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Counter Recruiting in Parnell's Ireland 1880-1892

Over the past two decades debate surrounding the Great War has become a popular subject within Irish society. It has proven to be so prevalent that, as Timothy Bowman noted, 'we probably know more about Irish units in the Great War than most of their English, Scottish or Welsh counterparts'.² Nevertheless, academic study into Irish military history has only scratched the surface. Little study has been conducted into the Irish regiments of the British Army from their creation in 1881 until August 1914. Given that the Boer War played such a significant role in the advancement of Irish nationalism, it is surprising that it has largely been passed over. Although David French and Edward Spiers have detailed the impact the military had on society, both write in a British context where Ireland does not feature prominently, apart from Spiers' chapter 'Army Organisation and Society in the Nineteenth Century', in *A Military History of Ireland*.³ While Elizabeth Muenger and Virginia Crossman have discussed at length the role of the military during nineteenth-century Ireland, they do not deal with recruitment or its effects on Irish politics.⁴ Richard Hawkins covers similar territory in his article 'An Army on Police Work, 1881-2'; however, he does not demonstrate how Nationalists reacted to the army's deployment.⁵ This has led to comments such as 'the 1914 army never regarded itself as being an occupying force,' by Henry Harris, continuing to circulate in modern literature.⁶ It is little wonder then that Terence Denman pointed out in 1994 that 'the central importance of the anti-recruitment theme in extreme Nationalist ideology has been neglected and deserves more study'.⁷

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² Timothy Bowman, *Irish Regiments in The Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 2.

³ Edward Spiers, 'Army Organisation and Society in the Nineteenth Century', in *A Military History of Ireland* ed. by Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 335-357.

⁴ Virginia Crossman, *Politics, Law & Order in 19th Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996); Elizabeth A. Muenger, *The British Military Dilemma in Ireland: Occupation Politics, 1886-1914* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

⁵ Richard Hawkins, 'An Army on Police Work, 1881-2: Ross of Blandenburg's Memorandum', *Irish Sword*, 11 (1973), 75-117.

⁶ Henry Harris, *The Irish Regiments In The First World War* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968), p.1.

⁷ Terence Denman, 'The Red Livery of Shame: The Campaign Against Army Recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914', *Irish Historical Studies*, 29:114 (1994), 208-233 (p. 232).

Yet Denman's claim has yet to be satisfied. This is strange given that the military's heavy handedness during the Land War allowed Charles Stewart Parnell to unite the various strands of Irish nationalism and trigger what is now termed the 'long gestation'. It is upon this latter point that this paper will focus. I will argue that as a result of the aggressive deployment of the Army during the Land War and the Plan of Campaign, a Nationalist counter recruiting campaign emerged. The Land War created the perfect conditions for Nationalists not only to mobilise the nation behind them but to portray the Army as an instrument of British rule in Ireland and a force used at the behest of landlords. Throughout the Land War and Plan of Campaign, the Army played into the hands of Nationalists by operating in conjunction with the police and the powerful landlord lobby, in trying to curtail the Nationalist agrarian campaigns. To achieve this, the article is divided into two sections. The first will illustrate how Nationalists reacted to the Army's deployment and the second will demonstrate how their reaction affected recruitment.

Although the military pre-empted the Land War when they proposed the re-occupation of vacant military stations in Connacht and Munster during November 1879, it was not until the incident on the estate managed by Captain Boycott that the patience of the Irish Secretary, William Forster, began to wear thin.⁸ Forster warned Gladstone in November 1880 that 'the present outrages, or rather that condition of the country which produces the outrages, is owing to the action of the Land League, but I believe that now these outrages are very much beyond its control'.⁹ Indeed, even though Forster had proclaimed counties: Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Limerick, Mayo and parts of Donegal as unlawful, agrarian crime continued to rise as the year came to a close.¹⁰

⁸ Hawkins, p. 76.

⁹ T. Wymess Reid, *Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster*, 2 vols (London : Chapman & Hall 1888), II, p. 265.

¹⁰ Criminal and judicial statistics. 1881. Ireland. Part I. Police--criminal proceedings--prisons. Part II. Civil proceedings in central and larger and smaller district courts, H.C. 1882, C.3355, p. 142.

Table 1: Monthly Totals of Agrarian Crime¹¹

Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1880	114	97	83	67	88	90	84	103	168	269	561	866
1881	448	170	151	308	351	332	271	373	416	511	534	574
1882	495	410	542	465	401	284	231	176	139	112	93	85

Even in this early stage of the Land War it was clear that in order for the government to triumph it was going to have to rely on the foundations of the British administration in Ireland: the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), the Army, and the Landlords. The more Army protected Landlords, the more Nationalists were able to label them as part of the opposition or as the ‘garrison’. Michael Davitt alluded to this in a speech in Kansas when he told his audience, ‘that in declaring this war against Irish landlordism, in not paying rent in order to bring down the garrison in Ireland, we know that we are preparing the way for that independence which you enjoy in this great American Republic’.¹² Nevertheless the military continued to play into the hands of the Nationalists. Officers were ordered to practice route marching:

in such a way as not only to exercise the men but also to gain a knowledge of the country and to influence the population [...] It appears for these ordinary patrols, which may be more or less regarded as route marches, no requisition from magistrates will be necessary, and that the presence of peace officers can be dispensed with.¹³

The presence of soldiers passing through the country did little to quell the unrest, in fact it did quite the opposite. As the Army were actively aiding the police, they began to be viewed as one and the same and suffer the similar fate. In Clare, stones were thrown at the county militia.¹⁴ In November 1880, the commander at Tralee asked for reinforcements as there were only 130 efficient men in the barracks. This request came after a mob of 300 townspeople attacked troops on piquet duty at Ballymullen the previous month.¹⁵ On 11 April 1881, a further clash between

¹¹ Outrages (Ireland). Return of outrages reported to the Royal Irish Constabulary Office in each month of the year 1880 and 1881, and in the month of January 1882, H.C. 1882 (7) LV, 615, p. 2, 1883 (6); Outrages (Ireland). Return of outrages reported to the Royal Irish Constabulary Office in each month of the years 1881 and 1882, and in the month of January 1883, H.C. 1882 (6) LVII, 1047, p. 2.

¹² F. Hugh O'Donnell, *A History of The Irish Parliamentary Party*, 2 vols (London, Longmans, 1910), II, p 8.

¹³ London, National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK), CO 904/187/98-99, Report on military aid to civil powers (with memorandum dated 1882), 1918.

¹⁴ Dublin, National Library of Ireland (NLI), Kilmainham Papers, MSS 1071-73.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

soldiers and civilians took place at Dungarvan, where a detachment of the East Kent Regiment was stationed. The incident seemed to be the result of bad blood between the two groups after some of the locals called the soldiers 'bloody slaughterers' or the soldiers referred to the locals as 'bloody Irish'. Either way, such was the ill feeling between the two that the Commander of Forces in Ireland, General Sir Thomas Steele, and the local magistrates agreed that the detachment be removed from the town.¹⁶ On the 14th, stones were thrown at two soldiers of the 1st battalion of the North Staffordshire regiment at Ennistymon. The police quickly arrested one man and brought the soldiers to the safety of their barracks. However those soldiers along with seven or eight others left the barracks and made their way to the Church Hill area of the town where they attacked a civilian named Gaffney and two other men.¹⁷

The military responded to these attacks by establishing nine flying columns in Ireland: two apiece at Dublin and the Curragh, and one at Belfast, Athlone, Limerick, Fermoy, and Cork.¹⁸ The flying columns were not intended to support the police, but to swiftly put down any potential rising or serious attack on the security forces. Gladstone also reacted to the deteriorating state of affairs; on 7 January 1881, Parliament was recalled allowing Forster to introduce a Coercion Bill, the Protection of Persons and Property Bill. The Coercion Act was followed up by procedures making it easier for magistrates to call on the Army for aid. As a result, by the end of July, 192 people had been arrested and detained under the Coercion Act.¹⁹ The Army issued a circular on 22 April 1881, stating that 'protection parties should always be so strong as to render all attempts at resistance hopeless'.²⁰ The roles of the Army and the police were quickly becoming indistinguishable as they appeared together patrolling the country and escorting bailiffs as they evicted tenants from their homes. The results were felt in Tralee where the 1st battalion of the North Staffordshire regiment were sent to replace the 1st battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment. However, before the Northamptonshire Regiment left, one soldier was attacked without provocation. Despite the change in regiment, the anti-military atmosphere remained, as the police reported the Staffordshire Regiment were 'likewise unpopular with some of the townspeople and subjected to similar ill treatment by them'.²¹ In turn, the commander of the Staffords warned his men to 'refrain from using any language that could be considered derogatory by Irishmen'. These orders had come too late for the Army, who found that:

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Hawkins, p. 78.

¹⁹ Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act, 1881. List of all persons detained in prison under the statute, 1881 (171) (209) (273) (316) (372), c. 4, 44 Vict, p. 2.

²⁰ NAUK, CO 904/187/86, Report on military aid to civil powers (with memorandum dated 1882), 1918.

²¹ NLI, Kilmainham Papers, MSS 1071-73.

there are a great number of rough characters in Tralee and the place is anything but quiet [...] Soldiers of other corps stationed at Tralee have also been insulted by the lower classes of civilisation and this leads him to think there is general ill feeling toward the military.²²

Regardless, Forster pushed on and in July decided to further liaise with landlords and sheriffs so that the authorities knew, 'what protection they want, and when and where, thereby preventing them [the Land League] from being masters of the situation'.²³ For Nationalists, the unholy trinity of the Police, Army, and landlords was now complete. In Dublin, Captain C.S. Collingwood found this, writing that,

the feeling of the populace towards the military at this station is now of the worst and most hostile description: The roughs go about in gangs of from six to twenty and take every opportunity of insulting soldiers and it is only by examining constant watchfulness and by stringent measures that I have hitherto been enabled to restrain the men under my command from committing a breach of the peace, which would doubtless result in a serious disturbance. Whether I shall be able to do so to the end is a matter of grave doubt [...] It appears to me that at present everyone who is in any way connected with the maintenance of law and order in this neighbourhood is regarded with hatred.²⁴

Forster and Cowper felt they had to continue with their policy to regain control of the country, irrespective of the consequences. In October, they had Parnell and the Nationalist leadership arrested. At protest over Parnell's arrest in Charleville, a riot broke out and order could only be restored when a detachment of the Royal Scots took aim at the protestors.²⁵ The Government then suppressed the Land League on 20 October and warned they would use 'all the powers and resources at our command to protect the Queen's subjects in Ireland'.²⁶ In December, Foster and Steel ordered that joint military and police patrols were to be mainly composed of troops, supplemented 'by such small force of Police as the county can conveniently

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Reid, II, p. 323.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Clifford Lloyd, *Ireland under the Land League: A Narrative of Personal Experience* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1892), p. 142.

²⁶ Irish National Land League. Proclamation by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, dated 20th October, 1881, relative to an association styling itself the Irish National Land League, H.C. 1882, C.3125, p. 3.

afford'.²⁷ Their order further blurred the lines between the Army and the civil power. This was underlined when Forster had the country divided into six districts, over which there would be a Special Resident Magistrates, to regain control of the country. The Special Magistrates, four of whom were serving Army officers, were invested with almost dictatorial powers.²⁸ By the middle of January 1882, there were 217 soldiers on personal protection duty throughout Ireland.²⁹ There were also a further 1,149 persons under less intrusive protection from the authorities throughout the country.³⁰ In Clare, attacks on individuals were so common that the Special Resident Magistrate for the county, Clifford Lloyd, had huts built every three miles in isolated areas to house patrols of soldiers and police.³¹

Therefore, by the end of the Land War the Army were viewed as an extension of the RIC and as a tool at the disposal of landlords, sent to administer one of the three Coercion Acts passed by Parliament. This attitude is what the commanding officer of Maryborough barracks found in 1881 when he reported that,

since the passing of [the Coercion Act] the Landlords have begun to press for their rents, and the military have been frequently called upon to aid the civil power that they are now in almost as bad odour with the mob as the constabulary, who are looked on with feelings of intense hatred all through this district.³²

Lady Cowper recalled that on St. Patrick's Day, 'there was every sign of dislike and disapprobation both of the Military and the Viceroy. The National Anthem was hissed, as were also the Scots Guards and the Viceroy, and at the end of the show, when the soldiers had marched off, the crowds were dispersed by a large body of police.'³³ Although the Kilmainham Treaty, agreed to on 5 May 1882, brought an end to the agrarian conflict, the hatred shown toward the military did not dissipate. In October 1882, Michael Davitt told an audience in Dublin that,

²⁷ NAUK, CO 904/187/74, Report on military aid to civil powers (with memorandum dated 1882), 1918.

²⁸ For further information regarding this aspect see Hawkins, pp 75-117.

²⁹ Hawkins, p 91.

³⁰ Police protection (Ireland). Return of the number of persons receiving special police protection in each county in Ireland on 31 December 1880, p. 1, H.C. 1881 (1) LXXVI, 641.

³¹ Lloyd, pp. 235-36.

³² Virginia Crossman, 'The Army and law and order in the nineteenth century', in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 358-78 (p. 378).

³³ Katrine Cowper, Countess Cowper, *Earl Cowper: A Memoir* ([n.p.]: Printed for private circulation, 1913), p 557.

The whole aim and object of England in governing Ireland was to get money and men. England wanted to rob Ireland of her resources. She had robbed Ireland by unfair and excessive taxation, and she robbed her of her men in order to use them in wars like 'Tell-al-Kebir'.³⁴

Upon receiving the national tribute Parnell commented 'look about you on your every side. You see over 30,000 soldiers of the regular Army retained in Ireland. You see another more efficient Army of 15,000 policemen for the same purpose'.³⁵ At a meeting of The National League William Redmond once more made reference to the fact that Britain had 35,000 police and military personnel in Ireland and that many of these would be sent to Egypt and Soudan to 'slaughter the unfortunate people there'.³⁶ The Nationalist campaign worried some in the Irish administration. Edward Jenkinson wrote, 'recruits have almost ceased to enter our Army, and if ever bad times were to come for England, and we were hard pressed in a large European War, Ireland would be a weakness to us, instead as she should be a strength, and a thorn in our side'.³⁷

Jenkinson had reason to be concerned. In Limerick, where the Kings Royal Rifles Corps were stationed, soldiers who left their barracks were often attacked and stones were occasionally thrown at groups either on duty or off as they passed through the city. Consequently Colonel Hatchell ordered all soldiers who were on duty outside the barracks at night to carry rifles.³⁸ After T.P. O'Connor delivered a lecture in Galway, soldiers attacked a number of people who were in attendance after they were heckled in Eyre Square. The troops smashed the windows of the building in which the lecture took place before the police arrived to quell the disturbance.³⁹ Back in Limerick, soldiers of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps once more attacked civilians outside their barracks. Between twenty and thirty troops armed with their side arms left the barracks and began attacking residents; after the residents took shelter in their houses, the soldiers began to smash their doors and windows. The political nature of the relationship between the Army and the citizens was reflected by the Mayor, who at the following meeting of the town Commissioners said he 'hoped the people would not notice them, that they will pass them by; that they will make no freedom with anyone of them, but treat them, as far as they could be

³⁴ The Freemans Journal, 10 Oct 1882.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Sir George Fottrell, *Dublin Castle and The First Home Rule Crisis: The political Journal of Sir George Fottrell 1884-1887*, ed. By Stephen Ball, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2008), p. 208.

³⁸ The Freeman's Journal, 5 Jun 1885.

³⁹ The Freeman's Journal, 16 Sep 1885.

treated, as aliens in a strange country'.⁴⁰ The matter was then referred to the Lord Lieutenant who had the soldiers moved to Kinsale. Upon hearing the news Colonel Hatchell wrote 'I fear it is too well known that the next regiment would fair no better.'⁴¹ Soon after Edward Jenkinson wrote to Gladstone,

We never were so hated and our government so powerless. The National League rules Ireland, and our government is isolated and completely out of touch and out of sympathy with the people [...] Under such conditions no administration can be carried on.⁴²

In such a climate it is unsurprising that none of the four recruiting officers from the Royal Munster Fusiliers visited one town in County Limerick between 1887 and 1892. Indeed when Colonel Markgill Crichton Maitland attempted to hire local recruiting agents he wrote 'agents are afraid of the work; they get such a bad name among the people'.⁴³ In order to address this problem the Colonel offered one week's pay and leave in advance and believed that if men wore a smarter uniform it would aid recruitment.⁴⁴ This issue was not confined to Limerick. Colonel Maitland found the military would not be able to employ recruiting agents in the South of Ireland 'unless the feeling with regard to the Army changes'.⁴⁵

The bitterness felt against the Army was deepened during the Plan of Campaign. The link between military operations and a Nationalist reaction once more became evident on 10 June 1887 in Athlone. Eight days after the beginning of the Bodyke evictions soldiers from the Royal Berkshire Regiment and the Borders were involved in a fracas with locals in which some soldiers were badly beaten. The following day approximately 300 soldiers left their barracks and began verbally abusing people in the town. However, before the incident became a riot the police arrived and the soldiers returned to their barracks. In spite of this, the next day a similar number of soldiers once more entered Athlone, and began physically assaulting the general public. On this occasion the Police were not in a position to stop the incident escalating as members of the

⁴⁰ The Freemans Journal, 13 Nov 1885

⁴¹ The Freemans Journal, 18 Nov 1885

⁴² Fottrell, p. 284.

⁴³ Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the Army, 1892 C.6582, C.6582-I, p. Lxiv.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. lxxv.

⁴⁵ Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the Army, 1892 ,C.6582, C.6582-I, p. 333

public retaliated.⁴⁶ In the aftermath of the incident the Athlone Town Commissioners asked that the soldiers be removed from the town, a plea which was later granted. There were also clashes between soldiers and the citizens of Galway, which resulted in one being stabbed in a clash between forty to fifty civilians and six soldiers.⁴⁷ The Army simply ceased recruiting in Clare until 1892, when a sergeant was sent to 'introduce the redcoat among the people'.⁴⁸

The hostile atmosphere created as a result of the Army's aggressive deployment, led to a decline in the number of men enlisting for service between 1880 and 1883. This was despite the collapse of the Irish economy.⁴⁹ The failing Irish economy is best illustrated on Tables Two and Three showing the collapse of agricultural prices between 1881 and 1891. On the first table the value of each product is greater in 1881 than in 1886. The Knipe Report found that average agricultural prices fell by 23% between 1881 and 1886. During the same period the value of livestock in Ireland depreciated by £9 million. The report also found that 28% of the value of agricultural produce was paid in rent in 1881 and this had increased to 42% by 1886.⁵⁰ During this period the average wage for an agricultural labourer declined from £25 per annum in 1880-81 to £24 in 1892-93. It was against this backdrop that a private's pay was set at £40 per annum, a corporal's £51, a sergeant's £69 and a colour sergeant's, which according to Peter Karsten was the highest rank an average Irish soldier may attain, was £89.⁵¹ When one also considers that Edward Spiers found that 'those who enlisted came primarily from the least skilled sections of the working class. Casual labourers comprised the bulk of recruits from the urban and rural areas', this period should have generated a steady stream of recruits for the army but it did not.⁵² David French agreed with Spiers writing that 'those at the very bottom' were driven into the army 'out of desperation'.⁵³ However Irishmen were electing to emigrate rather than enlist. Between 1881 and 1890, of the 212,813 men between twenty and thirty years of age who emigrated, 176,310 were

⁴⁶ The Freeman's Journal, 13 Jun 1887

⁴⁷ The Freeman's Journal, 24 Sep 1889

⁴⁸ Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the Army, 1892, C.6582, C.6582-I, p. 328.

⁴⁹ For the purposes of this article I will not be examining how the Cardwell reforms affected recruitment. Nor will I be looking at the role the militia played in providing men for the army, as they both would deviate from its focus. Indeed the influence which the Cardwell reforms and that of the Militia held over recruitment could be the focus of another paper.

⁵⁰ Report of the Royal Commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, and the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885. Separate report by Mr. Thomas Knipe, 1887, C.5015, Land Acts (Ireland.), p. 4.

⁵¹ Peter Karsten, 'Irish Soldiers in the British Army, 1792-1922: Suborned or Subordinated?', *Journal of Social History*, 17, (1983), 31-64 (p. 39)

⁵² Edward Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army: 1868 – 1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 129.

⁵³ David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, The British Army, & the British People, c.1870 – 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 37.

labourers.⁵⁴ Although Spiers acknowledges the effect emigration had on recruiting in his chapter in *A Military History of Ireland*, he does not detail the motivational factors behind why Irishmen were choosing to emigrate over enlisting at a time of economic uncertainty. Therefore, we can argue that Nationalist politics did have a bearing on an Irish labourer's decision to enlist. Briefly touching on recruiting during the Boer War, Spiers hints at this stating that 'the anti-recruiting drives of Maud Gonne and her pro-Boer Ladies may have had some effect, but they did not bring Irish enlistment to a "virtual standstill" as her biographer claims'.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Census of Ireland, 1891. Part II. General report, with illustrative maps and diagrams, tables, and appendix, 1892, C.6780, p. 527; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1881, 1882, C.3170, p. 10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1882, 1883, C.3489, p.10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1883, 1884, C.3899, p.10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1884, 1884-85, C.4303, p. 10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1885, 1886, C.4660, p. 10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1886, 1887, C.4967, p. 10; Emigration statistics of Ireland. For the year 1887, 1888, C.5307, p. 10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1888. Report and tables showing the number, ages, occupations, conjugal condition, and destinations of the emigrants from each county and province in Ireland during the year 1888, 1889, C.5647, p.10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1889. Report and tables showing the number, ages, occupations, conjugal condition, and destinations of the emigrants from each county and province in Ireland during the year 1889. 1890, C.6010, p. 10; Emigration statistics of Ireland, for the year 1890. Report and tables showing the number, ages, occupations, conjugal condition, and destinations of the emigrants from each county and province in Ireland during the year 1890, 1890-91, C.6295, p.10.

⁵⁵ Spiers, 'Army Organisation and Society in the Nineteenth Century', p. 341.

Table 2: Agricultural Prices 1881 – 1886 ⁵⁶		
Price of Produce per 112 lbs	1881	1886
Wheat	10s 2d	6s 4d
Oats	8s 0d	6s 3d
Barley	7s 9d	5s 5d
Butter	96s 6d	86s 4d
Beef	63s 9d	53s
Mutton	74s 6d	64s 2d
Pork	55s 0d	40s 4d
Potatoes	4s 0d	2s 9d
Hay	4s 4d	3s 0d
Straw	3s 3d	2s
Milch Cows	£19 5s 0d	£14 10s 0d
Two Year Olds	£12 0s 0d	£9 7s 6d
One Year Olds	£7 15s 0d	£5 13s 9d
Lambs	34s 0d	29s 0d
Wool per lb	12 3/4d	8 7/8d

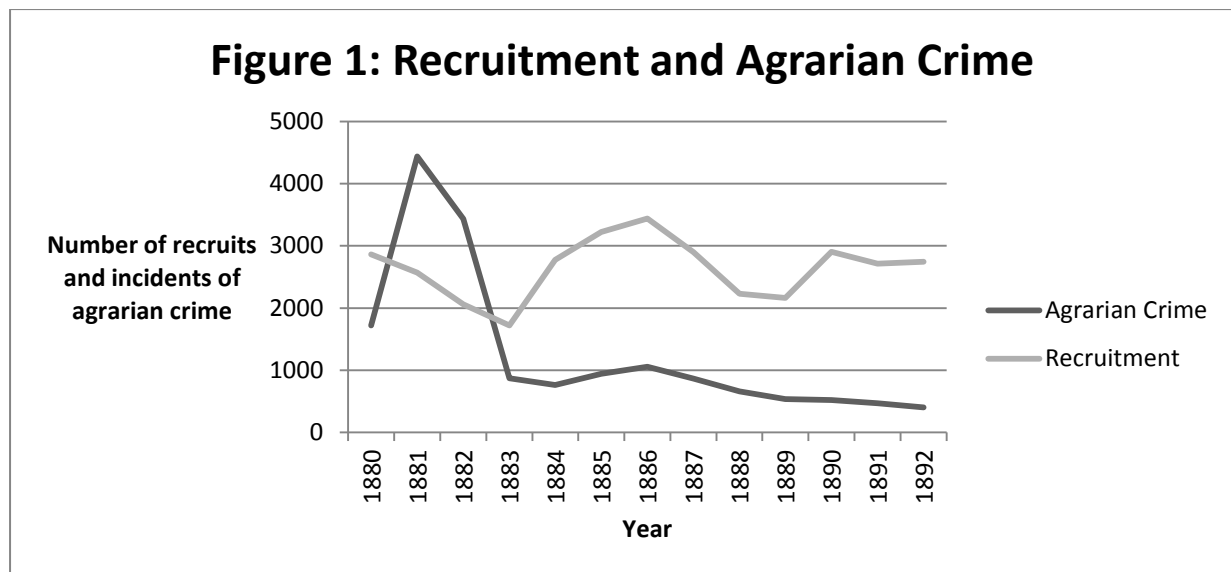
⁵⁶ Report of the Royal Commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, and the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885. Separate report by Mr. Thomas Knipe, 1887, C.5015, Land Acts (Ireland.), p. 4.

Table 3: Average prices 1887-1891⁵⁷

Product per 112lbs	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891
Wheat	6s 3d	6s 11.5d	6s 5.5d	6s 8.5d	7s 2d
Oats	4s 10.5d	5s 4d	5s 8.5d	6s 1d	6s 10d
Barley	6s 0d	6s 7d	6s 7d	6s 6.5d	7s .75d
Flax per stone	5s 11d	6s 1.5d	5s8.25d	5s2.25d	5s 11d
Potatoes	2s 3d	2s 6.25d	2s8.25d	3s 0.5d	3s6.25d
Hay	2s 6.25d	2s 0d	1s 9d	1s11.5d	3s 3d
Butter	90s 89d	89s 10d	96s 0d	86s6.25d	103s6.5d
Pork	40s 5.5d	42s 5.5d	43s11.25d	37s3.75d	39s 5.5d
Wool per lb.	0s 10d	0s 10d	0s 9.5d	0s 9.5d	0s 9.5d

I would argue that the politics of the agrarian conflicts would have a negative impact upon recruitment. Indeed the number of recruits does not increase until after Parnell agreed to bring the Land War to an end on 5 May 1882. It was not until after the Kilmainham Treaty that the Army began to withdraw from its role as an aid to the civil power. The number of recruits peaked between 1885 and 1886, as Parnell negotiated with both the Liberals and Conservatives with the view of winning a Home Rule Bill in exchange for Nationalist votes in the Commons. The defeat of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill in April 1886 coincided with the second collapse of the Irish agricultural economy in a decade. In response Nationalists began what was known as the Plan of Campaign in an attempt to protect tenants from evictions. Inevitably, this led to the Army once more being asked to aid the RIC and a further decline in enlistment, despite the fact that the prevailing economic conditions made the environment ripe for recruiting sergeants. However by 1890 Parnell had distanced himself from the Plan and as a result it never had the support or momentum of the Land War. Therefore, its effects upon recruitment were only felt between 1887 and 1890. In any event Parnell's fall in 1892 overshadowed the Plan of Campaign and threw the cause of Irish Nationalism into chaos.

⁵⁷ The agricultural statistics of Ireland, for the year 1891. Division of land; acreage under crops; number and size of holdings; number of occupiers of land; woods and plantations; small fruit; rates of produce; average prices of agricultural produce; noxious insects; number, ages, &c., of livestock; diseases of cattle; exports and imports of livestock; dairy industries; honey produced; number of scutching mills; number of corn mills; silos and ensilage; forestry operations; agricultural schools; wages of agricultural labourers; loans for labourers' dwellings; observations on the produce of the crops by superintendents of enumeration; the weather, 1892, C.6777, p. 21.



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⁵⁸ Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, p. 19, 1886 [C.4677] Army and Militia: Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, p. 15, 1889 [C.5652]:Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting for 1892, 1893-94, C.6906, p. 25; Agrarian outrages (Ireland). Return showing, by provinces, the highest number of duly reported agrarian outrages in Ireland in any year between 1844 and 1880; and, of the same for 1880 and for each succeeding year, 1887 (94), p. 1; Agrarian offences (provinces) (Ireland). Return by provinces, of agrarian offences throughout Ireland reported to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary, between 1st January, 1887, and 31st December, 1887, 1888, C.5345, pp. 2-11; Agrarian offences (provinces) (Ireland). Return by provinces, of agrarian offences throughout Ireland reported to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary, between 1st January, 1888, and 31st December, 1888, 1889, C.5691, pp. 2-11; Agrarian offences (provinces) (Ireland). Return by provinces, of agrarian offences throughout Ireland reported to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary, between 1st January, 1889 and 31st December, 1889, 1890, C.6008, pp. 2-11; Agrarian offences (provinces) (Ireland). Return by provinces, of agrarian offences throughout Ireland reported to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish constabulary, between 1st January, 1890 and 31st December, 1890, 1890-91, C.6327, pp. 2-11; Agrarian offences (provinces) (Ireland). Return by provinces, of agrarian offences throughout Ireland reported to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary, between 1st January, 1891 and 31st December, 1891, 1892, C.6649; pp. 2-11. Agrarian offences (provinces) (Ireland). Return by provinces, of agrarian offences throughout Ireland reported to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary, between 1st January, 1892, and 31st December, 1892, 1893-94, C.7014, pp. 2-11.

Table 4: Recruiting and Politics⁵⁹

	The Land War					Home Rule Campaign	
	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886
Numbers Recruited	3446	2567	2062	1738	2776	3224	3438

Table 5: Recruiting and Politics⁶⁰

	Plan of Campaign					
	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892
Numbers recruited	2900	2230	2163	2903	2711	2743

The politically charged agrarian conflicts challenged the view that an economic crisis provided an upsurge of recruits. When General Buller told the Cooper Commission in 1887 that ‘there are a lot of idle fellows in the country, who have nothing to do, and with very little labour, they have not much chance of being employed’, the Army would have almost expected an increase in recruits.⁶¹ However, in 1892, General Feilding found the opposite. He observed that, ‘Even those enlisted have been obtained with difficulty from districts which, even 10 years ago, provided the Army with an abundant supply of men of fine physique’.⁶² The recruiting difficulties found nationally were replicated provincially, where men were clearly choosing the alternatives to enlisting during times of political tension.

⁵⁹ Army and Militia. Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1886, C.4677, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1889, C.5652, p. 15; Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting for 1892, 1893-94, C.6906, p. 25.

⁶¹ Land Acts (Ireland). Report of the Royal Commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, and the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885, 1887, C.4969, C.4969-I, C.4969-II, p.501.

⁶² Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1892, C.6597, p. 1.

Table 6: Recruiting and Politics in Provincial Ireland 1880 - 1886⁶³

	The Land War					Home Rule Campaign	
Year	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886
Royal Munster Fusiliers (Tralee)	498	422	309	339	423	437	468
Royal Irish Regiment (Clonmel)	461	284	201	188	266	330	329
Leinster Regiment (Birr)	155	103	158	119	120	162	160
Dublin Recruiting District	0 ⁶⁴	232	294	181	621	666	806
Royal Dublin Fusiliers (Naas)	569	433	364	164	455	303	167
Connaught Rangers (Galway)	123	144	132	153	185	202	309
Royal Irish Fusiliers (Armagh)	250	160	120	139	116	237	298
Royal Irish Rifles (Belfast)	0 ⁶⁵	606	373	341	473	725	722
Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Omagh)	222	183	111	94	117	162	179

Table 7: Recruiting and Politics in Provincial Ireland 1887 - 1892⁶⁶

	Plan of Campaign					
Year	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892
Royal Munster Fusiliers (Tralee)	318	187	157	196	279	386
Royal Irish Regiment (Clonmel)	292	226	333	376	253	307
Leinster Regiment (Birr)	166	171	161	147	205	231
Dublin Recruiting District	693	748	751	922	922	655
Royal Dublin Fusiliers (Naas)	318	145	132	170	213	195
Connaught Rangers (Galway)	123	144	132	153	185	202
Royal Irish Fusiliers (Armagh)	133	122	71	128	97	126
Royal Irish Rifles (Belfast)	523	329	354	679	511	448
Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Omagh)	133	112	65	117	105	131

The tables also demonstrate that despite the Land War being a mainly rural conflict, the effects of the Nationalist counter recruitment campaign were also visible in the urban centres of the

⁶³ Army and Militia. Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1886, C.4677, p. 19.

⁶⁴ During 1880 the Royal Dublin Fusiliers also recruited from the Dublin recruiting district.

⁶⁵ Regiment and district created in 1881.

⁶⁶ Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1889, C.5652, p. 15;
Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting for 1892, 1893-94, C.6906, p. 25.

Dublin recruiting district and the Belfast based Royal Irish Rifles. This fact is also emphasised by the recruiting pattern of the urban dominated Royal Munster Fusiliers, which contained the cities of Cork and Limerick. In each case the numbers of recruits decreased throughout the Land War before increasing during the period before the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill. Throughout the Plan of Campaign in Belfast and Munster, the number of recruits decreased, before increasing after 1892. While the number of recruits increased in the Dublin recruiting district during the Plan of Campaign, it explodes after the fall of Parnell in 1892.

The main difference between the urban and rural districts was in their volume of recruits. The cities of Dublin, Belfast, Cork, and Limerick provided their respective regiments with far more working class men than the rural based units such as the Leinster Regiment or Connaught Rangers. Indeed by 1885, only 72 men born in the regimental district of the Rangers were serving in the regiment.⁶⁷ In order to solve both the lack of recruitment and the low amount of Connacht men serving in the Rangers, in 1886, the military authorities were forced to appoint 513 men to the regiment from other sources, of whom 46% were originally from the province.⁶⁸ This came despite the fact that in 1881 Connacht contained 407,021 men.⁶⁹ A full 207,021 more than the 200,000 the army felt necessary for a district to maintain a regiment.⁷⁰ Therefore, Connacht should have easily produced an adequate number of men for the Rangers. Although the Congested Districts Board deemed the entire recruiting ground of the Rangers as unviable, the recruiting figures demonstrate that economics had little effect on recruiting during the agrarian conflicts.⁷¹

The recruiting area of the Royal Irish Fusiliers suffered from the opposite problem. Straddling counties Armagh, Cavan, and Monaghan, its recruiting district contained a male population of 192,397. However, of its total population of 385,198 people, 256,108 were Catholic while only 86,404 were Protestant and 42,686 were Presbyterian, thus ensuring that Nationalist politics

⁶⁷ Army and Militia. Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1886, C.4677, p. 19.

⁶⁸ Army and Militia. Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1887, C.4984, p. 20.

⁶⁹ Census of Ireland, 1881. Part I. Area, houses, and population: also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Vol. IV. Province of Connaught, 1882, C.3268, pp. 613 – 618.

⁷⁰ Memorandum by His Royal Highness the Field-Marshal Commanding in Chief on the proposal of the Secretary of State for war for the organization of the various military land forces of the country; and report of a committee on the details involved therein, 1872, C.493, p. 4.

⁷¹ Congested Districts Board for Ireland. First annual report of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland, 1893-94, C.6908, p. 4.

would inevitably affect recruitment.⁷² Colonel Cox complained that as the number of recruits was so low for the Royal Irish Fusiliers, that the 2nd battalion was not strong enough to take the field if the need arose.⁷³ The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, with its depot in Omagh, recruited in counties Donegal, Fermanagh, Derry, and Tyrone, had combined male population of 318,491. It should, therefore have been able to maintain its regiment, but as the recruiting figures show the region did not.⁷⁴ The recruiting pattern of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers was comparable to other regiments which were based in Nationalist dominated areas. This pattern was mirrored in the religious make-up of the population. There were 388,474 Catholics, 131,485 Protestants, and 115,783 Presbyterian.⁷⁵ Once more, the Nationalist majority ensured that politics and recruitment would become intertwined. Although the Royal Irish Rifles dominated recruiting in Ulster, it lost many recruits to other regiments, particularly to Scottish regiments. In 1889, General Roche reported that 'the officer commanding the 26th and 71st regimental districts informs me that about one third of the Glasgow recruits are of Irish extraction'.⁷⁶ While Colonel E.A. Collins found that the preferred regiment for the militia men in Ulster, who wanted to enlist in the Army, was the Highland Light Infantry.⁷⁷ It would appear then that many Belfast based Unionist recruits wished to enlist in a regiment in which they had historical and family ties, further emphasising the link between politics and recruitment, albeit from a Unionist perspective.

This link was underlined in 1891 by General Feilding, who noted the decline in recruiting and blamed the decrease on 'the number of emigrants [...] and the opposition of the Nationalist Party to the enlistment of any young Irishman in Her Majesty's Forces'.⁷⁸ During April 1893, the then Chief Secretary, John Morley, asked Lord Wolseley why 'the number of Irish non-commissioned officers and men has gone from 237 per thousand twenty years ago to 135 thousand today. I wonder what is the full reason of this immense decline. It can hardly be due to political feeling'.⁷⁹ It was against this backdrop that recruiters were expected to enlist men.

⁷² Census of Ireland, 1881 Part I. Area, houses, and population: also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Vol. III. Province of Ulster, 1882, C.3204, pp. 993-995.

⁷³ Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the Army, 1892, C.6582, C.6582-I, p. 129.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Census of Ireland, 1881. Part II. General report, with illustrative maps and diagrams, tables, and appendix, 1882, C.3365, p. 342.

⁷⁶ Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1890, C.5953, p. 7.

⁷⁷ Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1887, C.4984, p. 45.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Hove, Hove Library (HL), Wolseley collection, Autograph Section, MORLEY, John (1st Viscount Morley of Blackburn)/6, Letter from John Morley to Wolseley 13 Apr 1893.

To make a career in the Army more appealing, standards were lowered. In 1886, the military allowed men under twenty years of age who were one inch below the minimum height requirement to enter the infantry provided the medical and approving field officers believed they would become efficient soldiers.⁸⁰ As a result, the number of underdeveloped and impoverished recruits rose from 8% of total Irish enlistment in 1890 to 25% in 1892.⁸¹ Medical staff became so worried about the hygiene of these men that they asked for special baths to be made available for them instead of the regular baths used by soldiers as they might become infected.⁸² Colonel Markgill Crichton Maitland complained of the quality of Irish recruits stating that, 'the class that enlist in Ireland is almost entirely confined to the destitute; about one tenth of the recruits are a better class of men, and possibly well to do, but the other nine tenths are comparatively destitute or afflicted with red coat fever'.⁸³

In Connacht and Munster, where the actions of the Land League were most prevalent, recruiters were simply boycotted. In the catchment area of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers the military were not helped by the refusal of many local tradesmen to allow recruiting posters to be displayed in their premises, while the Leinster Regiment only managed to display 25% of their allotted posters.⁸⁴ The counter recruitment campaign created an atmosphere in which the Army and its recruiters were not welcomed by Nationalists. The Army were not viewed as a force that policed the empire and fought small colonial wars but one which held and occupied Ireland. As a result, Army chiefs never trusted Nationalists. Lord Wolseley, wrote in March 1895,

I am influenced by the conviction based upon my knowledge of Ireland and Irish ways, that you draw the teeth of the elements of possible internal disturbance whenever you remove from Ireland all regular Irish regiments, all the Irish reserve and all the militia regiments except, Mid-Ulster and Londonderry Artillery and the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Royal Irish Rifles and the 3rd Royal Irish Fusiliers.⁸⁵

The Duke of Connaught agreed with Wolseley when he wrote 'on the outbreak of hostilities with a European power, it will be expedient to remove all dangerous elements from Ireland.

⁸⁰ Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1888, C.5302, p.20.

⁸¹ Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the Army, 1892, C.6582, C.6582-I, p. Xxxvi.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 304.

⁸³ Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting for 1892, 1893-94, C6906, p. 329.

⁸⁴ Army and militia. Annual report of the Inspector General of Recruiting, 1890-91, C.6275, p.24.

⁸⁵ NAUK, WO 32/7081, Allotment of Special Reserve battalions of Irish Regiments to war stations in Ireland. Allotment of units and copies of correspondence, 1887 – 1908, Lord Wolseley to the War Office 31 Mar 1895

Consequently all the militia infantry, with the exceptions you mention, will be transferred to England.⁸⁶ Upon the outbreak of the Boer War, any Irish regiment stationed in Ireland was removed and replaced by British units. This attitude was to persist when, in 1912, the Irish Command listed the counties where opposition might be expected in a future war. It is no coincidence that every county in Munster and Connacht, with the exception of Sligo, is listed as they were the most active during the Land War and the provinces in which the counter recruitment campaign was most vociferous.⁸⁷

Although the breakdown in trust was to have long term consequences, in the interim Nationalists had shown that they could interfere with military recruitment. This was to break new ground, as previously it had been seen as impossible. In 1812, the Catholic Church told Daniel O'Connell that 'while they never promoted a soldier's life as the best way to heaven; but that poverty and drunkenness etc. always has and always will drive many into it'.⁸⁸ Even the leading Fenian, John O'Leary, conceded in 1869 that 'it is too often poverty and not his will consents, when a poor Irishman takes the Saxon shilling'.⁸⁹ Nationalists managed to do this at a time of economic turmoil by portraying the Army as a force of coercion and occupation. Consequently the fate of Army recruitment in Ireland would become attached to developments in Nationalist politics. This was to have consequences for the Army during the Boer War and the Great War.

Although the Land War began as an economic crisis, it quickly became political after Nationalists objected to being evicted from their homes by the instruments of British rule in Ireland. The violent scenes witnessed at evictions led to the Army being called upon to aid the increasingly overburdened RIC. However as the violence escalated, the military's involvement deepened. Soon soldiers were not only escorting bailiffs but patrolling the countryside in an attempt to suppress the Land League. Consequently, Nationalists viewed the Army with mounting bitterness and as an affront to their cause. Soldiers were frequently assaulted in politically charged attacks as the country descended into chaos. The nature of the atmosphere in Ireland led to men choosing not to enlist despite the collapse of the economy, breaking with the accepted hypothesis that depressed economic conditions fuel enlistment. Therefore, under Parnell's leadership, Nationalist politics would have a bearing over recruitment. This was not only

⁸⁶ Ibid., Duke of Connaught to Lord Wolseley 25 Apr 1895

⁸⁷ NAUK, CO 904/174/255, Reports on the value of the police in the event of an uprising or invasion and scheme for mobilisation of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC)

⁸⁸ Denman, p 208.

⁸⁹ John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism* (London, Downey, 1896), p. 74.

displayed during the Land War and Plan of Campaign, but during the first Home Rule campaign, when enlistment increased as the relationship between Nationalists and the Government thawed.

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