschoolde en losse arbeiders, maar ook hier waren de afwijkingen voor sommige groepen niet significant (geschoolden en beambten, kleine zelfstandigen en werklieden). In Friesland waren de verschillen in sterfterisico's tussen de referentiegroep en de andere sociaal-economische groepen in geen enkel geval significant en liepen de kinderen uit de groep van werklieden zelfs een iets hoger sterfterisico.

Kindersterfte per provincie en geboorteperiode



Gedurende de gehele 19e eeuw deden de kinderen van losse en ongeschoolde arbeiders het slechter dan die uit de andere sociale groepen, met uitzondering van de geschoolden en beamtben in de periode 1812–1839. In de periode 1812–1839 waren echter alleen de verschillen met de grote burgerij significant. In de periode 1840–1889 was de sociale ongelijkheid groter en weken zowel de boeren als de kleine zelfstandigen significant af van de referentiegroep. In de periode 1890–1912 waren het uitsluitend de geschoolden en beamtben en de werklieden die significant afweken van de referentiegroep.

Ofschoon Nederland al vanaf het midden van de jaren 1860 een vrijwel continue groei van de levensstandaard kende en na 1875 de zorg van de overheid voor de volksgezondheid werd geïntensiveerd, nam vanaf het laatste kwart van de 19e eeuw de sociale ongelijkheid in zuigelingen- en kindersterfte niet af. Processen van urbanisatie, industrialisatie en proletarisering hebben daarnaast ook de omvang van de groepen met relatief hogere sterftetekansen doen toenemen.

Vuil water

De verschillen in overlijdensrisico varieerden sterk per provincie en per periode. De verklaring moeten we vooral zoeken in de specifieke risicofactoren die de relatie tussen sociaal-economische positie en overlijdensrisico's beïnvloeden. In Zeeland en ook in een groot deel van Utrecht was de hygiënische situatie gedurende een groot deel van de onderhavige periode aanzienlijk slechter dan in Friesland. Als gevolg van het ontbreken van een goede afvoer van menselijke en niet-menselijke afvalstoffen was het oppervlaktewater sterk vervuild. Daarnaast zorgde een toenemende verzilting en het hoge grondwaterpeil in de polders voor een beperkt aanbod van zoet water en was ook de kwaliteit van het putwater slecht. De slechte afwatering zorgde ook voor veel stilstaand water, een ideale voedingsbodem voor de malariamug. Als gevolg daarvan was malaria in dit deel van Nederland tot ongeveer 1870 endemisch. Het gebruik van vervuild oppervlaktewater had juist voor zuigelingen en kleine

kinderen ernstige consequenties. Het water werd gebruikt voor het schonen van de flessen en spenen en andere eetgerei, voor het maken van pap, voor het verdunnen van melk, voor het wassen van het lichaam en kleren. Het risico van maag-/darmstoornissen was daardoor zeer groot. Deze ziekten waren veruit de belangrijkste doodsoorzaak van zuigelingen.

Van ruimtelijke segregatie was nauwelijks sprake, alle sociale groepen woonden door elkaar. Zowel kinderen van hogere als van lagere sociale groepen leefden in dezelfde risicovolle omgeving en de sociale verschillen in sterfte waren daardoor, vergeleken met de regionale verschillen, betrekkelijk gering.

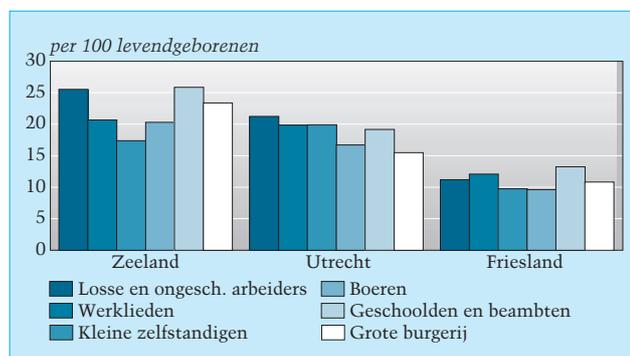
Borstvoeding

Vanaf 1870 werd de kwaliteit van de watervoorziening verbeterd zodat de sterfte in Zeeland en Utrecht kon dalen. In dit proces van sanitaire verbetering traden er sociale verschillen op in de mate waarin deze nieuwe voorzieningen beschikbaar kwamen en werden als gevolg daarvan ook sociale verschillen zichtbaar in het niveau van de zuigelingensterfte.

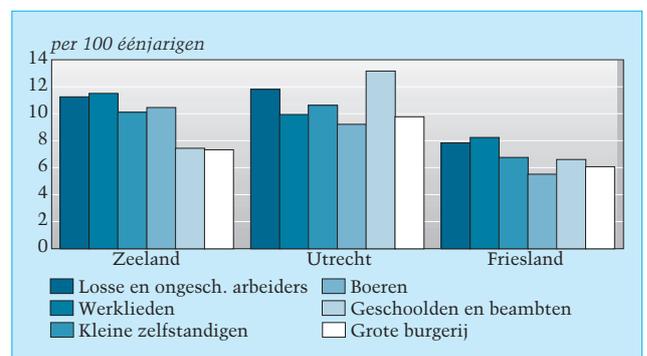
Een tweede factor die bijdroeg aan de vermindering van de sterfte is de aard van de voeding van de zuigelingen. In een aantal studies is aangetoond dat zelfs in economisch zeer gedepriveerde groepen de zuigelingensterfte relatief laag kan zijn indien de desbetreffende groep er gunstige voedingsgewoonten op na houdt. Met name in gebieden met slechte hygiënische toestanden had borstvoeding grote positieve gevolgen voor de overlevingskansen van de zuigeling, veel meer dan in gebieden waar de watervoorziening en waterkwaliteit afdoende waren.

Er zijn sterke aanwijzingen dat in Friesland borstvoeding veel meer voorkwam en ook veel langer werd gegeven dan met name in Zeeland. Een indirecte indicatie hiervoor is dat de typische zomerpiek in de zuigelingensterfte in Friesland ontbreekt, terwijl deze wel heel duidelijk is terug te vinden in Utrecht en Zeeland. Kunstmatig gevoede kinderen liepen in de zomer veel meer risico dan in de andere perioden. Een tweede indicatie wordt gevonden in de statistieken van de sterfte naar doodsoor-

Zuigelingensterfte naar sociaal-economische positie vader per provincie, 1812–1909.



Kindersterfte naar sociaal-economische positie vader per provincie, 1812–1909.



zaak. Vergeleken met Utrecht en Zeeland stierven er in Friesland aanzienlijk minder kinderen aan stuipen, de gevolgen van diarree en andere maag-/darmstoornissen.

Combinatie van factoren

Het tragische is dat juist de gebieden met een zeer slechte kwaliteit drinkwater ook die gebieden waren waarin borstvoeding relatief weinig voorkwam. Deze combinatie van factoren verklaart de hoge zuigelingensterfte in Zeeland en West-Utrecht. In Friesland daarentegen was het drinkwater van een

relatief goede kwaliteit en was borstvoeding meer gangbaar. In Friesland zullen vanwege de betere waterkwaliteit eventuele veranderingen in de praktijk van de borstvoeding ook minder consequenties voor het niveau van de zuigelingensterfte hebben gehad dan in Zeeland of Utrecht. ◀

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Historische Steekproef Nederlandse bevolking

De gegevens voor dit artikel komen uit de Historische Steekproef Nederlandse bevolking (HSN). Doel van de HSN is het aanleggen van een representatieve database van 19e- en twintigste-eeuwse levensgeschiedenissen. De basis voor deze HSN-database wordt gevormd door een steekproef uit de geboorteakten uit de periode 1812–1922. Gebouwd wordt aan één groot basisbestand waarin op uniforme wijze gegevens worden verzameld van de Nederlandse bevolking. De onderzoekspersonen zijn geselecteerd via een enkelvoudige a-selecte steekproef in de geboorteregisters uit de periode 1812–1922.

De landelijke steekproef omvat in totaal bijna 77 duizend personen. Dit aantal is voldoende om statistisch verantwoorde uitspraken te kunnen doen voor relatief zeer kleine subpopulaties binnen de bevolking

In de database van de HSN worden voor deze personen op een systematische wijze gegevens verzameld uit de in de openbare archieven bewaard gebleven akten van de burgerlijke stand en de bevolkingsregisters. Per 1 oktober 2002 zijn van deze steekproef alle geboorteakten, 22 duizend overlijdensakten, 12 duizend huwelijksakten en 18 duizend persoonskaarten ingevoerd.

In de geboorteakten vinden we naast de identificerende gegevens van de boreling zelf ook de namen, adressen, leeftijden en beroepen van de ouders. In de overlijdensakten vinden we onder ander de laatste woonplaats en het laatste beroep van de overledene en gegevens over de echtgenote(n). Van alle onderzoekspersonen die tussen 1 jan. 1940 en 1 oktober 1994 zijn overleden, kan de persoonskaart worden geraadpleegd en ook deze gegevens zijn inmiddels in de database opgenomen. Op de persoonskaart zijn onder andere de beroepsvermeldingen, de oorzaak van overlijden (tot 1956), alle woonadressen, de gezinssamenstelling en de godsdienstige gezindte te vinden.

De database wordt verder aangevuld met gegevens uit de huwelijksakten. Deze akten geven informatie over de beroepstitels, analfabetisme (handtekening), woonplaatsen van bruid en bruidegom, de ouders van de huwend en de getuigen (veelal vrienden of familie van de huwend).

Het uiteindelijke doel is de reconstructie van de gehele levensloop. Hiervoor is het nodig de bevolkingsregisters voor de onderzoekspersonen volledig over te nemen. Ook het kadaster en de belastingarchieven komen in aanmerking om onderzocht te worden op het voorkomen van de HSN-onderzoekspersonen. Bij elkaar zijn deze bronnen zeer rijk en geven informatie over de gezinssamenstelling, het migratiepatroon, de verdere beroepsloopbaan en de inkomens- en vermogenspositie van de onderzoekspersoon, en eventueel van zijn of haar verwanten.

Van bijzonder belang zijn de bevolkingsregisters. Deze zijn in Nederland vanaf 1850 op een dynamische wijze bijgehouden. In het register staan de demografische gegevens van het huishouden op een bepaald moment, terwijl ook alle veranderingen in het huishouden betreffende adres, familieomvang en migratie worden bijgehouden. Alle verhuizingen van de onderzoekspersonen kunnen met deze registers over het gehele land worden gevolgd.

Het werk aan de database wordt uitgevoerd door het Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis te Amsterdam. Het eigendom van de gegevens berust bij de stichting Historische Steekproef Nederlandse bevolking. De financiering gebeurde tot op heden voornamelijk vanuit het Investeringsfonds Middelgroot van de Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO). Op basis van een subsidie uit het Investeringsfonds Groot van NWO zullen in de periode 2003–2007 van alle geborenen vanaf 1863 de volledige levenslopen worden verzameld (ca. 40 duizend personen).

F. van Poppel en K. Mandemakers, 'Sociaal-economische verschillen in zuigelingen- en kindersterfte in Nederland, 1812–1912', *Bevolking en gezin* (2002), nr. 2.