

THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY: AN EXAMINATION OF IMPERIALISM, TERROR,
AND JUST WAR

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of California Polytechnic State University,

San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of History

by

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June 2020

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ABSTRACT

The Irish Republican Army: An Examination of Imperialism, Terror, and Just War

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Analysis of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and their actions in the 1970s and 1980s offer insight into their use of just war theory in their conflict with the British government and ultra-loyalist Protestant forces in Northern Ireland. The historiography of Irish history is defined by its phases of nationalism, revisionism, and anti-revisionism that cloud the historical narrative of imperialism and insurgency in the North. Applying just war theory to this history offers a more nuanced understanding of the conflict of the Troubles and the I.R.A.'s usage of this framework in their ideology that guided their terrorism in the latter half of the twentieth century. The murders of influential members of British society and the I.R.A.'s statements on these events further posit just war theory as a guiding force of this group. In 1980-1981 the I.R.A. staged hunger strikes in the H Block of Long Kesh Prison and the writings of their leader Bobby Sands continued their use of just war theory in their efforts to be granted Special Category Status. This work concludes that the I.R.A. utilized just war theory throughout this period and that it was a guiding force of their ideology. It contributes a more nuanced analysis of just war theory and its applications to the I.R.A.'s struggles against the British. Ultimately, it demonstrates how this theory was used by this insurgent movement to claim legitimacy, defend their actions, and frame their anti-imperialist movement as a necessary means to combatting British forces.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

So many people supported me in my pursuits for this project. I like to think that in all things in life, no one achieves anything alone and this work is no exception.

Thank you to my family, who holds my heart in their hands. As I write this we are in the midst of a pandemic and I have not seen them in months. I daydream of the day when we can all be together again.

My friends, thank you for always keeping things light. Hailey, thank you.

My colleagues at the Public Health Laboratory, thank you for your unfailing hard work to keep us all safe, for the kindness you have shown me, and for always asking about this project in between our COVID-19 testing, rabid bats, and constant phones ringing.

Thank you to the department for allowing me to explore this interest and to my advisors for their help with this project.

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Chapter 1: An Introduction

On January 4, 1969, members of the Catholic civil rights group, People's Democracy, was attacked as it marched from Belfast to Derry in Northern Ireland. Its attackers were Protestant loyalists and off duty members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). These forces went on to attack Catholic homes, businesses, and individuals who were not involved in the demonstration for greater rights of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. This event would spark what has since come to be known as The Troubles, an ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland that would rage in the North and spread to mainland Britain in later decades as well. Political power, anti-imperialist, and religious identity were key facets of this conflict that was characterized by road blockades, bombings, and mass violence in Northern Ireland.

The true length of this period is largely debated. Many historians trace the origins of this conflict to the early modern imperialism of the British in Northern Ireland with the establishment of the Ulster Plantation in 1604. This began a centuries-long narrative of colonization and brutality in the North perpetrated by the British monarchy and the Cromwellian regime. Religion was a central factor in the development of this conflict as the British support and favoritism of the Protestant majority in the North resulted in diminished rights and freedoms for the Catholic population. Political status and representation were further problems for the Catholic minority. A lack of opportunity and being stuck in state-designed poverty resulted in a socio-economic divide in the North, one that civil rights and revolutionary groups sought to combat.

Revolutionary groups were not a new presence in Northern Ireland prior to the Troubles, but they did sustain a greater international attention in the latter half of this

century. Beginning in 1969 the Irish Republican Brotherhood splintered with the stronger faction becoming the Irish Republican Army. This group waged a dirty war against the Protestant extremist group the Ulster Volunteer Force and the British Paramilitary forces that were deployed to aid the Protestant faction. Throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, the I.R.A. and the British would continue to engage in violent clashes with the latter performing bombing in Northern Ireland as well as in Britain to draw attention to their cause for freedom.

It is important to note that the I.R.A. are not unique in terms of radical groups of the twentieth century. Their training manual, the Green Book, their anti-imperial statements, and their murders of high-ranking members of British society do not make them any better or different than other extremist groups of this period. Rather, analysis of this dirty war and the actions of the I.R.A. contribute a case study to this international period of anti-imperialist movements. The I.R.A. is unique due to its place at this geopolitical moment in history. In the Cold War era they became enemies of the United States and the Catholic Church and not just the British that Irish revolutionaries had long fought against. This is demonstrated in the handling of this conflict by the Thatcher administration and the British involvement with the Catholic Church's official stance on the I.R.A. and their later hunger strikes. Placing this conflict within the lens of just war theory allows for a greater delving into the imperialism, discrimination, and brutality that led to this period of Irish history and the actions of this group.

The Irish Republican Army, commonly referred to as the I.R.A., has a long and storied history. Often reduced to a sectarian group of radical Catholics known for the terror they inflicted on Northern Ireland and Britain in the latter half of the twentieth

century, this group is underexamined in terms of its more complete history. Condemned by the British, there have been few comprehensive examinations of the imperialism, discrimination, and brutality inflicted on the Catholics of the North by the British themselves. The revisionist lens that has been applied to the I.R.A. has left a broad historiographical gap, one that this work seeks to refute.

This work is framed within the concept of just warfare, a centuries-old convention of the Catholic Church that allows for a greater understanding of the I.R.A., their intentions, and defenses of their actions during the Troubles. Despite this existing framework, few authors have employed it in their analyses of the I.R.A., resulting in a skewed and inaccurate historiography. In this work, I aim to align the I.R.A. and their struggle for liberation in Northern Ireland within the framework of just war theory. A centuries-old Catholic ideation that originated with the crusades, just war theory alleges a rightful ability to combat injustice from an invading body for the good of one's community. I argue throughout my writing the just war can be aptly and appropriately applied to the I.R.A. and their fight against the British. In doing so, I make the allegation that the I.R.A. were not the only terrorists of the Troubles, and rather that the British perhaps instigated the use of terrorism in the North. Throughout these chapters, I thematically analyze the actions of the I.R.A. and apply just war theory to them. Looking at murder, imperialism, and protest, I ultimately conclude that this theory was accurately applied to the period of the Troubles.

Revisionism plagues the conventional historiography which is where our narrative begins. Refuting the reductionist approach that has been so long applied to this group, I offer a deeper analysis of the centuries-long history that preceded that terrorism

of the I.R.A. in the late twentieth century in order to ground this exploration in the imperialism of the British in Northern Ireland. Providing this background grants readers a more nuanced account of this history, one that more accurately situates the later violence of the I.R.A. and their murders of British citizens. The notion that violence must be appropriately measured against the circumstances that necessitate it shapes this work in its application of just war theory to the I.R.A. Exploration of the 1981 hunger strike in HM Maze Prison in Northern Ireland furthers the humanity of the I.R.A. and their intentions in their struggle for liberation. Together, these subjects of their history depict a nuanced and intentioned group that wanted freedom rather than mere terrorists intent on violence.

The existing historiography of the I.R.A. and the Troubles is deeply flawed due to the revisionism that dominates it. Authors such as T.W. Moody and R.F. Foster created a revisionist tradition in the historiography of the I.R.A. Reducing their intentions and motivations to mere terrorism, rather than a response to a brutal imperialist regime, fed into the British version of the events of the Troubles. These works focus on the early modern origins of the Troubles, a time in which the British began their imperialist control of the North. Despite this, they gloss over the true realities of a plantation style of ruling, one so brutal it would later be mirrored in the plantations of North America, and focus on the perceived benefits of imperialism and the Whiggish interpretation of this history. Despite these failings, other authors such as Tim Pat Coogan and J. Bowyer Bell worked to improve this historiography by adding a more realistic and human narrative of the I.R.A. In my own work, I aim to write alongside these authors and against the revisionist histories that have plagued the I.R.A. and their historiography since the mid-twentieth

century. In order to fully do this, I begin my own narrative where they did as well, in the early modern period and the first drives of imperialism of the British.

Just war theory serves to situate this narrative in a broader and established interpretation of murder and war. This work aims to portray the I.R.A. and their fight against the British as a just war as opposed to terrorism. This understanding adds a more nuanced interpretation of the Troubles, the I.R.A. and their motivations, and the role of murder in this narrative. Murder is an understandably uncomfortable aspect of this discussion, but the intentions behind these killings aid in exploration of this conflict as a true war. The I.R.A. demonstrated their understanding of just war theory and its applications to their struggle throughout this period through statements to the press, their training guide, and their commentary on Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland, all of which revolved around incidents of murder. Despite the significance of this theory, few works have discussed the I.R.A. in these terms and so this work aims to rectify this gap in the historiography with its delving into the intricacies of the background of the Troubles, various sources that demonstrate the I.R.A.'s embrace of just war theory, and analysis of the hunger strike as an act of the I.R.A. with the intention to procure them legitimacy in this fight. The murders committed by the I.R.A. further demonstrate their being motivated by just war ideology.

The murders of PM Airey Neave and Lord Mountbatten in 1979 garnered international attention and altered the narrative of the I.R.A. These targets were significant due to their symbolism of imperialism and the motivations that the I.R.A. detailed in their statements taking responsibility for these attacks. The murders of these prominent British figures also furthered the I.R.A. and their intentions to demonstrate the

elitism of the British as the government showed such a greater concern after the murders of these men as opposed to those of ordinary citizens or military personnel. Coverage of these events in multinational newspapers depicts how these events allowed the I.R.A. to make the Troubles a transnational affair drawing international attention. Both of these intentions depict the I.R.A. strategy of combatting the containment of their movement, an enduring concept in their fight against the British. The I.R.A.'s use of just war theory did not always take the form of violence, however.

The 1981 Hunger Strike and the motivations portray the motivations of the I.R.A. to granted legitimacy as an opponent in what they deemed a legitimate war. The issue of Special Category Status spurred hunger striker Bobby Sands to begin this strike in an attempt to procure this symbol of validity. The hunger strike offers readers a compelling look into the relationship between the I.R.A., the British government, and the Catholic Church in this period. These relationships were intricate and often delicate as each sought to procure their own version of a "peaceful settlement." This chapter aims to relate these three actors and foreshadow the ensuing events of the next seventeen years as they each continue to pursue their ideations of "peace." This analysis of the hunger strike demonstrates the humanity of the I.R.A. and its members in their struggle for personal liberation.

This work examines how the I.R.A. portrayed their conflict with the British in the 1970s and 1980s as a just war. It examines the existing historiography of the I.R.A. to demonstrate how revisionism has long supported the imperialist propaganda that the I.R.A. were a sectarian terrorist group rather than a legitimate power in Northern Ireland. Analysis of the early modern roots of this conflict further supports the argument that this

conflict was a just war due to its revelations on the abuses of the British and their colonial practices in Northern Ireland that spanned centuries prior to the events of the latter half of the twentieth century. Discussion of the murders of prominent members of British society, Airey Neave and Lord Mountbatten, demonstrates how just war theory influenced the motivations of the I.R.A. to commit these murders. Lastly, analysis of the hunger strike of 1980 in the HM Maze over the issue of Special Category Status for the imprisoned I.R.A. members depicts how intent the I.R.A. was on being recognized as a legitimate opponent of the British in a just war. Ultimately, this work seeks to depict the Troubles as a just war between the I.R.A. and the British government.

Chapter 2: The Historiography of Irish History: Nationalism, Revisionism, and Just War Theory

The historiography of Northern Ireland is composed of three primary styles: nationalist, revisionist, and antirevisionist. These approaches to Irish history began in the revolutionary period of the 1880s-1920s and extend into today. In its beginnings, Irish history was written by those who were directly involved in it. Irish revolutionaries who were often educators, authors, and politicians crafted these writings on events and practices that directly impacted the present events of their lives and of Northern Ireland. In the 1930s, these histories were replaced by a new class of historian, those who were inspired by Herbert Butterfield's 1931 work, *A Whig Interpretation of History*. T.W. Moody began this new tradition of writing, deemed the professional approach, and sought to demythologize Irish history. Thus, this became the conventional style of analyzing Irish history in its attempts to clinically examine the early modern histories of this nation and with its scientific methodology, remove the emotional nationalist narrative. The violence of the Troubles in the 1960s and 1970s in Northern Ireland spurred a resurgence of revisionism in the historiography and their analysis of the history of Ireland prior to these events. These works drew heavily on the writings of their predecessors, resulting in a continuation of this skewed tradition. In the time since, an anti-revisionist history has emerged, one that regrants the humanity to the subjects of conquest, famine, and imperialism that the revisionist histories had ultimately removed in their pursuits of "value-free" history.

Examination of these varying approaches are a necessary component of adding to this historiography. Irish history is uniquely difficult to write about, especially in terms of

the Troubles, because it is such a highly charged subject with deep entanglements in the past and present popular consciousness. Authors that discuss the Troubles in the framework of just war theory posit a new intervention in the historiography. By adding this theoretical outline in which to examine this history, these authors create a new narrative, one that allows for a clinical approach to this history that at once echoes the revisionists, but due to the personal and violent subject matter draws on the anti-revisionists. In this melding they answer the calls of the anti-revisionists for a greater humanity in their approach, but do not fall victim to a history entrenched in nationalistic fervor. Together they present a worthy discussion that poses the question of just how historians should approach such catastrophic events as the Troubles. This discussion necessitates an understanding of these sects of the historiography.

2.1 Nationalism

Prior to the 1930s, the historiography of Irish history was dominated by nationalist writings. From 1880 to the 1920s the Irish literature revival occurred and with that came a generation of scholars dedicated to the glorification of Irish history as a legitimate study.¹ Amongst these scholars were Douglas Hyde, an Irish language scholar and activist who began the Gaelic League in Northern Ireland.² Daniel Corkery wrote alongside him in articles and works that brought the plight of the Irish to the forefront of the popular consciousness during his time as an educator and author in Northern Ireland.³ Lastly Patrick Pearse, also referred to as Padriag Pearse, wrote extensively during this

¹ Kevin Whalen, "The revisionist debate in Ireland," *Boundary 2*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2004), 180-181.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

period as a poet and a revolutionary. He was also an Irish Revolutionary and a prominent member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Pearse was executed by the British in 1916. These details are necessary to mention as they demonstrate how entrenched these men were in the histories they were writing. They were not merely professors or even just supporters of the Green movement, they were intrinsic to it. Due to this they produced overtly nationalist histories that relied heavily on anti-imperialist sentiment and bias against the British. These are the facets of this sect of the historiography that later historians of the 1930s would seek to correct in their demythologization of Irish history. Despite this intention, the anti-revisionists also contributed their own biases to the historiographies, ones that the later historians of Irish history would take great issue with.

2.2 Revisionism

Revisionism arose to combat this following Herbert Butterfield's 1931 work, *A Whig Interpretation of History*. Here he posited the idea that "the study of the past with one eye on the present is the source of all sins and sophistries in history. It is the essence of what we mean by unhistorical."⁴ While he was not specifically writing against the nationalist scholars of Northern Ireland, he was writing against nationalist interpretations of history. This could be well and conveniently applied to the then mainstream interpretations of Irish history in the North. In this work Butterfield also argued for a more scientific, clinical methodology, one that would remove the personal convictions of the authors of it. Historian Brendan Bradshaw argues in his 1989 work, "Nationalism and

⁴ Herbert Butterfield, *A Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: Norton and Company, 1931), 21.

Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland,” “it seems fair to claim that the 1930s saw the launching of Irish national studies on a professional basis.”⁵ Led by authors T.W. Moody, D.B. Quinn, and R. Dudley Edwards, this movement was meant to offer a more sophisticated approach to this history. In this decade Moody published *The Londonderry Plantation, 1609-1641* (1939), the first large scale example of the scientific methodology being applied to this period. He and R. Dudley Edwards also began a journal called *Irish Historical Studies* and founded The Irish Committee of Historical Sciences, the former in which historian Kevin Whalen claims each “self-consciously opposed . . . nationalist myth in the name of scientific objectivity.”⁶ Their primary intentions were based on demythologizing Irish history and the implementation of a “value-free” approach.

To understand the revisionist advent one must discuss the circumstances in which this methodology arose. As mentioned, revisionists took great issue with the mythological aspects of the nationalist interpretation. Chiefly, they condemned the glorification of revolutionary Irish figures for reasons that will be explored more deeply later in this chapter. Author T.W. Moody greatly discussed this issue in a speech given nearly forty years after his first works in the revisionist tradition. In 1977, Moody delivered a speech to the Dublin University History Society titled “Irish History and Irish Mythology.” In this speech he argued, “it is not Irish history but Irish mythology that has been ruinous to us and may prove even more lethal.”⁷ While he was responding to criticism of the revisionist tradition that had endured throughout the twentieth century,

⁵ Brendan Bradshaw, “Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland,” *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 104 (1989), 336.

⁶ Whalen, 183.

⁷ T.W. Moody, “Irish History and Irish Mythology,” in *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism*, ed. Ciaran Brady (Portland: Irish Academic Press, 1994), 86.

Moody maintained that mythology of Irish history was the greatest threat to the improvements in this historiography. His rhetoric against mythology posits the key ideas of the revisionist school of Irish history. Moody further argued that “the obsession with myths, and especially the more destructive myths, perpetuates the closed mind.”⁸ This statement demonstrates how revisionists sought to capitalize on their scientific and “value-free” approach and portray it as the more level headed understanding. Moody’s condemnations of myth, with no room for exception, depicts one of the primary failures of revisionism for its lack of understanding the centrality of these myths of their early modern wars, revolutions, and heroes to Northern Ireland its popular history. While the revisionists sought to combat this trend in the historiography, in the 1960s and 1970s they saw their work as combatting actual violence.

The emergence of more widespread violence in Northern Ireland and later mainland Britain spurred the revisionist tradition into a resurgence. Historian Nancy Curtin argues that “events in the 1960s and 1970s reinforced this sense that the Irish people needed liberation from nationalist mythology, a mythology held responsible for the eruption of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and which offered legitimation to the Provisional Irish Army.”⁹ Here the revisionists attempted to oppose this influence of nationalist mythology by replacing it with their works that were more removed from the current public history. Revisionists viewed this history as it was as being too influenced by the nationalist fervor that was taking hold in the North and worried that it would increase recruitment to the ranks of nationalist paramilitary groups. Whelan argues that in

⁸ Moody, 86.

⁹ Nancy J. Curtin, “‘Varieties of Irishness’: Historical Revisionism, Irish Style,” *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Revisionisms (1996), 195.

this second phase of revisionism, authors such as “Jesuit Fr. F.X. Shaw, Garret Fitzgerald, and Conor Cruise O’Brien, more explicitly attacked the received national narrative, questioned the independence, and pronounced the failure of the postimperial state.”¹⁰ F.X. Shaw authored “The Canon of Irish History: A Challenge” which attempted to demythologize Patrick Pearse while criticizing the memorialization of the 1916 uprising in which he had been instrumental.¹¹ O’Brien wrote *States of Ireland*, arguing for partition, a staunchly Unionist view.¹² These works can be examined in the framework of revisionist failure posed by Bradshaw and supported by Whelan.

Bradshaw offers a threefold condemnation of revisionism, hinged on the idea of a “value-free” history that was championed by the revisionist historians of this period. Claiming that Irish history is arguably catastrophic due to its early modern history of conquest, displacement, genocide and famine, a value-free approach cannot be applied to such issues of humanity.¹³ He argues, “the value-free approach is peculiarly vulnerable to, to the operation of unrecognized, or at least unacknowledged bias.”¹⁴ He delineates these into two categories of sins of omission and sins of commission. In terms of sins of omission he pinpoints the Irish famine as an example of the type of catastrophe that revisionists simply overlook in their writings. This is supported by the 1969 work of T.W. Moody, *The History of Modern Ireland*. While he is an editor of this monolith, Moody is featured as well in one of the final chapters “Fenianism, home rule and the land

¹⁰ Whelan, 187.

¹¹ F. X. Shaw, “The Canon of Irish History: A Challenge,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 61 (Summer, 1972): 113–52.

¹² Conor Cruise O’Brien, *States of Ireland* (London: Hutchinson, 1972).

¹³ Bradshaw, 338.

¹⁴ Bradshaw, 337.

war”. Moody writes that “post-famine Ireland was an exhausted, dispirited, and divided country” and dedicates a mere paragraph to this suffering.¹⁵ This example is not meant to condemn the whole of Moody’s work, but it does directly hinge on a major flaw of revisionism that anti-revisionists such as Bradshaw have identified. The famine is one of the key “catastrophic” events in Irish history and this is widely acknowledged by Bradshaw, Wahlen and Curtain. Therefore this neglect by Moody, one of the founders of this methodology and a famed Irish historian, is significant and telling. Rather, Moody quickly turns his attention to the British and Unionist concerns of this period and their aversion to home rule. His glossing over of a colonially-facilitated mass murder supports Bradshaw’s criticism of the problematic nature of this so-called “value-free” history. The sins of commission that Bradshaw refers to can be seen in later works as well.

Historian R.F. Foster drew heavily on Moody’s revisionist approach when he wrote his 1988 work, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*. While Foster writes that the intention of this work “is to provide a narrative with an interpretive level, stressing themes as much as events, and concentrating on areas that have come under rev-evaluation—often with the effect of liberating them from the Anglocentric obsession that once led the study of Irish political and economic history so far astray.”¹⁶ Despite this intention, this work poses similar issues of revisionism. This was a deeply inflammatory work for its derision towards the I.R.A. and the nationalist movement itself, as well as its deep lack of attention to the actual issues that affected the lives of Catholics in Northern Ireland. Due to its broad time period, one can see the revisionist disdain that Foster held for nationalist

¹⁵ T.W. Moody, “Fenianism, home rule and the land war,” in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968), 276.

¹⁶ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1988), 17.

groups of the twentieth century, from the early to the later which he briefly discusses at the tail end of this work. It is important to understand why this work and those like it in this period may have been written in such a way.

Kevin Whelan offers his own analysis as to why revisionist historians such as Foster write in the way that they do. He claims, “Conservatism was the hallmark of the revisionist project, with its narrowly provincial focus on the intellectual life of London, Cambridge, and Oxford.”¹⁷ R.F. Foster embodied these traits of his predecessors. He was the Carroll Professor of Irish History at Herford College, Oxford from 1996-2016 and his work is known for its prominence in the conservative vein of British history. That is not to say that one can assess the entirety of one’s intentions from their background, but to analyze this alongside his work is worthwhile.

The notion that revisionism is tinged with elitist bias can be supported by Foster’s 1988 work as well. In his attention to the turn of the century revolutionary groups, Foster refers to them as the “irreconcilably separatist ‘underground’” and claims that there was far more ‘political energy’ depicted by the United Irish League, a more mainstream and socially acceptable group. His division of these groups and disparagement of the more revolutionary factions of this period speaks to his revisionist tendencies to dismiss more radical members of Irish society as mere political troublemakers. Foster insults these groups in stating that this advent of twentieth century Irish nationalism “was changed by the involvement of Britain in two major wars - the scenario that every ‘advanced’ Irish nationalist had been hoping for since the 1850s.”¹⁸ He disregards the motivations for

¹⁷ Whelan, 185.

¹⁸ Foster, 117.

nationalists and the true issues they were facing in their daily lives that perhaps made them intent on liberation. Foster ignores the colonial nature of this period and the horrors that accompanied it and in this he places himself and his work in colonial history. Foster embodies what Curtain refers to as the “inattention, insensitivity, or downright hostility to the affirming and coherent aspects of national history.”¹⁹ Foster’s work has also been called into question for its heavy reliance on outdated writings from the nineteenth century that historian Brian P. Murphy has taken significant issue with due to their impacts on the historiography of Ireland as a whole.

He describes these in his 1993 work, “The Canon of Irish Cultural History: Some Questions concerning Roy Foster’s *Modern Ireland*.” Murphy argues in this work that his “concern is not with theoretical arguments about revisionism, but with particular instances of inaccuracy in the use of source material.”²⁰ Noting that past anti-revisionist critiques may have been vague, Murphy details Foster’s critical arguments against Irish nationalism and the 1916 uprising are heavily rooted in previously disproven and heavily biased sources of F.S. Lyons, Patrick O’Farrell, and Oliver MacDonagh.²¹ These inaccuracies largely hinge on Foster’s near identical evidence that he provides, despite not delving into the original source material, and rather relying on the conclusions of these previous authors. While this is a part of academic scholarship, Murphy takes issue with this for two reasons: Foster’s leading position as an Irish historian who embraces his title

¹⁹ Curtain, 199.

²⁰ Brian P. Murphy, “The Canon of Irish Cultural History: Some Questions concerning Roy Foster’s *Modern Ireland*,” *Studies, An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 82, No. 326 (1993), 171.

²¹ Murphy, *Ibid*.

as a revisionist and the sheer wrongness of his statements on the Gaelic League and the role of nationalism in the early twentieth century.²²

2.3 Anti-Revisionism

The anti-revisionist thread arose in the same period as the revisionist revival. These works sought to offer more nuanced analysis of Irish history, refuting the revisionist attempts to gloss over the impacts of this history on the cultural memory of Northern Ireland's public. The authors of the anti-revisionist vein aim to illuminate the problems of imperialism and the long-term ramifications of colonization in the North. Their works range in analysis from simply offering a greater analysis of the society of the earlier twentieth century in the North to the cultural memory that had come into existence in the time since. Together they offer a more revealing history, one that does not attempt to remain "value-free."

The notion of "the Irish Problem" as a facet of this historiography is accepted as having begun with Dennis Barritt and Charles Carter's *The Northern Ireland Problem* (1962). Brian Lambkin thoroughly explores the evolution of this historiography from this work onwards in his article, "The Historiography of the Conflict in Northern Ireland." He alleges that this work set the history for the first time in 1962 and remained unchallenged until 1969, when new literature began to be published in response to the outbreaks of violence in Northern Ireland.²³ Barritt and Carter's work falls within the revisionist vein,

²² Roy Foster, "We Are All Revisionists Now" In *the Irish Review (Cork)*, No. 1 (Fall: 1986).

²³ Brian Lambkin, "The Historiography of the conflict in Northern Ireland and the reception of Andrew Boy's Holy war in Belfast," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, Vol. 114C (2014), 333.

but definitely not in the same ways that the above discussed works did. This work alleged that there was no singular problem in the conflict, but rather a culmination of “racial, religious, political, economic, and social conflicts all rolled into one.” Delineation between this work and Moody and Foster’s is important, however, as Barritt and Carter do address the societal struggles facing Catholics in Northern Ireland and they do give credence to the struggle. Yet it is only because they are not overtly nationalistic that they would not be considered anti-revisionist, yet not fully revisionist either. Lambkin also alleges that this work was further “reset” in his words, in 1969 as violence began in the North.

Holy War in Belfast was the first major challenge to this “setting” of the historiography and tackling the issue of just what was the cause of the problems in Northern Ireland. Boyd used this work to present “an account of sectarian violence in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Belfast” and to trace the origins of this tumult.²⁴ Boyd frames this conflict much as the title states, as a “holy war” between the Protestant and Catholic factions in Northern Ireland. He grounds this work in his first chapter, titled “The Rise of the Bigots” in which he depicts the steady tensions and divisions of these groups and the oppression of the Catholics at the hands of the Protestants.²⁵ The centrality of religion is what shapes this work and makes it a unique contribution to the historiography as it so deeply focuses on the religious foreground and backgrounds of this struggle, such as the preachers in the streets and the “riots on our lady’s day.”²⁶ Boyd offers readers insight into the formation of pre-I.R.A. Catholic groups such as the

²⁴ Lambkin, 333-334.

²⁵ Andrew Boyd, *Holy War in Belfast* (Kerry: Anvil Books Ltd., 1969), 10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

Catholic Gun Club as well as the violence committed by the Protestant Orangemen, events that I find are not well enough discussed elsewhere in the historiography.²⁷

Despite his overwhelmingly religious focus, Boyd does cite Barritt and Carter in the course of this work, giving credence to the idea that a more all-encompassing work can be completed in terms of the varying themes that were first posed in *The Northern Ireland Problem*. Lambkin also provides a helpful roadmap in tracing this work's reception by other authors of this period who each offer their own interpretation of just what was at the root of the violence occurring in the 1970s.

Other works appeared in this decade as well, but all drew on *Holy War in Belfast* and even complimented its content. Also in 1971, Constance FitzGibbon published *Red hand: the Ulster colony* which offered a more prolonged time period than Boyd's but had a similarly religious focus in terms of the violence that occurred within it. In 1972 historian Tony Gray published *The Orange Order* which "sought to meet 'the perceived need for better understanding the origins of the Orange Order and its rise to dominance in Northern Ireland.'"²⁸ It is similar to Boyd's work but rather focuses on the Protestant faction which Boyd had villainized in 1969. Lastly, *Belfast: approach to crisis: a study of Belfast politics, 1613-1970* by Ian Budge and Cornelius O'Leary was published in 1973 and claimed to offer "a detailed historical study of Belfast's development, including 'the vicious riots which have erupted from time to time since the early nineteenth century.'"²⁹

²⁷ Boyd, 35.

²⁸ Lambkin, 335.

²⁹ Ian Budge and Cornelius O'Leary, *Belfast: approach to crisis: a study of Belfast politics, 1613-1970* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1973), 379.

As I agree with Boyd's interpretation, I also agree with these works and their attention to the importance of religion when analyzing sectarian violence. I perhaps agree most with Budge and O'Leary's work as I appreciate the continued specific historical attention to Belfast itself. These works were later met in the historiography with the advent of fieldwork publications that gave life to the I.R.A. and its members.

These works in their attention to the nuances of the people this history affect demonstrates the anti-revisionist approach. This methodology in the historiography has been championed by two primary authors, the first being Tim Pat Coogan in 1970 with his innovative work, *The I.R.A.* It is important to note that Coogan is not a conventional historian. He is a respected Irish writer and newspaper columnist, but it is Coogan's lack of historical training that enabled him to offer such a unique and intimate depiction of this group at a time when historians were still bogged down by the revisionist debate and the argument over what the root of the "problem" was. This work was met in 1997 by J. Bowyer Bell, a historian, and his work *The Secret Army: The I.R.A.* Each of these fieldwork narratives enabled narratives of this organization offers an intimate portrayal of the lives of these members, starkly refuting the revisionist historians that preceded these authors. They grant humanity to a population that it had been absolved from by those who attempted to clinically analyze them.

Coogan's work offers a two-part approach to the history of the I.R.A. In his first section, Pre-1969, he relies heavily on secondary sources to offer depictions of the early Republican forces. Coogan dedicates two chapters, "Republic and Republicans I" and "Republic and Republicans II" to these forces and delves into a stark depiction of their ideologies, the motivations behind their violence, and the ultimate division of the ranks.

Coogan contends that “the extraordinary doggedness of the Republican tradition persisting, despite many disasters, through the generations cannot be overlooked.”³⁰ This assessment starkly delineates Coogan in the historiography as he borders on appreciation for the Republican struggle. He further describes the Republic and its ideals as “not a formula to be dispensed at Ballot boxes once in every five years. It is a way of life.”³¹ This statement again is a great delineation from the previous historiography. Coogan grants agency and humanity to the social actors he lived alongside to complete this project. This methodology and historiographical intervention are further depicted in the second portion of his work.

Coogan’s second half of *The I.R.A.* occurs in the post-1969 period and highlights the intense struggle of the I.R.A., their practices, and their lives in this time as they engaged in a dirty war against the British paramilitary and the Unionists. Like above authors, he dedicates analysis to the “problem” in his chapter “The Roots of the Conflict.” Here he alleges that “the catalyst in Northern Ireland was the Civil Rights movement—though the British Education Acts also contributed by ensuring that in the ranks of this movement there would be several young men and women equally, if not better, educated than their Unionist opponents, and well able to hold their own on television and political techniques.”³² Coogan situates this history into a broader discussion of human rights with this chapter and further aligns the I.R.A. with causes outside of Ireland, such as the American civil rights movement and the pan-Arab movement. In doing this, Coogan acknowledges the I.R.A. as a legitimate political and

³⁰ Tim Pat Coogan, *The I.R.A.* (New York: Harper’s Collins, 1970), 281.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

³² *Ibid.*, 281.

social group, intent on equality, rather than simple terrorists that the revisionists would have history believe they were. He also dedicates chapters of this work to the lengths I.R.A. members went to achieve their goals of liberation such as in “Prison: Riots, Escapes, Unlucky Freedoms, Personalities and a Place in Grossmaglen” and “Hunger Striking: the I.R.A. Reach Beyond Bars”. It is no secret the horrors faced by members of the I.R.A. in prison and Coogan sheds light on these instances. His attention to the hunger strikes in prison further his narrative of humanity of this group and its members as they sought a moral and ethical equality for Catholics in Northern Ireland.³³ For all of his successes, Coogan has been the target of stark criticism and praise.

Published nearly three decades later, Bell picks up where Coogan left off. He offers a similarly in-depth history compiled through years of fieldwork and living alongside members of the I.R.A. Like Coogan, Bell relied heavily on living sources. He writes that “this book could not have existed without the quiet cooperation of well over a hundred individuals who gave me their time and told their story: this in a country where the battle of books is carried on into the pubs of lanes, and alien authors are anathema.”³⁴ It is this unique source material that makes this work more nuanced than literature that did not employ a fieldwork methodology. Due to his on-the-ground approach, Bell offers readers insight into the differing opinions, strategies, and closed-door feelings of members throughout this tumultuous period. He also uniquely addresses the evolution of the I.R.A. and its members into members of Sinn Féin, the mainstream political group

³³Coogan, 290-295.

³⁴ J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The I.R.A.* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1997), xv.

that represented Republican interests in this period and into today. These interventions in the historiography make this work the most recent and helpful to my own work.

Bowyer dedicates a chapter to exploring the hunger strike that garnered international attention for the I.R.A. His chapter titled “Unconventional Conflict, The Hunger Strikes, January 1980- October 3, 1981” begins this exploration. Here he contends that “the idea that conventional politics was futile” arose in this period and thus began the continued campaigns of violence, hunger strikes, and rebellion both within and outside of prison walls.³⁵ His notion that this was an unconventional conflict speaks to the Irish exceptionalism in all regards that I hope to highlight in my own work. Like Coogan, Bell deeply humanizes the members of the I.R.A. that he knew and lived alongside. He writes of Kevin Delaney who was murdered by Unionist forces and when no Catholic church would accept his corpse, “eventually mass was said at his home and the I.R.A. went back to war.”³⁶ It is small details like these that make this work chilling in its humanity and the life that it brings to these members. This idea is continued as Bell addresses everyday regulation of members of the I.R.A., their homes, their families, and entire Catholic communities by the British paramilitary forces.³⁷ Like Coogan his attention to the hunger strikes gives agency to those who died in the course of this movement and their history, rather than callously dismissing their lives and deaths. Bowyer also depicts what he calls “The Protracted Struggle, September 1981-January 1984.” Here he discusses I.R.A. feelings towards Margaret Thatcher and how her election

³⁵ Bell, 480.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 482.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 484.

escalated violence in the North.³⁸ He pays careful attention to the imperialism that many felt she was the embodiment of and how it incensed many in this organization and just everyday Catholics in Northern Ireland. His delving into the colonial narrative offers readers a more concrete ideation of what inspired members of the I.R.A. He further discusses the latter half of the 1980s and early 1990s where he situates this history into the broader narrative of world events, the struggle for liberation, and the place of the movement at the time of this work's publication. This cohesion and human based approach are what delineates this work in the historiography.

The historiography of the I.R.A. is a necessary component to understanding the legacy of revisionism that has plagued this area of study. Authors like Moody perpetually shaped these narratives with their own imperialist interpretations of Irish history prior to the advent of the I.R.A. This trend extended to the study of the I.R.A. and their actions that have so long been deemed mere terrorism. Bowyer Bell offers a greatly needed intervention in this historiography. The historiography of the I.R.A. has also been influenced by the application of just war theory to its narrative. Scholars outside of the Irish revisionist debate have weighed in and offered more nuanced and perhaps more enlightened, due to their lack of entrenchment in this divide, writings on the I.R.A. and the ways that just war theory can aid in explanation of the conflict of the 1970s in North.

³⁸ Ibid., 516.

2.4 Just War Theory Applications

Violence is a vital component of discussing the I.R.A. and their tactics during the latter half of the twentieth century in Northern Ireland and mainland Britain. Known for their bombings, the I.R.A. also participated in and facilitated kidnappings, robberies, and other means of torture and murder throughout this period. Less known, or perhaps just less acknowledged, are the murders, torture, rape, and mass starvation inflicted by the British government and their paramilitary forces during the occupation of Northern Ireland. It is perhaps important for me to state early in this discussion that I don't support or condone the actions of the I.R.A. despite them and their struggle being the focus of my thesis. In the same way, I do not remove culpability from the British and their history of abuses in the North. These events exist purely beyond me and the confines of academia in a time and situation that I have no personal connection to. As a historian we are taught not to make moral value judgements, and so I will not judge the I.R.A. for their methods. I will also remove judgment from the British as they were an imperial power in Ireland during this time, and as such were just behaving as imperial powers have and have done for centuries. The atrocities committed by either side exist in a larger context of ideology, abuse, war, and terror.

Slavoj Žižek's work, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008) offers a nuanced analysis of violence and our perceptions of it as a society. Žižek provides an in-depth examination of writing on violent revolt. His work oscillates between the "ways we perceive and misperceive violence," arguing that the common interpretation is

reductionist and ignores the causes of said violence.³⁹ Rather, he alleges that authors and society choose to focus only on the destruction and death the violence causes, rather than the systematic oppression that necessitates these acts. Zizek argues that violence “takes three forms—subjective (crime, terror), objective (racism, hate speech, discrimination, and system (the catastrophic effects of economic and political systems).⁴⁰ This multifaceted approach allows for analysis of the way these forms feed off of one another and how subjective violence is not truly the most damaging form. Zizek writes against the interpretation that only the most physically destructive form of violence is the most violent, and rather illuminates the state sponsored violence that then incurs a public response. This work can be well applied to the situation in Northern Ireland from 1969-1998, the period which largely comprises the Troubles.

Zizek’s analysis of subjective and symbolic violence are visible regarding the bombings and oppression that occurred in this time. He writes, “subjective violence is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective forms of violence.”⁴¹ This alleges that subjective violence is only the most condemned in society because it is the most visible due to its public performance. It also offers that it is seen as the worst because it is the most physically destructive (damage to structures, loss of life), even though less physical forms of violence are similarly harmful. Ultimately, it can be concluded that subjective violence is condemned the most as it disrupts the norms of society. In terms of Northern Ireland this is significant as the British and the Protestant population created these social norms and expectations, and thus physical attacks on them

³⁹ Slavoj Zizek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador Publishing, 2008), 1.

⁴⁰ Zizek, 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

were seen as an attack on their ideology and cultural production. Once the bombings moved to Britain, such as the Brighton Bombing, these attacks then attacked British society and culture itself in a more blatant way on British soil. Together these events can be well analyzed under Zizek's framework.

He also addresses symbolic violence that can be analyzed in terms of the relationship between the Catholics of Northern Ireland and the British. Zizek alleges that this form of aspect of instigating subjective violence is "embodied in language and its forms."⁴² This notion of rhetoric and speech has far reaching implications in Irish history dating back hundreds of years from my period of analysis. Elizabeth I had referred to the Irish as a "rude and savage people" during her reign. James I levied similar attacks against the Irish despite their shared Catholic faith, in order to procure support for the Ulster Plantation settlement in the mid-seventeenth century. Famed military leader and politician Oliver Cromwell similarly denigrated the Irish in his speech at Drogheda before he led a genocide against its population. These derogatory and demeaning characterizations of the Irish continued to proliferate throughout the later centuries and throughout the Troubles as well. The Infantilization of the Irish in rhetoric led to real oppression, what Zizek refers to as systemic, through discriminatory policies and restriction of the lives of Irish Catholics. Zizek creates an apt framework for analyzing murder and terror but does not address the I.R.A. itself. Despite this, other authors do by means of discussing just war theory.

⁴² Zizek, 3.

Author Timothy Shanahan fills in this historiographical gap with his work, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism*. Shanahan states that “the major aim of this book is to deploy the concepts, theories and resources of moral philosophy in order to evaluate the I.R.A.’s claim of unqualified moral legitimacy.”⁴³ His application of moral philosophy to the I.R.A. is a unique approach that had not been replicated since. This work was pioneering in the field of history as it melds philosophy with the history of the I.R.A. No other author has posed the question of how to approach such a violent conflict and apply questions of morality to it from a layman’s perspective. His discussion of the moral basis of terrorism and counterterrorism does not result in any concrete conclusion, rather he implores the reader to draw their own conclusions on the morality of dirty war, terror, and imperialism. This is a difficult subject to approach without application of the “value-free” narrative of the revisionists but Shanahan does so in a way that offers both sides of the narrative: those of the I.R.A. and the British counterinsurgency units that were deployed to the North. This is invariably unique, no other work has attempted to do this and thus he has made the first foray into this historiography with his discussion. Shanahan offers the works of philosophers and historians to cultivate an understanding of the role of morality in the acts of terrorism committed by the I.R.A., two seemingly disparate subjects. Despite this, he does well in his assessment of the role of just war theory and uses it to come to the conclusion that the I.R.A. did not wage a legitimate war in light of this theory. Shanahan’s work is unique in

⁴³ Timothy Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 8.

its approach and also in its existence as the only work that applies this concept fully to the I.R.A. only.

Shanahan offers an analysis of the qualifications of a just war and directly applies them to the I.R.A. He states, “I will argue that although the I.R.A.’s armed struggle, at least in some of its phases, can reasonably be described as war, it fails to satisfy key conditions both for the just initiation of war and for the just conduct of war.”⁴⁴ To support this argument, Shanahan details the six prerequisites of a just war and judges the I.R.A. and their variance of warfare against these standards. The first of these is legitimate authority: essentially just who can declare a war? Under conventional standards only a public power (i.e. the state) can do this and so a private group such as the I.R.A. could, from the outset of warfare, not wage a just or legitimate war. This is followed by “just cause” which Shanahan describes as “only as a defence against a real and serious attack on the common good.”⁴⁵ The serious attack on the Catholic community and their low quality of life under colonial rule places the I.R.A. within this framework. Shanahan follows this with “right intention,” being “an intention to defend the common good of the community.”⁴⁶ Similarly, this requirement works for the I.R.A. and their mission. “Probability of success” is the next determinant. Shanahan posits the conventional understanding in discussion of this theory that “to undertake war when the chances of war is unjust.”⁴⁷ He does not think that the I.R.A. meets this requirement. Personally, I am torn and will greater explore this in my thesis as a ramification of trying to assess an

⁴⁴ Shanahan, 93.

⁴⁵ Shanahan, 103.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 104.

inhumane situation from a place of humanity and morality. Lastly, Shanahan measures the I.R.A. against the standards of “proportionality: the probable overall benefits of going to war must outweigh the probably overall costs of doing so” and “last resort: all other options must be exhausted, otherwise this is not legitimate warfare.”⁴⁸ To each of these he states that the I.R.A. does not work accordingly and as such, restates that they and their war cannot be reconciled with just war theory.

The Ethics of War (2016) by A.J. Coates offers insight into the various types of war and the ideologies that guide them. Coates writes this work in what he deems a period of “major revival” in which “those at the forefront of contemporary just war thought are often moved by a strong sense of dissatisfaction with the received state of the tradition.”⁴⁹ Drawing on the works of theorists David Rodin and Jeff McMahan, Coates accepts that there is a serious need for revision of just war theory and its contemporary understandings. Despite this, he does not simply deem it an unusable framework, but rather builds his work around the notion that this ancient creation is still viable. This work has three parts. The first, “Images of War”, focuses on the varying traditions of interpreting war: realist, militarist, pacifist, and just war. The second, “Principles and Concepts of the just war,” more deeply examines just war theory. This work is concluded with “Terrorism and counterterrorism” which is most applicable to my own work as it examines the role of terror in a just war and vice versa. Together, these elements can be well applied to the I.R.A. and the murders they committed.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 104-105.

⁴⁹ A.J. Coates, *The Ethics of War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 1.

Coates details the moral function of the just war ideation in this work. He argues “the just war image is the only one [compared to realism, militarism, and pacifism] to uphold the moral limitation of war clearly and consistently.”⁵⁰ Issues of morality plague discussions of the Troubles. Conventional understandings condemn murder no matter its circumstances, yet this cannot be the case in the application of just war theory to the actions of the I.R.A. This framework does not seek to excuse their actions, but rather to situate them in terms of the centuries of tensions and imperialism that preceded them. Approaching the Troubles in this way allows for a greater understanding of the entirety of the relationship between the North and Britain.

In part one, Coates discusses the “moral primacy of peace” in the context of just war. Coates alleges that “the just war theorist consistently affirms the moral primacy of peace over war, resisting the cult of violence and the drift into total war to which militarism in both its open and covert forms is prone.”⁵¹ In theory, this is why the Catholic Church has for so long allied itself alongside this interpretation and practice of war. The notion that peace would be of the utmost importance seems fitting, and is perhaps why most Western nations similarly proclaim to favor this ideation of war as well. This interpretation makes it easy to neglect the precipitation to war and the unjustness towards sects of the population that precedes an internal war against the state. In terms of the I.R.A. this is a vital understanding as it was used both by the West and the Catholic Church to condemn their campaign. In my broader work I will address the condemnations issued, especially that of Pope John Paul II during his 1979 sermon at

⁵⁰ Ibid., 115.

⁵¹ Coates, 115.

Drogheda where he called on “the men of violence” to put down their arms and return to the church.⁵² To this, the I.R.A. issued a statement reminding the Pope and the Church that it was they who coined the idea of a just war and wondered aloud if perhaps they had forgotten this.⁵³ I will further explore this narrative later in this chapter. Ultimately, Coates offers a more nuanced understanding of the morality that is essential to just war theory and furthers his narrative with an intensive examination at the tenets of just war.

“Principles and concepts of war” delves deeply into the varying aspects of this theory. In terms of legitimate authority, Coates alleges that it “has become the most neglected of all the criteria that have been traditionally employed in the moral assessment of war.”⁵⁴ Like Shanahan, he states that it is conventionally reduced to the idea of the public versus the private, with only the public (i.e. the government) being able to legitimately wage a just war. This interpretation is what he alleges is a major failing of this theory, due to “perhaps the narrowly legalistic interpretation” that it can be assessed by.⁵⁵ To simply conclude that the I.R.A. was not a government agency and thus disqualified itself from waging a just war is reductionist and Coates’ criticism of the moral nature to this decision derides the correctness of it. Coates brings morality into the question of why the state is so easily supported while other groups are not, asking “If the state’s right to war is subject to such minimal moral scrutiny, why should the claims to belligerency of less official bodies be treated with greater moral skepticism?”⁵⁶ Here he

⁵² John Paul II, “Holy Mass in Drogheda: Homily of His Holiness John Paul II,” 29 September 1979, accessed 3 March 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790929_irlanda-dublino-drogheda.html.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Coates, 140.

⁵⁵ Coates, 141.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

questions the disparity of legitimacy given to each of these bodies. Coates even examines this situation through the lens of the I.R.A., furthering the idea that they are a well-documented case study for the revision of the interpretation of just war theory. Despite this, Coates finds that the I.R.A. do not meet the requirements posed by this framework to be a legitimate authority.

Ultimately, Coates acquiesces to the state's technical and legal superiority. He states that, "the state's *right to war* derives. . . from its membership of an international community to the common good of which the state is ordered and to the law of which it is subject."⁵⁷ While he does admit that this is why the I.R.A. is not truly certified under just war theory to wage such an attack, in his analysis it is clear that Coates thinks there must be more nuance to the argument of just who is legitimate. In this he refutes revisionist historians of the conflict, discussed early on in my own work, as it is nuance and greater understanding of the classification of the I.R.A. that he seeks, rather than simply reducing them to a sectarian group. This is the first time Coates addresses the immense role of community in the ideation of just war. In his own analysis, and purely in the tenets of just war, it will continue to play a major role.

Coates's analysis of just cause centers around the idea that while it may be the most objectively visible defense of war, it cannot take the place of being the most important. Coates argues that "a just cause is a necessary but not sufficient condition of just recourse: even when the cause is most certainly just it may not be serious or weighty enough to warrant such a drastic remedy as war."⁵⁸ This is an important distinction in the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁸ Coates, 163.

theory. Coates depicts and supports the idea that while injustice may occur, there must be a thorough consensus that war is the only and best option beyond any peaceful one. This is similar to the description given by Shanahan, but again Coates calls for more nuance in this moral decision making as well as the judgement of others on these decisions. His next chapter, “Proportionality and the recourse to war,” supports this, as he argues that “the existence of a just cause, even when allied with legitimate authority, does not in itself justify recourse to war.”⁵⁹ Proportionality is the central aspect of this argument and Coates further delineates this to individual acts of violence. He concludes in this portion that despite these requirements being met, a group cannot, under just war, wage war if it is firstly, not a proportional response to sustained abuses, and secondly that if a war is waged in order to be just it must adhere to proportional levels of violence (i.e. not a massacre). These distinctions offer a way to properly assess catastrophic acts of the I.R.A., such as bombings.

Coates dedicates the final section of his work to terrorism and its role in just war theory and practice. Very against the idea of defining terrorism and risk limiting its scope of analysis, Coates argues that “what is really needed is an understanding (not a definition) of terrorism that embraces (among other things) both the matter of ‘status’ and the matter of ‘tactic.’”⁶⁰ To get to this assessment, Coates favors an approach that utilizes both context and comprehensiveness. He argues for this against a definitional approach as he deduces that these requirements allow for a more nuanced understanding of the events of terrorism on an individual basis. By not forcing analysis to conform to a hierarchy,

⁵⁹ Ibid., 183.

⁶⁰ Coates, 312.

Coates alleges that one may find greater insight and moral understanding of terror itself. This is a significant factor in terms of the I.R.A., whose terror has long been reduced to mere violence without purpose. Coates links just war theory and terrorism throughout this section, stating “these differences [of terrorism] are part of the moral particularity of terrorism, on which traditional just war thinking is traditionally centered.”⁶¹ This linkage is a helpful addition to the historiography of just war. It offers greater understanding of the acts that do fall into this category and the proper way to assess them.

Coates’ discussion of terrorism revolves around supposed morality and non-combatant immunity. Coates uses these topics to distinguish from the terrorism of state and non-state actors, stating that “both states and terrorists kill noncombatants, but they do not kill them in the same way or in the same circumstances.”⁶² This statement is telling of the relativity of this work as unlike revisionist historians, Coates does not pretend that the state does not also commit acts of terror. Rather he creates a narrative in which terror is absorbed into just warfare which is a welcome and interesting addition to the historiography. This conflation gives credence to the idea of a dirty war between the I.R.A. and the British government, and once again grounds them as near equals when it comes to the Troubles. Coates seemingly admits that he also cannot come to a concrete conclusion on terrorism but can only offer his analytical suggestions, stating “in dealing with a phenomenon as morally flawed as terrorism this negative and qualified appraisal seems more fitting than a more unequivocal approach.”⁶³ In regards to the I.R.A. this is a fitting mode of analysis. In my own work I cannot defend nor degrade them, because I do

⁶¹ Ibid., 325.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Coates, 326.

not exist in the same space or circumstance as them. I cannot support the British either, because I also do not exist in that space. Coates provides a nuanced means of analysis for a convoluted history and his insights well support various ideas I have of the I.R.A. and their past.

History and Revolution: Refuting Revisionism (2009) by Mike Haynes and Jim Wolfreys offers helpful guidance on how to discuss terror and morality from an academic standpoint. While they do not specifically discuss the revolutionary aspects of the Troubles, they do offer insight into writing on revolution itself. Together they discuss a more positive view of revolution and its ramifications early on in this work, alleging that “revolutions concentrate change, they open new possibilities, some of which - perhaps many of which - will not be taken but which nevertheless become markers for the future.”⁶⁴ This notion is in direct defiance of the contemporary revisionist histories of Northern Ireland. As discussed in my literature review, these authors portray the struggle for freedom in the North as mere sectarian violence with no real results. Haynes and Wolfreys, it can be assumed, would disagree with this interpretation as they see revolution as purely productive act for the societies they occur in.

These authors also allege that revolutions are denigrated in contemporary history. They are “profoundly uncomfortable events for those who believe that, for better or worse, we live in the best of all possible worlds where there exists only a limited space for some tinkering to bring improvement.”⁶⁵ This idea too can be related to the Troubles and the violence of the I.R.A. Murder, of course, makes people uncomfortable even in a

⁶⁴ Mike Haynes and Jim Wolfreys, *History and Revolution: Refuting Revisionism* (London: Verso Publishing, 2007), 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

historic context. The justification of murder through a revolutionary lens then also incurs this response and thus a condemnation in revisionist history. In the geo-political context of the Troubles, this argument is clear. Britain, the U.S. and the Catholic Church all disregarded this revolution as mere sectarian violence. This is demonstrated in their responses to the violence of the I.R.A. and their hunger striking. Their condemnation poses a greater question for historians, one echoed by the anti-revisionists, of just how this history should be approached in contemporary history.

The historiography of Irish history and later the Irish Troubles is tumultuous. Initially dominated by nationalist histories, it gave way in the early twentieth century to the revisionists inspired by Herbert Butterfield. These histories would dominate the historiography until they were challenged by the antirevisionists in the later half of this century, authors who questioned the validity of the “value-free” approach and countered this with a more nuanced analysis of the cultural memory of Irish history and the Troubles. Around the same time, just war theory began to be applied to the histories of modern Ireland, offering a framework in which to analyze the violence and death of the 1960s and 1970s in the North.

Chapter 3: Situating the Men of Violence

The I.R.A. of the latter half of the twentieth century situated themselves and their conflict with the British in just war theory ideology. This is demonstrated through their statements given in this period that align themselves with the tenets of just war theory and conveys their actions against the British forces as anti-imperialist and defensive. Despite their interpretation of their legitimacy, the Catholic Church and the British government continued to condemn them for their violence. Situating this violence in the context of just war theory allows for a greater understanding of this conflict beyond other anti-imperialist movements of this period. The condemnation of the Catholic Church alongside the British invokes discussion of the Cold War context of the Troubles, one that is introduced in this chapter and expounded upon in the next.

In August 1969, a statement was disseminated by the I.R.A.'s publicity bureau on the current situation in the Six Counties. Addressed to "the London, Dublin and Belfast Governments, to the Foreign Ministries of all States, to the Secretary General of the United Nations, and to the Irish and international press," this statement outlined the hostilities that plagued this time and the I.R.A.'s response to the actions of these factions. There are numerous aspects of this document that align the I.R.A. and their mission to just war theory. It proclaims their self-identification as a governmental body and the legitimacy of their warfare. This writing also discusses the idea of response to violence, rather than incitation of violence at the hands of the I.R.A., allowing for analysis of their ideas of defensive violence. Lastly, this work is grounded in the idea of commonality and peace, the driving force behind just war theory. Together, these elements allow for this

statement to act as a grounding position for the I.R.A. and the actions they took in the decades after its release.

At its outset this statement immediately establishes the I.R.A. as a governing body with a supposed control or influence over the population of Northern Ireland. It states:

The Army Council of the Irish Republican Army, acting in the capacity as the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic proclaimed in 1916, and ratified by the universal suffrage of the Irish people in 1918, hereby calls on all Irishmen and Irishwomen, both at home and in exile, to forget all divisions and differences of the past and to stand in unity against the forces of British imperialism.⁶⁶

Three facets discussed in this brief paragraph directly align the I.R.A. with one of the key tenets of just war theory: having authority. This brings into question the idea of identification of the I.R.A. While the British had long condemned them at this point in time as a mere sectarian faction in the North, the I.R.A. had a far more sophisticated identification of themselves and their role as a form of authority. While all insurgent groups maintain that they were justified in their pursuits, the I.R.A. aligned themselves with the rhetoric and beliefs of just war theory. Contrary to the British notion that the I.R.A. ruled simply by fear and terror, something that I will explore in greater detail in a later chapter focused on British response, the I.R.A. maintained that they were themselves a governing body. Complete with charters, the famed Green Book that

⁶⁶ Cathal Goulding, "Irish Republican Army statement in relation to the situation in Northern Ireland," August 1969, *IRA Documents Collection*, National Archives, Ireland.

detailed the rules and regulations of the Irish Volunteers, and council bodies on various levels of the organization, the I.R.A. did satisfy most conventional requirements for a political body.

The call to action that concludes this paragraph supports the idea that the I.R.A. had considerable influence in the North and abroad. While the British long alleged throughout the twentieth century that the I.R.A. was a diminutive group confined to the North, the group did maintain a sense of authority both in Ireland and in the United States. As the group had been in existence for fifty years at the time of this statement, the I.R.A. had proliferated itself and its ideology throughout numerous generations of Irishmen and women. This supports the power of their call to action and thus their actual authority to issue it. It is this power that contributes to the ability to see classify the I.R.A. as a ruling body, unofficially or not. The cause of this statement is telling as well.

The call to action is significant, yet the focus of this unity is a prominent theme of this period and the I.R.A.'s overarching mission throughout the twentieth century: combatting British imperialism. Denoting this exact purpose further aligns the I.R.A. and their purpose in this statement with just war theory. By naming this specific enemy satisfies the requirement of just war theory to be fighting for the greater good of a community. Later in this document, the authors write, "in response to urgent calls for help from an almost defenceless people. . .the Army Council has placed all volunteers on full alert and has already sent a number of fully equipped units to the aid of their comrades in the Six Counties."⁶⁷ This statement alleges that the community in question

⁶⁷ Goulding, "Irish."

are the Irish Catholics of the Six Counties region in the North and their violence was purely in the defense of these people. The inclusion of this specification as to who is being defended and why, fulfills the prerequisite of just war theory needed to “rightly” wage war against another power. The rhetoric of protection and defense further supports this classification.

As discussed above, a major tenet of just war theory is the idea that a power must act defensively rather than offensively in order for violence to be justly performed. It is argued throughout this document that the I.R.A. is acting in a purely defensive capacity. The authors allege that their actions were necessitated “because of the intransigent stand of right-wing Unionism, and their meeting of moderate demands with terrorism and violence, we have been reluctantly compelled into military action.”⁶⁸ This rhetoric of being forced into this avenue of action fits within the framework of just war theory as well. It posits the idea that the I.R.A. had no other channel to combat the British forces of imperialism. Violence stands as a last resort in both just war theory and this I.R.A. statement. They further this argument later in this document, claiming that “these forces of the I.R.A. are being used in a defensive capacity wherever the people are being terrorized by Unionist mobs, backed up by armed B-Specials.”⁶⁹ The use of the term “defensive” is an exacting one derived totally from the origins of just war theory. As discussed by Coates and Shanahan, in this ideology, violence can only be enacted from a defensive position. Describing Unionist and British action as terrorism depicts how these narratives of one another clashed in this period as each side argued that the others were

⁶⁸ Goulding, “Irish.”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

the true terrorists in their ideation of just war. To the I.R.A., however, they were acting wholly in accordance with just war theory. This justification perhaps spurred the onslaught of violence that plagued Northern Ireland and Britain throughout the decade that followed.

In 1979, Pope John Paul II gave a sermon at Drogheda during his tour of Northern Ireland. The first visit to Ireland by a pope, this campaign is most known for his plea to the I.R.A. to end the violence that had dominated the 1970s in Northern Ireland and Britain. Drawing on the Catholic faith and Irish history, he issued a seemingly sincere appeal to the I.R.A. It is important to note the lasting relationship of this figure and the West, however, to understand his role in these events.

Pope John Paul II had a positive relationship with the U.S. and Britain in the post-Cold War era. He, U.S. President Ronald Reagan, and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher united to form a coalition during the Cold War and to protect one another interests beginning in the 1960s. The special relationship between the administrations of Reagan and Thatcher and just these politicians themselves speaks to the uniting of these nations that occurred in the 1970s in response to the spread of communism. Northern Ireland was an outlier. Neither Reagan nor Thatcher had great influence in this region, but Pope John Paul II did. As the highest Catholic leader, he had a reach to the North that neither of these politicians did. John Paul and the Church had previously condemned the communists and in the post-cold war era they were replaced with the I.R.A. as a new insurgent group to target.

The timing of his visit and declaration against “the men of violence” is telling as well. A month before his visit, Louis Mountbatten, the Earl of Mountbatten and a cousin

of Queen Elizabeth, was killed while at a vacation home in Mullaghmore, Ireland. While the violence had been raging for years, this was the first intervention of the Pope. He did not come in 1972 after Bloody Sunday occurred where the British military waged an open campaign against Irish civilians resulting in eighteen Irish deaths. He similarly did not come after any other murder committed by the I.R.A. against any other British civilian. After the Mountbatten killing he issued a plea for “peace” that was almost immediately rejected.

Pope John Paul acknowledged the nuance of the situation, but ultimately condemned the I.R.A. and their actions in the North. Three days later, on 3 October 1979, the I.R.A. issued a statement in response alongside their political arm, Sinn Fein. Together these statements reflect the attempted influence of the Catholic Church over the Northern Irish situation. The responses of the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein demonstrate the ties to just war theory that the I.R.A. had maintained since 1969 in stark contrast to the church’s abject ignoring of this history and the abuses of Britain. They portray the religious tensions that plagued even those of the same religion during this time of civil and imperial unrest.

Pope John Paul focused largely on the violence perpetrated by the I.R.A. rather than assessing the more complete history of violence in the North. Aligning this history and the legacy of the Irish Saint Oliver Plunkett, he argued, “Saint Oliver Plunkett, Primate of Ireland, for twelve years, is forever an outstanding example of Christ’s love for all men . . . He was indeed the defender of the oppressed and an advocate of justice,

but he would condemn violence.”⁷⁰ John Paul conjured a legacy in Ireland of passive non-violence, one that never existed, with his rhetoric of peace and religion. In doing so, this homily, despite its degradation of the I.R.A. employees a similar approach to their own statements on the history of Ireland. Both rely on the idea of a legacy and an inheritance of the situation in the North yet diverge in their plans for Ireland’s future. John Paul’s reference to Plunket is the first time in this homily that the timing of it can be questioned in terms of how it may have been influenced by the British and the United States.

Oliver Plunkett died in the fifteenth century but had only recently been canonized at the time of this homily. The timing of this canonization in 1975 and the “peace” that he was meant to signify in Ireland is easily attributed to the half decade of violence that Northern Ireland and Britain had just endured from both the I.R.A. and the British paramilitary. In his characterization of Plunkett as “a defender of the oppressed and an advocate of justice,” the pope admits knowledge of the injustices imposed on the Northern Irish.⁷¹ Despite this, he offered no tangible ways of combatting these injustices outside of prayer on the part of the Irish. John Paul also did not discuss any ways that the British may have served to lessen the violence in the North. The I.R.A. narrowed in on this failure of this homily in its addressal of who was truly responsible for the violence in the North in their own statement.

The I.R.A. statement countered this narrative of the source and continuers of the unrest that plagued Northern Ireland. Arguing for a more holistic assessment of the true

⁷⁰ Pope John Paul II, “Holy Mass.”

⁷¹ Ibid.

actors in this conflict, the authors allege, “church leaders, politicians and establishments are bankrupt and have also failed to resolve the massive social and economic problems suffered by our people and created by British interference.”⁷² This aspect of their statement gives names to the “injustice” that John Paul simply mentions in his own writing. The I.R.A. also introduces the concept of morality in this charge, arguing that the Catholic church is morally bankrupt alongside the politicians that proliferated the problems of the North. This allegation furthers the idea that the Provisional I.R.A. was a true governmental force due to the assumed ineptitude of those who were *supposed* to be in power. Further arguing against the idea posed by John Paul that in order to achieve peace the I.R.A. must come to peace first and pray for an end to the violence of the British rather than take action, they wrote “in all conscience, we believe that force is by far the only means of removing the evil of British presence in Ireland.”⁷³ Relying on the tenet of just war that defensive action is the only appropriate one in a just war, this statement argues that defense was the only choice. Just war is posed as a logical response in this framework, one that was further supported by Sinn Fein.

On the same day, Sinn Fein offered their own interpretation of the role of just war in this conflict as well. Their statement was much more pointed in its attention to just war and its characterization of the Northern conflict as an example of it. The authors address three primary aspects of this theory in their brief statement: the good of community, defensive action, and legitimate revolt. While the I.R.A. addressed John Paul in terms of his failures to attention to the British occupation, Sinn Fein offered a more nuanced

⁷² “Full Text of IRA Statement,” *The Irish Times*, October 3, 1979, accessed 2 April 2020, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/full-text-of-ira-statement-1.444004>.

⁷³ “Provisional FS Statement,” *The Irish Times*, October 3, 1979.

questioning on the nature of just war. Their argument harshly condemned John Paul's rejection of this being a just war and alleged that there was a failure of the Church to abide by their own creation.

The three arguments of this, albeit brief statement, portray the tensions between the established political group of Sinn Fein and the Catholic Church. On British imperialism, the statement noted, "we would add that the nation is another human community which has the same inalienable rights."⁷⁴ The idea of community and the good of its members is a primary classification in just war theory. Sinn Fein converts the notion of common good to common inalienable rights in this statement, broadening the scope of the intentions of just war in Northern Ireland. Regarding armed resistance, they argued "the people organized their own physical resistance to British terror. This action was totally in keeping with the traditional Christian teaching on the right to resist oppression."⁷⁵ Mimicking the I.R.A.'s classification of the British actions in the North as terrorism reiterates this stance, but also gives it a more legitimate political voice. While the I.R.A.'s status as a governing power is negotiable and highly open to interpretation, Sinn Fein was and remains a noted political force in Northern Ireland with a large base in the Irish Catholic community. This is the first inkling of a connection to just war theory in their argument and its Christian roots. They expand on this later in their statement, directly addressing John Paul asking, "In light of the constant reiteration of media terms like 'violence', 'hatred' and 'men of violence' Sinn Fein would welcome clarification as to whether this teaching on the right to resist, the right to resort to legitimate revolt and

⁷⁴ "Provisional FS Statement," *The Irish Times*, October 3, 1979.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

the right to engage in a just war has been changed.”⁷⁶ This is the most compelling action in this statement. Their direct counter to the church and John Paul makes clear the broadening divide between these two major actors in the conflict. It also supports the idea that John Paul was and would continue to be much more closely aligned with the British and American government’s interpretation of the I.R.A. and their actions as terror rather than legitimate warfare.

The I.R.A. concluded their statement by posing another major tenet of just war theory: peace. They stated that “we have, and will continue to deal with it, until the British dimension is withdrawn and a climate for real peace and justice can be created.”⁷⁷ The enduring idea of peace is present in all of these statements, but it is utilized in varying ways meant to sway public reaction or support for the authors. As discussed above, John Paul spoke only of peace as something that the I.R.A. could help to achieve, ignoring the British element. Sinn Fein spoke of peace as achieved through just warfare. The I.R.A., however, discusses peace as something prevented by the British, despite their attempts to achieve it. These divergent narratives depict how the discussion and understanding of peace varied between these groups in this period.

Two years after this international back and forth on May 5, 1981, John Paul issued a statement on the continued conflict in the North. He stated, “let us pray so that the Lord may cause men to discover the means to a solution which will help the populations of Northern Ireland to turn themselves to a prospect of reconciliation and of peace, as already so many times and from so many parts it has been invoked up to now in

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Full Text of IRA Statement.”

vain.”⁷⁸ Again calling for peace, John Paul seemingly replies to the I.R.A. message given two years ago and harkens back to his homily. Discussing how peace was rejected by the I.R.A. continues his narrative. Throughout the 1980s, this rhetoric would continue both from the Church and from the governments of the West.

⁷⁸ “John Paul II’s remarks on the situation in Northern Ireland,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 2 May 1981.

Chapter 4: The I.R.A. and Murder

Murder is an enduring theme of the Troubles. It occurred on both sides of the imperialist divide, perpetrated by the British government both directly and indirectly and by the I.R.A. often in the form of bombings. Anti-imperialism was a guiding factor of the I.R.A. in their pursuits during this period as opposed to anti-colonialism. Just war theory supports the use of violence and murder to combat offensive forces and this was performed by the I.R.A. in these situations. The rhetoric used to defend these actions further align them with just war theory and the proper use of it in their fight against the British. The Green Book of the I.R.A. acted as a training manual since its inception and was revised throughout the decades to reflect the most current issues of the struggle. This work also influenced the murders of the Duke of Burma, Lord Mountbatten and Tory MP Airey Neave both in 1979. These murders evidence the violence of the I.R.A., but also their motivations for doing so; primarily freedom for the North. Further analysis of their statements on these deaths relay the anti-imperialist sentiment that bolstered this movement throughout its existence.

The murders committed by and crucial to the work of the I.R.A. are a controversial subject in their history. In the case of both Airey Neave and Louis Mountbatten, the British refer to these murders as assassinations due to the men's standing in society. However, I will not refer to them as assassinations, since this term was never applied to the British and Irish civilians that were killed during this conflict. Such a delineation perpetuates the idea that one life is worth more than the other. Murder acts as a great equalizer in this narrative of the I.R.A. and the classism of the British government that neglected the deaths of ordinary Irish and British civilians compared to

their many statements on the murder of upper-class members of British society. In the I.R.A.'s pursuits to expose this through the murder of elite British citizens, they proved that the British could easily neglect the murder of their own common people, and thus dismiss the murder of the Irish citizens during this war. One work in particular of the I.R.A. depicts the structure that motivated and ruled these murders in the late 1970s.

The Green Book first emerged as a known source of training and guidelines for the I.R.A. in the mid-1950s. Since that time it has “acted as a manual of conduct and induction to the organization.”⁷⁹ It is shrouded in secrecy and has been protected by members who only receive it once they have been admitted to the organization. This work has been printed at secret locations and the true number of copies remain unknown. Despite it having existed for over seventy years, only two editions of it can be found online. One of these is the 1956 version and it is available in its complete form. The second is the 1977 edition of which only three chapters have been made available online. It is heavily suspected that the Green Book is a living document and that there are far more recent versions in existence, but not available outside of the organization.⁸⁰ The 1977 version is most applicable to the time period of this analysis as it shaped the actions of the I.R.A. in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

This edition involved four primary updates to the 1956 version. The updates to this edition were “aimed at combatting the counter insurgency efforts of the British army and the RUC” that had plagued the North since the early 1970s.⁸¹ The first of these updates was to the political policy and social structure to one that offered a more militant

⁷⁹ *The Green Book (1977)*, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://irishrepublican.weebly.com/the-green-book.html>.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

and stylized approach to combatting the British.⁸² This was followed by greater attention to military strategy in undertaking attacks on the British paramilitary forces.⁸³ In this attention to their military strategy, the updated version addressed their current military strength and how to improve it in the face of a more larger and well equipped enemy.⁸⁴ Lastly this updated edition discussed the technology and tactics of the British forces.⁸⁵ While the additions to this version of the Green Book were focused on the future of the movement and the new advancements that were needed, the work itself remained staked in the past history of the I.R.A. and the British.

The guidelines of the Green Book began with framing this conflict as a just war, one that the I.R.A. had as the founding basis of its organization. This text is very clear that this is how members of the I.R.A. shaped their own struggle and how they insisted their members understand the nature of this conflict. This is demonstrated by the statement:

Commitment to the Republican Movement is the firm belief that its struggle both military and political is morally justified, that war is morally justified and that the [I.R.A.] is the direct representative of the 1918 Dail Eireann Parliament, and that as such they are the legal and lawful government of the Irish Republic, which has the moral right to pass laws for, and to claim jurisdiction over the territory, air

⁸² *The Green Book.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

space, mineral resources, means of production, distribution and exchange and all of its people regardless of creed or loyalty.⁸⁶

The idea that this war was morally justified harkens to the moral aspect of just war theory. This states that a war is morally just only if the conflict will result in a better reality than the current circumstances for the defensive party. By claiming that they are the legal and lawful government of the Irish Republic, the I.R.A. satisfies a further requirement of just war theory, the idea that the defensive party must be officially understood as a government power. While most if not all guerilla forces claim legitimacy, not all claim that they are an official government of their own, one that is representative of an entire political party. Most groups do not depict themselves as being so closely aligned to just war theory itself. It is their exacting rhetoric that draws on the wording of just war theory and its components that make it clear that the I.R.A. interpreted their conflict with the British as a just war. Their further descriptions of this conflict support this as well - for example, their statement that their intention was to create “a War of attrition against enemy personnel which is aimed at causing as many casualties and deaths as possible so as to create a demand from their people at home for their withdrawal.”⁸⁷ By characterizing this war as a war of attrition, the I.R.A. situated themselves as the defensive party of this conflict. This is another tenet of just war theory, that mandates that to engage in a just war, a party must act defensively rather than offensively. Situating themselves in this way demonstrates again the I.R.A. drawing on

⁸⁶ *The Green Book*.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

the clauses of just war theory to support their fight against the British. The tactics and motivations of the I.R.A. depicted in the Green Book elaborate on how this war was to be waged.

The Green Book is first and foremost a training manual. Anti-imperialism was a major cornerstone of I.R.A. ideology, as demonstrated in their Green Book statement “the objective of 800 years of oppression ‘is economic exploitation with the unjustly partitioned 6 counties remaining Britain’s directly controlled old-style colony’ and the South under the ‘continuing social, cultural, and economic domination of London.’”⁸⁸ This two-fold interpretation of imperialism in Ireland was and is an enduring classification of the British abuses in the North as told by the I.R.A. Their outright colonial rule in the North and their cultural domination in the South was seen as the final form of British colonialism in Ireland. Together, these dominations resulted in enduring anger, stress, and economic hardship in the North, spurring on the I.R.A. and their attempts to free themselves and their neighbors from these constraints. Economic imperialism of Britain was a further form that the I.R.A. condemned, stating “From 1958 on, the Free State abandoned all attempts to secure an independent economy, and brought in foreign multi-national companies to create jobs instead of buying their skills and then sending them home gradually.”⁸⁹ The economic domination of Ireland by Britain contributed to a Marxist approach by the New I.R.A. of the 1960s and throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. In the Cold War period, the I.R.A. was not unique in terms of this approach; many other anti-imperial and anti-colonial movements arose in

⁸⁸ *The Green Book.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

this period, with a shared Marxist ideology. Britain, the United States, and the Catholic Church condemned these movements. Thatcher and U.S. President Ronald Reagan used starkly Christian imagery to link Marxist anti-imperialism to communism and create depiction of a new “evil empire” to defeat. Despite this insistence on linking these movements by these Western nations, the I.R.A. was not truly a Marxist movement.

Like other anti-imperial movements of this period the I.R.A. employed a Marxist approach to their goals of economic domination and subversion. While this was an expected and normalized aspect of these groups in Europe, the United States, and South America, the I.R.A. was not dominated by Marxist sentiment.⁹⁰ While the I.R.A. was not unique in their casual Marxism, they were in the fact that to fully embrace the atheism of Marxism was to condemn oneself to the outskirts of this movement. The I.R.A. was more so influenced by the writings within their guiding text.

This violence itself, however, was also guided by the Green Book. There were five principles that informed the structure for their attacks. These ranged from short term solutions such as murders to long term solutions to the problem of imperialism in Northern Ireland at the hands of the British.⁹¹ These five points each discussed a nuanced aspect of the problems between the nations and aimed to finally remove the imperial powers from the North after a decades long conflict.⁹² The Green Book is an important document in the history of the I.R.A. and their beliefs that they waged a just war against the British government. This source aids in depicting how the I.R.A. viewed themselves

⁹⁰ Michael McKinley, “‘Dangerous liaisons?’: The provisional Irish Republican Army, Marxism, and the communist governments of Europe,” *History of European Ideas* 15 (2012), 432.

⁹¹ *The Green Book*.

⁹² *Ibid.*

and interpreted their place in anti-imperialist movements. While they are not unique in their guiding doctrine and beliefs of legitimacy, common feelings amongst guerilla movements, these are important factors in exploring how just war theory was utilized by the I.R.A. The statements within this work aid in aligning the I.R.A. with the tenets of this theory discussed in previous chapters. It cements how this was their leaderships interpretation of this movement and how the I.R.A. members on the 1970s were indoctrinated into this line of belief. While they do not use the language of just war theory often, the guiding principles of this group can be clearly seen in this context.

Bombing remained of tantamount importance throughout their campaign. Responding to the economic imperialism in the North, they argued for “a bombing campaign aimed at making the enemy’s financial interest in our country unprofitable while at the same time curbing long term financial investment in our country.”⁹³ Revealing a deeper intention to the bombing than mere murders, the I.R.A. relayed how the bombing served a much larger purpose. These bombings, unlike those in Britain itself, were aimed at infrastructure of Britain in Northern Ireland. While this may have been their intention, it is difficult to find a bombing in the North that did not also cause mass death of both British soldiers and Irish civilians. The Ballykelly bombing that ravaged Belfast in 1982 demonstrates these failures where many died and little true infrastructure was harmed. As the Green Book was first written early in this war, the later bombings on the mainland may have had an altered intention to simply bring Britain to its knees, such as the Brighton Bombing and the bombing of London’s subway system,

⁹³ *The Green Book*.

rather than portray a more nuanced argument against their actions in the North. The I.R.A. largely aimed to combat the imperialism in the North at the hands of the British, yet posed this idea in an unusual way.

The I.R.A. ultimately was against the violent interventions of the British, yet argued that they should make the North as ungovernable as possible. They alleged that their intention was “to make the Six Counties as at present and for the past several years ungovernable except by colonial military rule.”⁹⁴ In attempting to make this region intractable, their aims were furthered in the lack of control that the British had in the North. In creating an anarchic area, the I.R.A. forced the British to continually dedicate more time and resources to this disruption to detract from the British interference in their other activities and plans. This tactic fits within the framework of exhausting British resources and attitudes in the long term, but in the short term appears like it would have created more hardship for Irish citizens. Despite this, it did occur and the British did ultimately deploy greater and greater numbers of soldiers and paramilitary forces to the North. In later decades, it would become clear that this was a major error on both sides. The fight against imperialism, was not confined to brute force, however.

The I.R.A. also relied heavily on a propaganda campaign against the British. In their training book, they argued that they must “sustain the war and gain support for its end by National and International propaganda and publicity campaigns.”⁹⁵ This propaganda was “directed outwards, mainly towards America and Britain, utilizing ancient myths, current allegations or revolutionary fervor according to the taste of each

⁹⁴*The Green Book.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

audience.”⁹⁶ Mostly in the form of posters, writings, and interviews, the I.R.A. aimed to reconcile their fight for freedom with one that could be understood internationally. Aligning themselves with other anti-imperial movements in this period, they attempted to legitimize their narrative on a global scale. They succeeded on varying levels with this pursuit throughout the world with monetary support coming from New York chapters of the I.R.A. and support from guerilla movements in the Middle East. Within their own organization, they attempted to maintain absolute control.

The I.R.A. sought complete order within their ranks. They argued that they would fulfill their goals “by defending the war of liberation by punishing criminals, collaborators, or informants.”⁹⁷ Like most insurgent movements of the time the I.R.A. suppressed treason within its ranks. Operating as a structured military organization bolstered their claims that they were a legitimate power in the North. This aligns themselves with the just war ideation that a body must be an official, governing force. While they remained unrecognized by the South and the British, this rhetoric fueled the idea that they could wage a war against who they saw as their oppressors. The mention of collaborators and informants is telling of the style of rule they used to control the different branches of their organization. In turn, ruling ideology would be used against them by the British for murders of I.R.A. members during the latter half of the twentieth century. This final guideline, while last, maintained a great precedence throughout the statements and recruitment made by the I.R.A. in this period. These guidelines for the I.R.A. were well enacted, and resulted in considerable violence throughout the 1970s and

⁹⁶ Maurice Tugwell, “Politics and Propaganda of the Provisional IRA,” *Terrorism* Vol. 5, No. 1-2 (1981).

⁹⁷ *The Green Book*.

beyond in Ireland and Britain. This violence is well demonstrated in the 1979 murders of British MP Airey Neave and Louis Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma.

On 30 March 1979, Neave was murdered by a car bomb as he left Westminster. The BBC reported that “the 63-year-old Conservative MP, known for his tough line on anti-I.R.A. security, was taken to Westminster Hospital where he died from his injuries.”⁹⁸ Neave had been a harsh critic of the I.R.A. and an ardent supporter of internment in the North. Two years before his death he gave a speech to the Northwood Women’s Advisory Committee titled “American Money and I.R.A. Arms.” Discussing the enduring nature of the conflict, Neave relayed that “the I.R.A. persist in their campaign because they believe that sooner or later the resolve of the British people to defend freedom and democracy in Northern Ireland will collapse, that troops will be withdrawn and Northern Ireland abandoned to its fate.”⁹⁹ This statement relates directly to the I.R.A. intention of their violence, to overwhelm the British and exhaust them mentally and in terms of resources. Despite this, Neave continued that “in fact it seems evident that the I.R.A. bombing in Britain only stiffen our resolve to resist it.”¹⁰⁰ It was this dedication to the enduring cause against the I.R.A. that made Neave a target of the I.R.A. Continuing these attacks on this group until his ultimate death, Neave championed harsh policies and continued occupation of the North.

⁹⁸ “1979: Car bomb kills Airey Neave,” *BBC Archive: On This Day: 1950-2005* (30 March 1979), 1, accessed 12 June 2020, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/30/newsid_2783000/2783877.stm.

⁹⁹ Airey Neeve, “American Money and IRA Arms,” speech, 2 February 1977, National Archives of Ireland, accessed 7 April 2020.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

His close relationship with Margaret Thatcher also made him a lofty target for an attack. Working together for many years, Thatcher and Neave cultivated a close professional relationship as he remained one of her most ardent supporters in parliament. They also had a friendship that was well publicized both before and after his murder. In her statement on his death, Thatcher stated that Neave was “a gentle, brave and unassuming man, he was a loyal and very dear friend. He had a wonderful family who supported him in everything he did. Now, there is a gap in our lives which cannot be filled.”¹⁰¹ It has been assumed, for statements such as these, that this attack was meant to personally harm Thatcher. Their close relationship offered the I.R.A. an opportunity to both further their cause and injure the resolve of Thatcher herself in this war. Their statement on this murder fully embraced ideas of anti-imperialism and harming Thatcher.

Three groups claimed responsibility for this attack: the Provisional I.R.A., the New I.R.A. that had emerged a decade earlier, and the Irish National Liberation Army. The actual murderers have never been named or punished and so we today cannot make any conclusions on the perpetrators and their identities. The Irish National Liberation Army had emerged in recent years as a militant Marxist guerilla branch in the North. They issued a statement claiming responsibility for the murder months later in 1979. While it cannot be known if they truly committed this crime, the themes and ideas posed in their statement warrant analysis due to their significance in understanding the murder, no matter who performed it. Their message, published in Provo magazine *Starry Plough*, read:

¹⁰¹ Margaret Thatcher, “Written Statement following assassination of Airey Neave,” 30 March 1979, accessed 2 April 2020, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103990>.

In March, retired terrorist and supporter of capital punishment, Airey Neave, got a taste of his own medicine when an INLA unit pulled off the operation of the decade and blew him to bits inside the ‘impregnable’ Palace of Westminster. The nauseous Margaret Thatcher snivelled on television that he was an ‘incalculable loss’ – and so he was – to the British ruling class.¹⁰²

The first part of this statement demonstrates the anti-imperial motivations of this murder. As Neave was a decorated British soldier prior to his foray into the political realm, to the I.R.A. he was an ardent imperialist and to them, a terrorist. Neave had also supported the death penalty for members of the I.R.A. and internment, hence their deeming him a supporter of capital punishment. As for their characterization of Westminster as ‘impregnable’, this meant to attack the notion that the British and their palaces were not as safe as they had claimed them to be. By murdering Neave as he exited this place, the I.R.A. demonstrated that they could not only infiltrate Britain, but also its supposed safest locations meant for the royal family and their protection. This was meant to further parallel their cause to that of the British and their occupation of the North in portraying how they could occupy Britain in their own way if they wanted to.

The latter half of this statement drew entirely on Thatcher and her own personal connection to Neave. It supports the idea that Neave was targeted at least in part due to this relationship and the consequences that it would have for Thatcher. Mocking her

¹⁰² Irish National Liberation Army, “Irish National Liberation Army Statement on Airey Neave’s Murder,” *The Starry Plough*, August 1979.

statement, the INLA portrayed their shared sentiment with the I.R.A. and the Green Book on the need to expose the classism of the British. Their murder of Neave was symbolic due to his place in society and the outpouring from the upper classes of British society that they expected to follow. They proved correct in their expectation, at least partially. While statements from Thatcher and other officials were given at the murder of every other British citizen in some way or another, none were as emphatic or sentimental as the one given on Neave's death. The classism of the British and the symbolism of the I.R.A.'s murders was portrayed later in this same year with the murder of Lord Mountbatten.

On 27 August 1979, Louis Mountbatten, the queen's cousin and Duke of Burma, was murdered in Mullaghmore, Northern Ireland with the explosion of his fishing boat by an I.R.A. bomb. The murder of the queen's cousin was one of the highest profile targets in this period and created a new environment of terror for the British public. On 28 August 1979 the *New York Times* reported that the "Earl Mountbatten of Burma, one of the heroes of modern British history, was killed today when his fishing boat was blown up in the sea."¹⁰³ Lord Mountbatten was a decorated soldier and perhaps most importantly, a member of the British royal family. The *Times* continued, "his murder, probably the boldest and most dramatic act of the long terrorist campaign here, sent shock and indignation across both Britain and Ireland."¹⁰⁴ The murder itself was bold and brash, in the conventional I.R.A. fashion. A bomb placed under a fishing boat and detonated by two I.R.A. members whose identities have never been fully confirmed

¹⁰³ William Borders, "Lord Mountbatten is Killed as his fishing boat explodes, IRA factions says it set bomb," *New York Times*, 28 August 1979.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

murdered Lord Mountbatten and a young Irish boy acting as a boatman while seriously injuring the others on board. The shock and indignation by whom? The general public and political establishment? soon became apparent as statements were issued by leading political figures in Ireland and Britain, condemning the violence and the ongoing bombings by the I.R.A.

Jack Lynch, Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland, depicted the tensions of the ruling South and the I.R.A. in the North with his condemnation of the murder. Days after the event, he issued a statement referring to Lord Mountbatten as “a man of great courage and who had a remarkable record of service to mankind, was highly respected by the people of Sligo and of Ireland and was always a very welcome visitor in our country.”¹⁰⁵ This characterization directly supports the I.R.A.’s criticism of the partnership between the government of the South and the British government. Lynch’s dual promotion and praise of Mountbatten combined with his denunciation of the I.R.A. furthered the divide between these factions. Days later on 31 August 1979 his statement was supported by the Minister of Justice’s, which similarly discussed these events as “a grievous wound inflicted” on Ireland through “the cold blooded murder of an honoured visitor.”¹⁰⁶ His near identical statement demonstrates how the Southern government was united with the British in their anti-I.R.A. stance. This was due to the economic and religious cohesion of the South with the mainland. The partition of Ireland also afforded the British greater influence over the Southern government whereas the North was isolated and neglected. Alone, this was a focus of the I.R.A. in their condemnations of the partitioning of the

¹⁰⁵ Jack Lynch, “Statement on the assassination of Earl Mountbatten of Burma,” 27 August 1979, National Archives of Ireland, accessed 4 April 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

North while the South remained loyal to the British. As referred to by Padraig Pearse in his oration at Donovan O’Rossa’s grave, the perceived betrayal of the South due to the economic and religious connections they maintained with the British continued to be a focus of I.R.A. propaganda. This idea was continued by the division discussed by Lynch later in his own statement.

Lynch’s comments posed the existence of a great cultural and social difference in the North and the South. He continued, “all true Irish people utterly denounce and condemn the I.R.A. campaign of violence and destruction which has brought death and sorrow to many thousands of innocent people.”¹⁰⁷ This statement demonstrates the cultural divide that the I.R.A. alleged had been created by the British and Southern government’s partnership. Lynch’s classification of the I.R.A. as not truly Irish while aligning himself and those “truly Irish” with the British in this time is an outright declaration of widespread and government supported division amongst the Irish people.

The British statement on this attack paralleled those of the Irish government. On 28 August 1979, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher issued a statement that the Irish Times called a “pledge to stand firm on I.R.A.”¹⁰⁸ Her statement condemned the attacks, but also posed the idea of retribution and continued war in the North. On the I.R.A., she wrote, “by their actions today the terrorists have added yet another infamous page to their catalogue of atrocity and cowardice . . . they will earn the condemnation and contempt of people of goodwill everywhere.”¹⁰⁹ The rhetoric of her response demonstrates the attempts of either party, the I.R.A. and the British, to appeal for transnational support.

¹⁰⁷ Lynch, “Statement.”

¹⁰⁸ “Thatcher pledges firm stand on IRA” *The Irish Times*, 28 August 1979.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Her calling on the “people of goodwill everywhere” reflects the British push for US support, one that was later answered. The invoking of “goodwill” also demonstrates a religious connection, one that would be returned in the response of Pope John Paul II as discussed in a later chapter of this work. Thatcher concluded her statement by relaying that “the people of the United Kingdom will wage the war against terrorism with relentless determination until it is won.”¹¹⁰ Foreshadowing the increased paramilitary forces that would be sent to the North, Thatcher unknowingly, or perhaps knowingly, set the stage for the next decade of Anglo-Irish relations. Her condemnation met with an equally passionate and incendiary response from the I.R.A.

Four days after the murder on 31 August 1979, the I.R.A. issued a statement taking responsibility for the attack. In terms of their motivations for the murder, the I.R.A. stated that “the execution of Lord Mountbatten. . . the bombing was a discriminate act to bring to the attention of the English people the continuing occupation of our country.”¹¹¹ Here the I.R.A. placed their frustrations as solely focused on the imperial occupation of the North. Fitting with their ideology posed in the Green Book, this attack did cause death- including that of an innocent casualty- and did cause destruction that would garner attention abroad. The statement continued, “the British Army acknowledge that after 10 years of war it cannot defeat us, but yet it continues with the oppression of our people and torture of our comrades in H Block.”¹¹² H Block was a prison block in Her Majesty’s Long Maze, or The Maze, in Northern Ireland. The British soldiers that guarded this block often used torture, warned of in the Green Book, that resulted in

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Statement by IRA,” *New York Times*, 31 August 1979.

¹¹² Ibid.

deaths and mass trauma to I.R.A. members interned there. This reached a boiling point two years after this statement with the launch of the hunger strikes by the I.R.A. prisoners in protest of their living conditions and their lack of special classification in prison that would protect them from torture. Because of these continued abuses both in the public and in H Block, the I.R.A. vowed to “tear out their sentimental imperialist hearts.”¹¹³ The directness of this statement depicts how imperialism was the true problem in the eyes of the I.R.A. in 1979 and how it guided their murder of Lord Mountbatten. With this murder, they further hoped to portray the classism and depravity of the British government and its neglect of its everyday people, as they alleged that “tributes paid to him will be seen in contrast to the apathy of the British Government and English people to the deaths of over 300 British soldiers and the deaths of Irish men, women, and children at the hands of their forces.”¹¹⁴ This juxtaposition in response, the overt indifference of the British governments to the deaths of lower class members of society compared to those of the upper echelons, demonstrated the class inequality that the I.R.A. had sought to expose and exploit.

The murders of Neave and Mountbatten were a turning point in the I.R.A. relationship with the British and with Margaret Thatcher. The murder of Mountbatten revealed the I.R.A.’s power to touch even those who were supposed to be untouchable in British society as members of the royal family. Neave’s death portrayed the I.R.A.’s ability and want to move this battle to the mainland and strike at places that again, were supposed to be impenetrable. Together these murders demonstrated a newfound tenacity

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “Statement by IRA.”

and boldness of this party as well, one that would continue throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. This recklessness in using bombs to create the most chaos and death as possible well fulfilled the Green Book's expectation and increased the terror of the populations in both Ireland and Britain.

Chapter 5: The Hunger Strike of 1981

The hunger strike of 1980-1981 was a pivotal moment in the just war strategy of the I.R.A. While protests had begun in the various British prisons in North Ireland in the mid-1970s, the hunger strike focused international attention on the plight of the I.R.A. and altered the relationship between Britain, the I.R.A., and the Catholic hierarchy. There were numerous reasons for prison protests, including but not limited to the torture of I.R.A. members and their subhuman living conditions in British prisons. The hunger strike was a culmination of these problems and the largest and most influential protest in response to the British revocation of Special Category Status for members of the I.R.A. The I.R.A. continued to maintain that they were waging a justified, political war against an imperial oppressor and so should be afforded this status that would equate them to political prisoners. The refusal of the British government to grant this spurred the hunger strike, the involvement of the Catholic Church, and international commentary on the Troubles. Ultimately, the hunger strike had a major impact on the international knowledge on the Troubles and public opinion on the plight of interned I.R.A. members.

5.1 Special Category Status for I.R.A. Inmates

Special Category Status (SCS) was first introduced to Northern Ireland in 1972 as a means of bargaining with the I.R.A. regarding their sentences in British prisons. It had been secured as a result of a hunger strike in 1971 as the I.R.A. and the British attempted to capitalize on a temporary ceasefire to introduce a lasting peace agreement.¹¹⁵ After

¹¹⁵ Chairman Lord Gardiner, "Report of a Committee to consider, in the context of civil liberties and human rights, measures to deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland: Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by Command of Her Majesty," January 1975, Accessed 4 April 2020,

continuous back and forth and further chaos in Northern Ireland due to I.R.A. violence, on 19 June 1972, SCS was granted. SCS had important implications to the I.R.A. and the classification of their struggle against the British as just warfare. It would preclude them from being deemed mere criminals, and would instead grant them prisoner of war status. A hallmark of their movement to secure this status was the fact that they deemed themselves to be political prisoners engaging in a just battle against their oppressors. Responding to abuses rather than creating them themselves, a tenet of just war, the imprisoned members of the I.R.A. were frustrated by attempts to delegitimize their plight by calling them criminals and treating them as such. By succeeding in getting SCS, the I.R.A. members also could not be criminally tried for crimes committed during the Troubles, furthering the narrative that this was a just war between two sovereign bodies. Those imprisoned during this period continued to place their struggle in the context of just war as they sought to procure the greater good for their community of inmates in the face of oppression. Despite these progresses, they did not last. As the Troubles continued, however, with bombings by the I.R.A. and continued abuses by the British, SCS was revoked in 1976.

5.2 Human Rights Abuses in the H Block at Long Kesh Prison, HM Maze

The problems of inhumanity and criminalization spurred these strikes throughout the British prisons in Northern Ireland. In 1977 prisoners began protesting at The Maze, Belfast Prison, and Armagh Prison over the lack of special category status.¹¹⁶ This

<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/hms0/gardiner.htm>.

¹¹⁶ E.N. Barry, "Prisoners Protesting Because They Have Not Been Granted Special Category Status," memo, 4 April 1977, IRA Documents Collection, National Archives of Ireland.

beginning of the protests over SCS, was described by prison officials as “an important facet of the special category battle” with further implications for “numbers of new committals swelling the ranks of existing protestors.”¹¹⁷ With eighty three protestors at The Maze compared to four in Belfast and ten in Armagh, it became clear that this would be the focal point of further protests. The Blanket and Dirty Protests of the late nineteen seventies raged at The Maze. The former was the result of protesting against the prison uniform that was a marker of being a criminal and was exercised by wearing nothing but a blanket. The latter followed during which the prisoners would defecate in their cells and refuse to shower. The living conditions, whether of their own making or otherwise, were a further reason for the later hunger strike.

The Catholic Church staked a claim in this debate with their advocating for the prisoners and the living conditions in The Maze. Traveling to the United States, Archbishop Tomas O’Fiaich and Father Denis O’Brien Faul, two figures who would become representative of the Catholic hierarchy, gave a speech to Congress in 1978 on human rights abuses by the British in their prisons. Focusing on the H Block that would later house the 1980-1981 hunger strike, they told of how the “prison conditions have always been bad in this mile-square camp of concrete, iron, barbed wire, soldiers, dogs, hundreds of prison officers, and men in cages.”¹¹⁸ The basic arrangement of the H Block was a continuous point of contention with the prisoners as well. It had isolated them from the other inmates of the prison and was more harshly watched and controlled than the

¹¹⁷E.N. Barry, “Prisoners.”

¹¹⁸ Father Denis Faul and Father Raymond Murray, “Violations of Human Rights in Northern Ireland (1968-1978),” speech, Washington, D.C., 7 October 1978, accessed 4 April 2020, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/docs/faul_murray/faul_1978_violations/faul_1978_violations.pdf.

other blocks as well. O’Fiaich and Faul introduced the greater issues of harassment and torture as well, stating:

The punishments that the British have inflicted - 24 hour lock-up, deprivation of physical exercise and fresh air, no radio, TV, reading materials, writing materials, hobbies, games, all lack of contact with the outside world, association with fellow prisoners. . . all this constitutes torture, degrading treatment, and is contrary to human rights.¹¹⁹

These are significant points in the human rights abuses of the British as the British would continuously deny that they were accurate. This, despite the fact that these priests had consistently visited the H Block and with its prisoners to discuss their quality of life. This denial points to a much larger conspiracy of torture and abuse by the British in their prisons, especially The Maze, that perhaps contributed to the later and more internationally known hunger strike.

Torture and brutality were poorly kept secrets at The Maze as demonstrated by various reports and writings from this period. In their same presentation to Congress, the priests offered the account of a current H Block prisoner, Liam McCloskey. I will keep this and following testimonies of these abuses in their entirety, as it is not clear to me which aspect of abuse and torture is not necessary to this narrative. On McCloskey they said:

¹¹⁹ Faul and Murray, “Violations,” 8.

Totally naked he was thrown up on a table by four prison officers, one holding each arm, one holding each leg, face downwards. This was in order to carry out an exploration of his back passage. A fifth prison officer banged McCloskey's head down violently on the table smashing his nose.¹²⁰

The story of Liam McCloakey was not unique in H Block. The question of anal cavity searches was contentious and the way that they were carried out amounted to assault in this period. The sexual nature of these searches allowed the British authorities to dehumanize the Irish prisoners and increased tensions between these parties. This issue of sexual assault and humiliation is discussed frequently in prison sources from this period. A smuggled book written in the H Block has a chapter dedicated to these experiences. Notable is the account of a prisoner identified as Joe McQuillan, who wrote:

At the table I was asked to take off my towel, which I did, and was told to bend over. I was taken aback and stood dumbfounded. I didn't believe what I was hearing. Suddenly four or five screws jumped on me, grabbing my arms and legs. One grabbed my hair and pulled my head down onto the table and repeatedly banged it off to table surface. One ordinary screw went between my spread legs and pulled my buttocks apart; his thumbs pushed at the entrance of my anus pulling it open. The pain was bad but nothing compared to the humiliation I felt at

¹²⁰ Faul and Murray, "Violations," 8.

that moment. This couldn't be happening, it was nothing less than sexual assault.¹²¹

These graphic tales are necessary to this narrative as they demonstrate how personal this struggle was for members of the I.R.A. and the brutality that they endured in their fight. These personal abuses support the ideation of just warfare in regards to the hunger strikes because they were performed in response to tacit abuse and performed by and for the good of the community facing them. This culture of torture and barbarity reflects the poor living conditions created by the British authorities continued to be a point of international attention throughout the 1980s. The involvement of the church posited them as a major actor in this situation as they acted as advocates for the prisoners, but also sought to derail the hunger strikes alongside the British.

In the same year as Faul and Murray's speeches to Congress, Archbishop O'Fiaich issued a statement on the Conditions in the H Block after one of his most recent visits to The Maze. Comparing the prison conditions to Calcutta, O'Fiaich condemned prison officials, arguing "one would hardly allow an animal to remain in such conditions, let alone a human being."¹²² In what would come to be known as the Calcutta Speech, O'Fiaich officially inserted himself into the struggle of the H Block prisoners. While previously he had written on and condemned each of the British prisons in the North, from this point onward he and Faul would become intrinsic to the situation of The Maze.

¹²¹ Joe McQuillan, "Chapter 4: Table/Mirror Searches—Beatings—Forced Washes," *Hunger Strike Book* (n.p., date unknown).

¹²² Tomas O'Fiaich, "Archbishop O'Fiaich on the Conditions in H Block," 1978, accessed 4 April 2020. <https://alphahistory.com/northernireland/archbishop-o-fiaich-conditions-h-block-1978/>.

His commentary resulted in his and the Catholic powers in Ireland maintaining a pivotal role in this struggle, having a major influence over British relationships, the futures of the hunger strikers, and the conditions of the prison.

O’Fiaich and Faul were not alone in their condemnations. Two years later on 5 January 1980, the Bishop of Derry, Edward Daly, wrote to Humphrey Atkins, British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with his own input on the H Block. Focusing on the issue of the prison uniform, a source of contention for the strikers and something they demanded they not be forced to wear as they did not view themselves as criminals, Daly discussed alternatives. Daly argued that the prison uniforms were “excessively humiliating and Dickensian” and that he felt “very strongly that. . . some strategy could be devised whereby all prisoners in Northern Ireland could be permitted to wear their own clothing.”¹²³ This focus on the prison uniforms demonstrates one change that SCS would afford H Block prisoners and what would later be the first demand of the 1981 hunger strikers. His writing to the Secretary of State on this matter portrays how invested the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland was in subduing the events within H Block. As Bishop of Derry, a largely Catholic community in northeast Northern Ireland, he also spoke for the Catholic members of this county. While he wrote that support for the I.R.A. was at its lowest in this period, he also relayed that “from my own contacts with many of my people, there is significant concern in the Catholic community about the H Block problem.”¹²⁴ This concern, despite the lack of abject support, is significant as it pushed the British to act or risk further deterioration of their already tenuous relationship with the

¹²³ Edward Daly, Bishop of Derry Letter to Secretary of State, 5 January 1980, IRA Documents Collection, National Archives of Ireland.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

average Catholic population. Daly's voicing this concern demonstrates the own pressures he and the church felt from their own constituents to act. This involvement depicts how far reaching the events of H Block were, even though most in Northern Irish society still condemned the I.R.A. for their actions outside of prison. The significance of this letter is supported by the reply that it received.

Weeks later on 31 January 1980, Humphrey Atkins replied to Daly with a letter that diminished the situation in H Block. Despite the now years long condemnations of the inhumane conditions in H Block by prisoners and priests, he wrote "we have in Northern Ireland a humane prison regime which provides first-class facilities for work, training and education, and arrangements for visits and recreation which are in advance of those in Great Britain."¹²⁵ Effectively calling the prisoners in H Block and perhaps more surprisingly the Archbishop of Northern Ireland O'Fiaich, liars, Atkins was shameless in his repudiation of any concern of Daly's. This letter acts as a great representation of the lies, arrogance, and unfairness of the British government during the hunger strikes. While unsurprising, this letter further foreshadows the breakdown in the relationship of the Catholic Church and the British government over the course of negotiations about H Block. The immense arrogance and conceit in this letter depicts how the British approached the entirety of the strikes, especially concerning Bobby Sands.

¹²⁵ Humphrey Atkins, H Atkins Response to Bishop of Derry, 31 January 1980, IRA Documents Collection, National Archives of Ireland.

5.3 Bobby Sands, The Catholic Church, and The British Government

On 1 March 1981, I.R.A. member from Belfast, Northern Ireland Bobby Sands began his hunger strike. An avowed Republican, Sands came from a Catholic family that had personally been harassed and forced numerous times to move by the Loyalist Protestants in Belfast. While he was only twenty-six at the time of his strike, Sands had at this point been in the I.R.A. for at least ten years. Like his forebearers in the prison strikes of the Blanket and Dirty Protests, Sands took to striking as a means of waging the struggle for Special Category Status. In line with the conventional I.R.A. narrative unto this point, Sands similarly employed a just war approach to his hunger strike.

Sands left behind his prison diary that he began at the advent of his hunger strike. In it, he writes in detail of the abuses he faced, why he felt he must strike, and how his body and mind fared throughout his starvation. In his first entry on 1 March 1981, Sands discussed his reasons for striking, stating, “I have considered all arguments and tried every means to avoid what has become the unavoidable: it has been forced upon me and my comrades by four-and-a-half years of stark inhumanity.”¹²⁶ The idea that he and the other I.R.A. members in H Block were forced to strike fits well within the notion of just war theory. While he was not physically rebelling, the action of combatting an imperialist, oppressive system furthers the idea that he and his fellow strikers took and applied just war and its ideations into the prison system of the Maze. Being forced to act, rather than acting on his own accord, supports the application of just war theory to this

¹²⁶ Robert Sands, *Robert Sands' Prison Diary*, 1 March 1981, accessed 4 April 2020, <https://www.bobbysandstrust.com/writings/prison-diary/>.

situation as acting defensively rather than offensively is a major aspect of this practice as well. Sands himself alludes to just war theory in his writings.

Much of his writing discussed the nature of the I.R.A. and his own personal battle against the British. On his place in this struggle he writes, “I am a political prisoner because I am a casualty of a perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime that refuses to withdraw from our land.”¹²⁷ By classifying himself as a political prisoner, he demonstrates the belief of the entirety of the I.R.A. who demanded SCS in this period. In the official statement of the hunger strikers of 1981, they stated, “We have asserted that we are political prisoners and everything about our country, our interrogation, trials, and prison conditions show that we are politically motivated and not motivated by selfish reasons for selfish ends.”¹²⁸ This classification furthers the idea that he and the I.R.A. were a just body, waging war against an enemy of their community. By situating themselves and the organization in this way, the hunger strikers and Sands directly argue that they are legitimate in terms of just warfare in their struggle within the prison. Acting for their community rather than themselves aligns them with these principles. Their demands reflect the political nature of their strike:

1. the right not to wear a prison uniform
2. the right not to do prison work

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Republican Hunger Strikers at Long Kesh Prison, “Statement at Beginning of Strike,” 1 March 1981, <http://bobbysandstribute.weebly.com/hunger-strike.html>.

3. the right of free association with other prisoners, and to organise educational and recreational pursuits
4. the right to one visit, one letter, and one parcel per week
5. full restoration of remission lost through the protest¹²⁹

The first three demands most depict their political pursuits. The issue of prison uniforms and prison work directly align to their current status as mere criminals. This reflect the enormity of their issue with criminalization. Sands wrote in his diary on 6 March 1981 on this problem, stating “they will not criminalise us, rob us of our true identity, steal our individualism, depoliticize us, churn us out as systemized, institutionalized, decent law-abiding robots. Never will they label our liberation struggle as criminal.”¹³⁰

Criminalization was one of two primary ways that the British attempted to condemn the I.R.A. as a sectarian group in the North with the other being containment of the struggle to these borders. As discussed in previous chapters, containment failed with the murder of Airey Neave and further bombings on the mainland. Ultimately, criminalization would fail as well.

The relationship between the hunger strikers and the Catholic Church can be analyzed in terms of Sand’s private commentary and the public statements of the church on the hunger strike. The first major divide between the Church and the hunger strikers was due to the urgings of the Church to end the hunger strike itself. The second was due to a lack, or perhaps a chosen ignorance, of what the strike was truly over. While the

¹²⁹ Republican Hunger Strikers, “Five Demands.”

¹³⁰ Robert Sands, *Robert Sands Prison Diary*, 6 March 1981, accessed 10 April 2020, <https://www.bobbysandstrust.com/writings/prison-diary/>.

hunger strikers repeatedly stated that their strike was for a want of SCS status and in turn, a undoing of the current criminalization policy, the Church maintained that it was due to the lack of humanitarian conditions in prisons. Ultimately, this was reflected in the continuing divide between the protestors and church officials.

On the issue of hunger striking and ultimate starvation, the strikers and the Church could never truly come to an agreement. Sands wrote on 2 March 1981, “I was very annoyed last night when I heard Bishop Daly’s statement (issued on Sunday, condemning the hunger strike.)”¹³¹ The statement he was referencing was published the day before, calling on the hunger strikers to cease their activity. Speaking directly to them at one point, Daly pleaded, “Your families want you to live. I want you to live. Nothing further can be gained by further deaths on hunger strike. Give an opportunity for discussions to take place in a calmer and less tense atmosphere.”¹³² This statement is indicative of the role that the Catholic Church took for the entirety of the strike. Speaking as representatives of religion, one that did not and does not allow for suicide of any means, the Church spoke out on their disdain for both the mistreatment of prisoners and the hunger strike itself. Rather, they argued for a peaceful settlement between parties, one that would not result in further deaths of I.R.A. members. While tensions would continue to persist between the I.R.A. and the Church, they would similarly brew between the Church and the British Government.

¹³¹ Robert Sands, *Robert Sands Prison Diary*, 2 March 1981, accessed 10 April 2020, <https://www.bobbysandstrust.com/writings/prison-diary/>.

¹³² Philip Whitfield, “IRA urged to call off hunger strike,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 August 1981, accessed 8 June 2020, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1981/0803/080364.html>.

These were inflamed by the death of Bobby Sands on 5 May 1981 from starvation within the Maze. His death represented the veracity of this strike, and the commitment of he and the other hunger strikers- the nine at least who would follow suit and die within the year. Fearing a continuous stream of deaths from within HM Maze, the Catholic Church continued its efforts to bring the British and the I.R.A. to a peaceful resolution. The British, unsurprisingly, were unmoved by the death of Sands and if anything, ramped up their condemnations of Sands and the I.R.A. On 6 May 1981, Thatcher issued a statement to the press on the death of Sands:

This government will never grant political status no matter how much hunger strike there may be. We are on the side of protecting law-abiding and innocent citizens, and we shall continue in our efforts to stamp out terrorism. Mr. Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organization did not allow to any of their victims.¹³³

This statement demonstrates the unwavering nature of Thatcher in her fight against the I.R.A. Citing her famous position that “there is no alternative,” this statement supports her and the British government’s unyielding nature in their refusal to negotiate with the I.R.A. Outside of politics, her inhumanity on the death of Sands further inflamed the tensions between these two parties, and lessened the Church’s faith in the British to bring about an end to the strike. The relationship between the government and the Church

¹³³ R.W. Apple Jr., “Mrs. Thatcher says Death of Sands Won’t Alter London’s Ulster Policy,” *New York Times*, 6 May 1981.

would continue to deteriorate throughout this period as the government remained inflexible and intent on allowing the hunger strike to continue.

Following the death of Sands, the Church and the government engaged in a tenuous back and forth. Daly himself had previously criticized the government for “what he called ‘duplicity in its relations with those seeking and working for a solution.’”¹³⁴ This state of the relationship between the Catholic hierarchy and the British state would only increase in strain over the following year. This is well demonstrated in the communications between Cardinal O’Fiaich, Father Faul, and British representatives. While these priests continued their public appeals to Britain to put a peaceful end to the strikes, the British continued to claim there was no humanitarian issue within the prison. On 15 May 1981, a letter from Thatcher’s advisor was sent to O’Fiaich, stating that “the government is not the inflexible party at this time . . . we are committed to maintaining an enlightened and humanitarian prison regime, and I believe we do so.”¹³⁵ While this letter claims that they are open to negotiation, it had been made clear at this point that they would not discuss the reestablishment of SCS, the main factor in this fight. The claim that they provided a humanitarian prison regime is abjectly false as well given the recollections of the priests and the inmates themselves. This was not the only letter of this sort sent in this period of the British denying the true nature of their prisons.

A week later a similar message was sent. This time claiming questioning if the prisoners “demand a humanitarian prison regime? They already have it; conditions in The

¹³⁴ Apple, “Mrs. Thatcher.”

¹³⁵ Mr. Wyatt, Hunger Strike: Message to the Cardinal, letter, 22 May 1981, IRA Documents Collection, National Archives of Ireland.

Maze are among the best in the world.”¹³⁶ This, even though O’Fiaich and Faul had many times visited the Maze and been astounded by its depravity. It should be no surprise that the Catholic Church lost faith in the word of the British considering they continuously lied throughout this period despite the obvious truth of the matter. Finally, in June of 1981, the British recognized the lack of faith that the fathers had in the British. Writing to Downing Street, the letter stated, “relations between the Government and the Catholic Hierarchy in northern Ireland are at present bad. . . the cardinal and Bishop Daly, and probably Bishop Philbin too, believe that the Government have ignored their concern and advice over the hunger-strike and unrest in the Catholic community.”¹³⁷ Knowing that they must maintain this relationship, during and after the hunger strike, the British began to attempt to mend this connection. In September of 1981, talks began at Stormont in Northern Ireland between the two parties to discuss humanitarian reforms in British prisons in Northern Ireland.

The strike collapsed in early October of 1981. Ten strikers total had died and the British, for all their refusals earlier in the strike, began to reincorporate SCS status for I.R.A. prisoners in the Maze. Despite it being their refusal to grant this that prolonged the strike, the I.R.A. and strikers “blamed not Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher or the hated British army, but the Roman Catholic Church.”¹³⁸ This was due to their meddling in attempting to prematurely ending the hunger strike, their eventual partnership with the British to bring this about, and their calling on the families of the hunger strikers to put

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Mr. Wyatt, Relations with the Catholic Hierarchy, letter, 3 June 1981, IRA Documents Collection, National Archives of Ireland.

¹³⁸ William Borders, “The Irish Catholic Church is Sorely Tried by Ulster,” *New York Times*, 18 October 1981.

them on life support despite their wishes to die being known. Accusing the Church of being “extremely immoral and misleading,” the I.R.A. condemned the Church’s involvement that they claimed had permanently damaged their relationship.¹³⁹ In his diary Sands had written on the problem of the Church and their own duplicity and many in the I.R.A. continued this narrative and condemnation after his death. The Church would persist in their involvement in I.R.A. strikes, attacks, and murders for the remainder of the Troubles.

These three bodies, the Church, the strikers, and the British were all affected by the hunger strike of 1981. Ten I.R.A. members gave their lives, the British continued their imperialism and murder in the North, and the Church attempted to be a partner to both. The eventual reinstatement of SCS status, one that would stand until 2007, demonstrates the effectiveness of this strike, despite the British refusal to acknowledge this. In his last journal entry before the British took away the privilege of writing in his cell, Sands spoke of his will and the will of the I.R.A. and the Irish to combat the British: “They won’t break me because the desire for freedom, and the freedom of the Irish, is in my heart. The day will dawn when all the people of Ireland will have the desire for freedom to show. It is then we’ll see the rising of the moon.”¹⁴⁰ The Troubles would continue to rage for seventeen years after the death of Sands with a final peace agreement being signed in 1998. Over 3,500 people died in this period, not including the I.R.A. members like Sands who died for their cause. Despite the end of the Troubles, the

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Sands. *Robert Sands’ Prison Diary*, 1 March 1981, accessed 4 April 2020, <https://www.bobbysandstrust.com/writings/prison-diary/>.

cultural memory and existence of I.R.A. splinter groups continues into the present day in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The I.R.A. and just war theory offer greater comprehension of the nature of the Troubles, British imperialism, and the role of religion in this period. The historiography of this period that originated in the mid twentieth century offered a purely imperialist and backwards understanding of the true motivations of the I.R.A. Delving into the origins of the hatred that existed between the North and the British allows for a greater understanding of the why these tensions existed and the centuries in which they had continued to brew and grow. Applications of just war theory to the I.R.A. provides a framework for analyzing mass violence at the hands of both parties that otherwise would be difficult to truly grasp as anything other than terrorism. The actual murders that occurred at the hands of the I.R.A. and analysis of the motivations behind these further aligns them to just war theory and portrays the anti-imperialist motivations behind them. Lastly the hunger strike of the early 1980s demonstrates how individual members of the I.R.A. employed a just war approach to their combatting the injustices they faced in the HM Maze prison in Long Kesh. Together, these discussions portray the realities of the history and oppression that influenced the I.R.A. in their revolts against the British in the later half of the twentieth century.

The historiography of the Troubles and the I.R.A. began in the mid twentieth century with imperialist and British-centric narratives. These, such as T.W. Moody's *Fenianism and the Land War* and later R.F. Foster's *Modern Ireland*, portrayed the I.R.A. as terrorists and disregarded the early modern events that fueled the Troubles. The works of Moody and Foster were lauded for their supposed in-depth analysis of the roots of the deteriorating Anglo-Irish relationship that was occurring in this period, despite

their neglect of the British atrocities committed in Ireland. Author J. Bowyer Bell improved this narrative with a biographical approach to the I.R.A., an on the ground lens as he lived amongst them, and a restoration of humanity to their plight. His seminal work, *The Secret Army*, demonstrated the true intricacies of the I.R.A. and their ideologies, lives, and wants for a better life for them and their community. This thesis has sought to depict the I.R.A. alongside Bowyer Bell as a community of people intent on procuring improvements in their society. It has also attempted to refute the reductionist historiographies of Moody and Foster with a more nuanced account of the intricacies of the lives of I.R.A. members in prison and the British actions that inflamed tensions during this period. Ultimately, it looks to illuminate this understudied history and the complexities of the ideologies of the I.R.A. and how they put these into action.

The early modern origins of the Trouble offer insight into the history of the tensions between the Irish and the British. As early as the reign of Elizabeth I, there existed evidence of the British disdain for the Irish and their supposed sub-humanity. This rhetoric supported the later interventions of James I with his establishment of the Ulster Plantation in 1609. The plantation system was the first act of British imperialism and colonization on Irish soil that would persist throughout the following centuries. Even after its official end, the British maintained their self-proclaimed ownership of the North and its people, exacerbating these tensions. During the reign of Charles I, Oliver Cromwell led a second invasion of Ireland, resulting in mass murder and colonization that further damaged the relationships of these nations. Oliver Cromwell came to power as the Lord Protector of England in 1653 until his death in 1658, during which time he continued his oppression of the North. This period is essential to the later events of the

Troubles as it is where the religious and imperialist tensions began that would later fuel the I.R.A.'s movement. It also demonstrates the roots of how just war theory began to be applied by the I.R.A. to their response to the British.

Just war theory offers a compelling framework for understanding the I.R.A. and their actions. It provides an understanding of violence and murder in the context of war, rather than terrorism as the I.R.A. has so long been condemned for. This theory places the I.R.A. and the British against one another as legitimate opponents in a justifiable conflict as opposed to the I.R.A. being a sectarian terror organization. The tenets of just war theory, namely retributive action only and seeking the good of one's community, can be well applied to this scenario. These allow readers to view the I.R.A. as a community intent on bettering their living situation in an imperialist society as well as providing an understanding of why they felt that murder was an appropriate response to the British impacts on the North. This framework allows for the I.R.A. to be seen as a human force against imperialism and those who perpetrated it as opposed to individual terrorists intent on meaningless murders. This is apparent in analysis of the murders of PM Airey Neave and Lord Mountbatten.

The bombings performed by the I.R.A. are what first drew international attention to this group. When these attacks, first confined to Northern Ireland and against ordinary British soldiers, moved to the mainland and the targets became public figures, the narrative of the I.R.A. was changed. These murders demonstrate the ideological guiding points of the I.R.A.'s murders in the 1970s. Focusing on targets that were proponents of imperialism and in the case of Neave, ones who had directly impacted the I.R.A. and other Irishmen in their political capacities. These targets acted as representations of the

oppression that the I.R.A. was reacting to in line with just war theory. In their understanding, these murders were not provoking but instead were responsive to the injustices that they felt they had endured from this class of British society. The condemnations of the British government and the Catholic Church of these attacks demonstrate the partnership of these powers, one that would continue into the 1980-1981 hunger strikes.

In March of 1980 Bobby Sands began a hunger strike against the revocation of Special Category Status for I.R.A. members imprisoned in the HM Maze Prison in Long Kesh, Northern Ireland. Sands and his fellow strikers, nine of whom would die alongside him during this strike, were intent on portraying that this strike was about the lack of this status that would posit them as a foreign power in their fight against the British. Special Category Status would thus allow the I.R.A. to maintain a status that, in just war theory, would make them a legitimate opponent against the British. The Catholic Church attempted to intervene numerous times in this fight, attempting to, in their own understanding, aid the protestors by fighting against human rights abuses in the prisons. While these did exist, this approach only helped the British as it directly refuted what Sands and his colleagues stated they were fighting for. Ultimately, SCS status would be reinstated, but only following the death of Sands and other members of the I.R.A. and perhaps more importantly, the international attention that was garnered during the strike as the Church and the I.R.A. brought attention to their plight.

Just war theory is intrinsic to analysis of the I.R.A. and the Troubles. The ideology of this group, apparent in their Green Book, their propaganda, their statements given to newspapers and the government, and the statements of individual members all

align with just war theory. Their reminding of this fact to the Catholic Church in their 1979 statement in response to John Paul II's condemnations of them at Drogheda acts as concrete proof that they were motivated and guided by this philosophy. The essential nature of just war theory and practice to the I.R.A. heavily influenced the analysis of this work that argues that the I.R.A. waged a just war against the imperialism of the British. Through analysis of the origins of the Troubles, the intentions of the I.R.A., and the brutality of the British, this work has sought to depict how their reactive responses, though violent, were legitimate in the context of a just war. It has worked to demonstrate that the I.R.A. were not a mere terror organization, but rather a population of men and women that were fighting for the betterment of their lives and those of their community while living under an imperialist regime. Ultimately, it has attempted to demonstrate that the Troubles truly were a just war between the I.R.A. and the British.

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