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1916 – A Workingmen’s Revolution?

AN ANALYSIS OF THOSE WHO MADE THE 1916 REVOLUTION IN IRELAND

by

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This article is a historical-sociological approach to the theoretical study of revolutionary movements. After a short introduction to Irish revolutionary history we present an analysis of the occupational background of the actual participants of the Easter Rising. This is followed by a short methodological discussion on the use of the sources. In the next section we try, very tentatively, to outline a perspective of why this particular group of people emerged as the revolutionary force, and what effect the occupational characteristics of the group had for future Irish politics.

In order to reveal pre-revolutionary thinking on the Irish revolution we examine some Irish and some other authors, to see how much they were concerned with and how they emphasised the recruitment problem in their revolutionary theorising. Finally, we comment briefly on trends in modern social science literature to see how the recruitment problem is treated, and conclude the article with a recommendation of the personnel approach as a very useful tool for further research on revolutionary theory in history and social science.

A basic motivation in presenting the article is also to try to encourage some new approaches to the study of modern Irish history, and especially, to the events centering around 1916.

THE PRE-1916 EVENTS

The modern revolutionary history of Ireland can be said to have
begun with the foundation of the societies of United Irishmen in the 1790s and with their unsuccessful attempts in 1798 to overthrow the established order in Ireland. The American and French revolutions had obvious repercussions through these events in Ireland.

Since then it can be said that the revolutionary tradition was manifest in the Emmet Rising of 1803, the “Young Ireland” attempts in 1848 and 1849, the Fenian insurrection of 1867 (with its many and widespread ramifications), the Land War of 1879-1882 to an extent, and finally in the Easter Rising of 1916.

From these, in the short run, abortive attempts at overthrowing a foreign establishment came a prolonged heritage of non-legitimacy towards public authorities as well as a belief in the efficacy of force and a pattern as to how future political change would be brought about.

In the immediate background of the Easter Rising can be placed the great strike and lockout of 1913 with the frustration and humiliation of great numbers of workers, an enhanced “image” for the trade unions, a deeper awareness on the part of native capitalists of the strength of the workers’ movement, and as a result of police brutality the idea of a militant workers’ organisation—an idea incarnated in the foundation of the Irish Citizen Army in the late Autumn of 1913. Almost simultaneously the Irish Volunteers were formed (publicly on 25 November 1913) on the precedent of the Ulster Volunteer Force, both in their way reacting to the fate of the Irish Home Rule Bill in the English Parliament.

Quite apart from these in origin was the Irish Republican Brotherhood (formed in 1858), the secret organisation which was responsible for the launching of the Irish Volunteers—many of the most prominent officers of which were members of the IRB—and contacts overlapped with these in the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association and Na Fianna Éireann.

The earliest formal contacts between the Irish Citizen Army and the IRB element of the Irish Volunteer leadership could be said to have been made in the Irish Neutrality League formed shortly after the outbreak of the first world war.

At the outbreak of the war the various forces had strengths of over 180,000 Irish Volunteers, at most 200 in the Irish Citizen

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Army, as well as smaller numbers in the Hibernian Rifles, Na Fianna Eireann, Clan na Gael Scouts and Cumann na mBan.

The revolutionary potential of the Irish Volunteers was nothing like its mustered strength might suggest. It included over 20,000 reservists who were recalled to the “colours” soon after the outbreak of war. It also included a great number of followers of John Redmond and this became very clear when after Redmond’s Woodenbridge speech (which in effect was an attempt to commit the Irish Volunteers to action on England’s side in the war) the movement split, the vast majority proved loyal to Redmond and joined the then formed Irish National Volunteers while about 10,000 remained in the parent organisation.

While Intelligence Notes (pp. 175-6) reasonably accurately records the gradual rise of the Irish Volunteer strength up to 1916 the decline of the Irish National Volunteers was much more precipitate than their figures suggest.

As the war went on tensions in Ireland, which had been exacerbated by incidents such as the Curragh Mutiny, were further increased by the postponement of the Home Rule Act and by the threats of partition and conscription and in turn these drew the revolutionary movements closer together: the O’Donovan Rossa funeral being a marked example of a combined operation. While the presence and actions of the IRB’s Military Committee and later Military Council was unknown to most the 1916 Proclamation named its personnel, including as it did both Pearse and Connolly, in the revolutionary leadership.

Though in terms of numbers the auguries for an insurrection in the Spring of 1916 were not as bright as they had been at the beginning of the war, nonetheless Pearse and others felt that the numbers who had remained with them in September 1914 as well as the later recruits were dependable in a way the larger more politically amorphous body of the Summer of 1914 certainly was not.

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 1916 RISING

The Irish Rising was finally carried out in the main by the Citizen Army under the leadership of James Connolly and by the Irish Volunteers by that time effectively led by Pádraic Pearse as Director of Organisation. It is not quite certain how large a group the combination of the two comprised potentially, but it has been
estimated to around 250 Citizen Army men (in Dublin only) and about 15,000 Irish Volunteers all over the country.

For many reasons as we know, the whole revolutionary force did not turn out on Easter Monday when called for action. From different sources we know that maybe 1,300 people were actually fighting in Dublin and at least 1,000 elsewhere; those who reported for action say in Limerick, Cork, Tralee and Coalisland, but did not in fact participate are excluded except for those included in the lists of the men sentenced immediately after the Rising.

During the few days of fighting 62 IRA men were shot dead. Some escaped the final round-up by the English soldiers after the surrender. Shortly after the fighting the English Army and the

3. Cf. police returns in Breandán Mac Giolla Choille, ed., *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916*, p. 176. While their estimate of the Citizen Army's strength is totally inaccurate, the Irish Volunteer strength is probably only slightly underestimated. Desmond Ryan estimated "no more than 18,000" (*The Rising*, Dublin, third edition, 1957, p. 1).
4. This will be the subject of a forthcoming study by the Rev. J. M. Heuston, o.p. Some indication of the problem of resolving the varying computations is given in Heuston, *op. cit.*, p. 8, where he analyses the strength of the H.Q. force.
5. The lists for North Dublin/Meath can be compiled from a roll in the National Museum of Ireland and from Seán Ó Lúing, *I Die in a Good Cause* (Trapee, 1970). The county Louth activities have been described by Seán MacEntee in *Episode at Easter* (Dublin, 1966). The roll for Ferns is in the National Museum but that for Enniscorthy has not so far been located (though Desmond Ryan gives the total Wexford active strength as 600 in *The Rising*, Dublin, 1957, pp. 248-9). There has been no satisfactory assessment of the numbers engaged in Galway under Liam Mellows and estimates from 200 to 1500 have been seen or heard by one of us when collecting data on that theatre of the war.
6. For a quick run through this aspect of the Rising see Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-50.
7. The total number again has been a matter of some dispute, but after long and careful study the Department of Defence concluded that 62 was the correct figure and had their names inscribed on a plaque in the 1916 memorial plot in Arbour Hill, Dublin. *Cuimhneachán 1916-1966* (Dublin, 1966), pp. 72, 73.
8. This was most obviously so in Galway where other conditions obtained. In Dublin the commandants accepted the surrender terms and interpreted them quite strictly. MacBride suggested to many of the men in Jacobs that they should make their escape. Other individuals, and through differing circumstances—Eamon Martin for example—escaped the round-up also.
RIG arrested the most-clearly suspicious members of both the Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers. (This particularly applies to the latter, and outside Dublin: since most of the former's strength had been committed to the Rising from the start.)

The revolutionary force in 1916 can thus be recognised and ordered in four levels of participation:

In this first attempt to get a picture of who actually carried out the 1916 Revolution, we analysed the list of people arrested published in the *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook* (which had compiled the lists directly from the *Irish Times* shortly after the arrests were made). From *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916* (ed. Breandán Mac Giolla Choille) we got further information on the “elite” of the revolutionaries—i.e. the people who were court-martialled and got the death or heavy sentences.

The lists in the *Sinn Féin Handbook* have varied amounts of information. We find: names, addresses (rather scant), sex (by name or title), and from the total list we could derive occupation in the following proportions:


10. Compiled by the *Weekly Irish Times* and published in Dublin in 1916.
I—Rank and File

(a) Total on the *Handbook* list .................. 2,521 99.99%
(b) Total with stated occupation .................. 1,289 51.32%
(c) Total with no information on occupation ...... 1,232 48.67%

II—Elite

(d) Total on *Intelligence* list* .................. 175 100.00%
    (all with stated occupations)

*Intelligence* list contains 183 persons, but 8 were found not guilty
and are therefore not included in the "elite".

There were 70 women on the rank and file and 1 (Countess
Markievicz) in the elite.

This group of 1,464 (b plus d) people is thus the basis for
analyses of the occupational structure of the Irish revolutionaries.
In the chart we have drawn a vertical line across the circles to
demonstrate the difference between the whole force (actual and
potential) and the proportion we base the discussion on.

There are no uniform and fully-agreed methods of grouping
occupations into broad classes which will satisfy all approaches to a
study of this type. Usually one proceeds to classify either by prestige
(money, property), by status (perceived importance), or by trade. In the following table we made a five-fold classification
which is a mixture of status and trade classification: Table 1
presents the raw figures and Table 2 the relative proportions in
each group. The idea behind the comparison of elite and rank and
file is to get an impression on how broadly-based the leadership
was.

### Table 1

**Absolute Distribution of Number of People in the "Rank and File" and in the "Elite", on a Mixed Trade/Status Classification (Only Men)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Farmers</th>
<th>Clerical Professions</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>(e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank and File ...</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite .................</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals .................</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION ON RANK AND FILE AND ELITE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>(c)</th>
<th>(d)</th>
<th>(e)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank and File</td>
<td>62.45</td>
<td>10.55</td>
<td>13.65</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>41.14</td>
<td>15.42</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Totals</td>
<td>59.90</td>
<td>11.13</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% difference</td>
<td>+21.31</td>
<td>-4.87</td>
<td>-3.20</td>
<td>-12.85</td>
<td>+1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R—E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It must be noted that the table contains only men.

The results show that the workers in the elite are underrepresented in relation to their relative strength in the rank and file. The group overrepresented is the top status people such as directors and professional men.

Altogether the picture of the 1916 revolutionaries indicates that this was a revolution undertaken by workers in alliance with small farmers, many middle- and a few upper middle-class people. From the figures it does look like a perfect picture of a socialist revolution in the way Lenin and Marx envisaged it in their writings. (Especially with regard to the low percentage of farmers.)

Most revolutions are carried out in the name of “the people”. Usually they are not carried out by the people, not even in terms of representing among themselves a relative proportion of all interests in the population. In Table 3 and Table 4 we have tried to give an idea of the extent to which the 1916 revolutionaries were a microcosm of the people in terms of occupational structure. The tables are arranged in order to correspond with the classifications in the 1911 Census, and are therefore reorganised from the more status developed classifications in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF RANK AND FILE AND ELITE COMPARED WITH THE 1911 CENSUS REPORT ON OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CENSUS (MEN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank and File</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum (R+E)</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1464</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census (Men) | 103.63 | 25.831 | 101.396 | 721.669 | 434.699 | 804.850 | 2192.048
1—Professional and Governmental Class
2—Domestic Class
3—Commercial Class
4—Agricultural Class
5—Different Working Class
6—Persons Not Producing.

### TABLE 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank and File</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>15.42</td>
<td>41.14</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Census</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>32.92</td>
<td>19.88</td>
<td>36.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (R+E) (total)</td>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>23.63</td>
<td>12.84</td>
<td>50.81</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% difference</td>
<td>+4.36</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>+19.01</td>
<td>-20.08</td>
<td>+30.90</td>
<td>-33.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Down at the bottom of Table 4 we get a simple measure of the representativeness of the Revolutionaries in relation to the population. Class 6—Persons Not Producing—has the greatest discrepancy. This is due to the large number of pensioners, old age and people unemployed. They are heavily underrepresented among the 1916 group (rank and file, and elite). The working class is much overrepresented whilst the farmers are (agricultural class) heavily underrepresented. Class 3 are strongly overrepresented and the professional and domestic class are closest to their proportion in the population.

The revolution of 1916 was to some extent a workingmen’s revolution with strong assistance from the middle group of commercial classes. It was not a revolution carried out by the largest proportion of “the producing group” farmers and Class 6.

The grouping of 1916 men in broad classes certainly does not give us the full picture of the revolutionary force. Within each class there are lots of variations. In Table 5 we have tried to produce a more detailed breakdown of specific occupations. This is compared with the Census groupings and ranked according to size of group. The relative figures in column two and three gives an impression of how well the more specialised groups compare with their strength in the total labour force (men) over fourteen years.
TABLE 5
RANGE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS
FREQUENCIES AMONG ELITE AND RANK
AND FILE—Sum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Nos. (R+E)</th>
<th>% of R+E</th>
<th>% from Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General labourer</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>19.79</td>
<td>6.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Farmer and Class VI General</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>13.65</td>
<td>51.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Commercial clerk</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>On roads</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Plumbr and house painter</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Porter, messenger</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Grocer’s assistant*</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Carpenter, joiner</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shop assistant*</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Machinist, machine worker</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Artists</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Draper</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fitter and turner</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Music, bookbinder, printer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Cabinet maker, upholsterer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Broker, salesman, commercial traveller</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Electrician, apparatus maker</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Shoe, bookmaker, dealer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Library and scientific</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Apprentice, assistant</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Coachmaker, motor-car assembler</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Grocer*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Hotel servant</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Railway</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Legal profession</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Medical profession</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Seamen boatmen</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals ........................................... 1146 men 88.55% 68.61%

*Not specified in Census.
Table 5 gives a very varied picture indeed. As might have been expected from the other classifications the general labourer and the general farmer plus agricultural labourer dominated in number. Besides that there is a wide representation of the skilled workers, lower, middle and upper middle class. Even a few upper-upper class like Count Plunkett, Countess Markievicz, Sir Roger Casement (not counted here), are involved.

Altogether the people involved in 1916 represent the full and broad occupational structure of the Irish urban society and also to some extent the rural areas. The few groups we can think of as not represented are e.g. soldiers, police, public administration, clergy, M.P.s etc. (though ex-soldiers, children of policemen and employees of Dublin Corporation did take part).

In terms of which groups are over or underrepresented it is fairly clear that general labourers are overrepresented (Citizen Army) and farmers/agricultural labourers underrepresented, but since the numbers are small and the differences generally do not exceed 3 to 4 per cent it is not advisable to draw any firm conclusion from that.

We have thus presented the main trends of the composition of the people who partook in the Easter Rising. They were all able to join for one common goal and inspired by one common ideology—an independent and integrated Republic of Ireland.

PROBLEMS IN ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE

Returning to our chart which gives the overall picture of the whole nationalist movement in 1916, it is quite clear that we have analysed only one part of the total potential revolutionaries and only a little more than 50 per cent of the actual revolutionaries. How well does our sample represent the total revolutionary movement and the actual fighting group?

(a) Concerning the total nationalist movement we have no indication either of the total number (ca. 17,000) or of its occupational composition. It is possible that the farmers underrepre-

11. Count Plunkett's title was a Vatican title of honour. He was not in the English sense "ennobled". He was then the Director of the National Museum of Ireland. Countess Markievicz (wife of a Polish count) was a Gore-Booth, a family listed in Burke's Landed Gentry as are the Casements—though Roger's title was a mark of esteem for his services to humanity while in the English Consular Corps.
sentation in our table would be reduced and the working class less overrepresented.

(b) The people who died and the people who escaped arrest are as yet not known in any great detail. Their number is so small—except in Galway, where they were probably mostly small farmers or farm labourers—that they would not really affect the distributions even if they constituted a completely homogeneous group.

(c) The 48.7 per cent from which we have no information is a problem. Information on those (which might be obtained in a future research programme) might alter the picture in two ways. First: The proportion of groups in Tables 1 and 4 could conceivably be totally changed. That is most likely if the people have very much the same occupation in common, which again is not very likely in the 1916 group. Second: We might get an even more varied picture of total specialised groups in action. This would mean that Table 5 would have shown a much greater variety than now presented.

However, the results we have presented do correspond very well with the general image we have from more generalised descriptions of the movement, and we do not think that 100 per cent information on the “activists” (arrested) would have changed our results completely. We would, by the way, recommend such a study to be undertaken, in order to establish a full bibliographical data archive for studies in modern Irish history from 1900 and onwards. It is obvious that active participation in 1916 was a stepping stone for prominence in modern Irish politics, and a full biographical archive would facilitate very considerably the study of patterns in recruitment to Irish political life in this century.

BACKGROUND FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES AFTER 1916

The long-term trends in Irish history show that the nationalist organisations were led and recruited by almost the same type of people as we have shown for the 1916 men. Gradually the occupational structure of the country changed, but it is generally thought that the active groups in revolutionary movements in Ireland in the 1916 century were the urban lower or middle classes with some few upper classes and also a certain number of farmers. The new

facet of the 1916 men is the extent to which the working class as such joined in with the nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{13}

All the different types of farmers’ secret societies and organisations which agitated the land question never seemed to be engaged in a planned revolutionary organisation. Many of the agrarian riots and rebellions might seem to have failed, due to this lack of an overall policy for future development, and is partly true also of the 1916 men.

With a growing working class in towns and cities in the last part of the nineteenth century, what had seemed to be urban middle-class nationalism got a new basis for support and recruitment, and in 1916 this showed very decisively in the rebellion.

The 1916 group is therefore very much in line with what has been the dominant tradition in Irish revolutionary politics in terms of which groups of people would participate. The lack of farmers, clergy, people in public administration and certainly the lack of a broad representation of land-owners is a feature of the group in which is really what one should expect from previous revolutionary history in Ireland.

The effect of this organisational basis in post 1916 developments can be looked upon from different angles. First of all MacCracken has shown that in top politics (T.D.s and Cabinets) experience in 1916 is of crucial importance.\textsuperscript{14} It proved to be a very important background (and this obtained also for relatives of participants) for prestige in politics. Secondly the general diversity of groups taking part contributed to the feeling that this was the first step to broad national revolution. We know from history after 1916 that the impact of what had happened in Dublin did extend steadily throughout the country: Sinn Féin rapidly gained more and more popularity and the establishment of the first Dail Eireann soon after the 1918 election is probably strongly related to this broad and varied composition of occupational groups in the 1916 men.

Long-term effects of this are harder to trace. We can suggest hypotheses without having too much evidence for their support. If there had been less people from the working class participating this might both have strengthened and weakened the Labour

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. \textit{Labour in Irish History}, p. 17, and \textit{Lessons of History}, p. 5, for some of Connolly’s comments on the class structure and leadership of previous Irish revolutionary movements.

party's position in Irish politics. It might have strengthened it by then disassociating the socialist movement from the nationalist one and this might have led to internal solidarity in the labour movement. It might have weakened it by isolating it from the main streams of policy at the time; a more likely eventuality in the Irish experience.

With a broader representation of farmers and of clergy one might have experienced a development towards tighter connection between those groups and possibly avoided the split in 1921 on the Treaty. The solidarity between the different groups in the country may have created a situation of broader perspective for the whole population on the development of Irish society. One can also speculate if a more full-scale farmer participation in 1916 had taken place where it might have had a considerable impact on future development of farmers' co-operative and other interest organisations.

One further comment might be made here that urban/rural dichotomies are not as readily recognisable in the Irish revolutionary pattern as might be expected. The imbalance in the Dublin population structure for example is not only caused by emigration from the countryside (resulting in a large section of the city's population being rural or small-town born or of such background within one or two generations) but by the unusually large emigration from Dublin out of the state. Factors such as these are obviously of significance in assessing the evolutionary patterns of revolutions and of revolutionaries in Irish conditions.

THEORIES AND THINKING ON THE IRISH REVOLUTION

It is often difficult, when studying material on revolutions and revolutionary movements, to draw the lines of demarcation between notes on revolutionary plans, revolutionary visions (or hopes) and writing on revolutionary theory proper. A plan or a vision does more or less suggest who shall or ought do what, when and why. A theory suggests what will happen if who does what, when and why.

It is not difficult to imagine why an admixture of both kinds of thinking so often occurs. The distinction between them is analytical.

For a revolutionary the differences have practical importance only if they can serve his purpose. The great stress revolutionaries put on the theoretical and “scientific” rightness of their revolutionary vision has often been noted. It has great propagandist value, and if a revolution is planned “scientifically” and is theoretically “right”, it is irresistible; no human being or state machinery can ultimately resist a scientific theory above human control. Hence also, however, the classic debate between the marxists who believe in revolutionary determinism (the revolution will come by itself due to “drives” in human development) and the activists or voluntarists who believe in the thesis that the revolution will not come if you do not prepare for it and turn out when called.

There are two principal Irish thinkers who guided Irish people in revolutionary organisations and activities before the 1916 Rising, Connolly and Pearse. They also led the men in the streets later.

If we try to trace what they wrote as to who they expected should comprise the revolutionary force and how, when and why the revolution should develop, we are in some difficulty in finding specific statements. James Connolly has several sayings on these four points, most of them in very general marxian phrasing. He often takes the Irish working class and the class-war doctrine, as point of departure. A rising or a take-over in Ireland should be based on the working class (sometimes the agricultural labourer and the small farmer are taken into account and sometimes the intellectuals). He also seems to think that a rising should take place as a perpetuation of a general strike. This may very much be a reflection of the experience from the abortive general strike in Dublin in 1913, which did not produce any real victory for the Irish trade unions (except bringing forward the organisation of the Citizen Army).

The following quotations will illustrate his way of thinking:

“...To the tenant farmer, ground between landlordism on the one hand and American competition on the other, as between the upper and the nether millstone; to the wage-workers in the towns, suffering from the exactions of the slave-driving capitalist, to the agricultural labourer, toiling away his life for a wage barely sufficient to keep body and soul together; in fact to every one of the toiling millions upon whose misery the outwardly-splendid fabric of our modern civilisation is reared, the Irish Republic might be made a word to conjure with—a rallying point for the disaffected, a haven for the...
oppressed, a point of departure for the socialist, enthusiastic in the cause of human freedom..."16

"Therefore political power must, for the working classes, come straight out of the industrial battlefield as the expression of the organised economic force of labour; else it cannot come at all. With labour properly organised upon the industrial and political field, each extension of the principle of public ownership brings us nearer to the re-conquest of Ireland by its people; it means the gradual resumption of the common ownership of all Ireland by all the Irish—the realisation of freedom.

"Not the least of the many encouraging signs given to the world during the great Dublin labour dispute just mentioned was the keen and sympathetic interest shown by the "intellectuals" in the fortunes of the workers. In itself this was a phenomenon in Ireland. Until then, there had been discovered no means of bridging the gap between the Irish workers who toiled as ordinary day labourers, and those other workers whose toil was upon the intellectual plane, and whose remuneration kept them generally free from the actual pressure of want..."17

"Here, then, is the immense difference between the socialist republicans and our friends the physical force men. The latter, by stifling all discussions of principles, earn the passive and fleeting commendation of the unthinking multitude; the former, by insisting upon a thorough understanding of their basic principles, do not so readily attract the multitude, but do attract and hold the more thoughtful amongst them. It is the difference betwixt a mob in revolt and an army in preparation. The mob who cheer a speaker referring to the hopes of a physical force movement would, in the very hour of apparent success, be utterly disorganised and divided by the passage through the British Legislature of any trumpery Home Rule Bill. The army of class-conscious workers organising under the banner of the Socialist Republican Party, strong in their knowledge of economic truth and firmly grounded in their revolutionary principles, would remain

entirely unaffected by any such manoeuvre and, knowing it would not change their position as a subject class, would still press forward, resolute and undivided, with their faces set towards their only hope of emancipation—the complete control by the working-class democracy of all the powers of National Government...”

Pádraic Pearse was the other main influencing theoriser. He was regarded as a more “spiritual” inspirer and less keen on strategic matters. He seemed to think that a revolution should come about by “all” the men or the “whole people”—except the British landed aristocracy and the British-influenced industrialists. In terms of when, how and why, he is referring to a spontaneous rising, “at the right moment” and due to the long history of English oppression:

“... We want recruits because we have a faith to give them and a hope with which to inspire them. ...
“... We want recruits because we are sure of the rightness of our cause. We have no misgivings, no self-questionings. While others have been doubting, timorous, ill at ease, we have been serenely at peace with our consciences. The recent time of soulsearching had no terrors for us. ...
“... We want recruits because we believe that events are about to place the destinies of Ireland definitely in our hands, and because we want as much help as possible to enable us to bear the burden. The political leadership of Ireland is passing to us—not, perhaps, to us as individuals, for none of us are ambitious for leadership and few of us fit for leadership; but to our party, to men of our way of thinking; that is, to the party and to the men that stand by Ireland only, to the party and to the men that stand by the nation, to the party and to the men of one allegiance.
“We want recruits because we have work for them to do. We do not propose to keep our men idle. We propose to give them work—hard work, plenty of work.”
“... Ireland armed will attain ultimately just as much freedom as she wants. These are matters which may not concern

the Gaelic League, as a body; but they concern every member of the Gaelic League, and every man and woman of Ireland. I urged much of this five or six years ago in addresses to the Ard-Chraobh: but the League was too busy with resolutions to think of revolution, and the only resolution that a member of the League could not come to was the resolution to be a man. My fellow-Leaguers had not (and have not) apprehended that the thing which cannot defend itself, even though it may wear trousers, is no man.

"I am glad, then, that the North has 'begun'. I am glad that the Orangemen have armed, for it is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands. I should like to see the A.O.I.H. (Ancient Order of Hibernians) armed. I should like to see the Transport Workers armed. I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. . . .

". . . This is what I meant when I said that our work henceforward must be done less and less through the Gaelic League and more and more through the groups and the individuals that have arisen, or are arising, out of the Gaelic League. There will be in the Ireland of the next few years a mulitudinous activity of Freedom Clubs, Young Republican Parties, Labour Organisations, Socialist Groups, and what not; bewildering enterprises undertaken by sane persons and insane persons, by good men and bad men, many of them seemingly contradictory, some mutually destructive, yet all tending towards a common objective, and that objective: the Irish Revolution . . ."20

The quotations from these two prominent Irish leaders are not very clear and they cannot provide us with some straight-forward answers to the four points we look for. Especially not for what kind of people they thought should be involved. [A detailed and fully laid out programme for a forthcoming revolution could also have been quickly picked up by the police and the military (something partly experienced in earlier rebellions in Ireland), and any kind of a Rising would have been prevented from happening.]

The importance of their writings and work in the movement will have to be judged mostly for its practical implication, not so much for insight in theory of human development. Without them

20. Pádraic Pearse, "The coming Revolution" (November 1913), Political Writings and Speeches, pp. 91-99.
it is doubtful if we would have had the revolution in 1916. They organised it and issued along with others the call to arms for Easter Monday.

Besides Pearse and Connolly, there is some importance in the work of other writers towards understanding the background of and efforts at forming a theory on revolution in Ireland.

Nicholas Mansergh in his book, *The Irish Question 1840-1921*, discussed three types of theories: (a) Italian nationalist theories (Cavour and Mazzini), (b) English conservative and liberal statesmen’s theories (Joseph Chamberlain, Randolph Churchill, William Gladstone, Herbert Asquith, David Lloyd George), (c) Communist theories (Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Lenin). They all try to focus on the four points we ask for and thus try to predict a revolution and suggest how to stimulate one, or how to prevent one from happening.

The English statesmen’s thinking and writing on Ireland is well known and is much tied to the general strategical perspective for the balance of power between the two major parties. When the Irish Nationalist Party became a real force in English politics, the Irish problem became a problem of tactical consideration and as such a part of the liberal or conservative idea of politics. The who, how, when and why was therefore confined to this tactical perspective.

The two Italian contributors to the thinking on Ireland, were sympathetic to the Irish cause, but did not really believe in the rightness of the nationalist revolutionary strategy. Therefore they did not come down to the real issues involved in such a strategy.

The Communist or Marxist thinking was much broader, formulated in a comparative perspective—with its basic strength on its analysis on an overall view of human development. At first Marx thought that the revolution should start in England among the English proletariat and from them spread to Ireland. He then realised the deep split in the working class between English and Irish workers and recommended instead that the English proletariat should press forward to a separation of the two countries, and establish some kind of a federal system. Later on he thought that the revolution should come among the Irish proletariat and then spread as an epidemic to England and “liberate” the English working class from their joint oppressor.

A quotation from Marx illustrates this position:

"I have become more and more convinced—and the only question is to bring this conviction home to the English working class—that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland in the most definite way from the policy of the ruling classes, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish, but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it by a free federal relationship. And, indeed, this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading-strings of the ruling classes, because it must join with them in a common front against Ireland. Every one of its movements in England itself is crippled by the disunion with the Irish, who form a very important section of the working class in England. The primary condition of emancipation here—the overthrow of the English landed oligarchy—remains impossible because its position here cannot be stormed so long as it maintains its strongly entrenched outposts in Ireland. But there, once affairs are in the hands of the Irish people itself, once it is made its own legislator and ruler, once it becomes autonomous, the abolition of the landed aristocracy (to a large extent the same persons as the English landlords) will be infinitely easier than here, because in Ireland it is not mere simple economic question, but at the same time a national question, since the landlords there are not like those in England, the traditional dignitaries and representatives, but are the mortally hated oppressors of a nation. And not only does England's internal social development remain crippled by her present relation with Ireland; her foreign policy, and particularly her policy with regard to Russia and America, suffers the same fate."  

But Marx, and also Engels, remain vague on the question who would make the revolution in Ireland. In some of their other writings there is more clarity on this; but then they were never really successful in predicting actual revolutions, in terms of who, when and how. They were more convincing on why.

The position of Lenin on this particular question is not much clearer. But living close to the events of 1916, mindful of the experiences of 1905 and a year and a half before "his own" revolution in Russia he was much more alive to its reality and significance than were the German Social Democrat Karel Radek or the Russian national-liberal Kulisher. While he states that "the misfortune of the Irish is that they have risen prematurely" he repudiated the "putsch" label put on the Rising by both Radek and Kulisher and described Easter week as an "uprising" in "the centuries old Irish national movement" which "expressed itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie and a section of the workers after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of the press etc."

Connolly had expressed some concern as to how the socialists would react to his part in the 1916 Rising: "They will never understand why I am here," he remarked. "They will all forget I am an Irishman."23 His apprehension was justified in the immediate reactions of his comrades in other countries24 until Lenin redressed the balance,25 though as has been pointed out, Connolly's actions were more in keeping with 2nd International resolutions about imperialist wars than were the activities of so many of the continental socialists during the war.26

In his conclusion Mansergh clearly demonstrates the weaknesses in the communist thinking and theorising on Ireland, both in terms of actual social and economic conditions and—in a general way—of dogmatically fitting classical dialectic historical class-doctrine theses on to the Irish situation.

**OTHER GENERAL APPROACHES**

In the whole field of social science one can find a vast literature, both general and specific, on problems of revolutions, conflict behaviour, deviant action groups, and on social development of various descriptions. These types of work can broadly be classified

into three sets of approaches, basically centred on disciplinary orientation.

(a) The psychological-psychiatric approach, seeks to trace the origins of revolutions and outbreak of violent action in the internal states of human mind and in the factors effecting changes in the individual’s states of mind. Examples of such work are:
J. Dalland, et al., Frustration and Aggression (1939).

(b) The socio-economic approach seeks to explain revolutions and “deviant behaviour ending in violence”, by using socio-economic indicators of social structure of the community in which the revolutions take place. Another name for the same type of analyses is ecological approach. Examples of such kind of analyses are:
Rolf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (1951).
Lewis Coser, Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict (1967).
Lewis F. Richardson, Statistics of Deadly Quarrels (1960).28

(c) The third kind of analyses will broadly be described as the historical-cultural approach. Violence, or violence leading to a revolutionary action, is explained and described with focus on national or communal “learning” and on political tradition. Revolutions develop due to some sort of long time build-up in the history of the nation as it is either perceived, or being unconscious by the actors, or laid down in the political and social structures of the community. These approaches may either be very specifically related to one nation at the one point of time in history or of more

general application in time and space. Examples of these
approaches are:
Regis Debray, Revolution in the Revolution (1967).
Priscilla Robertson, Revolutions of 1848, a social history (1960).
Harry Eckstein, ed., Intended War (1964).29

This variety of approaches does not provide us with a theory
for testing with the framework of the 1916 Rising in Ireland. The
whole set of approaches can add to our understanding and raise
new questions in our analyses of the men in 1916. They help to
formalise the questions in studying the effect and cause of the
social composition of the revolutionary force, and they often have
more ideas as to how the questions should or can be framed.

One reason for the tentative nature of hypotheses on the cause
and effect of the social compositions of revolutionary groups, seems
to be the failure to assemble, or the lack of interest in assembling
exact information on the people who did participate. Sometimes
this lack of interest in social analyses stems from the unavailability
of information on secret societies and revolutionary armies. As
regards 1916 as well as in other instances, this can to some extent be
overcome if sufficient emphasis is placed on gathering data on each
known member of such organisations.

The present trend in creating elite-archives on “official elites” is
a promising venture for such work.30 A broadening of this research
strategy on “non-official elites”31 and on “strategic groups” in the
process of nationbuilding should be undertaken. And this, of course,
should have to be accompanied by a strong theoretical orientation.

29. Bibliography in Leonard W. Doob, Patriotism and Nationalism. Their
30. Bibliography and project description on elite archives in Stein Rokkan,
31. In the joint project involving the Institutes of History and of Sociology
at the University of Bergen—on the recruitment of the Norwegian Nazi
movement—we are at the moment building up a large (and complete)
biographical archive on the Norwegian Nazi Movement. This idea, it is
hoped, will be an example for other people and lead to the establishment of
similar archives for other European countries, thus making it possible to
obtain an enlarged perspective of the comparative recruitment to the Nazi
and Fascist organisations pre and during the second world war.