

A black and white portrait of Cathal Brugha, a man with light-colored hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

CATHAL  
BRUGHA

REMEMBERED



# CATHAL BRUSHA

## REMEMBERED



Óglaigh  
na hÉireann  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



# contents

|                                                                               |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Foreword</b>                                                               | 4  |
| COMMANDANT DANIEL AYIOTIS                                                     |    |
| <hr/>                                                                         |    |
| <b>1. Cathal Brugha and the Gaelic League:</b>                                | 6  |
| a deep commitment to Irish language and culture                               |    |
| MARY MACDIARMADA                                                              |    |
| <hr/>                                                                         |    |
| <b>2. ‘God Save Ireland’:</b>                                                 | 13 |
| Cathal Brugha and the 1916 Rising                                             |    |
| LIZ GILLIS                                                                    |    |
| <hr/>                                                                         |    |
| <b>3. ‘Spared to do great work for Ireland in the years that followed’:</b>   | 23 |
| Cathal Brugha and the reorganisation of the Volunteers and Sinn Féin, 1916–17 |    |
| AARON Ó MAONAIGH                                                              |    |
| <hr/>                                                                         |    |
| <b>4. Deliberate amnesia?</b>                                                 | 30 |
| Cathal Brugha’s involvement in the plan to assassinate the British cabinet    |    |
| FERGUS O’FARRELL                                                              |    |
| <hr/>                                                                         |    |
| <b>5. A reluctant politician:</b>                                             | 36 |
| Cathal Brugha, TD for Waterford, 1918–22                                      |    |
| PAT MCCARTHY                                                                  |    |
| <hr/>                                                                         |    |
| <b>6. ‘Deire le ré na cainte’:</b>                                            | 44 |
| Brugha, the Irish language and the first Dáil                                 |    |
| AINDRIAS Ó CATHASAIGH                                                         |    |

|                                                                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>7. Duty, conspiracy and enmity:</b>                                               | 51  |
| Cathal Brugha as Minister for Defence, 1919–22<br>DAITHÍ Ó CORRÁIN AND GERARD HANLEY |     |
| <hr/>                                                                                |     |
| <b>8. ‘Would prefer to die by an Orange bullet or an English bullet’:</b>            | 80  |
| Cathal Brugha and the drift to Civil War<br>GERARD SHANNON                           |     |
| <hr/>                                                                                |     |
| <b>9. Death in Dublin:</b>                                                           | 91  |
| Cathal Brugha’s last act<br>JOHN DORNEY                                              |     |
| <hr/>                                                                                |     |
| <b>10. ‘When many of us are forgotten Cathal Brugha will be remembered’:</b>         | 100 |
| Brugha in memory and commemoration<br>CAITLIN WHITE                                  |     |
| <hr/>                                                                                |     |
| <b>11. ‘Sincere and wholehearted loyalty’:</b>                                       | 107 |
| Caitlín Brugha (1879–1959)<br>JOANNE ROTHWELL                                        |     |
| <hr/>                                                                                |     |
| <b>Afterword</b>                                                                     | 114 |
| CATHAL MACSWINEY BRUGHA                                                              |     |
| <hr/>                                                                                |     |
| <b>About the Authors</b>                                                             | 118 |
| <hr/>                                                                                |     |
| <b>Notes</b>                                                                         | 120 |

# FOREWORD

COMMANDANT DANIEL AYIOTIS

‘Many would not have forgiven—had they been in my place—Cathal Brugha’s attack on me on January 7th. Yet I would forgive him anything. Because of his sincerity I would forgive him anything. At worst, he was a fanatic—though in what has been a noble cause. At best, I number him among the very few who have given their all that all this country—now torn by civil war—should have its freedom. When many of us are forgotten, Cathal Brugha will be remembered.’

Michael Collins, 17 July 1922<sup>1</sup>

Such was the generous assessment that Michael Collins wrote privately days after the death of Cathal Brugha. By the time of Brugha’s death at the outset of the Civil War, these one-time (if sometimes uneasy) comrades in a revolutionary war against British rule in Ireland had become bitter opponents on the issue of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

In 2024 it was my great honour to co-host a conference exploring the life and legacy of this great republican and revolutionary leader at the barracks bearing his name in Rathmines, Dublin. I am now delighted to be writing the foreword to the natural corollary of that conference, the collected articles from that day’s excellent panel of speakers. The conference was chosen to coincide with the 150th anniversary year of Brugha’s birth, and a range of top scholars assembled to share with those in attendance the most contemporary research examining his contribution to Irish culture, society and the independence struggle. It is to their eternal credit that the historians with featured articles in this publication have generously taken the time to adapt their research for publication so that it can be preserved and shared.

It is fitting that Portobello Barracks was renamed in Cathal Brugha’s honour in 1952 and that his name, as a result, is spoken daily by those members of Óglaigh na hÉireann—the Irish Defence Forces—who work within its walls. It is only since 2020, however, that a ceremony to mark the anniversary of his death has become an annual event, and so it is not before time that his prominence within the barracks has come to match that of Collins. It is my personal opinion that, of the two, Brugha is in fact the more fitting as a patron to Irish members of the soldiering profession. He has few equals as an exemplar of soldierly virtues to the men and women of Óglaigh na hÉireann. Accounts of his bravery and

ferocity in battle are many. Receiving numerous bullet wounds during the Easter Rising, too weak from loss of blood to retreat and not expecting to survive, he remained at his barricade and continued to fire at the enemy in order to cover the retreat of his comrades. Surviving against the odds, Brugha continued to lead from the front. He became the chief of staff of the Irish Volunteers in 1917, and the following year was elected as a Sinn Féin TD, taking his place in the separatist Dáil Éireann in January 1919. Here, he was chosen from among his peers as Ceann Comhairle, served as president of the Dáil in the absence of the imprisoned Éamon de Valera, and, from April, as Minister for Defence. In the latter role, he was determined that Óglaigh na hÉireann would serve as the army of the Irish people and maintain high standards of discipline. Opposing the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Brugha fought against his former comrades with the same devotion to duty and sheer physical bravery that he had displayed during the Easter Rising. Refusing to surrender during the fighting in Dublin in the early days of the Civil War, he was shot and died of his wounds. Tim Pat Coogan has rightly described Brugha as having ‘passed into folklore as the contemporary embodiment of the legendary hero Cuchulain, who had tied himself to a tree stump during battle so he should not fall from his wounds’.

I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the people who brought this work from its inception as a one-day historical conference to the publication you are now holding in your hands: historians Gerard Shannon and Liz Gillis, who originated this idea, co-edited and themselves contributed articles; Pat McCarthy and the Military History Society for partnering with us on it; Brigadier Generals Tony Cudmore (ret'd) and Steve Ryan; all of the contributing authors; and the ever-obliging and professional staff of the Defence Forces Printing Press. Thanks are also due to Ronan Colgan and Emer Condit at Wordwell for copy-editing and to Caitlin Quinn and Ciara Mitchell at Vermillion Design for graphic design and layout.

In his assessment, quoted at the top of the page, Collins was indeed correct: Cathal Brugha is, and always will be, remembered. Rightly so.

# 1. CATHAL BRUGHÁ AND THE GAELIC LEAGUE:

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## A DEEP COMMITMENT TO IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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MARY MACDIARMADA

Cathal Brugha, as he is more commonly known, was born Charles William St John Burgess on 18 July 1874 at Richmond Avenue in Dublin. He went to primary school in Dominic Street and then to Belvedere College for his secondary education. After Belvedere he studied medicine for two years but had to give it up in order to start working when his father's business failed. This bankruptcy was the result of two of Brugha's older brothers absconding with the proceeds of a massive shipment of goods that they accompanied to Australia in the late 1880s<sup>1</sup>. The bankruptcy was a disaster but the betrayal by their own also deeply wounded the family. In 1891 Brugha started work for Hayes & Finch, a firm of church suppliers dealing in items such as altar wine, candles and vestments. He eventually became their travelling salesman and came to know people the length and breadth of Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, in November 1892 Douglas Hyde gave an address at the Irish National Literary Society on the need to 'de-anglicise the Irish people'.<sup>3</sup> He proposed that Irish language and traditions should be reclaimed by the Irish people and used to differentiate themselves from English language and customs. And thus the Gaelic League was founded in 1893 by Hyde and Eoin Mac Néill. Its key objectives were the preservation of Irish as the national language, the extension of its use as a spoken language, the study and publication of existing Gaelic literature, and the cultivation of a modern literature in Irish. The League was strictly non-political and non-sectarian. It aimed to achieve its objectives through classes on spoken and written Irish, through entertainments and social gatherings, and through a very strong campaign to ensure that Irish was taught in the schools and colleges of Ireland. It also realised the absolute necessity of preserving the Gaeltacht areas. By 1908 it had over 600 branches, having spread to every county in Ireland.

Charles Burgess joined a new and vibrant branch of the League, established in 1901. It was named Craobh an Chéitinnigh/the Keating Branch in honour of Seathrún Céitinn, the great Irish poet and historian of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries who wrote *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*. Charles was an enthusiastic member and soon developed an all-consuming interest in Irish language and culture.

Within a short time he had translated his name to Cathal Buirséas and by 1906 was using the form Cathal Brugha. The Keating Branch initially had its offices in Rutland Square (now Parnell Square), and in their first few years they moved to North Frederick Street, North Great George's Street and O'Connell Street before finding their way back to Parnell Square—always needing larger premises for a growing membership.

The Keating Branch was founded by four proud Munster men, Seán Ó Ceallaigh (also known as Sceilg) from Valentia Island, Tadhg Ó Donnachadha from Carrignavar in Cork, Shán Ó Cuív from Macroom and Risteard Ó Foghludha from Killeagh near Youghal. All four were native Irish-speakers and were firmly of the opinion that Munster Irish—and in particular Cork and Kerry Irish—was the purest form of the language. They promoted this view in no uncertain terms in the Keating Branch. They just about tolerated Gaeilge na nDéise from Waterford, while Limerick and Clare Irish barely scraped in. This set up a tension between the Keating Branch and the rest of the Gaelic League from the beginning. One critic said that the Keating Branch thought that Baile Mhúirne in West Cork was the capital of Gaelic Ireland and that Munster poets and the Munster dialect were superior to all other forms of Irish. And there were tales of Keating Branch members meeting trains from Cork and Kerry at Kingsbridge (now Heuston) Station, urging people newly arrived in Dublin to join. They were, of course, particularly interested in capturing native Irish-speakers.<sup>4</sup>

But this was just the form of Irish that was taught. The Keating Branch welcomed Dubliners and others with open arms once they subscribed to this hierarchy of the Irish language. In addition to language classes, the Keating Branch had dancing, music and drama classes, and you could attend classes there six nights a week. They also established their own choir and a band. Their flagship event each year was Coirm Cheoil na Samhna—the Hallowe'en Concert—which had a very elaborate programme and was held in the Abbey Theatre in 1905. Not given to modesty, the branch boasted that they were going to have a concert the likes of which had never been seen in Dublin before.

The Keating Branch set out to be vibrant and to be different; their motto was *Múscaíl do mhisneach, a Bhanba*, Banba being one of the old mythical names for Ireland. The motto could be loosely translated along the lines of 'Arise, Ireland, and take courage'. They published a magazine called *Banba* from 1901 to 1906, and they also had one of the first camogie teams in the country.

Cathal Brugha took to the Keating Branch and to the learning of Irish with great enthusiasm, attending classes and practising until he had a competency in Irish like a native speaker. He also played hurling and learned Irish dancing. He won prizes in various competitions, including a silver medal at the Oireachtas (the annual festival of the Gaelic League) in 1904 for his essay on Seathrún

Céitinn. Lectures on history topics with debates in Irish afterwards were regular features of Gaelic League branch activity and Brughá became a competent and much-sought-after lecturer. And if not lecturing, he was there to contribute to the debate afterwards. At one such event in 1904—a lecture by Fr Pádraig de Paor on *Foirgnimh na Róimhe*/the Buildings of Rome—both Brughá and Patrick Pearse contributed to the debate in Irish afterwards. Over time, the relationship between Brughá and Pearse became very fractious. The initial enmity arose when Keating Branch member J.J. O’Kelly (Sceilg) was denied the editorship of *An Claidheamh Soluis* (newspaper of the Gaelic League) in favour of Pearse. Brughá and his friends had little regard for Pearse’s ‘Dublin Irish’ and generally disagreed with him on all aspects of the future of the language.

In 1906 Brughá entered six different competitions in the Oireachtas, winning first place in five of them. In the early days of his Gaelic League membership he was given to emphasising the non-political and non-sectarian aspect of the League. He saw it as a unifying force for people from various different backgrounds, with the main objective being to promote the language and have it spoken throughout the country. Before long he was on the Keating Branch committee, and in 1905 he was elected to the Coiste Gnó or national executive of the Gaelic League. In 1906 he was assigned to organisational and industrial committees of the Gaelic League and he served on the Oireachtas committee from 1906 to 1916. While he was very popular, even his close friend Sceilg wrote that Brughá had very definite opinions on all matters: ‘Bhí a thuairim féin ag Cathal i dtaobh gach ní agus san go beacht doimhin daingin’.<sup>5</sup>

The Keating Branch was very proactive. On the recommendation of Brughá and Shán Ó Cuív, it began to collect money to establish colleges to educate teachers of Irish and to put pressure on the executive of the Gaelic League to proceed with this project at full speed. There was a great shortage of teachers for both the Gaelic League’s own classes and the primary and secondary schools. The first summer college for teachers of Irish was established in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaigh in the Cork Gaeltacht in 1904, and very shortly afterwards colleges were established in Mayo, Donegal, Belfast and An Rinn. Brughá taught Irish in the college at Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh during his holidays in the summer of 1910.

Brughá also took a huge interest in the teaching of Irish in schools. By 1908 the Irish language was taught in primary and secondary schools but there were ongoing rows with the National Board of Education about the low fees paid for this teaching. It was largely through Brughá and the Keating Branch’s efforts that a special Ard-Fheis of the Gaelic League to address this issue was held at the Rotunda in Dublin in June 1908, with over 300 in attendance.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to castigating the National Board of Education over the fees paid for teaching Irish in schools, a new campaign took root. The Gaelic League now wanted Irish to be taught in the newly proposed National University of Ireland colleges to be established in Dublin, Cork and Galway—and, most importantly, they wanted it to be a subject that was mandatory for matriculation into the university. This would indeed put the Irish language on a strong footing. It was one of the great triumphs of the Gaelic League that the National Universities Commission agreed to make Irish compulsory for matriculation. This ensured that Irish was taught in the schools over time, but particularly in the élite schools, from which most university entrants came at that time.

In 1908 Cathal Brugha was elected president of the Keating Branch—no mean feat for a Dubliner who was not a native Irish-speaker, demonstrating the very high regard in which he was held by the members (even rising in the ranks above more notable Cork and Kerry members). He remained president of the Keating Branch until his death in 1922.

Brugha met his wife Caitlín in Birr, Co. Offaly, at a Gaelic League meeting and they were married in 1912. His Keating Branch friends held a celebration in Wynn's Hotel in Dublin to congratulate him on his marriage. The *Freeman's Journal* reported that they wanted to acknowledge the esteem and respect in which they held him. 'His labours', they said, 'were an inspiration to every one of them.'<sup>7</sup> 'A living example of what could be done in the matter of learning Irish.' When people said that it was impossible for a non-native speaker to thoroughly master the language, they had only to point to Cathal Brugha to refute that suggestion. Tadgh Ó Donnachadha wrote a song in Irish extolling Brugha's virtues, particularly his efforts to promote the Irish language throughout the country.

The feis or festival of Irish language and music became a key event in many towns throughout Ireland in the early 1900s and an integral part of Gaelic League activities. There were feiseanna in towns and villages all over the country. While the main Gaelic League festival was the annual Oireachtas, the feiseanna were held throughout the year. The Keating Branch became the 'go to' branch for assistance. Because they had a very high standard of Irish, they were much in demand as adjudicators or moltóirí, and they were also in demand to demonstrate Irish dancing and music around the country. Agnes Dodd of Killorglin wrote in her memoirs that she had spent the summer of 1902 or 1903 dancing around various feiseanna in Cork with members of the Keating Branch, demonstrating the finer points of Irish dancing.<sup>8</sup>

The syllabuses for the competitions for each feis were very elaborate, presented in little booklets that could run to twenty pages: reciting and composing poetry, singing, Irish dancing, history essays, choirs, bands, harpists,

whistling, wood-carving, art, and on and on it went. The prizes ranged from 5 shillings up to £5—and sometimes the prize was a week's holiday in the Gaeltacht. It was not unusual to have a prize of £5 offered for the best essay; this was a lot of money at the time and it was therefore possible to have a nice little income stream if you had a reasonable command of Irish.

Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh described in his memoirs how he spent many weekends at feiseanna around the country, and he recounts how he and Brughna went to Cork in 1907 or 1908 for a week to adjudicate at Feis Mumhan. They were then asked to go to Dunmanway Feis. There were hundreds of people there, and a great fuss was made of the fact that these two gentlemen had come all the way from Dublin to adjudicate.<sup>9</sup>

Brughna loved the feiseanna. He felt that there was a wonderful national and Gaelic spirit at each one and they were very enjoyable occasions. Another trip to the Iveragh Feis was promoted to the members of the Keating Branch in a brochure that promised accommodation in Fitzgerald's Hotel in Cahersiveen, which was described as 'like the palace of some ancient Munster prince'. There would be evangelising (presumably language evangelising) and sight-seeing, a boat trip to Valentia, shell-gathering, hill-climbing, a ramble through Ballinskelligs Castle, lessons on the Atlantic cable, an aeríocht on the beach at Derrynane and song and dance and, naturally, Irish classes. (The Keating Branch members were clearly unashamed in their intention to have both education and fun.) On another occasion, Brughna's close friend Sceilg described how they were both working in Killarney and cycled out to Cahersiveen at the weekend to attend Feis Dairbhre. They met a local seanchaí with whom they discussed 'difficult words from the Irish language'. They also helped the local priest to translate his sermon for the Sunday Mass—given the feis, he was anxious to show that he was supportive of the Irish language.<sup>10</sup> Wherever he stayed around the country on business, Brughna sought out the local Gaelic League branch or feis and joined in their activities. The *Kilkenny People*, for instance, reported that Brughna was an adjudicator at the Castlecomer Feis in June 1909.<sup>11</sup>

A huge aspect of the work of the Gaelic League was the promotion of Irish goods; the argument was that a prosperous economy would stem the tide of emigration and in turn keep Irish-speakers at home. Many of the feiseanna, and the Oireachtas, held industrial exhibitions to promote local industries. Buying Irish was also emphasised in the newspaper of the Gaelic League, *An Claidheamh Soluis*. In July 1913 Brughna presided at the opening of the Aonach (industrial exhibition) at the Oireachtas in Galway.<sup>12</sup>

When he travelled around the country, Brugha sought out the company of native Irish-speakers. In Waterford city, for instance, he became friendly with Máirtín Ó Colmáin, who was a native speaker from the Comeragh Mountains. He also spent time in the other towns of na Déise, including Dungarvan, where he again sought out native Irish-speakers and Gaelic League classes. He often cycled out to Coláiste na Rinne to attend classes and to listen to the locals conversing in Irish.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the huge pro-Cork and Kerry bias in the Keating Branch, it is interesting to note that the ever independent-minded Brugha, while visiting the Cork and Kerry Gaeltachts regularly, held the Gaeilge na nDéise in Waterford dearest to his heart. He also arranged for his wife and children to live in the parish of An Rinn in the south of the county for a time during the War of Independence. On the night that Brugha was elected in the general election of 1918, the banna ceoil marched from An Rinn into Dungarvan and played music in the square to congratulate him.<sup>14</sup>

The cultural aspect of the Keating Branch was very strong between 1900 and 1914. James Kavanagh, who joined the branch around the same time as Brugha, said in a later statement to the Bureau of Military History:

**'From the cultural and social standpoint they [the members of the Keating Branch] were all that could be desired but a great number of them were antagonistic to those who sought political freedom for our country'.<sup>15</sup>**

Nevertheless, the branch gradually became associated with militant republicanism. The establishment of the Volunteer movement in 1913 gave a respectability to militarism, as it was initially supportive of Home Rule and was founded by Gaelic League stalwart Eoin MacNeill. This inevitably encouraged some Keating Branch members to engage in military activity. The subsequent split in the Volunteers and the establishment of the Irish Volunteers marked the clear arrival of a separatist militant wing in Irish republicanism, and many of its exponents were members of the Keating Branch.

With Cathal Brugha as its president from 1908 onwards, the Keating Branch was a welcoming environment for republicans, because Brugha had been sworn in as a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in 1908. Seán Mac Diarmada, one of the leading IRB men in the country, was a member of the Keating Branch, as was Thomas Clarke, and when Michael Collins came back from London in 1916 he frequented the branch too. Fionán Lynch from Cahersiveen was also a member of the Keating Branch and fought in the 1916 Rising as captain of F Company, First Battalion, in Dublin. The branch became a

meeting place for the collection of arms, using ceilidh dances as cover. Brighid Ní Dhiscin told the Bureau of Military History that ‘it was the atmosphere of the Keating branch that really aroused the spirit of nationality that up to then was latent in me’.<sup>16</sup> As president of the branch, Brugha was undoubtedly a major part of cultivating such nationalist spirit.

During his involvement in the Irish revolution Brugha remained deeply committed to the Irish language. At the first meeting of Dáil Éireann in January 1919 he read the Declaration of Independence in Irish. Two months later, in March, he spoke at a meeting in the Mansion House about Irish in the education system. On 10 March he delivered the oration in Irish at the grave of Pearse McCan, the Irish Volunteer who died of influenza in a British jail. He described McCan as ‘the most recent Irish martyr, high-souled and noble-hearted’.<sup>17</sup> In October 1919 he addressed a meeting of the Gaelic League in Dungarvan, where he exhorted all to attend Irish classes and do what they could to forward the cause of the Irish language.<sup>18</sup> ‘The language was slowly dying in the district and it was up to the people of Dungarvan to set an example in the cultivation of the language’, he said. On 6 December 1919 the *Killarney Echo* referred to Brugha’s work as chairman of the Kerry Gaeltacht Committee, which was established to revive and preserve the Irish language there.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, Cathal Brugha had a great commitment to and love for Irish language and culture for most of his adult life. His military and underground governmental activities dominated his time during the period 1919–22, but he never lost sight of what he regarded as the centrality of the Irish language in the midst of the revolutionary struggle. On 26 April 1922 the *Irish Independent* reported on a speech in Irish given by Brugha. With the country on the brink of civil war, he stated his hope that if the negotiations to repair the Treaty split were successful—and presumably he meant if he was happy with the outcome—he did not wish to have anything more to do with politics but rather, appropriately, would promote the Irish language throughout the country.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. ‘JOD SAVE IRELAND:’

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### CATHAL BRUGHHA AND THE 1916 RISING

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LIZ GILLIS

‘In the glorious roll-call of Easter Week few names stand out so prominently as that of Cathal Brugha. So unassuming and gentle, yet so daring, his part in the fight during that memorable week singles him out as one of the noblest heroes of our own time.’<sup>1</sup>

These words, written by Volunteer Joseph Doolan, member of ‘A’ Company, 4th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, for many sum up Cathal Brugha and his actions during the 1916 Easter Rising which have earned him his place amongst the celebrated republicans of Irish history. One cannot talk about the Easter Rising without mentioning Brugha, who, despite being gravely wounded, single-handedly prevented British troops from storming the headquarters of the Irish Volunteers in the South Dublin Union during Easter Week.

Cathal Brugha was a dedicated republican. He came of age at a time of great political activity in Ireland. The ‘Cultural Revival’, which promoted all aspects of Irish culture, including theatre, sport, language and literature, had a profound effect on that generation. It was their moment of political awakening and led many on the path to revolution, in which Cathal Brugha would play an integral part.

If one organisation stands out as being crucial in politicising people at this time it has to be the Gaelic League.<sup>2</sup> In 1901 Brugha joined its Keating Branch, which was the most radical of all the Gaelic League branches, bringing together many who would play prominent roles in the Irish revolution.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Keating Branch would become a recruiting ground for both the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the Irish Volunteers. In 1908 Brugha was elected president of the Keating Branch. In that same year he was sworn into the Teeling Circle of the IRB, which was closely affiliated to the Keating Branch.

In 1909 he went into business with Anthony and Vincent Lalor, establishing Messrs Lalor Ltd, which specialised in making church candles, amongst other ecclesiastical products. Although a director of the company, he would regularly travel all over Ireland to develop business contacts; this provided him with excellent cover for recruiting new members to the IRB. By 1912 Brugha was a veteran member of both the Keating Branch<sup>4</sup> and the Teeling Circle, but in that year he was to meet a man who, like himself, was totally dedicated to the Irish language and the independence of Ireland—Éamonn Ceannt. A strong friendship

quickly developed between them. They had many things in common, including the fact that both had met their wives through the Gaelic League.<sup>5</sup> Very soon, other events taking place at that time would prove momentous in both their lives.

In April 1912 a new Home Rule Bill was put before the House of Commons. Unlike in previous attempts, thanks to the passing of the Parliament Act in 1911 the House of Lords could only veto bills three times, after which they could be passed. This meant that Ireland could eventually get limited independence from Great Britain. The response from the Unionist population in the north of Ireland was immediate; they would resist, by force if necessary, any attempt by Britain to introduce Home Rule.<sup>6</sup> To show the government that they were not making an idle threat, in January 1913 the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was formed. In response to this, on 25 November 1913 the Irish Volunteers were formally established in the Rotunda in Dublin, ostensibly to defend Home Rule. Both Brugha and Ceannt were among the first members of the organisation, joining the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade.<sup>7</sup> In recognition of his leadership qualities, Brugha was appointed second lieutenant, 'D' Company.

He was involved in the Howth gunrunning on 26 July 1914. In charge of twenty members of the IRB, his role was to secure the pier until the main body of Volunteers arrived.<sup>8</sup> The outbreak of World War I caused a split in the Irish Volunteers, the majority of whom joined the British army. A core group of approximately 10,000 remained, retaining the name Irish Volunteers. Tom Clarke, Seán Mac Diarmada and other IRB members saw this as their opportunity to strike. Owing to the split, the Irish Volunteers had to be reorganised. Éamonn Ceannt was appointed commandant of the 4th Battalion; Cathal Brugha was appointed vice-commandant.

Within the IRB, a secret Military Council was set up to plan a rebellion before the war's end. Although not a member of the IRB Military Council, Brugha certainly would have supported an insurrection. An indication of how much he was trusted is borne out by the fact that he was given the plans of the Rising in case anything should happen to the leaders.<sup>9</sup> With the plans finalised, the date was set: Easter Sunday, 23 April 1916. Two weeks before the Rising, Brugha went to Kilkenny to inform the local IRB of the plans. However, Eoin MacNeill, chief of staff of the Irish Volunteers, was completely unaware of the planned insurrection. Discovering that he had been duped by the Military Council, he decided to call off the Rising, feeling that he could not knowingly send so many out to their slaughter. He held a meeting in the house of Dr Séamus O'Kelly on Saturday 22 April. Brugha was present and was furious at MacNeill's intention to issue a countermanding order cancelling Sunday's manoeuvres. MacNeill would not listen and issued a notice to be published in the morning's newspapers.

Frustrated, Brugha went to the home of Éamonn Ceannt. Áine Ceannt recalled:

‘... at two o’clock I was awakened by a knocking at the hall door. I opened a window and looked out, and a voice in Irish asked for Éamonn. Hearing Irish I was reassured, and came down to find Cathal Brugha. I told him where he would locate Eamonn, and without another word he went away. Within half an hour Eamonn returned with all his equipment, guns, ammunition, etc., which he had brought with him. I was astounded, but he merely remarked: “MacNeill has ruined us—he has stopped the Rising”. Keyed up as I was for the fight, I started to make suggestions, but Eamonn replied: “The countermanding order is already in the hands of the paper. I am off now to see if anything can be done.” It was five a.m. when he returned home and said he had failed to contact anyone. His first call had been to O’Kelly’s but, in his excitement, Cathal had omitted to say at which O’Kelly’s John MacNeill had held his meeting.’<sup>10</sup>

Despite MacNeill’s countermanding order, the Military Council decided to go ahead with their plans: they would strike the following day, 24 April. Volunteers and members of Cumann na mBan, the women’s revolutionary organisation, were sent around the country to instruct local units to await further orders. Brugha returned home and spent the night with his pregnant wife and young family.

Orders had been sent to members of the 4th Battalion to mobilise at 10 a.m. in Emerald Square. In all, approximately 125 Volunteers and twenty-five members of Cumann na mBan were present. At roughly 11.30 a.m. the small garrison moved off to take up their various positions, led by Éamonn Ceannt and Cathal Brugha. Ceannt’s area of command was vast. The main position to be taken was the South Dublin Union (now St James’s Hospital). Other outposts attached to the Union were Jameson’s Distillery on Marrowbone Lane (under the command of Séamus Murphy), Watkins Brewery on Ardee Street (under the command of Con Colbert) and Roe’s Distillery at Mount Brown (under the command of Thomas McCarthy). Their aim was to prevent British reinforcements from the nearby Richmond Barracks or Wellington Barracks from entering the city centre to attack the GPO, headquarters of the rebels. On reaching Jameson’s Distillery in Marrowbone Lane, Ceannt led part of his unit to enter the South Dublin Union via the Rialto gate at the rear of the complex, while Cathal Brugha and W.T. Cosgrave, lieutenant, ‘B’ Company, led the remainder of the group to occupy the complex via the front entrance on James’s Street. Once they entered the Union, they began to occupy buildings and barricade their positions. The Union was full of patients who could not be evacuated but had to remain there for the duration of the Rising.

The South Dublin Union was huge, spanning nearly 50 acres. Ceannt, like all of the commanding officers, simply did not have enough men and had to deploy them where he could. Volunteer Gerald Doyle, 'B' Company, 4th Battalion, recalled:

'As far as I can recollect regarding the move off from Emerald Square, about three Companies marched up the Canal under Ceannt. As we got to the Rialto gate the small wicket gate was open and some Volunteers went in through it. The main gate was then opened and the main body marched in. Incidentally, I should have mentioned that part of the Battalion occupying the South Dublin Union went in through James' Street. I think that this party was under Liam Cosgrave and Cathal Brugha. As we entered the gate I recollect distinctly having heard Éamonn Ceannt detailing George Irvine to select six or eight Volunteers under his command to lock and barricade the Rialto Gate and the wicket gate.'<sup>11</sup>

John Vincent Joyce, 'C' Company, stated:

'When we reached James's Street a party was detailed to take over Rowe's Distillery and the remainder of the Battalion, about 70 in all marched into the Union precisely at noon, much, I might say, to the surprise of the officials, none of whom displayed any apparent enthusiasm at our arrival, and one even threatened to summon the police!'<sup>12</sup>

Joyce was one of six men sent to take up a position behind a wall at Mount Brown; others were deployed to McCaffrey's Field (now Ceannt Fort estate), while another section was ordered to occupy the boardroom over the main entrance of the Union. Ceannt initially set up his headquarters at the rear of the complex, but this proved to be inadequate, offering no protection. According to Peadar Doyle, Quartermaster, 4th Battalion:

'Having decided to make the Garden Huts the Headquarters, we took possession of a large room facing the Canal Walk. Ceannt and Brugha and Cosgrave took Council and I had the privilege of writing the first despatches to the O/C's at Marrowbone Lane and Jacob's Factory. During the dictating and writing of the despatch bullets were coming through the window of the hut and when I left to give the despatches to Volunteer Joe O'Gorman we were subjected to a volley of rifle fire from a number of about 10 soldiers who had mounted the canal wall opposite and about 200 yards distant. Fortunately their aim was not so good or perhaps it was the difficult position they held on the wall that embarrassed them, at any rate they were driven off. It was now evident that with the small force available it was not possible

to defend the entire area and Cosgrave, who had a general knowledge of the buildings, suggested that the stone building on the west side would be the Headquarters. I then got orders to have our ammunition removed to this position at the Nurses' quarters which lay at an angle with, and adjacent to the front offices, both granite buildings overlooking the Square.<sup>13</sup>

Cosgrave, Brughá and the others had only occupied the Nurses' Home when the garrison were engaged in battle. A detachment of the Royal Irish Regiment, who were stationed in Richmond Barracks, were ordered to make their way towards Dublin Castle, as word had been sent that buildings had been occupied in the city centre. Volunteer James J. Burke, 'A' Company, remembered:

'... We got into position facing the Mountshannon Road, smoked for a while, with our rifles at the ready, and it must have been before midday when we saw a large body of British troops approaching down Mountshannon Road. I do not know if the order to fire was given, but as soon as they came within a distance of 40 or 50 yards fire was opened on them by five Volunteers at the windows. The soldiers immediately scattered ... Now and again a head would appear over the wall and a shot would ring out from our outposts ... I had called George Irvine and told him that we would not be able to do much in our position ... We could not advance. I suggested that as Seán McGlynn had not come back as promised, one of our Volunteers should be sent back to the main body to find out where we were to retreat to. Captain Irvine agreed, and Volunteer Paddy Morrissey was sent with the message. As soon as he had left the building we heard a volley and Paddy Morrissey crawled back wounded in the leg. We were surrounded. We moved to the back of the building, broke down windows, and in the process of doing so fire was opened on us from the side, indicating that the troops had already occupied the grounds and had our hut surrounded ... Shots immediately began to ring out from all sides. Volunteer Traynor was killed by a bullet which came through the side of the building, which soon became perforated by bullets. Willie Corrigan and myself went to another window and were breaking the glass there when bullets crashed the remaining glass ... The position now was hopeless ... there was a cry, "Put up your hands", from outside and before we knew where we were the troops were in the building.<sup>14</sup>

Having evacuated the occupants of the Nurses' Home, the garrison proceeded to barricade the building. A makeshift republican flag made from a blind was flown from a window.<sup>15</sup> The Volunteers were under fire from James's Street and the rear of the Union, but the military did not press home their attack and instead were

pulled back to Kingsbridge (Heuston) Station. That evening Ceannt addressed the headquarters garrison. 'Guards were detailed for the night and after prayers had been recited all available men were ordered to rest.'<sup>16</sup> The Volunteers and the military had suffered a number of casualties that day. Ceannt had tried to negotiate a ceasefire so that both sides could collect their dead. The response came back from an NCO that 'all our officers are dead and I'll have no part in negotiating'.<sup>17</sup> Tragically, Nurse Margaret Keogh lost her life during the opening attack while attending a wounded Volunteer.

By Tuesday the British were taking control of the situation. Brigadier General William Lowe was in command and had set up his headquarters in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, a stone's throw from the South Dublin Union. Reinforcements from around the country had arrived on Monday, and they continued to come. Machine-guns were placed on the roof of the Royal Hospital, which gave commanding views of the South Dublin Union. Early that morning the military launched another attack. According to Volunteer Joseph Doolan, 'A' Company:

**'About 5.30 on Tuesday morning we were attacked by heavy rifle fire, which lasted about half an hour. Frank Burke was killed in this attack, which I think, came from the Inmates' Dining Hall in front of the Night Nursing Home. With the exception of heavy sniping there was very little fighting on Tuesday. This lull was utilised by the Commandant to put the Night Nursing Home into a proper state of defence, barbed wire entanglements and barricades being erected at every point of danger.'**<sup>18</sup>

On Wednesday 26 April yet more reinforcements arrived from England. The Sherwood Forester and South Staffordshire Regiments landed at Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire) and were ordered into the city. The 2/5th and 2/6th battalions of the Sherwood Foresters were to make their way towards the Royal Hospital while the 2/7th and 2/8th battalions were to go to Trinity College via Ballsbridge.<sup>19</sup> The day remained pretty uneventful. The Volunteers occupied two main positions, the Nurses' Home and the Boardroom over the front entrance. These positions were isolated from each other and Ceannt used this time to secure another building, the Bakehouse, which would create a link between the Nurses' Home and the Boardroom, which was accomplished by Wednesday night.

Both Ceannt and Brugha were held in high regard by their men. They were considerate of the impact that the fighting had on the men and would not ask anyone to do something that they were not prepared to do themselves, as James Coughlan of 'C' Company recalled:

‘On the following morning [Thursday] however, on hearing that both the Vice-Commandant and Commandant himself were missing from nightfall until the morning, it became very clear to me the reason for that. In consideration of the boring party and myself and not wishing to impose extra guard duty on the remainder of our comrades, the Commandant and Vice-Commandant remained in that Bakehouse the whole night ... guarding the new dangerous gap in our defences. Dangerous in effect because the Bakehouse doors had not yet been barricaded.’<sup>20</sup>

Reflecting on Brugha’s demeanour during Easter Week, Coughlan also stated:

‘Cathal Brugha seemed the most silent member of the garrison. I noticed him most as he sat at the open back door of the home cleaning his automatic pistol, which had a wooden holster which also served as a shoulder butt, like a rifle. Cathal Brugha spoke (when he did) quietly and always appeared composed and contented. Eamonn Ceannt was always cool and cheerful. I felt confident of the ability of these two men.’<sup>21</sup>

By now the garrison consisted of a little over forty men, the rest having been killed, wounded or taken prisoner.

On Thursday afternoon, just as the Volunteers had broken through to James’s Street, the British launched an all-out attack. Captains Michael Martin and John Sherlock Oates of the Nottingham and Derbyshire Regiment led the assault. They were to take as much of the complex as possible to divert the fire of the Volunteers from a consignment of ammunition that was being brought to the Royal Hospital via Rialto. The British did not know how many rebels were holding the Union; they probably thought that there were hundreds—certainly not just a little over forty men. They knew that the area they needed to attack was the Nurses’ Home, and they focused on it, pounding it with bombs and with rifle and machine-gun fire.

The Nurses’ Home was a veritable fortress. The Volunteers, anticipating a frontal assault, had heavily barricaded the front porch. Brugha was in command of the section in the Nurses’ Home, while Ceannt was with the section in the boardroom. According to John Joyce, who was in the Nurses’ Home,

‘A terrific volume of fire was opened on us from all sides. We immediately rushed to our posts, and before long, under covering fire from the Royal Hospital, where in addition to machine-guns, special marksmen were posted, we saw large numbers of troops in open order advancing towards us ... The volume of fire was intense and only very occasionally did we reply to it, husbanding, as we were, our ammunition for the late stages of the attack.’<sup>22</sup>

The soldiers succeeded in getting to the front porch but could not enter the building owing to the 8ft barricade erected by the Volunteers, who opened fire from the staircase inside. Time and again the British charged but were repelled by the Volunteers. Changing tactics, they decided to come at the building from the side and managed to bore through into the porch. A British soldier was killed when he stuck his head through the hole, but they had gained entry to the porch. The only thing that held them back was the barricade.

Determined to take the building, the soldiers threw grenades into the hallway. Brugha, who had been upstairs, was wounded by a grenade as he made his way downstairs. John Joyce was upstairs when the attack happened. He went downstairs to get arms, heard the movement in the front hall and calls to surrender. Soldiers were in the house next door to the right and had broken through but were stopped again by the barricade in the front porch. Joyce went into the kitchen, where he found Brugha lying on the floor in a pool of blood. W.T. Cosgrave was also in the Nurses' Home and assumed command. Gravely wounded, Brugha urged his men to leave: he would hold off the soldiers as long as he could. Joyce recalled:

'He asked me for a drink and told me the others had retired towards the boardroom and instructed me to join them. This I felt reluctant to do but when he instructed me to report to Comdt. Ceannt and tell him there was still a chance of holding on and that he would cover the barricade with his Mauser automatic I hastened to obey. I found the others had fallen back on the dormitory where we had slept the previous night and my preparations were now being made for a last stand.'<sup>23</sup>

Joyce did leave and found Ceannt. All they could do was listen to the sound of the explosions as the British threw grenade after grenade at the barricade to break through. Joseph Doolan remembered: 'During the whole of this attack Brugha's voice could be heard shouting above the din "Come on, you cowards, till I get one shot before I die. I am only a wounded man".'<sup>24</sup>

Volunteer Joe Byrne, 'C' Company, recalled that on seeing Joyce he asked where Brugha was:

"'Where's our Vice-Commandant?' He's wounded said Joyce. It got like hell let loose then later it stopped. "Where is he?" I asked. I could hear someone singing *God Save Ireland*. "That's him" he said, and he was right at the back.'<sup>25</sup>

Brugha had defied all the odds; he was still alive and his men were determined to return to him.

‘The effect was electric. Led by our Commandant and other officers, we all rushed back and very soon the Nurses Home was cleared of the enemy. Cathal Brugha alone had saved the situation. Lying there on the kitchen floor, badly wounded, he had prevented the enemy from crossing the barricades and his song had inspired the defenders to come back and repel the Saxon.’<sup>26</sup>

Joseph Doolan recalled a poignant moment when Ceannt discovered Brugha:

‘When Ceannt and Brugha met, a scene the most touching was enacted. The soldiers’ spirit broke. Both men dropped their revolvers. Ceannt went on one knee and put his arm around Brugha. Their conversation was in Irish. What was said, only God knows. After about a minute Ceannt arose, a tear in his eye. But again the soldier’s spirit took control.’<sup>27</sup>

The British again attempted to break through from the front and rear, but the Volunteers held them at bay. Unable to take the position, the military finally withdrew, leaving behind a number of dead and wounded. John Joyce described the condition of the building:

‘The Nurses Home was in a deplorable condition, everything was broken, all the plaster off the walls and ceiling and floors ripped up, electric light shattered, and generally the place was rendered unfit for occupation’.<sup>28</sup>

Brugha was gravely wounded. Joseph Doolan, who was tasked with trying to care for him, later recalled:

‘The dressing of his wounds was so tedious that it lasted well into the night. His clothes were embedded into the flesh in some of his more serious wounds and had to be torn away. In fact, none of his clothes were taken off; rather were they cut away. During the whole operation he was perfectly conscious, but apparently sinking fast, yet not a murmur escaped his lips ... At last his wounds were dressed, thirst from loss of blood set in, and he continually asked for a drink of cold water. He was given hot coffee in small sips. In the early morning he became delirious and remained so until his removal to the Union Hospital during the forenoon of Friday, 28th April. The First Aid man who dressed his wounds officially reported to Ceannt on the following morning that there were 25 wounds on his body, 5 dangerous, 9 serious and 11 slight, and that one of the dangerous wounds had an artery cut. His left foot, hip and leg were practically one mass of wounds. His removal to hospital was carried out by a devoted Carmelite priest Father Gerhard with the aid of a Union official under the Red Cross flag.’<sup>29</sup>

There was every possibility that Brugha would die from his wounds. The garrison prepared for another assault, which did not materialise. Friday and Saturday passed without incident. The garrison had had no contact with Volunteer Headquarters since Wednesday. On Sunday 30 April the garrison were surprised to see Thomas MacDonagh, commandant, 2nd Battalion. The men initially believed that they had won, but they soon learned the painful reality: MacDonagh was there to order the garrison to surrender.<sup>30</sup> Ceannt lined up his small garrison and marched off to Bride Street, where they laid down their arms, after which they were taken to Richmond Barracks to await their fate. As commandant of the garrison, Éamonn Ceannt was court-martialled and sentenced to death. He was executed in Kilmainham Gaol on 8 May.

Because of his injuries, Brugha was not put on trial. After his initial treatment in the South Dublin Union, he was transferred to the hospital in Dublin Castle and later to the King George V Hospital (now St Bricin's Military Hospital). By the time he was sufficiently recovered to be released, the authorities no longer sought to imprison him. Ireland was on the cusp of change. Although the Easter Rising was not supported by the majority of the public, the severe reaction from the British, the executions of the leaders and the mass arrests that followed changed popular opinion from anger against the rebels to sympathy.

Brugha was one of a few who had evaded capture. Despite his injuries, he was more determined than ever to build on what was started in Easter Week. The fight would continue along different lines, and Brugha, the hero of the battle of the South Dublin Union who had single-handedly held back the British, would be there to play his part.

### 3. 'SPARED TO DO GREAT WORK FOR IRELAND IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED':

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#### CATHAL BRUGHHA AND THE REORGANISATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS AND SINN FÉIN, 1916–17

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AARON Ó MAONAIGH

Both the military and the political strands of Irish separatism underwent significant reform and reorganisation during the two years that followed the Easter Rising of 1916. Central to these changes was Cathal Brugha. In the immediate aftermath of the Rising the Irish Volunteers organisation was in disarray. Its leadership had been decimated, with many key figures executed or imprisoned. Grievously wounded during the fighting at the South Dublin Union, Brugha was taken prisoner after the garrison's surrender and removed under British escort to Dublin Castle, whence he was transferred to the Richmond Hospital and subsequently to the George V Hospital.<sup>1</sup> Such were the extent of his wounds—'25 shrapnel and bullet wounds', according to one biographer—that the authorities believed he had little chance of survival.<sup>2</sup> Yet, somewhat miraculously, Cathal Brugha defied the odds to emerge as a crucial figure in the post-Rising reorganisation efforts. Demonstrating steely resilience and leadership, he worked tirelessly to rebuild the Irish Volunteers. His efforts were marked by a focus on increasing discipline, securing arms and fostering a renewed sense of purpose among the Volunteers. He was also to the fore in the reinvention of Sinn Féin from a minuscule fringe party prior to 1916 to the dominant political force in Ireland in the immediate aftermath of the Rising.

Despite his extensive injuries, Brugha wasted little time in initiating efforts to reorganise the Volunteers. Douglas ffrench-Mullen, who visited Brugha during his stay of convalescence at the George V Hospital, recalled: 'Cathal was in bed at the time ... He said what about getting the fellows together?'<sup>3</sup> Following some discussion, ffrench-Mullen suggested reviving dormant Gaelic League clubs as a means to carry out the *sub rosa* reanimation of the Volunteers. Throughout the summer Brugha made contact both directly and indirectly with members of his battalion. Henry S. Murray, a lieutenant in the 4th Battalion, recounted how he was summoned to Brugha's bedside, whereupon Brugha revealed that arrangements were in hand for the country-wide reorganisation

of the Volunteers. Murray was directed to co-operate with French-Mullen in resurrecting the dormant Thomas Davis Branch of the Gaelic League in Rathmines as a front for reorganising the 4th Battalion.<sup>4</sup> Initial efforts consisted of regrouping the remnants of the Dublin Brigade's 4th Battalion. Recruitment of new members was postponed for the time being while the strands of the old movement were pulled together.<sup>5</sup> Brugha's scheme of reorganisation was further aided by the efforts of another 4th Battalion member and 1916 veteran, Liam Clarke. Like Brugha, Clarke had received serious injuries during the Rising; the premature explosion of a home-made incendiary resulted in the loss of one of his eyes. Beginning in June 1916, Clarke began to gather together a small group of loyal and dependable men. As an organiser for the Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund, Clarke was able to use his position as a means to covertly reorganise Volunteer units outside Dublin.<sup>6</sup>

The work of rebuilding the Volunteer force went on slowly and covertly throughout the autumn of 1916. A meeting of the surviving members of various units was held in the Minerva Hotel, Dublin, on 7 August, at which a provisional executive was formed, chaired by the efficacious Clarke. Brugha was co-opted onto the executive after his discharge from hospital. From its establishment until the Volunteer Convention of October 1917 the executive met weekly, largely in Brugha's home, which became a temporary headquarters of sorts for the Volunteers. Although he never fully recovered from his wounds, lamed and requiring the use of a bicycle to get around, Brugha set about the task at hand with characteristic vigour and tenacity.<sup>7</sup> Together with a small number of other Volunteers, he began gathering arms, ammunition and explosives.<sup>8</sup> At his instigation, the companies of the 4th Battalion were reformed on proper working lines. Elections were held to fill vacant officer roles within the units and numbers were increased, with recruits drawn from the ranks of the local Fianna corps.<sup>9</sup> Gerald Byrne told the Bureau of Military History that efforts had sufficiently advanced that 'by the time of the general release we had the organisation going well in the city again'.<sup>10</sup>

By the autumn of that year reorganisation had progressed to such an extent that a convention of Volunteer officers from the provinces was called together in Fleming's Hotel, Gardiner Place. Cathal Brugha arrived on crutches to preside at the meeting, which had mustered about fifty delegates from the scattered remnants of the Irish Volunteers. Arguments were made to again organise the Volunteers into regional units, and a provisional committee was formed to direct the military organisation of the Volunteers throughout the country.<sup>11</sup> The importance of the re-establishment of an overarching centralised command cannot be understated. As Florence O'Donoghue explained, 'The

re-establishment of headquarters' contact with the country units of the Volunteers was of vital significance at this time. It gave the scattered groups a sense of organisation and control; it radiated a feeling of hope and purpose; it gave Volunteers an incentive to hold together, reform their ranks and recruit new members.<sup>12</sup> This development was further amplified during the Volunteer convention of October 1917, which also saw the establishment of a smaller resident executive, composed of members living in Dublin, of which Brugha was unanimously elected chair.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, it was within this particular sub-administrative unit that the real locus of power lay.<sup>14</sup> Its inception heralded a renewed vigour and sense of formality in the organisation.

The Volunteers were not the only movement to undergo a dramatic reorganisation in the wake of the Rising. Within the prisons and internment camps the Irish Republican Brotherhood underwent its own restructuring. The prison experience afforded IRB members considerable time to bond and plot—a formative experience to which Brugha had not been privy. It emerged revitalised and determined to increase its influence on the struggle for Irish independence.<sup>15</sup> In doing so, it brought itself into conflict with those who opposed its secretive nature and cloak-and-dagger intrigues. At some point after the Rising Brugha relinquished his membership and severed his connection with the IRB.<sup>16</sup> He was not alone in doing so; several figures in both Dublin and the provinces, including Éamon de Valera, Seán T. O'Kelly, Tomás MacCurtain, Liam Manahan and Rory O'Connor, also declined to continue their association with the Brotherhood in the post-Rising period.<sup>17</sup> The reasons for Brugha's rejection of the organisation were multifaceted. In the main, he was disillusioned by the failure of some IRB leaders and circles to take part in the Rising.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, since it had revealed itself in the 1916 proclamation of independence, he saw little merit in the continuation of the clandestine organisation. Speaking plainly, he declared: 'It is no longer necessary; we have now an open military organisation in the Volunteers and there is no necessity for a secret one, and if it continues to exist it will only create trouble and do harm, because it will be a case of "too many cooks spoiling the broth"'.<sup>19</sup>

In September 1916 Seán Ó Muirthile, then secretary to the IRB supreme council, spent a night at Brugha's house during which he discussed his plans for the future, the reorganisation of the IRB and his intent to make the Brotherhood 'the centre again from which Republican activities would be directed'.<sup>20</sup> Ó Muirthile recalled that Brugha was 'pleased to learn that matters were already under way, but he seemed to have lost some of his old faith in the Brotherhood', citing the reluctance of some IRB men to turn out during Easter Week.<sup>21</sup> Brugha's attitude towards the IRB hardened, however, over the months that followed.<sup>22</sup> Piaras Béaslaí recalled: 'Brugha had now become a bitter opponent of that

body [the IRB]. After the Easter Week insurrection he objected to any attempt to revive the secret organisation, maintaining that it had outlived its usefulness.<sup>23</sup> For the remainder of his life Brugha was deeply suspicious of the clandestine movement's machinations.<sup>24</sup> One former comrade claimed: 'He said once the IRB would never breed soldiers, it could only breed conspirators'.<sup>25</sup>

As time went on, Brugha became engaged in a power struggle with his Fenian counterparts for control of the Volunteers.<sup>26</sup> Fintan Murphy remembered one Volunteer headquarters staff meeting in Parnell Square at which Michael Collins, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Rory O'Connor, Cathal Brugha and Richard Mulcahy were present. 'I cannot remember what the subject matter was but there was an acrimonious debate and it was quite clear that there was a very distinct issue between de Valera and Collins. [When] they spoke it was clear that the majority [...] would side with Collins for we were all IRB.'<sup>27</sup> At the time, Murphy didn't appreciate the undercurrents of the developing conflict between Brugha and Collins, which would become apparent later on. The coterminous renewal of the IRB and Irish Volunteer movements, as Brian Murphy has observed, 'contained within itself the seeds of discord and the grounds for the personal animosity that developed between Brugha and Collins'.<sup>28</sup>

Brugha's role extended beyond the military sphere and into the political realm with the reorganisation of Sinn Féin, steering the party into its role as the political wing of the Irish republican movement. In the aftermath of the Rising, Sinn Féin capitalised on the surge of nationalist sentiment and redefined its objectives to align more closely with the militant republican ideology. Brugha's influence was instrumental in this transformation. He was deeply involved in restructuring Sinn Féin, helping to steer it towards a more radical stance that advocated complete independence rather than mere Home Rule.<sup>29</sup> The year 1917 saw a greater political engagement on Brugha's part and he became progressively more active.<sup>30</sup> For instance, he addressed several public meetings, including a rally held at the Mansion House concerning the conditions faced by Irish prisoners in British prisons<sup>31</sup> at which he decried the reduction in Irish prisoners' meals, claiming 'that the prison diet was now less in weight by 100 oz'. His suggestion that 'if Ireland accepted no bribe between now and the Peace Conference, the day of her delivery was at hand' elicited much cheering from the audience.<sup>32</sup>

During this period Brugha frequently liaised with the secretary of the Dublin Trades Council, William O'Brien, on matters relating to the co-operation of that organisation with the movement for independence.<sup>33</sup> Both men would add their signature to a statement released by a coalition of nationalists criticising what they saw as the structural failure of the British government's Irish convention.<sup>34</sup> On 10 June 1917 Brugha was arrested along with Count Plunkett, while *en route*

to a demonstration being held at Beresford Place, Dublin, to protest against the treatment of the prisoners.<sup>35</sup> The meeting had been proclaimed by the authorities, but a huge crowd assembled to hear the two men speak. When the police attempted to break up the gathering a fracas ensued, during which a Dublin Metropolitan policeman was mortally injured. The speakers' subsequent incarceration was short-lived, however, and both men were released under the general amnesty some days thereafter.<sup>36</sup>

Between 1916 and 1917 the Sinn Féin party witnessed an unprecedented growth in support. The draconian response of the British authorities to the Rising and growing disillusionment with the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) effected a transformation of public opinion on which the party capitalised.<sup>37</sup> In February 1917 Count George Noble Plunkett swept to victory in the North Roscommon by-election, securing a seat for Sinn Féin and dealing a huge blow to the ailing IPP. The campaign had brought together nationalists of varying hues and organisations, with the Irish Volunteers playing a notable public role in affairs.<sup>38</sup> Among the coalition of disparate groups, a new movement with a common purpose—Irish political independence—was emerging. Members of the Liberty Clubs, Labour Party and others met at the Mansion House to discuss possible terms of co-operation. Astute observers among the Volunteers saw in the party a political vehicle through which their aims could be channelled.<sup>39</sup> To this end, discussions took place at Brugha's home on the Upper Rathmines Road, during which it was proposed that Sinn Féin should merge with the Volunteers. A decision was made to force the hand of party leader Arthur Griffith. Thomas Dillon recalled:

'... the alternatives before us were to found a new organisation or to take over Sinn Féin on conditions with which Arthur Griffith would agree. "Which do you think we should do?" asked Cathal Brugha. I replied that the latter was obviously the simplest course. "We'll do that", said Cathal and the meeting agreed.'<sup>40</sup>

When William O'Brien asked Brugha whether Griffith was prepared to swallow the notion of a republic, Brugha obstinately replied: 'He had to or walk the plank'.<sup>41</sup> In October 1917 Sinn Féin held a two-day convention at the Mansion House. After a short discussion, Griffith agreed to put before his executive the proposal that half of them would retire to make room for six representatives from the groups that had previously met at the Mansion House.<sup>42</sup> A compromise was reached whereby the party would strive towards the establishment of an Irish republic, and when that republic was achieved the people would be free to choose their preferred form of government. The radical faction led by Brugha

and others won out in their efforts to subsume the party into a wider republican movement. Founding member and party president Arthur Griffith ceded his position as leader to Éamon de Valera.

The October convention was significant not least for its change in leadership but also for its radical new programme of proposed governance.<sup>43</sup> Sinn Féin had taken a bold step towards Irish independence, abandoning its former policy which advocated for a dual monarchy arrangement between Ireland and Britain. The party had succeeded in transforming an ethereal, vague movement into an organised political force.<sup>44</sup> During the convention, both Brugha and de Valera proposed their own prospective schemes of organisation, tantamount to the governing rules of the party. While Brugha's proposals were rejected in favour of de Valera's, there was little difference between the structural and administrative elements of both.<sup>45</sup> Where Brugha's scheme differed was in regard to its greater commitment to democracy, transparency and executive oversight, all of which were featured in his proposal.<sup>46</sup> Under his scheme, the organisation of clubs followed a hybrid of the GAA and electoral ward systems, with parishes and city wards constituting the boundaries of individual clubs. A nominal fee of one shilling per annum and a monthly contribution of one penny payable to the national council ensured affordability for the party's members. Contained within the by-laws of his document were provisions for detailed disciplinary procedures for members, demonstrating a fairness of procedure.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, an onus on clubs to produce a monthly progress report showed a commitment to accountability and perhaps revealed a little of Brugha's business acumen.

The meeting was also notable for its discussion of the appropriate use of action against British rule in Ireland. In this respect, Brugha spoke out against a policy of assassination and warned against the use of excessive force. His contributions, despite his historical reputation for belligerence, suggest a much more rational and logical thought process than he is usually credited with.<sup>48</sup> In recognition of his esteemed status within the movement, he was the second person elected to the party's executive committee, polling highly with 685 votes.<sup>49</sup> He served on the Sinn Féin executive from his election in October 1917 until his resignation the following April over the party's co-operation with the IPP during the conscription crisis.<sup>50</sup>

The post-Rising trajectory of Cathal Brugha through 1916–17 is perhaps best summarised in the words of former comrade Austin Stack: '... Cathal Brugha was spared to do great work for Ireland in the years which followed'.<sup>51</sup> Having survived near-certain death during the Rising, the indomitable Brugha emerged as a leading figure in the rejuvenation of the Irish Volunteer and Sinn Féin movements. His role in their reorganisation was foundational to the resurgence of the Irish

republican movement in the post-Rising period. His efforts to reorganise both movements laid much of the groundwork for what followed thereafter. In the words of one contemporary, 'A new awakening was at hand and Cathal bent himself to the task of directing this new manifestation of the old faith and hope into ways that would lead to sovereign freedom'.<sup>52</sup> His leadership and strategic vision were instrumental in transforming these organisations into effective instruments of the struggle for Irish independence. Though his influence on the military and political spheres of republicanism waned after 1918, and his life was cut short in 1922 during the Civil War, Brugha's legacy as a steadfast and influential republican leader rightly endures in the annals of Irish history.

## 4. DELIBERATE AMNESIA?

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### CATHAL BRUGHHA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLAN TO ASSASSINATE THE BRITISH CABINET

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FERGUS O'FARRELL

During the conscription crisis of 1918, the executive of the Irish Volunteers met to discuss its response to the prospect of the British government's extension of conscription to Ireland. The executive comprised twenty men, including Éamon de Valera, Seán McEntee, Cathal Brugha and Richard Mulcahy. One notable absentee was Michael Collins, then in prison.<sup>1</sup>

At the meeting, it was decided that Cathal Brugha would lead a team of Volunteer assassins to London, where they would execute the British cabinet should the order to introduce conscription be given in parliament. It is most likely that Brugha was the mastermind of the scheme.<sup>2</sup>

Brugha, Mulcahy and Dick McKee were responsible for recruiting the assassins. The hit squad arrived in London in April and remained there until the autumn. They tailed various government ministers around Whitehall, ready to kill them should conscription begin in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Brugha even took one of his men up to the viewing gallery of the House of Commons to see whether it would be possible to shoot the front bench from that vantage point.<sup>4</sup> William Whelan's witness statement to the Bureau of Military History (BMH) included this dramatic scene:

'[Brugha] took me into the House of Commons and we sat in the gallery. He then told me what he wanted me to do. He said "When the time comes I will do all the shooting here at the Ministers: you keep the people back from me." He added "if you can, shoot your way out. That is all I want you to do to keep the people away until I have finished the firing." We were not armed that day. There was the usual routine work in between. We went again to the House of Commons. Cathal Brugha had a peter-the-painter down the leg of his trousers. I was unarmed. I asked him if we were going to start. He said "No, I'm not going to start. I only want to get a feel of this thing here in the gallery".'<sup>5</sup>

Tim Pat Coogan interviewed a member of the assassination squad, Pa Murray, in the 1960s. Murray was tasked with executing Arthur Balfour. According to Coogan:

'One day he [Murray] learned that Balfour was to preside at Oxford at a university function that afternoon and to test his nerve he went to Oxford and accosted Balfour on the street under the pretext of seeking directions.

Balfour courteously walked with him for about a hundred yards, during which Murray satisfied himself that he could have carried out the mission if he had to.<sup>6</sup>

Developments on the Western Front and the German collapse meant, however, that Irish conscripts were deemed unnecessary as the war played out over the final months of 1918. The assassins returned home, their powder dry, to take up other roles in the independence struggle. Within a few months of leaving Westminster, on 21 January 1919 Brugha found himself in a very different role: presiding over the first meeting of Dáil Éireann.

One must nevertheless question why the 1918 mission to London has been so absent from the historical narrative of this period and why, when it is mentioned, it is portrayed as a unilateral action taken on the initiative of a bellicose Brugha. The answer may be found in the attitudes of one-time revolutionaries turned politicians and the manner in which they constructed and policed their archives. Brugha was undoubtedly the driving force behind the assassination plot. He was centrally involved in its planning and personally led the mission to London, but it is important to point out that he had the backing of the Volunteer executive. They unanimously endorsed the plan. One member of the executive, Richard Walsh, explained to the BMH why the executive signed the order to kill the government:

‘The document we signed authorising the expedition was drawn up in such a form that its publication would explain the reasons for the action and that the members of the Executive were taking full responsibility for issuing such an order as a representative Irish authority. As soon as the action planned was carried out in England, the document with the Executive members’ signatures was to be published in Ireland. This publication would be necessary to show the world that the men who carried out the operation were acting on the orders of the only body that then had the authority to authorize such actions on behalf of the Irish people, and that they were not just a crowd of gunmen acting on their own or taking orders from some unknown or obscure secret society.’<sup>7</sup>

Tomás Ó Dochartaigh, who published a biography of Brugha in 1969, also writes that a document was signed by the whole executive. According to Ó Dochartaigh, this document still existed at the time of publication, though he provided no footnote or clue as to where researchers might find it. It is much more likely that it was destroyed.<sup>8</sup>

There is also evidence in the pages of *An tÓglach*, the newspaper of the Volunteers, which alludes to a consensus at the executive level regarding the

assassination plan. In September 1918 the editorial addressed conscription and stated that:

**‘the policy of the Irish Volunteers in such a contingency is, of course, a foregone conclusion. Never at any moment since the question first arose has there existed the slightest divergence of opinion among those in control of the Army of Ireland, nor among officers or men, as to their duty in case of an attempt by the enemy to enforce conscription in Ireland.’<sup>9</sup>**

In the next issue the paper reiterated its commitment to resistance: ‘In our last issue we stated clearly the unanimous decision of the Executive of the Irish Volunteers to resist conscription to the death with all the military force and warlike resources at our command’.<sup>10</sup>

These statements from *An tÓglach* did not, for obvious operational reasons, reveal that a group of IRA assassins were ready to shoot the British government at that very moment. It is possible to argue that these statements in *An tÓglach* do not refer to the London mission but rather to the other plans which the Volunteers had to resist conscription. When viewed alongside the evidence in the BMH, however, it is quite credible that the executive backed the plan.

Richard Mulcahy, in particular, has attempted to abjure his role in the mission. There are several reasons for this. Following the revolution, Mulcahy had a long career in politics with Cumann na nGaedheal and later Fine Gael, often viewed as the parties of law and order. Revelations that he was centrally involved in a conspiracy to assassinate the British cabinet in the closing stages of the First World War could have been extremely damaging to him. What must also be taken into consideration is the personal relationship between Brugha and Mulcahy.

Brugha, as Minister for Defence, sacked Mulcahy as IRA Chief of Staff in 1921, and the Treaty split drove a further wedge between the two men, ending with Brugha’s death at the hands of Free State troops, of whom Mulcahy was the commander, in July 1922. Trawling through his archive, it is clear that Mulcahy has attempted to construct a favourable portrait of himself and Collins, while he can sometimes be disparaging of Brugha. The Mulcahy archive is vast and all serious scholars of the Irish revolution study it.

Brugha was a shadowy figure who sought to remain unknown during the war. He was highly reluctant to commit anything to paper that might have been incriminating. It is inconceivable that he would have left evidence of his involvement in a plot to kill the British cabinet. No personal papers of Brugha’s survive. Thus the historian is forced to look to his contemporaries to build a picture of the man and the Mulcahy papers are very useful in this regard.

In his extensive archive, Mulcahy often refers to Brugha's wild schemes, which he dreamed up autonomously and conducted independently of his colleagues in cabinet or his subordinates at GHQ. 'Cathal Brugha did no systematic work in connection with the carrying on of the military organisation. The things that filled him at any time with active intent in which he himself was to be engaged, which stand out in any way were the trips to London.'<sup>11</sup>

Through his archive, Mulcahy has tried to influence historians' interpretations of the revolution; he promotes the idea that he and Collins were *the* crucial actors in forcing the British to a settlement and were at the heart of formulating military policy. In many respects he is correct, but he has also attempted to discredit Brugha, whom he depicts as aloof, absent, angry and fastidious—a man who only became active when planning suicide missions to the House of Commons. The way in which Mulcahy has framed the 1918 mission in his archive is another example of his deliberate attempt to influence our understanding of events. Other evidence suggests that Mulcahy was intimately involved in the planning stages and signed the assassination order, despite his attempt to sanitise his role.

Mulcahy has deliberately tried to minimise his own part, as well as that of the rest of GHQ/the Volunteer executive, in the plot. For example, in his detailed annotations of Piaras Béaslaí's biography of Collins,<sup>12</sup> Mulcahy has noted that 'it must be emphatically stated that Cathal Brugha was the greatest advocate of extreme and drastic action against the British Government. He even advocated certain measures which no other members of the Executive or GHQ favoured, and in pursuance of his ideas, had intelligence officers sent to London to report on the practicability of these measures.'<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere he writes that 'He put me in a certain amount of difficulty when I found out that he was going to go over to London and that he wanted people to go with him for the assassinations over there; but that didn't prevent me from looking for the men for him and talking about the type of people that would be got'.<sup>14</sup> Mulcahy paints himself as a reluctant subordinate, who was 'dragged'<sup>15</sup> into this grand conspiracy orchestrated by a deranged and often absent Brugha.

In 1920 and 1921 Brugha was planning other assassination missions. Referring to this, Mulcahy writes that 'the latter plan was one that neither Collins nor myself approved of'.<sup>16</sup> This must beg the question of whether they approved of the first one in 1918.

The following is another attempt by Mulcahy to distance himself from the episode and to show that Brugha was acting alone, without sanction from or reference to the Volunteer executive:

'A situation had arisen which caused him to develop ideas of his own ... Cathal had apparently come to a very definite decision as to the part he intended to play. He asked me to get him from among the Volunteers some Volunteers to go to London with him on some dangerous work. His intention was that immediately the first positive act had taken place in Ireland to put conscription into force, he would personally lead an attack on individual members of the British Government responsible. He would make the plans himself and he would deal directly and personally with the persons Volunteering to go from Ireland. He would arrange his contacts in England. There was no room for discussion of the matter and at the moment there was no necessity. The Volunteers were brought and after Cathal had interviewed them he was in London by the 30th April [1918] to plan and await developments.'<sup>17</sup>

Significantly, there is no mention of Mulcahy or McKee in the interview process, despite several BMH contributors claiming that both Mulcahy and McKee were directly involved in the interviews. Mulcahy concludes with: 'it is a measure of his sense of what a disaster for Ireland an attempt to enforce conscription there would be, that he could think of no other way in which he could adequately express himself or be effective'.<sup>18</sup> This last line is a swipe at Brugha and is born out of the animosity that Mulcahy harboured towards him.

In 1967 Tomás Ó Dochartaigh contacted Mulcahy with a request to interview him about some articles that he was intending to write on Brugha (that research was eventually published as an Irish-language biography).<sup>19</sup> At the time, Mulcahy was writing historical articles on the revolution for the *Capuchin Annual*. In a telling note to himself (where he refers to Ó Dochartaigh as O'Doherty), though in his somewhat convoluted style, Mulcahy writes:

'evidently O'Doherty is going to bring out the fact that Cathal was in London in 1918 on the anti-British cabinet job. This opens the door for taking cognisance of this in the Capuchin article ... The O'Doherty articles will probably run for some time and will disclose 1. Some of the things that we may venture to include in the 1918 article about which when questions arise later, we may wish to have pre-mention of, and 2. Other matters that we will recognise as things that should wait and appear if necessary as surprise later.'<sup>20</sup>

Here Mulcahy is once again trying to distance himself from his involvement in the mission and is considering how to pre-empt possible assertions that Ó Dochartaigh might make which would implicate him in the plot.

The size and importance of the Mulcahy papers mean that the Mulcahy view has sometimes worked its way into the historiography. Mulcahy's son, Dr Risteárd Mulcahy, published a book about his father which downplayed his role in the affair.<sup>21</sup> Maryann Valiulis's biography of Mulcahy does not mention the assassination plot.<sup>22</sup> The way in which Mulcahy compiled his archive has contributed in a large part to our negligible and one-sided understanding of this dramatic episode in Irish history.

Mulcahy is not the only historical figure who has sought to promote a favourable picture of himself to future researchers. Patrick Murray has demonstrated how de Valera sought to do the same, amounting to a 'defensive preoccupation with his history'. Both men shared that preoccupation. Mulcahy 'laboured for decades to provide a painstakingly detailed account of events in which he had been involved. His main conclusions were radically at variance with those of de Valera and his apologists, as well as with those of Collins's official biographer, Piaras Béaslaí.'<sup>23</sup>

The assassination mission was aborted when the threat of conscription passed, but Brugha would return to the scheme on at least two occasions during the War of Independence, though the support of his colleagues for such action would diminish.

The scant attention that this episode has received in the historiography is symptomatic of Mulcahy's efforts to downplay the incident and frame it as a scheme for which Brugha alone was responsible. Little counter-narrative or analysis has been offered. However, new sources like the BMH and, more recently, the Military Service Pension Collection can add to our understanding of this intriguing affair.

## 5. A RELUCTANT POLITICIAN:

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### CATHAL BRUGHA, TD FOR WATERFORD, 1918–22

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PAT MCCARTHY

In March 1918 Sinn Féin suffered a notable electoral defeat. Despite a huge effort by Sinn Féin activists from all over the country, the party failed to win the Waterford City by-election. In a contest marked by violence, Captain William Redmond won the seat that had been held by his late father, John Redmond. He repeated that victory in the general election in December in a similar violent contest. But what about the other constituency in Waterford—the county? Waterford County was one of only seven seats in Munster that was contested in the general election of 1918, and Cathal Brugha was the Sinn Féin candidate. In the other seventeen constituencies Sinn Féin candidates were returned unopposed.

Prior to the 1918 election there were two parliamentary constituencies in Waterford County, but these had been amalgamated by the Electoral Reform Act of 1917. Hence there were two outgoing MPs available to contest the constituency on behalf of the Irish Parliamentary Party: J.J. O'Shee, first elected in 1895 for Waterford County West, and Martin Murphy, returned unopposed in 1913 for Waterford County East.<sup>1</sup> Murphy announced that he would not be going forward, leaving the way clear for O'Shee.<sup>2</sup>

John Joseph Shee was born in Carrick-on-Suir in November 1866.<sup>3</sup> He changed his name to O'Shee in 1900. Educated at Rockwell College and UCD, he trained as a solicitor and established his own practice in Carrick-on-Suir. In 1894, along with David Sheehan, he established the Irish Land and Labour Association, which campaigned for radical changes to land and labour laws to favour smallholders and farm labourers. His concern for the landless and social activism marked his public career. In 1895 he was elected as an anti-Parnellite MP for Waterford County West. His legal practice flourished, and he often acted for tenants seeking to purchase their farms under the 1903 Land Act. He continued to campaign for labourers, and by the standards of the IPP he was a radical. Against the wishes of John Redmond, who wanted his party to focus on Home Rule, he supported the women's suffrage bill in 1913. He was a very frequent contributor on both national and local issues, focusing on the plight of labourers, land purchase and pensions. He strongly supported Home Rule within the empire. In 1912 he told an English journalist that separatism was absurd because Ireland was dependent on the British market. When war broke out in 1914, he strongly supported the stance of Redmond and actively campaigned for

recruits for the British army. In July 1915 he told a meeting in Dungarvan that the war would be ‘an enormous cost and burden on the people of Ireland which should be accepted in the interests of our country’.<sup>4</sup> Given his record, he was clearly a formidable candidate.

In the aftermath of the failed attempt to impose conscription on Ireland, Sinn Féin prepared for the expected general election, confident that they would deliver the final blow to the IPP and establish themselves as the elected representatives of nationalist Ireland. The standing committee of Sinn Féin would have the final say on nominations. It was tightly controlled by Michael Collins and Harry Boland, who ensured that the approved candidates were either members of the IRB or had served in 1916. There was no shortage of local candidates seeking the nomination, but when Pax Whelan suggested some of these to Collins he was brusquely told that the candidate would be Cathal Brugha. Collins was acting on the recommendation of Boland, who described Brugha as ‘one of the greatest men in the movement and an Irish speaker’. Fluency in Irish was required by Sinn Féin for constituencies like Waterford with a Gaeltacht (an Irish-speaking area). Waterford County had its Sinn Féin candidate.<sup>5</sup> Pax Whelan later recalled that many locals had never heard of Brugha, ‘but when they heard he was a 1916 man, that he carried a few British bullets in him, and when they read a bit about him, they were happy enough. They all rallied around.’<sup>6</sup> Brugha’s qualifications were summarised on his election literature: fluent Irish-speaker, hero of 1916, soldier and statesman.

In the latter part of 1918 Brugha’s wife, Kathleen Kingston from Birr, whom he had met through the Gaelic League and had married in 1912, was quite ill and he devoted much of his time to nursing her.<sup>7</sup> It must have come as a surprise, and possibly an unwelcome one, when he found himself a candidate in the general election in a constituency with which he had no connection (see below). He was, however, very happy that there was a strong Gaeltacht in his constituency.<sup>8</sup>

The Labour Party decided not to contest the election, despite the fact that Waterford was a labour stronghold. This removed a serious obstacle to Sinn Féin. In Waterford, as in the rest of nationalist Ireland, the election would be a straight fight between Sinn Féin and the IPP, between Cathal Brugha and J.J. O’Shee. Under a new leader, John Dillon, the IPP appeared to be in a good position to fight an election, but appearances were very deceptive. In July Dillon remarked that the party needed some new policy but he does not appear to have made any effort to formulate one.<sup>9</sup> The failure of the IPP to engage with the newly enfranchised men and women also contributed to its downfall.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the party tended to reflect on past glories and bemoan the ingratitude of the electorate. O’Shee had one advantage compared to many of his parliamentary

colleagues: he was used to fighting elections and appreciated the importance of good local organisation—he knew that he needed to keep his election machine in good order.

By contrast, Sinn Féin was vibrant, well organised and eager for the election. In the aftermath of the Easter Rising, the party had initially made slow but steady progress in Waterford. The first branch had been established in the city in April 1917, and by the end of the year there were twelve branches in the city and county with a total of 703 members. A recurring theme of the monthly RIC reports was that ‘the only political organisation showing activity is Sinn Féin’. In December 1917 P.C. O’Mahony, IRB member and Irish Volunteer leader, was dismissed from his position in the post office in Dungarvan for his ‘seditious’ activities. He was immediately appointed as full-time organiser for Sinn Féin, and he set about his new task with enthusiasm. In his own words:

‘I was appointed Sinn Féin Organiser from the 1st December 1917 and my immediate job was to prepare for the General Election by the formation of Sinn Féin Cumann. I was at the same time to re-establish the Irish Volunteers and assist Cumann na mBan. I organised a very large number of Cumann in County Waterford—one in each parish. These were controlled by a Dail Ceanntair subject to a County Executive. The volunteer company was organised in parish areas and subject to a Battalion Council and to the Brigade. County Waterford was really not organised in the past, but now it was very quickly and thoroughly brought under Sinn Féin.’<sup>11</sup>

The local newspapers, the *Dungarvan Observer*, the *Waterford News* and the *Munster Express*, testify to his energy and success.

His task was made easier when in April 1918 the British government announced the extension of conscription to Ireland. All nationalist political parties, the labour movement and the Catholic clergy united in their opposition.<sup>12</sup> Sinn Féin was seen as the leader of this united front against conscription, and thousands of recruits joined Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers. Although many of these new members left when the conscription scare passed, a substantial number maintained their membership and helped to consolidate Sinn Féin as the leading nationalist party. It now had the two things necessary to fight a general election: funds and volunteers.

A subcommittee composed of Fr Michael O’Flanagan, Tom Kelly, Harry Boland and Robert Brennan (Director of Elections) drew up the Sinn Féin election manifesto, which sought a mandate to present Ireland’s case for independence at the peace conference.<sup>13</sup> It declared that it would establish an Irish republic by withdrawing the Irish representatives from Westminster to form a constituent

assembly in Dublin. It also committed the party to using ‘any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by military force or otherwise’. Well organised, well financed, well led and with a powerful vision of the future while invoking the memory of dead martyrs, Sinn Féin faced the electoral battle full of confidence, in stark contrast to their demoralised opponents, who were bankrupt of leadership, policies, funds and workers.

On 11 November 1918 the war ended with an armistice between the victorious Allies and the defeated Germans. On 25 November Lloyd George dissolved parliament and called a general election. Polling day was set for 14 December. In many constituencies, including Waterford, the campaign was already well under way when the election was formally called. Sinn Féin opened its campaign with a mass meeting in Dungarvan on 18 November. The meeting was chaired by Dan Fraher, and speaker after speaker addressed the huge crowd on the themes of Brugha’s 1916 heroism and his suitability to lead Waterford and Ireland to a new Ireland, a republic. ‘Parliamentary politics has failed,’ declared Eamonn Dee, ‘and Brugha is the man to represent Ireland at the forthcoming peace conference and he would demand and secure an independent republic for Ireland.’ The banner over the platform said it all: ‘For Brugha and Independence’.<sup>14</sup> Other public meetings followed almost every night in all parts of the constituency. Intensive canvassing concentrated on the newly enfranchised, and posters and painted slogans covered the constituency. The campaign reached new heights when Brugha arrived in the constituency on 4 December. Speaking in Irish first and then in English, he told a cheering crowd in Dungarvan that he had fought for a republic in 1916 and that he would continue that fight ‘on behalf of the Gaels of Waterford’.<sup>15</sup> From then until polling day he toured the constituency, escorted by volunteers and addressing three or four meetings each day. He was also strongly supported by the two main newspapers in the county, the *Dungarvan Observer* and the *Waterford News*.

O’Shee arrived from London on 27 November and was the unanimous choice at a ‘hugely attended convention’ in Dungarvan. His speech was the familiar one from IPP candidates: that parliamentary action was the only sane policy and that the Party had served and saved Ireland over the past forty years.<sup>16</sup> He presented no vision of the future, just more of the same. Although an appeal for funds was reasonably well supported, there is little local newspaper coverage of his activities. This may reflect the Sinn Féin bias of the local press rather than a lack of effort by O’Shee. Unlike the scene in Waterford city, there was little electoral violence in the county. An attempt by the RIC to remove Sinn Féin election posters in Ballymacarberry led to scuffles with local Volunteers,<sup>17</sup> but otherwise the police did not interfere. When the rival parties held final meetings at the

same time in Lismore, with both Brugha and O'Shee present, a few policemen formed a cordon between them and, 'although there was much flag waving, cheering and counter cheering, there was no actual collision'.<sup>18</sup> Richard Heskins, a prominent supporter of O'Shee, declared from his platform that 'even if Mr O'Shee's opponent prevails, it will be by a small margin', in itself an admission of defeat. In contrast, Sinn Féin speakers forecasted a majority of thousands.<sup>19</sup> Polling day itself passed off peacefully. Both candidates toured the polling booths in Dungarvan on election day, but there was no trouble and no clashes between the rival supporters.

After the voting ended, the sealed boxes were brought to Dungarvan courthouse, where they were kept until the count, which was set for 28 December. Despite the objections of RIC District Inspector King, the Volunteers mounted guard over the boxes to prevent any interference.<sup>20</sup> When the votes were counted, the result amazed everyone: Brugha had 12,890 votes, O'Shee 4,217. Sinn Féin had secured 75% of the vote, one of the biggest winning margins in the country. For O'Shee it was an ignominious end to his parliamentary career, during which he had served all classes in Waterford well. Outside the courthouse the jubilant Volunteers celebrated their victory, while the IPP supporters went quietly home past burning tar barrels, lit to mark the new era in Irish and Waterford politics.

J.J. O'Shee did not contest another election after 1918. Instead, he focused on his legal practice, which flourished with offices in Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir. In early January 1919 Cathal Brugha returned to Waterford to celebrate his victory. He toured the county, and a typical speech in Cappoquin reflected his views of the way the struggle might evolve:

**'The people had now by their votes endorsed the Rising of Easter Week, that the work they had then begun would now continue, that the RIC had better understand that they were the armed persecutors of the Irish people and would henceforth be treated as enemy garrison troops. Sinn Féin had now the authority of the Irish people to govern them and they would do so without delay.'**

In the early months of 1919 Brugha visited his constituency frequently, but as the War of Independence intensified these visits ceased. His last reported visit was in October 1919, when he spoke at a Gaelic League meeting in Dungarvan.<sup>21</sup> His next public meeting in his constituency was at Pickardstown, Tramore, in March 1922.

After his election Brugha went on to play a major part in the turbulent years that followed.<sup>22</sup> In the absence of de Valera and Arthur Griffith (both in prison), he was elected acting Ceann Chomhairle of the first Dáil at its inaugural meeting on 21 January 1919. He resigned that post in April and was appointed Minister

for Defence in the first Dáil government. He held that post throughout the War of Independence and, as such, he was a wanted man. From 1920 on he seldom slept at home but used safe houses instead. The decentralised nature of the IRA, the independence of local commanders, the parallel IRB structure and the influence of others, most notably Michael Collins, tended to limit his influence on military operations. These factors also led to growing differences between Brugha and Michael Collins, differences that were brought into the open during the bitter debates on the Anglo-Irish Treaty, a treaty that Brugha opposed. After the Dáil approved the Treaty, he was replaced as Minister for Defence by Richard Mulcahy.

On Sunday 5 March, members of the pro- and anti-Treaty sides joined together to mark the unveiling of a shrine at Pickardstown to the memory of the two Volunteers, Michael McGrath and Tom O'Brien, who had been killed at the ambush there just over a year previously. Despite continuous heavy rain, a crowd of several thousand assembled at the railway station in Tramore and, led by five bands, marched to the scene of the ambush. A large, armed IRA contingent was led by Pax Whelan and Paddy Paul, soon to be opponents in a civil war. The main speaker was Cathal Brugha. He spoke to the assembled crowd for twenty minutes in Irish before continuing in English:

**'As long as we have our language no matter what may happen, we are not finally beaten or subdued, but if the Irish language dies, then the Irish nation is dead'.**

He then pleaded eloquently for unity in the army and stated that he would not make party political statements, before sounding an ominous note:

**'I know very well that I can rely upon the IRA in Waterford to keep together so far as they can do it. But in order to do that it is necessary to get money. It is up to you people to subscribe sufficient money to keep the army intact. Those in charge of the army in Waterford will not make any unreasonable demand on you, but in the case of any demand that they may make you should give anything you give voluntarily, because if the army is broken, then God knows what may happen.**

**Remember you people who see that shrine, remember that they to whose memory it is erected died for a certain ideal. Up to a few months ago we were all of one mind with regard to the ideal that these men died for—and they died for nothing else (applause). It was no make believe. These men dared the consequences, and they are in heaven today. Please God every one of you will risk the consequences and come to whatever decision your**

consciences prompt you to do. When you have done that, then it does not matter what happens. When any of you happen in the future to look upon that shrine, say a prayer for those two gallant soldiers of Ireland—not that they need it, because they are in heaven but say it, and say one for yourselves that you may be strong enough to do as they did when the time comes, and it may be necessary for you to do it.<sup>23</sup>

This speech encapsulated Brugha's thoughts and feelings—his commitment to the Irish language, his belief that 'the intense yearning for national freedom that every Irishman worth his salt feels in his heart was too strong to allow Ireland to be turned into a British dominion'<sup>24</sup> and his evocation of the Republican dead. It also reflected his realism about the probability of armed conflict over the settlement and the need for 'fund-raising' to preserve the IRA. In Waterford, as in other areas controlled by the anti-Treaty forces, the Volunteers would need little encouragement to raise funds.

Almost as soon as the vote on the Treaty in the Dáil was complete, both sides took their cases to the people and spent much time at public meetings up and down the country, arguing the merits of their respective views. Early in March de Valera announced that he would form a new Republican party, Cumann na Poblachta, to contest the forthcoming general election. To launch his party, he began a speaking tour of Munster, where he delivered a series of speeches that at best were irresponsible and at worst were an incitement to civil war. He began his tour on 16 March in Dungarvan, where, accompanied by Cathal Brugha and guarded by armed men of the Waterford Brigade, he told the crowd that the Treaty 'barred the way to independence with the blood of fellow Irishmen', for its acceptance would mean that freedom could only be won by civil war. Warning his audience that if they did not fight today they must fight tomorrow, he proclaimed: 'When you are in a good fighting position, then fight on'.<sup>25</sup> The next day he spoke in Carrick-on-Suir and told a large, cheering audience:

**'If the Treaty was accepted the fight for freedom would still go on; and the Irish people, instead of fighting foreign soldiers, would have to fight the Irish soldiers of an Irish Government set up by Irishmen. If the Treaty was not rejected, perhaps it was over the bodies of the young men he saw around him that day that the fight for Irish freedom may be fought.'**

Later the same day he told a review of Volunteers in Thurles that:

**'They would have to wade through Irish blood, through the blood of the soldiers of the Irish Government, and through, perhaps, the blood of some of the members of the Government in order to get Irish freedom'.<sup>26</sup>**

Even though de Valera had little, if any, influence on the members of the IRA executive, these speeches were dangerous and irresponsible and, in the eyes of many, fixed the blame for the subsequent Civil War on his shoulders.

In the months that followed, Brugha often restrained more militant opponents of the Treaty who wished to start open warfare at once. He agreed to contest the June general election on behalf of the anti-Treaty side, but his true feelings about politics were revealed during a Dáil debate on 22 May:

**'I for one am absolutely sick of politics. It was against my will that I ever entered into public life. As Mr Collins and some of his friends on the other side know, I was away on a military mission when I was nominated for the County of Waterford. The first I heard about it was when I saw my name in a paper as having been nominated. It was against my will that I allowed the thing to go on. I did it anyway in the hope that owing to the then international situation we could get what we were out for. Now, I for one prefer to have nothing more to do with politics ...'**<sup>27</sup>

He was re-elected for Waterford in the pact election of 16 June 1922. Six days later, he joined comrades from the Dublin Brigade IRA when the Civil War started. He was stationed in the Hamman Hotel in Upper O'Connell Street. Badly wounded at the end of the battle, he died on 7 July.<sup>28</sup>

News of Brugha's death was met with shock and sadness in his constituency. Sinn Féin clubs and local elected bodies met to pass votes of sympathy. On 11 July, the day after his funeral, large crowds attended Requiem Masses in churches across Waterford city and county. Many businesses also closed for the day as a mark of respect. The local newspapers paid fulsome tribute to him, all emphasising his bravery and his 1916 exploits. Edmund Downey, editor of the *Waterford News*<sup>29</sup> and a close friend of Brugha's, concluded his tribute with a call to arms, printed in bold and large type:

**'Men of Ireland. There is a gap left in the ranks.  
Step in to fill it. Fly to arms in your country's cause.  
Let the Immortal "no surrender" of Cathal Brugha be your battle cry.  
Let his noble sacrifice be for you an inspiration of devotion to Ireland.  
May God Rest The Soul Of Ireland's Latest Martyr'**

## 6. ‘DEIRE LE RÉ NA CAINNTE’:

### Brugha, the Irish Language and the first Dáil

AINDRIAS Ó CATHASAIGH

When Dáil Éireann announced its existence to the world on 21 January 1919, Cathal Brugha took charge of proceedings. This meant that Ireland was now separated from England for good, he said, and, whatever consequences would follow from that, the time for talk was thankfully over: ‘tá deire le ré na cainnte in Éirinn’.<sup>1</sup> In its own way, it was as momentous as his defiance in the South Dublin Union during the Easter Rising, and his final stand in Thomas Lane. The fact that he threw down this gauntlet in Irish speaks to the role the language had won in the movement for independence, and its part in Brugha’s own journey to this point.

Brugha was not the only Irish-speaker to grow impatient with talking. ‘Ní dhéanann caint aon obair ...’, Patrick Pearse told his branch of the Gaelic League in 1911. ‘Níl mórán dá dhéanamh againn ar son na hÉireann taobh amuigh de’n chaint.’<sup>2</sup> It was time for the language movement to abandon its taboo against politics and embrace genuine action. The following year he organised a meeting to see ‘ar bhfhéidir cumann do chur ar bun tré na dtiocfadh le Gaedhilgeoiríbh a mbaramhla ar cheisteanna poilitidheachta do nochtughadh agus do chur i ngníomh’,<sup>3</sup> and launched *An Barr Buadh*, a newspaper devoted to preaching the gospel of political action in Irish.<sup>4</sup>

Brugha had been no fan of Pearse a few years before, believing him to be soft on the Board of Education’s attitude towards the teaching of Irish: ‘had he been in the pay of this Shoneen Board, he could hardly have done their work more effectively’.<sup>5</sup> But now he was interested enough to send Pearse his apologies for not attending the inaugural meeting of Cumann na Saoirse, as it came to be known.<sup>6</sup> In the event, neither the Cumann nor *An Barr Buadh* lasted more than a couple of months, but in that short span they brought together an impressive array of people, five of whom would give their lives in 1916: Éamonn Ceannt, The O’Rahilly, Con Colbert, Peadar Macken and Pearse himself. There was clearly a desire for more far-reaching action amongst a significant cohort of Irish-speakers.

This would soon be reflected within the Gaelic League in a struggle between Redmondite and radical wings, with the latter emerging victorious in the battle royal of the 1915 Ard-Fheis.<sup>7</sup> For some, however, radicalisation took the form of moving away from the League towards an activism which was broader than the language alone. Pearse expressed this attitude best:

‘I have come to the conclusion that the Gaelic League, as the Gaelic League, is a spent force ... the vital work to be done in the new Ireland will be done not so much by the Gaelic League itself as by men and movements that have sprung from the Gaelic League ... We never meant to be Gaelic Leaguers and nothing more than Gaelic Leaguers ... we went to school in the Gaelic League ... But we do not propose to remain schoolboys forever.’<sup>8</sup>

Pearse had dropped out of activity in the League by 1912. Ceannt was elected to its executive in 1913 but resigned after fitful participation over a few months. Brugha unsuccessfully stood for the executive that year,<sup>9</sup> but soon his involvement in the League went no further than his position—largely ceremonial—as president of its Keating Branch.

The formation of the Irish Volunteers in late 1913 drew in many Irish-speakers. The Irish Republican Brotherhood brought Eoin MacNeill, a vice-president of the Gaelic League, in as a figurehead on the strength of his article in the League’s paper mooted a volunteer force.<sup>10</sup> A large number of the founders were best known for language activities. Some were also recent recruits to the IRB, like Pearse and Ceannt, but this is itself evidence that the Brotherhood was taking a greater interest in the language movement. Brugha soon became another prominent Irish-speaker in the Volunteers.

While their involvement in the Gaelic League ended, their commitment to Irish did not. Many members of the Keating Branch fought in the Four Courts district at Easter 1916, and one of them, Piaras Béaslaí, bemoaned how little Irish he heard spoken during the Rising.<sup>11</sup> It may have been different when Irish-speakers were among themselves, however. A note in Irish survives, for example, written by Brugha on Easter Monday morning to inform Ceannt that one of their lieutenants had failed to mobilise.<sup>12</sup>

As the 1918 general election approached, Béaslaí successfully proposed that only Irish-speakers would be eligible to stand for Sinn Féin in Gaeltacht constituencies.<sup>13</sup> This decision paved the way for Brugha to stand in County Waterford, a place with which he had no personal, family or professional connection. A local Volunteer active in his campaign described Brugha as ‘a Dublin rebel’ with ‘all the disadvantages of being a stranger and unknown to 99.99% of the people of West Waterford’.<sup>14</sup> Brugha’s link with the county was linguistic, through his visits to the Ring Gaeltacht.

This was reflected in his election address, which made a specific appeal to the people of the Gaeltacht: ‘orraibhse 7 ar dhaoineib dbhur leithéid atá ar seasamh anois ... tuigeann sibh cad is fíorspiorad na nGaedheal ann’.<sup>15</sup> Only for those who continued to speak the language of Declan, patron saint of the Déise,

‘ní bhfuighmís a dheimhniúghadh don saoghal gur cine fá leith sinn’.<sup>16</sup> Advocating the new Sinn Féin policy, he presented the shift from parliamentarianism in terms which related to the life experience of Gaeltacht voters:

‘Cad a dhéanfadh feirmeoir le seanchéachda ná fuigheadh an talamh do threabhadh leis? Ná fuigheadh sé ceann oireamhnach? Cad a dhéanfadh iasgaire go mbeadh drochlíonta gan mhaith aige? Ná déanadh sé taighde i gcóir líonta foghanta go mór-mhór dá mbeidís le fágáil in aisce? Seadh, máiseadh. An dream so ar a bhfuilimse, an dream go bhfuil “Sinn Féin” mar rosc catha aca, tá againn beart a chuirfidh Éire ar a leas.’<sup>17</sup>

The inability of most Irish people to make a living in their own country was one of his indictments of British rule. In a theme that he would soon develop, he said that parliamentarianism had failed Ireland, ‘agus ní hiongnadh san, mar is ar chaint a bhíomair ag brath’.<sup>18</sup>

He appeared on the ballot paper as Cathal Brugha, and his election was officially announced as such. This was not the case with all prominent Irish-speakers, as witnessed by the election of candidates who stood as ‘John McNeill’ and ‘Pierce Beazley’. While ‘Eamon de Valera’ prevailed in East Mayo, he was ‘Edmund de Valera’ in East Clare.<sup>19</sup> The report of the British House of Commons did its best to Anglicise them all, however, turning Brugha into ‘Burgess, Cathal’.<sup>20</sup>

Following his election, Brugha was arrested on his way to a victory rally for giving his name to an RIC man in Irish and was detained for several hours. This was reported in the Gaelic League’s newspaper, which also gave him a glowing write-up amongst its profiles of new Irish-speaking TDs: ‘Is fánach Gaedheal i nÉirinn ná fuil aithne aige ar Chathal Brugha ... tá an Ghaedhilge aige chomh líomhtha le héan Ghaedhilgeóir i gCiarraidhe’.<sup>21</sup>

That ability was undoubtedly an important factor in the selection of Brugha to preside over the inaugural public session of Dáil Éireann. His seniority in the movement and his bravery in 1916 would also have counted for much, but someone at his ease in conducting business through Irish was definitely called for. It was Béaslaí who proposed him to a preparatory committee of TDs.<sup>22</sup> Although newspapers were reporting as late as the morning of the session that it would only be ‘partly in the Irish language’<sup>23</sup> or ‘bi-lingual’,<sup>24</sup> it turned out that Irish was the sole language of the day. That Brugha would take charge was decided in advance, however, as evidenced by invitations in his name to a reception that evening to toast the Dáil—although his description as ‘Reachtair na Dála’ shows that his exact title had not yet been established.<sup>25</sup>

Once moved to the chair, Brugha emphasised how serious their task was. Contemporary newspaper reports have him describing it as ‘an obair is tábhachtaighe dar deineadh i nÉirinn ó tháinig na Gaill’.<sup>26</sup> According to the official report published in June, however, he called it the most important work ‘ón lá tháinic na Gaedhil go hÉirinn’.<sup>27</sup> While the difference is profound and amounts to centuries of Irish history, it is impossible to determine which version is accurate, although the compilers of the official record may have had the chance to consult Brugha himself.

Brugha only broke into English at one point, to warn the audience against any cheering. ‘Béidir go bhfuil roinnt daoine i láthair ná tuigean an Ghaedhilg’, he said.<sup>28</sup> One newspaper claimed that the audience was ‘unable to follow the proceedings with any intelligent interest’, with ‘not more than one in ten’ understanding the speeches.<sup>29</sup> A journalist’s guess is not the same thing as historical fact, of course, but this misses the point being made. Ireland was announcing her independence to the world and doing so in a language of her own, and appreciating that fact was more important than the precise content of the speeches.

When the roll of TDs was called, many were returned as ‘fé ghlas ag Gallaibh’.<sup>30</sup> Brugha excoriated the hypocrisy of a government imprisoning them after claiming to uphold the rights of small nations, before mentioning one prisoner: ‘an bhean is misneamhla’s is cródha dár rugadh riamh in éin tír, .i. an Chonntaois Marceibhic’.<sup>31</sup> The ranks of imprisoned deputies included many of the leading lights of the movement, but his singling out of Markievicz seems to indicate a pride on Brugha’s part that Dáil Éireann had included a woman in its ranks before any other parliament.

He read the proposed provisional constitution of the Dáil. This had been drafted in English by a committee of six but was introduced in an Irish version. The text was innovative in introducing the terms ‘teachtaí’, ‘dáilcheanntair’ (constituencies) and ‘ceann comhairle’, which remain current. A government minister was called ‘aireach’ (an older variant of ‘aire’, which was also in use), with the head of the government designated ‘príomh-aireach’.<sup>32</sup>

Highlighting its importance, Brugha asked deputies to stand while he read the Dáil’s declaration of independence in its Irish version. He followed it with a dramatic statement:

‘A Theachtaí na Dála, tuigfidh sibh ó na bhfuil dearbhaighthe annso go bhfuilmíd scartha anois le Sasana. Bíodh a fhios san ag an saoghal, agus ag daoine go mbaineann an scéal leo. Pé nidh a thiocfaidh as a bhfuil ráite annso—imirt anma nó bás—tá deire le ré na cainnte in Éirinn, agus má’s maith é is mithid é—tá deire le ráiméis.’<sup>33</sup>

He appealed for unity above all else: ‘Cuirimís le chéile agus ná deineadh éinne sinn do dheighilt, agus ní baoghal dúinn’.<sup>34</sup>

Brugha was also scheduled to read the Democratic Programme to the Dáil in Irish,<sup>35</sup> but here proceedings hit a snag. A draft submitted by labour leaders was far too radical for some republicans, including Michael Collins, who wanted to ‘suppress’ it.<sup>36</sup> Seán T. O’Kelly argued otherwise, and a meeting broke up with O’Kelly being ‘told to draft the document myself’. His watered-down version wasn’t ready until the small hours, and he hurried into town to get copies typed in time for the Dáil session.<sup>37</sup> With this English version barely available, there was no time to translate it into Irish for Brugha to read. Béaslaí was called on, with his experience as a writer, translator and actor: ‘I stood up with the English version in my hand and pretended to be reading from it while I made an impromptu translation into Irish’.<sup>38</sup> While the other founding documents of the Dáil were soon published in three languages, Béaslaí’s subsequent translation of the document only appeared in June in the official report.<sup>39</sup>

Brugha’s time as ceann comhairle of the Dáil only lasted a day. George Plunkett took the chair at the next day’s private session, which elected O’Kelly as ceann comhairle. Brugha was elected ‘President of the Ministry’<sup>40</sup>—the ‘príomh-aireach’ envisaged the day before. While this was understood as a temporary appointment until Éamon de Valera was free to take up the job permanently, Brugha would be one of his ministers, and a government minister could hardly function as ceann comhairle. If that much wasn’t obvious, the standing orders were clear: ‘NO MINISTER OR DIRECTOR OF A DEPARTMENT MAY ACT AS SPEAKER AT ANY MEETING OF THE DAIL’.<sup>41</sup>

This point was stretched, however, when the Gaelic League called on the Dáil to establish a ministry for Irish.<sup>42</sup> The League’s president, J.J. O’Kelly, was also leas-cheann comhairle of the Dáil and in the chair when the League’s resolution was presented to the Dáil. In the ensuing discussion O’Kelly said that there was no urgency, but Brugha proposed that O’Kelly himself be appointed. O’Kelly demurred, pleading the need to consult the League. The Dáil formally expressed their desire for him to take up the role, however.<sup>43</sup>

It was eight months before the Dáil met again, but O’Kelly was appointed Minister for Irish in the meantime. The subsequent ratification of his appointment

didn't go smoothly, however. Béaslaí thought it wrong that O'Kelly would preside over Dáil discussion of his own department and called for a temporary ceann comhairle to be elected. Fionán Lynch agreed, and proposed Richard Mulcahy for the role. Brugha saw no problem with O'Kelly occupying both positions, and the Dáil agreed by eighteen votes to eight.<sup>44</sup>

Béaslaí wrote that establishing a ministry for Irish amounted to 'iarraidh ar an Dáil department den Rialtas a dheunamh d'obair na Gaedhilge'.<sup>45</sup> O'Kelly himself was proud that he 'was able to convert the Gaelic League into a Ministry of Education'.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, a good deal of the Gaelic League's work was effectively nationalised by the new ministry, and having its president in charge of it noticeably curtailed the League's independence. Apparently, however, Béaslaí did not really object to the combining of the two functions but believed that he would have combined them better himself. He challenged O'Kelly for the League presidency six weeks later and came within four votes of unseating him in the organisation's first contested presidential election.<sup>47</sup>

O'Kelly maintained that the ministry was 'a post I had neither sought nor desired. There was an IRB group who wanted to get the appointment for one of themselves by hook or by crook'.<sup>48</sup> The dispute between these two veterans of the Keating Branch reflected more general tensions within the independence movement, with IRB leaders Collins and Mulcahy lining up against Brugha and Austin Stack in the Dáil cabinet. De Valera recalled that Brugha told him, on his return from the US at the end of the year, 'Táimid deighilte ó bhun go barr'.<sup>49</sup>

One thing on which Brugha and Béaslaí were agreed was that 'Ceist oideachais iseadh ceist na Gaedhilge'.<sup>50</sup> When Brugha resorted to a few words of English on the Dáil's first day, he said that many couldn't speak Irish 'de dheascaibh an tsóirt sin oideachais atá in Éirinn le fada'.<sup>51</sup> The Dáil's policy towards the language was all but exclusively based on education and, indeed, the Ministry for Irish was subsumed into a Ministry of Education in 1921. Brugha proposed awarding prizes to Irish-speaking families in the Gaeltacht,<sup>52</sup> but there was little recognition of the economic basis of its decline, and even less in the way of radical policies that could address that.

In the heat of 1922's bitter controversies over the Treaty, Brugha publicly said that he would much rather leave politics behind him and devote himself to encouraging the Irish language.<sup>53</sup> Other speeches that he gave that year focused on the language or were given entirely in Irish.<sup>54</sup> Irish remained a touchstone for him throughout his life, accompanying him as he challenged the claim of the British Empire to rule Ireland. It was often the vehicle he chose to express that defiance.

This was so right up to the end. When an officer of the Free State army demanded his surrender on 3 July 1922, he responded: 'Ní'lim ar aigne a leithéid a dhéanamh i n aon chor'.<sup>55</sup> The opposing officer had to have that reply translated for him, managing only to grasp that it amounted to something along the lines of 'Not damned likely'.<sup>56</sup> Brugha's words were only understood in a distorted and over-simplified form, not even properly rendered in English, and much of what he said and wrote in Irish has suffered a similar fate since, when not ignored altogether. That neglect needs to be repaired if we are to appreciate his role in our history.

## 7. DUTY, CONSPIRACY AND ENMITY:

### CATHAL BRUGHAS AS MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, 1919–22

DAITHÍ Ó CORRÁIN AND GERARD HANLEY

Following his spectacular escape from Lincoln Jail on 3 February 1919, Éamon de Valera returned to Ireland for four months before his departure for the United States to promote Irish self-determination there. During de Valera's imprisonment, Brugha had acted as temporary president of Dáil Éireann in his stead. That role was relinquished on 1 April 1919 when de Valera attended the Dáil for the first time. Brugha was then appointed Minister for Defence, a position he held until 9 January 1922.<sup>1</sup> Despite successive roles as Speaker, President and Minister for Defence, Brugha was, by his own admission, a reluctant politician—something to which he often alluded. For instance, during the Treaty negotiations, Tadhg Kennedy, intelligence officer of Kerry No. 1 Brigade, recalled how Brugha spoke 'of his being unfitted for the job he'd held'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in June 1922 Brugha told an election audience in Waterford that he had 'no ambition whatever to be in public life; it was against his will he ever came into it'.<sup>3</sup> While a lack of archival sources makes a detailed appraisal of Brugha's life and ministerial tenure difficult, three constants can be identified and are considered in this essay. The first is the sense that Brugha was trying to marshal two horses—the political and the military—with varying degrees of success. The second is the dutiful minister for whom the supremacy of the Dáil was a cardinal principle. The third is the conspiracy and enmity that marked the breaking down of Brugha's relations with Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy. In this regard there were, as will be outlined below, several contributory factors at play.

The meeting of the first Dáil was in and of itself revolutionary because it determined that Irish resistance was to be expressed through the medium of an underground government, or what Arthur Mitchell has described as a counter-state.<sup>4</sup> The complexities of operating as an underground Dáil minister on the run posed significant personal and political challenges. For instance, it greatly disrupted family life. During his tenure as Minister for Defence, Brugha and his wife, Caitlín, were parents to five young children, all under seven years of age in 1919.<sup>5</sup> Brugha rarely stayed in the family home at 5 Fitzwilliam Terrace in Upper Rathmines.<sup>6</sup> He used a variety of safe houses, such as that of John Burke, a boilerman at Temple Street Children's Hospital. In October 1920 Brugha narrowly

avoided arrest when houses in Fitzwilliam Terrace were raided in an effort to apprehend him. Having been tipped off about the raid, Brugha fled the family home through a window. Caitlín was not so fortunate. She was seized by armed soldiers and detained in a Crossley tender in her nightdress for over an hour. Her pleas to be allowed to tend to her frightened children were ignored.<sup>7</sup>

While members of the underground Dáil cabinet were paid a ministerial salary, Brugha declined his own of £300, maintaining that his business, Messrs Lalor Ltd, which specialised in the manufacture of church candles and allied products, was sufficient to support his family. Instead, he requested that the proposed Dáil salary be used to support an Assistant Minister for Defence. Richard Mulcahy, IRA Chief of Staff, occupied this position. In theory, Mulcahy was to keep the minister apprised of developments at IRA general headquarters (GHQ). In practice, this did not prove to be the case. Mulcahy's personal papers indicate that he deliberately kept his contact with Brugha to a minimum: 'I kept him advised as far as possible how things were going without having very much more than ... weekly contact with him at times'.<sup>8</sup> Brugha was in a sense a part-time minister, but he pledged to be as committed as any other member of the cabinet.<sup>9</sup> While there is no evidence to suggest that his business responsibilities led to a neglect of his ministerial duties, they surely reduced his capacity to develop personal relationships within the army. Some IRA officers grumbled about Brugha's distance and inaccessibility. For instance, Ernie O'Malley criticised him for not being familiar with his army officers. In contrast, Collins cultivated these men, many of whom were also IRB members and saw him as the man in control.<sup>10</sup> As Tadhg Kennedy put it, 'surrounding Michael Collins was a gang of fellows who rightly or wrongly regarded him as Chief of the Army and that nobody else counted'.<sup>11</sup> Others, however, such as Seán Healy, a captain in the Cork IRA, were not enamoured of Collins's gregarious and 'hail fellow well met' attitude and were instead 'greatly impressed by the frankness and sincerity of Cathal Brugha'. The Minister for Defence was assured by Healy that he could 'fully depend on us to use every endeavour to carry out any task that might be allotted to us'.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the War of Independence, the Dáil's Ministry for Defence essentially operated from the Lalor premises at 14 Ormond Quay in central Dublin. Ministerial communications were also sometimes delivered to the Burke house in Temple Street. It was there that Brugha and Mulcahy hid in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday in November 1920, the minister armed with two revolvers.<sup>13</sup> Like many of his ministerial colleagues, Brugha cycled freely around Dublin on both private and Dáil business, presenting himself as an ordinary citizen going about his business.<sup>14</sup> His green Irish-made Pierce bicycle also served as a disability aid.

It supported him when walking and helped to relieve the constant pain in his left leg from the severe and lasting injuries that he had sustained during the Easter Rising.<sup>15</sup>

Incontrovertibly, Brugha's role as Minister for Defence was hampered by the fact that he was always in danger of arrest and generally on the run. While avoiding capture for the entirety of the conflict, much like Collins, some have attributed Brugha's fortune in this respect to the possibility that the British 'took no interest in him'.<sup>16</sup> According to Robert Brennan, however, by the end of 1920 Dublin Castle had offered an award of £5,000 for information leading to Brugha's arrest.<sup>17</sup> Brugha was especially security-conscious. He generally carried a gun and avoided being photographed. When not availing of one of his various safe houses, he often stayed at Lalor's, where a bed, other furniture and a gas stove were installed on the first floor. As a minister in constant danger of arrest, he rarely presented written reports lest critical information fall into the hands of the Crown forces (thereby making more difficult the historian's challenge of assessing his ministerial career). Cabinet colleagues described his reports as 'a model of brevity' which were always enthusiastically received. He addressed the Dáil on military matters on seven occasions, and only twice was any information included in the record.<sup>18</sup>

Brugha rarely interfered in the affairs of political colleagues, unless he considered that some action or decision might affect the work of his own department. For instance, a cornerstone of the Dáil's efforts to undermine the British administration in Ireland was the creation of a rival legal structure in the shape of the Dáil or republican courts. The courts became a means of demonstrating the Irish capacity for self-government. Brugha's initially favourable disposition towards them was short-lived. While not critical of the court system itself, he was clearly concerned that land disputes, which occupied much of the courts' time, would fragment Sinn Féin's base and divert attention away from the pursuit of the republic. He told Kevin O'Shiel, one of the architects of the Dáil courts system, that both the country and the republican movement should have only one objective: 'to get the English out of Ireland. Nothing should deflect or distract us from that purpose'.<sup>19</sup> He similarly opposed the creation of a separate republican police force, fearing that it would deplete the ranks of the IRA and weaken the military campaign.<sup>20</sup>

Several historians have noted the tensions between the political and military men within the separatist movement. For Brugha, as Minister for Defence, those tensions manifested themselves in terms of the authority of the Dáil and attempts to put a brake on the conduct of the military campaign. He attached paramount importance to the authority of the Dáil. In a speech in Waterford

on 25 April 1919, he emphasised that ‘The sole authority in this country is the authority of her own government—the authority of the elected representatives of the Irish nation. This authority alone has the right to our support.’<sup>21</sup> However, his desire that ultimate authority over the IRA should lie with Dáil Éireann was not shared by IRA GHQ, the IRB or Collins. Nevertheless, on 20 August 1919 Brugha proposed a motion that all Dáil deputies, IRA men and officers and clerks of the Dáil would swear allegiance to the Irish Republic and the Dáil as follows:

‘I, A.B., do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I do not and shall not yield a voluntary support to any pretended Government, authority or power within Ireland hostile and inimical thereto, and I do further swear (or affirm) that to the best of my knowledge and ability I will support and defend the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic, which is Dáil Éireann, against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, so help me, God.’<sup>22</sup>

Despite the opposition of Diarmuid O’Hegarty, secretary of the Dáil, and Mulcahy, the motion was approved by thirty votes to five. Undoubtedly, the Minister for Defence also saw the oath as a means of limiting the influence of the IRB and, by implication, Collins. In the event, the oath did not prevent the IRA from evolving its strategy and tactics independently of the Dáil—and, indeed, often of its own GHQ. Neither did it ensure that the Minister was in control of his military subordinates.<sup>23</sup>

Though often depicted as a proponent of political violence, Brugha repeatedly acted as a cautious and moderating influence as Minister for Defence. When de Valera went to the United States in June 1919, Brugha was anxious to curtail violence against the police lest it alienate American public opinion and undermine de Valera’s mission. For example, Liam Deasy, a member of Cork No. 3 Brigade IRA, recalled that Brugha was ‘very mad’ at the shooting of RIC Sergeant William Mulhern in the porch of the Catholic church in Bandon in July 1920, and that Collins had supported the stance of the Minister for Defence.<sup>24</sup> Brugha’s attitude towards the use of violence was less constrained after the Volunteers, Sinn Féin and the Dáil were proclaimed in September 1919, yet he remained cautious. Before the Bloody Sunday assassinations in November 1920, he insisted on there being sufficient evidence against each of the targets and trimmed the initial long list. It was a notable instance in which Brugha had asserted some authority over Collins.<sup>25</sup> Determining evidence of guilt was a policy on which the Minister for Defence insisted, often to the irritation of impatient colleagues. For Brugha, deaths had to have an obvious political or military purpose.

The safeguarding of civilians from mines and grenades during urban ambushes was one of Brugha's particular concerns. After an IRA ambush on Camden Street that resulted in civilian casualties, he rebuked Oscar Traynor, O/C of the Dublin Brigade, for conducting an attack during which, according to Traynor, a 'woman dealer who had two or three children was killed'. Decades later, Traynor told Ernie O'Malley: 'I always got a lecture or what seemed to be a lecture from Cathal Brugha—who ordered ambushes not to take place on Saturdays when the streets were busy'.<sup>26</sup> Traynor's recollection of events was imperfect. The victim was not in fact the 'woman dealer' but her 3½-year-old son, William Fitzgerald, who had been fatally wounded in the head by a fragment from an improvised grenade, which helps to explain Brugha's fury over the tragic incident.<sup>27</sup> After de Valera's return from the United States in December 1920, more emphasis was placed on the Dáil taking responsibility for the military campaign. This prompted Brugha to become more involved in military strategy, souring relations with Collins and Mulcahy.

De Valera's long absence in the United States in 1919/20 allowed Collins gradually to increase his own authority. This generated tensions between him and Brugha, although it is important to note that the men once shared a close friendship.<sup>28</sup> The animosity between the pair is often simplistically attributed to jealousy on Brugha's part.<sup>29</sup> Even de Valera shared this opinion with Mulcahy, telling him: '[Y]ou know I think Cathal is jealous of Mick ... Isn't it a terrible thing that a man with the qualities that Cathal undoubtedly has can fall a victim to a dirty little vice like jealousy.'<sup>30</sup> De Valera's long absence from the cabinet table did not, however, necessarily place him in the best position for assessing and understanding the intricacies of the relationship that had developed between Brugha and Collins. The explanation was, of course, more complex. A variety of factors can be identified which have tended to be ignored because the rivalry has generally been explained only from the perspective of Collins. These factors included Brugha's hostility towards the IRB, Collins's undermining of Brugha's ministerial authority, ill-defined roles and responsibilities, communication difficulties and conflicting personalities. Collins's increasing control over the IRA led to an encroachment on Brugha's responsibilities as Minister for Defence. Furthermore, by expanding his domain as Director of Intelligence to the limit, Collins further undermined Brugha's authority. The respective personalities of the men were almost antithetical. The brash and abrasive Collins had a fondness for whiskey, cigarettes and swearing, was anti-clerical and displayed an interest in atheism. Such traits were far removed from Brugha's sense of propriety and deep religious faith.<sup>31</sup>

From late 1920, Brugha's increasing involvement in military strategy was particularly noticeable in terms of mooted operations in Britain and gunrunning—an intrusion regarded as 'inappropriate' by Mulcahy as Chief of Staff. This soured relations between them, which up to this point had been generally harmonious.<sup>32</sup> In October 1920 Brugha engaged in a power play by having Liam Mellows appointed Director of Purchases at GHQ. Collins saw this as a move against the IRB network, which controlled gunrunning activities at home and abroad and whose first loyalty was to him. Brugha was conscious that his own attempts to source arms in Liverpool were stymied simply because he was not a member of the IRB.<sup>33</sup> Having cut ties with the IRB after the Rising, he remained convinced that the organisation could undermine the position of the IRA and the Dáil during the War of Independence. Collins's control over military matters not only humiliated Brugha but also left him 'holding an emasculated portfolio as a sinecure while real power remained outside his influence in GHQ and by inference with the IRB and Collins'.<sup>34</sup> Brugha's appointment of Mellows did not, apparently, have the intended effect. Although the differences between Brugha and Collins were, according to de Valera, 'growing more acute at this time', Mulcahy recalls that, despite everything, Collins 'always had a very considerable amount of human and sympathetic and affectionate feeling for Brugha'.<sup>35</sup>

Brugha proposed to cabinet that industrial installations in Liverpool should be bombed in reprisal for atrocities by the Crown forces in Ireland. Under the direction of Rory O'Connor, Director of Engineering at GHQ, nineteen warehouses in Liverpool and Bootle were set ablaze on 28 November 1920, causing damage worth £250,000. This action, however, proved counterproductive, as many IRA activists in Liverpool and elsewhere were arrested, leading one Liverpool Volunteer to recall how there 'was no one left to direct operations'.<sup>36</sup> These attacks were also part of a larger and questionable strategy to influence British left-wing organisations. In mid-1920, Brugha and Collins asked Seán McLoughlin, a revolutionary socialist and republican, to undertake agitation work with the British left to generate favourable support for the Irish cause and to identify individuals who could facilitate gunrunning or sabotage. Although McLoughlin later claimed to have visited every big town in England and Scotland and to have been 'in touch with every revolutionary element in Britain', his mission does not appear to have generated any real success. He remained in Britain until the truce in July 1921 and kept in regular contact with Brugha.<sup>37</sup>

Brugha's concerted efforts to monitor gunrunning created tensions with Collins during 1920. This simmering issue reared its head explosively in March 1921 when Brugha discovered that £2,700 assigned for the purchase of arms in Scotland—for which Collins was responsible—was unaccounted for. A cloud

of suspicion hung over Collins. A subsequent audit revealed sloppy procedures and a lack of financial accountability. Collins complained to de Valera that Brugha's behaviour was 'not gentlemanly' and that he was 'raking up petty technicalities'.<sup>38</sup> Mulcahy was also incensed by these events and alleged that Brugha was trying to stir up dissent. The episode was one of the lowest points before the Anglo-Irish truce in the fractious relationship between Brugha and Collins; it also further eroded relations with Mulcahy.<sup>39</sup>

Brugha's fixation with financial accountability was not exclusively reserved for the Minister for Finance. In April 1921, relations with Harry Boland became difficult when Brugha relentlessly queried accounting discrepancies for 650 Thompson submachine-guns which Boland had acquired in the United States as part of a covert arms-purchasing programme.<sup>40</sup> His over-zealous attention to financial procedures possibly stemmed from the devastating impact that the collapse of his father's extensive business interests in the late 1880s had on his family, not only causing bankruptcy and the loss of the family home but also forcing Brugha to give up his medical studies.<sup>41</sup> Although Brugha's adherence to proper financial procedures would, in ordinary circumstances, be regarded as admirable, these were not normal times. He certainly displayed a lack of trust in his political and military colleagues. It seems somewhat ludicrous for him to attach such importance to fastidious financial accountability in the murky and dangerous realm of illegal arms-smuggling by an underground government in a foreign country. More importantly, this episode contributed to some of the bitter divisions that emerged in the cabinet on the eve of the truce.<sup>42</sup>

As the War of Independence entered its third and more brutal phase, Brugha was left in the invidious position of having to defend particular IRA killings to which as Minister he had objected. One prominent example was the unauthorised abduction and killing of Mary Lindsay, a unionist, and her butler by Cork No. 1 Brigade in March 1921. Local IRA believed that Lindsay was a spy who passed information to the authorities that had led directly to the execution of five of their men.<sup>43</sup> Collins was aware of this but did not bring the matter to the attention of GHQ or the Minister for Defence. In July 1921 Brugha was delegated the unpleasant task of having to justify the killings while also regretting the circumstances 'which necessitated this drastic action by our local commanders'.<sup>44</sup> The Lindsay affair clearly demonstrated that there was a lack of control in the army, that GHQ directives had been broken and that a code of honour had been transgressed by killing a woman.

Periodically, plots to assassinate members of the British cabinet and other British political figures were floated, not only by Brugha but also by Collins. In 1918 Brugha personally led a mission to London to assassinate members of the

British cabinet in the event of the imposition of conscription in Ireland. When the threat of conscription subsided, Brugha's mission became redundant, so he and his men returned to Dublin.<sup>45</sup> The following year another mission was assessed by Liam Tobin and others. They advised Collins, Brugha and Mulcahy against it owing to insufficient support from the London Volunteers. The plans were abandoned, even though Brugha wanted the operation to go ahead. By contrast, in 1920 Brugha did not favour a proposal by Collins to launch an assassination plot in the event of the death of Terence MacSwiney, who was then on hunger strike in Brixton Prison. In any event, the idea was abandoned.<sup>46</sup>

There were further vague proposals to assassinate members of the British cabinet in 1920 and again in 1921. Seán Mac Eoin, the Longford IRA leader, recalled meeting Brugha in March 1921 and accepting an assignment to lead an assassination party to London in retaliation for the outrages perpetrated by members of the Black and Tans and Auxiliary Division. Mac Eoin describes his first impression of Brugha as 'a man who was nothing if not capable and thorough'. Following this meeting, Mac Eoin happened to meet Collins, who reacted furiously on learning of the nature of his business with Brugha. 'You are mad', he told Mac Eoin, and asked: 'Do you think that England has only the makings of one Cabinet?' He ordered Mac Eoin to return to his brigade.<sup>47</sup> In the event, Brugha's instruction was countermanded by either Collins or Mulcahy or both, but significantly this was accepted by the Minister for Defence.<sup>48</sup> This incident further demonstrates how government defence and military matters lacked a cohesive and strategic cabinet policy.

Within the cabinet Brugha was closest to de Valera, who treated him with a regard verging on reverence. As Minister for Defence, Brugha commanded much respect at cabinet meetings, but it was apparent, not least on a personal level, that he was not universally liked. His uncompromising nature and dour personality may have been contributing factors,<sup>49</sup> but it is important to note that many of the derogatory comments by former colleagues were uttered or written in the light of Brugha's anti-Treaty stance and Dáil speeches. For instance, during a heated (even frenzied) Dáil debate in January 1922, W.T. Cosgrave stated that 'except for war he [Brugha] was not worth a damn'.<sup>50</sup> In his statement to the Bureau of Military History submitted in 1954, Ernest Blythe claimed that Brugha had 'limited intelligence'.<sup>51</sup> In the case of both of these examples, the evidence suggests otherwise. On the other hand, Piaras Béaslaí, himself pro-Treaty and once a close friend of Brugha, describes him as 'of the highest character, ardently patriotic and devoted to the cause of Ireland ... a man of the kindest nature, a sincere friend, gentle in manner, but ... as brave as a lion'.<sup>52</sup>

As the Anglo-Irish truce came into view, Brugha was increasingly apprehensive that some of his colleagues appeared too willing to compromise on the goal of a republic. He also expressed reservations that 'if the fighting were stopped it might not be easy to get things going again', but he did not insist on this point.<sup>53</sup> Terms for a truce were agreed on 9 July 1921 and came into effect on 11 July. Among other things, the truce allowed normal life to resume. For the Brugha family, it meant reunion in the Rathmines family home for the first time in several months. In addition to simple pleasures such as meals with his family and listening to his wife, Caitlín, play the piano, Brugha enjoyed a short holiday with his family on the north Wexford coast and picnic trips to Howth.

Following exploratory peace talks with Lloyd George in London, de Valera hosted a meeting of his 'inner cabinet'. Some prominent cabinet members were not only favourably disposed to negotiations but also appeared resigned to an acceptance of dominion status for Ireland. Brugha, however, insisted that it was unacceptable to consider an offer that effectively dismissed any consideration of a republic.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, he accepted the cabinet decision to negotiate a peace.

On 14 September the Dáil selected members of a delegation to enter negotiations with the British. Later, de Valera revealed to Joseph McGarrity, the leader of Clan na Gael, that he would have liked Brugha to have gone to London as part of the delegation but deemed him too argumentative: 'Cathal is the honestest [*sic*] and finest soul in the world, but he is a bit slow at seeing fine differences and rather stubborn'.<sup>55</sup> In any case, Brugha insisted that 'he could not leave the army'. It certainly suited Brugha to remain at home while Collins was busily engaged in London. During the truce, Brugha attempted to reassert his ministerial authority, reform aspects of the IRA and explore a few of his own military strategies in the event of the collapse of negotiations. On 17 November 1921 he offered fresh commissions 'to put the army in an unequivocal position as the legal defence force of the nation, under the control of the civil government'. This reform of the IRA provided Brugha with more control over the army at the expense of Collins, Mulcahy and the IRB.<sup>56</sup>

During the Treaty negotiations Brugha's relationship with Mulcahy was practically severed, following Mulcahy's appointment of Eoin O'Duffy as deputy Chief of Staff without Brugha's approval. In a lacerating communication, Brugha accused Mulcahy of insubordination, informing him:

*'before you are very much older, my friend, I shall show you that I have as little intention of taking direction from you as to how I should reprove inefficiency or negligence on the part of yourself or the D/I [Collins], as I have of allowing you to appoint a Deputy Chief of Staff [Eoin O'Duffy] of your own choosing. In regard to your inability to maintain harmony and discipline among the staff; it was scarcely necessary to remind me of the fact, as your shortcomings in that respect ... have been quite apparent for a considerable time.'*<sup>57</sup>

The Minister for Defence's attempt to sack Mulcahy was averted only by the intervention of de Valera. Angered by an unseemly and unnecessary spat within the army administration at a delicate juncture, de Valera described the chaos as akin to 'mutiny'. This episode further revealed the stark tensions that divided the republican leadership just days before the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed.<sup>58</sup>

A fear that the truce might be short-lived also led to Brugha's more active involvement in procuring arms. As details of the Treaty negotiations began to emerge, the most contentious issue in the draft provisions was the requirement that public representatives and servants swear an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Brugha flatly refused to contemplate this and insisted that 'if the British wanted an oath from us ... we might give it, provided they swore to us in return'.<sup>59</sup> Treaty terms between representatives of the Irish and British governments, signed on 6 December 1921, were debated in the Dáil between 14 December and 7 January 1922. For Brugha, approval of the Treaty meant the disestablishment of his cherished republic. It occasioned an extraordinarily vicious contribution to the Treaty debates that cast him in an unforgiving light of his own making. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Dáil vote in favour of the settlement, he undertook to ensure that discipline would be maintained in the army.<sup>60</sup> On 9 January 1922 de Valera failed to be re-elected president and was replaced by Arthur Griffith. With the appointment of a new cabinet, Brugha's tenure as Minister for Defence was terminated and he was succeeded by Richard Mulcahy, thus ending his ministerial career.<sup>61</sup>

Brugha was both a constitutionalist and a militant.<sup>62</sup> At times, his role as a scrupulous minister gave way to more extreme stances, but during the War of Independence he was certainly more successful in the political realm than in the military one. His business acumen—the need for discipline, accountability and adherence to procedure—was a strength that he brought to the role of Minister for Defence. Yet, the same qualities meant an inevitable collision with Collins and also with Mulcahy. While this has understandably dominated the historiography given the enduring and widespread fascination with Collins, it is important to understand that a significant cause of the enmity between them was Brugha's insistence as Minister for Defence on the ultimate authority of Dáil Éireann.

Brugha's impact as minister is probably best described as modest. His ministerial influence and effectiveness were curtailed partly by the extraordinary circumstances of working in an underground government, partly by his choice to continue the parallel management of his business interests, and more significantly by the unwarranted interference of cabinet colleagues.





The Brugha family at their Rathmines home in 1921. From left to right: Cathal, Fidelma, Nollaig, Ruairí, Caitlín, Nónín, and Brenda. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.20PO-1K44-09).



Cathal Brugha pictured in the 1910s. Short and dextrous, he was often suited for professional purposes. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.2018.0189).



A double action Smith and Wesson Revolver, used by by Cathal Brugha. (© National Museum of Ireland).



Cathal Brugha depicted in his Irish Volunteer uniform remains one of the most enduring and commonly used images of him, likely taken before 1916. (Military Archives of Ireland).



A moustached Cathal Brugha in his Volunteers uniform, cropped from a larger group photo of the O'Donovan Rossa funeral committee (Military Archives of Ireland)



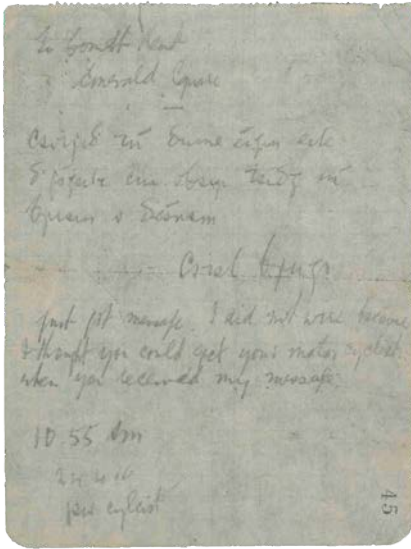
The O'Donovan Rossa Funeral Committee photographed in 1915, of which Cathal Brugha was a member. Brugha is pictured in the second-row, fourth from right. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.13PC-1B54-09).



Nurses' Home South Dublin Union where Commandant Eamonn Ceannt set up his headquarters during the 1916 Easter Rising. (Military Archives of Ireland).



Front door of Nurses' Home which had been barricaded by the Volunteers. It was in this hallway that Cathal Brugha was severely injured holding back the British troops. (Military Archives of Ireland).



Dispatch issued by Cathal Brugha in the midst of the 1916 Easter Rising, partly written in Irish (Military Archives of Ireland).



Following his wounds after the Rising, along with his permanent limp, Brugha walked with a cane. This cane, belonged to him, revealed a hidden sword! (Military Archives of Ireland).



Cathal Brugha arrested by the Dublin Metropolitan Police along with Count Plunkett on 10 June 1917. The two were planned to be speakers at a public meeting in support of republican prisoners. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.18PC-1A25-20).

# Scheme of Organisation

PROPOSED BY

CATHAL BRUGHA.

1. All persons of Irish birth or descent, irrespective of class or creed, who accept the Constitution of Sinn Féin, are eligible for membership, save that no member of the British armed forces or pensioner thereof, nor any person who has taken an oath of allegiance to the British Government shall be eligible while he retains the office or position involving that oath.

2. The membership fee shall be a minimum of 1/- per annum; and in addition thereto one penny per member per month, payable monthly to the National Council.

3. A Club shall consist of not less than ten members, and shall be directed by a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Committee of not less than three, elected annually by the members of the Club.

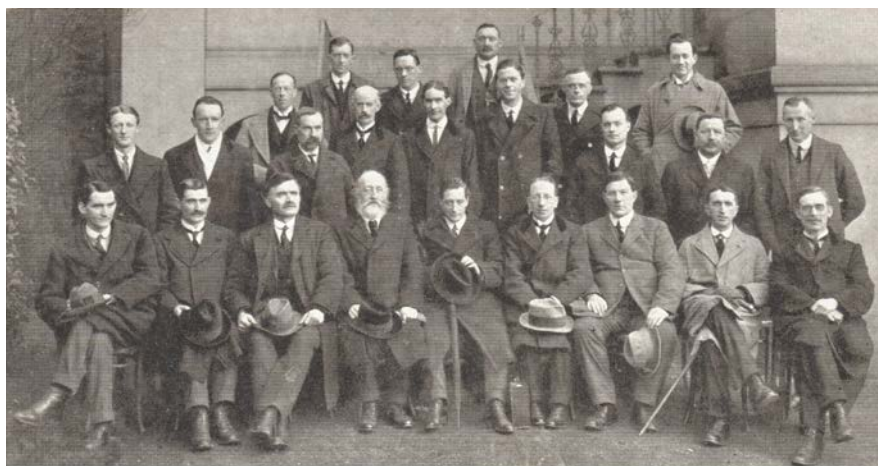
4. Each Club shall pay an annual affiliation fee of £1 to the Honorary Treasurers of the National Council.

5. Not more than one Club shall be established in any parish except with the express permission of the National Council or Executive Council. In cities and towns divided into wards only one Club shall be established in each ward.

Cathal Brugha was one of the key organisers in the revival of Sinn Féin the post-Rising period. He drafted a proposed scheme of organisation for the party. While not adopted in full, much of what he proposed was later incorporated into the party programme. (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).



Election badge worn by Cathal Brugha's supporters during the 1918 general election. Brugha was elected for the constituency of Waterford and had previously often travelled to the Gaeltacht in the county. (Military Archives of Ireland).



DAIL EIREANN, AN CHEAD TIONOL, 21 EANAIR, 1919.  
 SREATH 1.—(i dtosach)—S. O'Dochartaigh, S. O. hAodha, S. O'Ceallaigh, Conte Plungedad, C. Brugha, S. T. O'Ceallaigh,  
 P. O'Maille, S. Breathnach, T. O'Ceallaigh. SREATH 2.—S. MacSuibhne, C. O. hUigin, D. O'Buachala, E. O'Dubhgain,  
 P. Béaslaoi, An Dr. O'Riain, An Dr. O'Cuadhloigh, P. Mac an Bhaird, P. O'Maoldomhnaigh, R. Suataman. SREATH 3.—  
 R. Bartuin, R. O'Maolchatha, C. O'Coileain, P. O'Seanachain, S. de Burca.

Cathal Brugha sits in the middle on the front row in the group of twenty-four TDs present for the first sitting of Dáil Éireann on 21 January 1919. For the only time, Brugha acted as Ceann Comhairle for this initial meeting. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.2019.0044).



On 21 January 1919, Cathal Brugha gathers with other newly elected Sinn Féin TDs at the Mansion House. (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).



The second sitting of Dáil Éireann, 10 April 1919. Éamon de Valera, now escaped from Lincoln Jail in England, assumed the Presidency and appointed a new cabinet. Cathal Brugha, (front row, third from right), was to become the Minister of Defence. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol, KMGLM.18PC-1121-02).



On 10 January 1922, following the election of Arthur Griffith as the President of Dáil Éireann, Éamon de Valera led the anti-Treaty Sinn Féin TDs in protest out of the chamber. As a photographer prepares to take an image, a candid image reveals both a smiling de Valera and Cathal Brugha. Of note, to Brugha's right in the front row, is fellow TDs Joseph MacDonagh and Francis Ferran. All three men would be dead in over a year. MacDonagh would die of an illness following imprisonment in Mountjoy Jail on 25 December 1922, while Ferran died while imprisoned in the Curragh Camp on 10 June 1923. (Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).



Cathal Brugha in early 1919. Brugha served as the Dáil's Minister of Defence from April 1919 until January 1922. His ministry was to prove divisive, and he would clash with other leading figures such as Richard Mulcahy and Michael Collins. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.20PC-1A45-09).



With a tricolour flowing behind them, a group of anti-Treaty Sinn Féin TDs gather outside the chamber following the vote on the Presidency of Dáil Éireann on 10 January 1922. Cathal Brugha pictured centre with his hat, cane, and jacket – Éamon de Valera to his left, Constance Markievicz to his right. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.2015.0677).



In the midst of negotiations between the pro- and anti-Treaty Sinn Féin TDs, Cathal Brugha emerging from the Mansion House in April 1922. (Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).



Cathal Brugha strikes a pose as he addresses a crowd at an election gathering in Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny in 1922. Éamon de Valera is seated on the platform behind him. (Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).



From the same election gathering, in a striking candid moment, Cathal Brugha smiles at the crowd. (Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).

## CATHAL BRUGHA

Lies Dead = = Dead for IRELAND.

*He fought that IRELAND might be as free as any other land.*

*In EASTER, 1916, he fought the same fight.*

*The English found him riddled with bullets, half-dead, semi-delirious, singing "God Save Ireland."*

*He was first Minister of Defence for the IRISH REPUBLIC, and remained in that position throughout the Terror.*

*In 1922, with 18 Men, he upheld the REPUBLIC in O'Connell Street—calm, fearless, honourable—against overwhelming odds for several days.*

*He would not surrender to the ENGLISH in 1916.*

*He would not surrender to the PRO-ENGLISH in 1922.*

*He is a link with PATRICK PEARSE, ROBERT EMMET, PATRICK SARSFIELD, OWEN ROE O'NEILL, and BRIAN who drove the Danes from Ireland.*

Ar veir De go raib a anam.

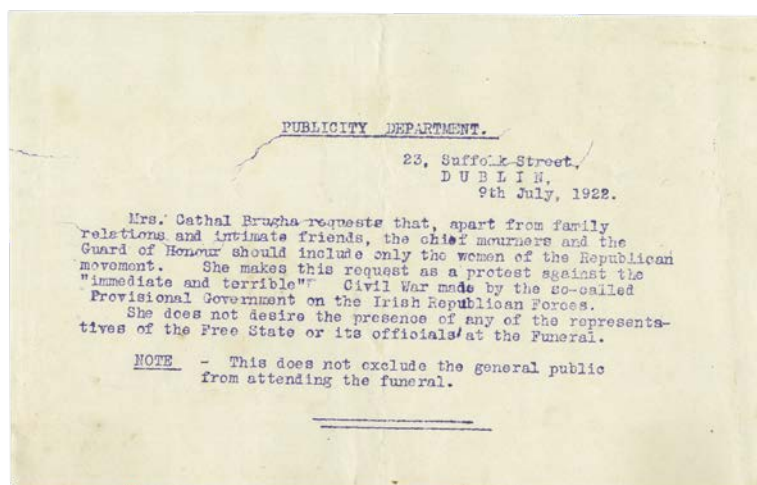
On his death, Cathal Brugha was regularly invoked in republican newsheets and other printed material for propaganda purposes. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.20NO-1D13-16)

The death mask of Cathal Brugha done in plaster by sculptor Albert Power. (© National Museum of Ireland).





Shortly after his death, Cathal Brugha's remains lie in state in the chapel of the Mater Hospital, flanked by a Cumann na mBan honour guard. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.20PO-1A35-17)



Notice issued by the office of the political party, Cumann na Poblachta, ahead of Cathal Brugha's funeral. Brugha's widow Caitlin made a specific request aside from relations and close friends, 'the chief mourners and the Guard of Honour should include only the women of the Republican movement.' (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.20NO-1K56-04)



Cathal Brugha's funeral procession proceeding through Glasnevin Cemetery on 10 July 1922, with Brugha's comrade and future President of Ireland, Seán T. O'Kelly, as one of the pall-bearers. O'Kelly also did the oration. (© National Museum of Ireland).



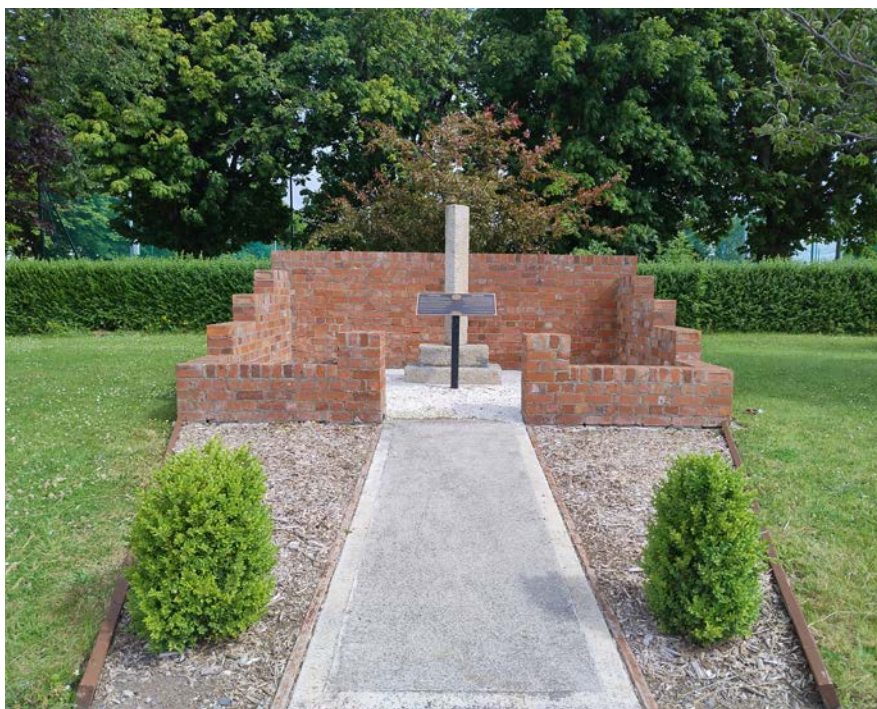
A floral tribute being laid to Cathal Brugha in his memory near where he was mortally wounded around the rear of the Hamman Hotel on 5 July 1922. (Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW, KMGLM.20PC-1A45-16)



Caitlín Brugha addressing an election meeting at Kilbrien, Co. Waterford on the campaign trail in 1923. (© Waterford County Museum).



Caitlín Brugha at Kilbrien, Co. Waterford during the 1923 general election. After her husband's death, Caitlín became an important custodian of her husband's memory. (© Waterford County Museum).



Memorial to Cathal Brugha resembling a medieval ogham stone unveiled in 2022 the grounds of Cathal Brugha Barracks in Rathmines, Dublin city (Military Archives of Ireland).



Commemorative plaque to Cathal Brugha sculpted by Albert Power adorning the front gate of Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin city. A sister plaque can be found on O'Connell Street near the original site of Hamman Hotel. (Military Archives of Ireland).



## 8. 'WOULD PREFER TO DIE BY AN ORANGE BULLET OR AN ENGLISH BULLET':

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### CATHAL BRUGHÁ AND THE DRIFT TO CIVIL WAR

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GERARD SHANNON

On 9 December 1921, following the cabinet vote to send the Treaty to Dáil Éireann for ratification, the chief opponent of the settlement, President Éamon de Valera, issued his first public statement:

*'The terms of this agreement are in violent conflict with the wishes of the majority of this nation as expressed freely in the successive elections during the last three years ... I cannot recommend this acceptance of this Treaty, either to Dáil Éireann or the country. In this attitude I am supported by the Ministers of Home Affairs and Defence.'*<sup>1</sup>

With these words, Cathal Brugha and Austin Stack (the Minister for Home Affairs) were the first public figures to stand with de Valera in what the latter referred to in the same statement as the 'great test of our people'. Both Brugha and Stack were said to have helped de Valera to prepare this statement, which was the first public indication of a split in the revolutionary movement. Moreover, de Valera had indicated to Erskine Childers that the support of individuals such as Brugha and Stack was important in demonstrating his own opposition to the settlement.<sup>2</sup>

It was no surprise that the passionately republican, strong-minded and obstinate Brugha should be opposed to the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The establishment of a 26-county Irish Free State as a British dominion was not in keeping with his republican views. Along with de Valera and Stack, he had been in the minority at cabinet level who had voted against sending the Treaty to the Dáil for ratification. Speaking in the Dáil during the subsequent Treaty debates from December 1921 to January 1922, Brugha firmly rejected the 'stepping stone' argument of Collins and those on the pro-Treaty side, insisting that they must maintain the Irish Republic.

During the initial debates Brugha had insisted that, as long as he remained minister, 'I will guarantee that discipline, so far as I can maintain it, will be maintained in the army', although he added that, if the Treaty passed, 'I am no

longer Minister of Defence and am not responsible for the army'.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, he reaffirmed this statement on discipline when the vote was finally held on the Treaty.<sup>4</sup>

On 7 January Brugha asserted that his opposition to the Treaty did not mean that he was opposed to peace. Responding to a comment from the pro-Treaty side 'that the Minister for Defence did not want peace', he posed the question:

'Does any man contemplate with equanimity a renewal of the conditions in this country in which his wife will be dragged in the dead of the night out of her house, hustled along through the garden, and put into a motor lorry, and kept there in order that she will not be present while her husband is being murdered if the English cut-throats can get him? Does any man look forward with pleasure to having his little children frightened out of their lives by the spectacle of armed men rushing in and running through the house? ... apparently [I do not] want peace but prefer ... this kind of thing. I am against this resolution because I know this Treaty can't achieve peace.'<sup>5</sup>

As he was frequently to do in the months ahead, Brugha would promote de Valera's idea of 'external association' with Britain as an alternative to the Treaty in the form of Document No. 2. Though this notion of 'external association' had already been rejected by the British during the Treaty negotiations, Document No. 2 revised the Treaty's defence clauses and removed references to the Crown and the oath of allegiance.<sup>6</sup> At the heart of Brugha's appeal to support the document was the idea of common citizenship: 'Common citizenship [under the Treaty] will mean that we are British subjects, and reciprocal citizenship will mean that we will remain Irish Republicans. There is no letting down the Irish Republic ... I defy ... anybody ... to prove that we have deviated by one hair's breadth from the Republican position by making such a proposal.'<sup>7</sup>

On the same date, however, Brugha made his most infamous and well-known contribution to the debate. In response to Griffith's calling Collins 'the man who won the war', Brugha replied:

'It is necessary for me to define Michael Collins' position in the army. Now, I have my department divided up into sections. I have the ordinary Ministerial part of it; the civil part of it; the liaison part of it; and then [army] Head Quarters Staff ... and at the head of each section of the Head Quarters Staff is another man working for the Chief of Staff. One of those heads of the subsections is Mr Michael Collins; and to use a word which he has on more than one occasion used, and which he is fond of using, he is merely a subordinate in the Department of Defence.'

To cries of ‘Shame!’ and ‘Get on with the Treaty!’, Brugha continued:

‘One member was specifically selected by the Press and the people to put him into a position which he never held; he was made a romantic figure, a mystical character such as this person certainly is not; the gentlemen I refer to is Michael Collins.’<sup>8</sup>

While perhaps a result of the poor dealings between the two men over the last year, and Brugha’s own suspicions of Collins’s influence in the IRB, Brugha’s attack on Collins was unquestionably a low point in the debates and not at all representative of Collins’s considerable talents and influence across the revolutionary movement. Both contemporary and subsequent commentary has reflected that the speech damaged Brugha not only in the public mind but also in his subsequent legacy. Todd Andrews, then a young IRA Volunteer, felt that the remarks ‘diminished Brugha’s stature while evoking sympathy for Collins’, while Jennie Wyse Power remembered it as the ‘most disgraceful public utterance I have ever listened to ... [afterward] there was dead silence in the chamber’.<sup>9</sup> It has been suggested that Brugha’s remarks may have helped to swing the vote on the Treaty towards the pro-Treaty side.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the view of one republican veteran, Kit Byrne, ‘If Liam Mellows was picked to end debate on the Treaty ... [it] would never have been ratified. But Cathal attacked both Collins and Griffith instead and that was a great mistake.’<sup>11</sup>

What is rarely acknowledged, however, is that Brugha was conscious of the poor reception of his remarks and addressed the issue. During the debate on 9 January, which led to the vote for Griffith as Dáil president, Brugha said:

‘It will be just as well for me to say at the start, having regard to what occurred on Saturday night, that I have decided to avoid saying anything of a contentious nature ... in connection with Mr Michael Collins ... It could not be said truly that any one man won the war. It has not been won at all. I may tell you I am in a position to know ... that the men mostly responsible for bringing us to the invincible position we held before this Treaty was signed are men whose names, if I mention them here, would not be known.’<sup>12</sup>

To laughter, Brugha stated: ‘There is only one man who can lead us properly and keep us all together. If Eamon de Valera did not happen to be President, who would have kept Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and myself together?’ Despite the efforts of Brugha and other anti-Treaty deputies, the Treaty was ratified by a majority of the members of Dáil Éireann that January.

Given his previous disregard for the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Brugha was naturally incensed that the IRB's supreme council had recommended the ratification of the Treaty to all IRB members. On 12 January 1922, with the Treaty now ratified, Brugha made his displeasure quite clear to supreme council member Eoin O'Duffy and predicted imminent conflict. In a particularly embittered letter to O'Duffy, he wrote:

*'I made up my mind that when fighting started again I would challenge these vile creatures, who thus prostituted the body that brought the Republic into existence ... Fighting has now been temporarily stayed, but only temporarily, I believe, that in our time, sooner or later, it will begin. When it does you may expect to hear from me. I will give you and the creatures referred to above an opportunity of showing your willingness to face certain death for Ireland, and you may be sure that I will not ask you to do anything that I am not prepared to do myself.'*<sup>13</sup>

Only two days before this letter, de Valera had led the withdrawal of the deputies from the chamber in protest at Arthur Griffith's election to the Dáil Presidency.

As the split in the revolutionary movement began the inevitable drift towards civil war, Brugha's opposition to the Treaty took several forms over the next six months. He would stand with de Valera in presenting a republican alternative to the Treaty and publicly support the efforts of the anti-Treaty IRA in their own opposition to the Provisional Government, yet on his own side and towards his pro-Treaty opponents he would push the idea of unity and the importance of halting the outbreak of civil war. While his contributions and actions would sometimes be inconsistent and have mixed results, his efforts nonetheless were emblematic of anti-Treaty republicanism in this critical period.

On 12 February 1922, anti-Treaty Sinn Féin TDs appeared on three platforms along O'Connell Street, and on one of these Brugha addressed the crowd. Much of the press coverage would mention that Brugha would often open his remarks in the Irish language, and on occasion his speech would be completely in Irish. As will be seen, he often referred to the usage of the language, which remained one of his great abiding interests even in the midst of this political turmoil. Brugha proposed that 'there was never more necessity for the Irish language than at the present time', and said that the printing of documents in English by the pro-Treaty Provisional Government showed that those 'trying to subvert the Republic were apparently trying to subvert the Irish language'. He added that all republicans wanted was:

‘that the people will get a fair chance to decide for themselves whether they are going to be British subjects or remain citizens of the Irish Republic. Practically the whole Press of Ireland is against us, and they will see, as far as they could do it, that the people would not have a straight issue put before them.’<sup>14</sup>

Beyond such public pronouncements, one of the more notable political initiatives with which Brugha was involved was the founding on 17 March of the new Cumann na Poblachta political party, with de Valera as president. Brugha was one of three trustees of this party, along with Austin Stack and Mary MacSwiney. The party’s offices were based at 23 Suffolk Street, and its manifesto was unashamedly republican and anti-Treaty in outlook. Its first aim was to ‘uphold, strengthen, and secure international recognition for the Republic established by the people’s will in accordance with the nation’s right to sovereign independence and to ... self-determination’. The manifesto, signed by republican members of Dáil Éireann, affirmed that ‘we take our stand on the Proclamation of the Republic’.<sup>15</sup> The party, however, was to struggle with getting funding, despite a tour of the United States and a public appeal, and Austin Stack was ultimately forced to borrow £14,000 from the anti-Treaty IRA.<sup>16</sup>

The weekly republican periodical *Republic of Ireland* came to function as the party’s official organ, and Brugha is listed as a member of the paper’s committee.<sup>17</sup> The front page of the first issue—several days before the final Treaty vote—contained a small editorial by Brugha, in both English and Irish. He excoriated the deputies who pushed for the Treaty’s acceptance and praised the current revolutionary generation. He then added:

‘And now after centuries of suffering borne by the nation’s manhood does anyone imagine that they will bend the knee to England at last? Does anyone suppose that now they are strong they are going to do that they scorned doing when they were weak? If anybody does think that, then he does not know the men of Ireland.’<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime, the leadership of what was to constitute the anti-Treaty IRA demanded of Richard Mulcahy, the Provisional Government’s Minister for Defence, the holding of an IRA Army Convention at which members of IRA brigades would vote on acceptance of the Treaty. Both sides were certain that the convention would reject the Treaty and the authority of Dáil Éireann, thereby setting the IRA in opposition to the Provisional Government. This resulted in a convoluted back-and-forth with Mulcahy over several weeks. Mulcahy was first

amenable to the proposal but then banned the holding of the convention. The anti-Treaty IRA leadership, consisting of figures such as Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows and Liam Lynch, held the Army Convention anyway.

In a letter subsequently published in several newspapers and written on 24 March, Brugha made clear his support for the anti-Treaty IRA's push for the proposed convention.<sup>19</sup> Referring to his tenure as the Minister for Defence, he recalled how 'it was my duty to safeguard the army from being directed and controlled by a secret society whilst it happened nominally under my charge'—a clear reference to the IRB. Undoubtedly perceiving that the IRB had swayed the Dáil vote on the Treaty, Brugha ended the letter with: 'There is no question that they [the army] are justified in now holding their convention'.

Such a public stance in support of the anti-Treaty IRA was to have mixed results. Much has been said about the infamous press conference in mid-March 1922 in which members of the press interviewed Rory O'Connor. When asked whether the Irish people should expect a military dictatorship, O'Connor flippantly replied, 'You can take it that way if you like'. What is often little mentioned about this ill-judged exchange is that the press conference took place at the Suffolk Street offices of Cumann na Poblachta, surely not a sterling advertisement for the new political initiative in which Brugha was involved<sup>20</sup>.

Of note, at the convention itself, which took place between the end of March and early April 1922, Brugha voted in opposition to a motion suggesting that the anti-Treaty forces might try to prevent the upcoming June general election. It is likely that Brugha was present at the convention because he was a member of the outgoing executive and a delegate of the Dublin Brigade's 4th Battalion. He was not, however, allowed to address the gathering of IRA officers, nor was he accepted as a proposed chairman—another example of the IRA leaders' uneasy relationship with politicians.<sup>21</sup> As Seán T. O'Kelly later remarked, 'They do not think even Brugha or [Harry] Boland good enough fighting men to join them'.<sup>22</sup>

Not surprisingly, there is no indication that Brugha was involved in the planning and subsequent seizure of the Four Courts and other key buildings in Dublin city centre by the anti-Treaty IRA on 14 April 1922.

During this turbulent period Dáil Éireann still held public sessions, with the anti-Treaty contingent headed by de Valera making up the first official opposition in the chamber. Brugha made several contributions, such as querying the formation of the pro-Treaty military force, matters related to his former ministry and various procedural matters. Such debates inevitably often became acrimonious.

On 2 March Brugha was one of the anti-Treaty republican deputies who pushed for the expansion of the electoral franchise, so as to allow women over the age of 21 the chance to vote. The motion was defeated and was generally mocked by the pro-Treaty side as an effort, in the words of Arthur Griffith, to 'torpedo the Treaty' and as 'a mischievous trick'. Brugha's contribution was notable in that he anchored his support for the motion in his revolutionary experiences. As he put it,

'I support this Bill because those of us who took part in the establishment of the Republic in Easter Week are bound by the promise which was given in the Proclamation. There are several other reasons, in addition to that, but the part taken by the Cumann na mBan and other women during Easter Week deserves some recognition from us. ... Moreover, most of you know that that enterprise was not received too popularly by the Irish public during Easter Week or immediately after. But it was the women, when they organised their public Masses and their public meetings as far as they could, who kept the spirit alive, who kept the flame alive and the flag flying. For that too they deserve the recognition.'<sup>23</sup>

On 17 May Brugha made one of his most striking contributions to Dáil Éireann. During a debate on a statement by pro- and anti-Treaty IRA officers who were pushing for peace and unity, Brugha referred to the endurance of partition and the plight of the Catholic minority in the north as sectarian violence continued. During this contribution, he made clear his distaste for and concern over pending civil war with his former comrades:

'Now, we have made repeated efforts to achieve peace. The difference between the two sides is so great that it seems almost hopeless to bring up these differences. I have one suggestion to make—that is in the last resort rather than have fratricidal strife, because it looks very much as if that was coming now, we could all unite on Ulster. This Treaty, amongst other bad things, means partition ... I suggest now that both sides unite in defence of our people in the north.'<sup>24</sup>

In one particular poignant instance, he said:

'I for one would prefer to die by an English bullet or an Orange bullet rather than by a bullet fired by one of the men with whom we have been fighting together during the last six years, on and off. I am never going to fire a bullet at any of these men and I hope that I am not going to die by a bullet from any of them. ... Let those who have no inclination for ... politics ... go and help our people in the north.'

Brugha was also to be central to peace initiatives and attempts to promote unity amongst the former comrades in these difficult few months. His own contributions to these were to be often mixed, and his efforts were also indicative of the inability of, or lack of political imagination on, both sides to breach the Treaty divide.

The most notable of these initiatives was what led to the pact election, which had its roots in the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis on 21–22 February. With the Dáil having already voted on the Treaty and Cumann na mBan having been the first republican organisation to announce its opposition, it was expected that support for the Treaty would be put to the vote at this Ard-Fheis. De Valera and Collins reached a compromise whereby de Valera remained the head of Sinn Féin and the Ard-Fheis was adjourned for three months until a republican constitution was decided, with the election to be held thereafter.<sup>25</sup>

This compromise perhaps goes some way towards explaining Brugha's comments at a speech in Waterford town in March 1922, in which he referred to the Parnell split 'and how the country became unified afterwards, and unfortunately it looks like we are on the verge of another split'. While still criticising Griffith and Collins, he went on to say: 'Above everything, if we could not agree, let us not fall out with one another. Have no rows and tolerate everybody's honest opinion.'<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps in this spirit Brugha was central to a peace conference that took place in the Mansion House from 19 to 23 April, headed by Archbishop Edward Byrne, which involved representatives of the pro- and anti-Treaty factions of Sinn Féin and members of the Labour Party. At one juncture Brugha suggested that Griffith and Collins were British agents (remarks that he withdrew), and the Labour leader William O'Brien later wrote of an exchange in which Collins said to Brugha, 'I suppose we [himself and Griffith] are two of the Ministers whose blood is to be waded through?', to which Brugha replied, 'Yes, you are two'—showing little lessening in the personal animosity between them. (Their exchange was a reference to de Valera's controversial statement on wading to freedom through the blood of Irishmen some weeks before.)<sup>27</sup>

While this peace conference ultimately failed, much more successful was the agreement between Collins and de Valera that led to the pact election agreement in May 1922. Sometimes dismissed as putting an anti-democratic choice before the Irish electorate, it was nonetheless a genuine attempt to stave off civil war. Under this agreement, both pro- and anti-Treaty Sinn Féin would put forward a joint panel of candidates and then form a coalition government, thereby not making the Treaty itself an issue. Cathal Brugha would support this agreement, being one of the deputies who unanimously voted on it in the Dáil.<sup>28</sup>

Brugha then threw himself wholeheartedly into campaigning for the election, running for the constituency of Waterford and East Tipperary, making numerous subsequent election appearances on platforms. A united revolutionary movement remained at the forefront of his mind in these appearances. In one, he said that ‘they in Dáil Éireann recognised that without unity they could achieve nothing. The generation that did what they had done in the past few years could achieve its final freedom and it deserved it.’<sup>29</sup> Brugha, like other republican speakers, seemed critical of the Labour Party for taking part in the election. At one appearance in Dungarvan, he said to the crowd that ‘there was one way by which England could re-conquer the country and that was by having them disunited’. According to the same news report, he then read aloud the leaflet of the Labour programme, and said that if he were elected he would do his best to have that programme carried out. He said, however, that Sinn Féin ‘were not in a position to have it carried out at present, I hope, in the last stages of the fight against the common enemy’.<sup>30</sup>

The election, of course, was an emphatic win for the pro-Treaty Sinn Féin candidates; they and other pro-Treaty parties took up a majority share, over 70 per cent, of the overall vote. Brugha came third in the constituency of Waterford and East Tipperary, with 5,680 votes. He seemed pleased at the election outcome, no doubt looking forward to the possible coalition government that would emerge. According to one account by his comrade J.J. O’Kelly (Sceilg), ‘Though Cathal’s foot still pained him sorely, I scarcely ever saw him more buoyant or more hopeful of harmony in the offing’.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, despite Brugha’s reported happiness at the outcome of the election, disputes over the contested Free State constitution published on the day of the election or Collins’s repudiation of the pact staved off the possibility of any coalition taking shape. More seriously, disputes within the anti-Treaty IRA came to a head with yet another convention held in the Mansion House on 18 June. The anti-Treaty IRA’s Chief of Staff, Liam Lynch, was challenged by the faction headed by Rory O’Connor over recent peace efforts. In the midst of this dispute, Tom Barry introduced a motion to declare war on the remaining British forces in Ireland should they not withdraw. The motion was defeated, but the contingent led by Rory O’Connor announced that they were withdrawing back to the Four Courts in protest.

Seán MacBride, who had been part of O’Connor’s faction, recalled Brugha’s attempt to appeal to those at the convention for unity:

**‘Cathal had been strongly against Barry’s resolution, but was also strongly against the compromise resolution because he thought an agreement could be found and that this wasn’t the best time to declare war on England’.**

Following an intervention by Brugha, according to the account of one IRA leader, Liam Lynch and representatives of the First Southern Division were allowed to attend further meetings with the Four Courts garrison, with Joe McKelvey now the anti-Treaty IRA Chief of Staff.<sup>32</sup> Events, however, were to overtake these tenuous efforts at unity.

The national situation changed dramatically with the bombardment of the Four Courts on 28 June 1922 by the forces of the pro-Treaty side, soon to be better known as the National Army of the Irish Free State. Internal disputes were put aside. As Cork IRA veteran Florrie O'Donoghue stated, nothing could have united the anti-Treaty IRA more than the 'cruel bludgeoning' of the Four Courts.<sup>33</sup>

In these crucial hours Brugha resolved on his next steps. Early on 29 June he sought spiritual guidance and prepared for a sad parting from his family. As his great friend Sceilg later wrote:

*'... he consulted a trusted priest, did the Holy Hour as was his wont in moments of anxiety, then took his decision with the instinct of a hero, and was left once more by his valiant wife to the promptings of his own heart. Having taken his leave of herself and six young children he said in Irish: I turned out in 1916, my heart throbbing with delight at the prospect of striking at an enemy we all knew; I go forth now scarcely knowing where to go.'*<sup>34</sup>

Brugha made contact with the republican forces at the Hamman Hotel led by Oscar Traynor, commandant of the anti-Treaty contingent of the IRA's Dublin Brigade. Though both men had had their differences in the previous conflict, Traynor fondly recalled meeting Brugha at this critical time:

*'The advent of Cathal Brugha to the Hamman is a memory that I will always treasure. ... I became conscious of a figure coming briskly towards the group. It was Cathal, his eyes alight. Before saying a word he grasped my hand, and looking into my face he said, "Oscar, you're a clinker", an old Dublin phrase which meant you were good. He then said, "I'm reporting in as a private soldier and I want work". I replied by saying, "Well, Private, you are now promoted to Commandant on my staff, and I shall greatly value your wisdom and service".'*<sup>35</sup>

Brugha's path was now set. In his view, and that of his comrades, there was to be no further attempt at a political accommodation with their pro-Treaty opponents. The early, uncertain months of 1922 on the path to civil war saw Brugha's last engagement with political activism and organisation as a way to express his republicanism, with the preservation of the counter-state and the Irish language having been paramount among his concerns. That peace efforts

did not lead to unity and the prevention of military conflict is a failure that should not be solely attributed to Brugha. By his own admission, he was not a natural politician inclined to the machinations of politics, mostly owing to his own obstinacy and his single-mindedness. Nevertheless, without question he shared the responsibility for the deterioration of relations across the leadership on both sides. This failure of political imagination and compromise by all concerned must be seen as one considerable factor that paved the way to civil war.

Brugha was determined to make his impact on the next military phase in the fight for the Irish Republic. In this he would prove no less dedicated to the cause. Not long after his death on 7 July 1922, several days into the Civil War, his widow found in one of his pockets a note containing words that he had spoken in the Treaty debates:

**‘Why, if our last cartridge had been fired, if our last shilling had been spent, and if our last man was lying wounded on the ground, and his English enemies howling around him with their bayonets raised ready to plunge them into his body, and if they asked him, “Now will you come into our Empire?”, true to the tradition that has been handed to him his answer would be: “No, I will not”.’<sup>36</sup>**

Such a statement, in tandem with the actions that led to his death, was the closest thing to his final political testament for posterity. The promotion of the note’s words in republican propaganda was intended to be an inspiration to his comrades. Liam Lynch, the IRA’s Chief of Staff, felt the words to be such, and thanked Caitlín Brugha for passing on ‘Cathal’s historic and characteristic message’.<sup>37</sup> He went on:

**‘Cathal has given great undying service to the cause of the Republic for which he has sacrificed all. Ireland is prouder than ever of him now. He was the bravest and most fearless of soldiers, and future generations will ever bless his honoured name.’**

Lynch’s words to the widow already signalled that it was to be Cathal Brugha’s death several days into the military fighting of the Civil War rather than his considerable political opposition to the Treaty in the first half of 1922 that was now to forever endure in the popular memory.

## 9. DEATH IN DUBLIN:

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### CATHAL BRUGHHA'S LAST ACT

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JOHN DORNEY

On 5 July 1922, with the Granville Hotel in central Dublin burning around him, Cathal Brugha emerged, revolver in hand, from the back entrance of the hotel on Thomas Lane to confront pro-Treaty troops. He did not, by all accounts, fire his weapon, but he refused calls to surrender and was shot in the left thigh by National Army troops. The bullet severed an artery and he died two days later in Dublin's Mater Hospital.

Brugha was the first senior political leader to die during the Civil War. Before it was over, the conflict had claimed the lives of quite a number of the pre-Treaty republican élite, including ten members of the Second Dáil, several of whom, like Brugha, had also been ministers in the underground Dáil government.<sup>1</sup>

The circumstances of Brugha's death, however, still require some comment. Several of his decisions during the fighting in Dublin that marked the outbreak of the Civil War appear difficult to explain. Why, for instance, was he, a former minister, bearing arms at all during the fighting? Why, holding no formal rank in the IRA, did he lead a contingent from his old unit, the 4th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade? And why, having mustered the 4th Battalion on their home territory, south of the River Liffey, did he lead them northwards into the 'Block' on O'Connell Street, into what was evidently a hopeless position? Why, moreover, having volunteered to lead a small rearguard action and having ordered the contingent still under him to surrender, did he not surrender himself but emerge, gun in hand, to be shot down by pro-Treaty troops?

This article will ponder these questions, as well as putting Brugha's death in the context of the fighting in Dublin in June and July 1922.

In the previous months, Brugha's reaction to the Treaty and to the split that followed had been marked by inconsistencies. He violently attacked the Treaty settlement and those who had signed it, but championed de Valera's Document No. 2 rather than the purist republican position. And while he supported attempts at healing the split in the nationalist movement peacefully in the first six months of 1922, he also remained prone to very personal and even threatening invective against his political opponents Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith. While often publicly lamenting the possibility of civil war, when the Provisional Government forces opened fire on the Four Courts on 28 June Brugha made it clear to his political colleagues that they must fight. The same morning, shortly after the

bombardment of the Four Courts began, Brugha met de Valera and Austin Stack in the anti-Treaty Cumann na Poblachta party offices on Suffolk Street to discuss a proposal made by the Labour Party, the Catholic bishop of Dublin and the lord mayor for a ceasefire to try to avoid civilian casualties. Brugha told de Valera, who wanted to explore peace talks, that ‘it’s no use, those fellows have gone over to the British. We are going to have to fight back.’<sup>2</sup> The proposal was in any case rebuffed by the Provisional Government. It is possible to argue, perhaps, that Brugha wanted the clarity of fighting, as he saw it, against the enemies of Irish independence simply to smooth out the tortuous contradictions which the politics of the Treaty split had thrown up for him. He had previously told colleagues that he was ‘absolutely sick of politics ... it was completely against my will that I ever entered public life’.<sup>3</sup>

The outbreak of fighting at the Four Courts had caught most anti-Treaty republicans, in Dublin and elsewhere, completely by surprise. Its suddenness—brought on, so republicans would argue, by a British ultimatum to the Provisional Government—left them without a plan, military or political, and led to an uncoordinated and unplanned response on their part.

The Dublin Brigade of the IRA was split, but the majority were anti-Treaty in sympathy and already, since April 1922, had occupied several points around the city as well as the Four Courts, notably at Fowler Hall on Parnell Square. At the opening of the bombardment of the Four Courts, pro-Treaty troops were sent to attempt to dislodge them, with limited success, leading to significant exchanges of fire between them and ultimately to fighting around the city.

The anti-Treaty elements of the Brigade, assisted in most cases by the women of Cumann na mBan, went on to take over numerous positions in the city. Oscar Traynor, commandant of the Dublin Brigade, commanded the most extensive: ‘the Block’, leading from Parnell Square down to the north-eastern end of O’Connell Street, Dublin’s main thoroughfare, and extending eastwards to Marlborough Street and Amiens Street. These were mainly held by men of the two northside battalions, the 1st and 2nd. On the south side of the Liffey, the 3rd Battalion under Joe O’Connor took over several streets around St Stephen’s Green, centred on a few fortified buildings on York Street.

The intentions of the Dublin anti-Treatyites appear to have been purely reactive, trying to relieve pressure on the Four Courts garrison to enable their escape from the siege. Joe O’Connor, the commander of 3rd Battalion, recalled: ‘Our plan in Dublin was to establish posts to intercept supplies reaching the forces attacking the [Four] Courts’.<sup>4</sup> While some republicans would later argue that they should have tried to seize the city and its barracks and seat of government, Oscar Traynor, the commander of the Dublin Brigade, seems to have thought solely in

terms of diversionary attacks on pro-Treaty forces, enabling the escape of the Four Courts garrison. His orders to O'Connor on 29 June read:

**'I have arranged a line of retreat for the [Four Courts] garrison. I have asked them to blow their mines as a signal of their retirement. I want your cooperation in this. Every possible post should be attacked. And the further you can push inwards the more use you will be to the Four Courts ... [But] do not make the mistake of spending yourself, if they go down it is our job to continue the fight.'**<sup>5</sup>

It was against this background that Cathal Brugha entered the fighting in Dublin, with the IRA Dublin Brigade's 4th Battalion. The 4th was based south of the River Liffey, from the west of the city centre down to the southside suburbs. It was also Brugha's old unit, with which he had fought in the Rising of Easter 1916. After the split over the Treaty the battalion had about 520 members.<sup>6</sup>

While the head of the battalion, Seán (or John) Dowling, was anti-Treaty in sympathy, several influential officers, including F.X. Coughlan, had taken the pro-Treaty side and had taken many Volunteers along with them. Like the rest of the Dublin Brigade, the 4th Battalion had been taken by surprise by the outbreak of fighting, and those prepared to fight the Provisional Government only mustered after the bombardment of the Four Courts had begun.

According to Joe O'Connor, the 'Fourth were slow in mobilising ... and the Brigadier [of the IRA Dublin Brigade], Oscar Traynor, gave me command of all forces on the south side of the city.'<sup>7</sup> According to Christie Byrne of the 4th Battalion, Brugha and battalion commander Seán Dowling first met in 'an old laundry' in the Sundrive area of Kimmage and appear to have had a heated argument about mobilising the battalion: 'they had at it', according to Byrne, with Dowling telling Brugha, 'I'm still B[attalion]n Co(mmander) for God's sake', but Brugha insisting 'get out and fight or give it up'.<sup>8</sup> Frank Henderson, another IRA battalion commander, later clarified that it was Dowling who was reluctant to commit the 4th Battalion to fighting against fellow Irishmen but Brugha who eventually won the argument for joining in the fighting in the city.<sup>9</sup>

The location chosen for mustering the men, Marrowbone Lane, was a distillery where part of the battalion had been stationed during the 1916 Rising. About a hundred men assembled there but 'a lot of them had no arms, and the lads who had joined during the Truce were not so good', according to John Callanan, one of the company commanders.<sup>10</sup> It was not at all clear what part they were to play in the fighting. Brugha, though holding no formal military rank, seems to have been made vice-commandant of the battalion by Dowling after some discussion.<sup>11</sup>

Initially, like elements of the IRA elsewhere in the city, they appear to have tried to relieve pressure on the besieged Four Courts by small-group attacks on the rear of the pro-Treaty troops bombarding the complex. Paddy Rigney, for instance, a veteran of the pre-Truce Dublin IRA Active Service Unit, launched a raid on the Bridge pub, which the pro-Treaty forces were using as a base, directly behind the artillery position on Bridge Street which was shelling the Four Courts. According to another fighter, Peter Ward, they fired into the pub with revolvers and ‘emptied their guns’ into it before the local civilians, who were hostile, drove them away. As Ward put it, ‘the people got noisy so we had to clear out’. They then attacked a car in James’s Street with a bomb.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever the utility of these small-group attacks, once the Four Courts fell, on 30 June 1922, it seemed to make sense for the anti-Treaty forces in Dublin to disperse. They held isolated positions around the city, disconnected from each other and without any coherent plan to seize the city or to topple the Provisional Government. All of their prior experience, other than that of 1916, had been in guerrilla warfare, and they lacked the heavy weapons and training necessary for a stand-up fight with pro-Treaty forces or the 6,000-strong British force still garrisoned in the city.

Moreover, they had some breathing space, as the pro-Treaty forces were unable to follow up the taking of the Four Courts with a sustained assault on the remaining anti-Treaty positions in Dublin for several days. They were very short of troops in the capital, National Army officer Padraig O’Connor putting their numbers at no higher than 1,500.<sup>13</sup> Pro-Treaty Quartermaster General Seán MacMahon recalled that ‘We had no reserves to relieve our men’ and that ‘After two days men were too exhausted to continue’. When the Four Courts fell, according to MacMahon, men fell asleep at their posts, even when guarding prisoners.<sup>14</sup>

Instead, however, of dispersing to pursue guerrilla warfare or to link up with the anti-Treaty IRA forces outside the city at Blessington, Oscar Traynor made the decision, apparently against Brugha’s advice, to conduct a kind of rearguard action at the Block on O’Connell Street. IRA officer Maurice Twomey wrote to IRA Chief of Staff Liam Lynch on 2 July: ‘OC Dublin [Traynor] is against the evacuation of the city which would be tantamount to surrender though he was “strongly urged” by people including Cathal Brugha to “get out and resort to guerrilla warfare such as existed prior to the truce with the English last year”’.<sup>15</sup>

It appears that subsequently Brugha, despite advising against continuing to hold fixed positions in Dublin, acceded to Traynor’s order to take the men of 4th Battalion over the river to the Block, where they would help to defend the position as most of the brigade’s fighters got away. Once there, according to

Traynor, Brugha insisted on taking command and that Traynor should get away and not let himself be captured.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of tying up further forces on O'Connell Street in the Block was questionable, to say the least. The Block held no strategic value. Most of the IRA who had come out to fight were by now getting away and dumping their arms at secret locations. Nevertheless, Brugha persisted with it. Most 4th Battalion men made their way through the surprisingly porous Free State cordons in ones and twos to the Block. Brugha himself paid a call to Joe O'Connor, who commanded the 3rd Battalion, based in York Street. According to O'Connor, 'When Cathal was leaving [York Street] De Valera said: "Mind yourself, Cathal". His reply was: "I am alright", at the same time slapping his revolver.'<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the logic of the last stand on O'Connell Street was to distract pro-Treaty forces in order to enable the safe evacuation from the city of the senior republican political figures, including Éamon de Valera and Austin Stack, who had made their way to O'Connell Street during the fighting. According to one account, once de Valera, Stack and Oscar Traynor had escaped from the Block, Brugha was supposed to follow his colleagues south of the river to a safe house on Mount Street, but he refused.<sup>18</sup>

The 4th Battalion men, who ended up concentrated in the south-eastern corner of the Block at the tramway office halfway up O'Connell Street, quickly realised the hopelessness of their position. Todd Andrews bluntly recalled to Ernie O'Malley that when he arrived there he 'asked for John Dowling [O/C 4th Battalion] ... "This [is] all balls" I said to John, "there's no point in it"'.<sup>19</sup> Andrews himself was wounded in the fighting by splinters thrown up by machine-gun fire and was taken prisoner but later escaped.<sup>20</sup>

After the surrender of the Four Courts, the pro-Treaty forces were quite slow to launch a concerted attack on the remaining garrison in the Block, requiring a two-day pause in operations before they could muster the forces required. Nevertheless, desultory fighting continued in the O'Connell Street area in the meantime.

The assault recommenced on 2 July, by which time most of the anti-Treaty fighters had slipped away, leaving Brugha behind and now in command of a small rearguard force of men and women. Initially the conflict consisted mainly of gunfire between pro-Treaty troops in the Ballast Office, located at the top of Westmoreland Street, and the anti-Treaty garrison in the tramway office on O'Connell Street. Gradually, however, the Provisional Government's troops constricted the republican garrisons, from which men were slipping away all the time, until they consisted of just a small clump of hotels at the north-east corner of O'Connell Street.

Pro-Treaty officer Padraig O'Connor relates how he sent small groups first to secure the west side of O'Connell Street and then all of Lower O'Connell Street south of the tramway office, while at the same time pressing from the east on the forces located at the rear of the Block from the Amiens Street direction. This was not a straightforward process, requiring the use of artillery and armoured cars to cover their movements, while tunnelling through the walls of buildings to avoid advancing under fire in the open.<sup>21</sup> In the Block at this time Robert Barton recalled that Brugha 'wandered all over the place, mostly on roofs between Hammam and Gresham with a Mauser automatic [C96 pistol] with rifle stock fitted ... cool and collected'.<sup>22</sup>

The final assault on the Hammam and Gresham hotels began with an artillery bombardment on 4 July, the 18-pounder gun firing over open sights directly into the hotels from just a few hundred metres away on Henry Street. Brugha refused several calls to surrender, but by the following day his position had become untenable. Incendiary bombs were thrown from armoured cars into the hotels, which by 5 July were on fire and burning fiercely.

National Army officer Emmet Dalton reported to his superiors: 'We attacked O'Connell Street at 1 am with two Whippet [Rolls Royce armoured] cars and 3 Lancia [armoured cars], entered O'Connell Street and shot up every post particularly the Hammam and Gresham Hotels, which were [also] bombed with rifle grenades. The reply to our fire was very weak. We stopped there for half an hour then returned to HQ to get more grenades. The attack was postponed until 8 or 9', at which time Cathal Brugha asked for a ceasefire.<sup>23</sup>

There followed a temporary truce, in which Brugha released the National Army prisoners he had been holding and the wounded of both sides were evacuated. Civilians were also evacuated from Marlborough Street at the rear of the position.<sup>24</sup> The *Irish Times* reported: 'Pathetic sights were witnessed, in one house two children lay dead and owing to conditions outside it was considered undesirable to remove the bodies'.<sup>25</sup>

On 5 July, at 2.30 p.m., a white flag was hoisted over the Hammam Hotel. Pro-Treaty troops under James McGuinness moved in to take the surrender. According to his commanding officer, Paddy O'Daly, who reported on events to the Provisional Government, 'He called out three times, "are you surrendering?", Answer "yes, yes, yes". He was about to enter the hotel when fire was opened on them and the white flag pulled down.' 'A man standing behind the Red Cross Flag fired with a Peter the Painter [C96 Mauser] on Staff Captain Stapleton, he was hit in the head ... Stapleton is the fifth man he lost due to recognising white or Red Cross flags'.<sup>26</sup>

Stapleton, an IRA veteran, was in fact shot through the cheeks but not seriously injured. Did Brugha abuse a flag of surrender as O'Daly claimed? The incident was a sinister preview of O'Daly's vindictive streak. He wanted to shoot those on O'Connell Street whom he claimed had abused a white flag, but was refused permission by his superiors. When Captain Edward Stapleton was in fact killed much later in the Civil War, by a trap-mine at Knocknagoshel, Co. Kerry, in March 1923, O'Daly, by then commanding Free State troops in Kerry, responded with a series of massacres of anti-Treaty prisoners at Ballyseedy, Countess Bridge and Cahersiveen, killing at least seventeen men. The allegation of 'false surrenders' has been a topic of much controversy in the historiography of the Irish revolution, most notably at the Kilmichael ambush of November 1920. O'Daly's allegation against those whom he called the 'irregulars' was that they tried to lure pro-Treaty troops in and then kill them by gunfire or detonating mines, just as Tom Barry had accused the Auxiliaries of a 'false surrender trick' that had led to the deaths of three Volunteers at Kilmichael. The truth of the surrender in 1922 appears to be more a case of confusion than deliberate subterfuge, however.

The *Irish Times* correspondent on the scene reported that Cathal Brugha said that the white flag was not intended as a surrender but only to protect the messenger, a Red Cross man named Brennan, and the members of the Dublin fire brigade, warning them of a mine in the Gresham Hotel. Pádraig O'Connor, National Army officer, later recalled that 'Cathal and the others appeared on the roof with a white flag on top of a pole'. Brugha told him that 'his [white] flag was only to warn the firemen'.<sup>27</sup> O'Connor later wrote: 'Three or four men appeared on the roof of the Hammam with a sheet on a pole ... We were very pleased with what we took to be a declaration of surrender.' Jimmy McGuinness called on them to 'come out the front without arms'. Brugha replied with a note upbraiding O'Connor for using a Red Cross flag to call for surrender, saying it was a breach of the Geneva conventions.<sup>28</sup>

By this point, what remained of the anti-Treaty position on O'Connell Street was a blazing inferno, forcing the last hold-outs with Brugha, reportedly seventeen men and three women, into the Granville Hotel. Brugha had received a note from Oscar Traynor telling him to surrender, and by now there was little option in any case.

National Army command heard from Commandant [Jimmy] McGuinness of the surrender of the 'die-hards' on O'Connell Street to Lieutenant Clancy: 'It was unconditional surrender. A party of just nine men. Brugha gave them the order to surrender but would not surrender himself. He was severely wounded.' The Adjutant-General reported to Michael Collins: 'It is reported that Cathal Brugha is dying of wounds in the Mater Hospital'.<sup>29</sup>

There are various accounts of Brugha's shooting, one stating that he emerged from the Granville Hotel with a pistol in either hand and shouting 'No surrender' but did not fire. What is certain is that he came out alone, armed, to face the pro-Treaty troops, having told the rest of his party to surrender, and that he was shot in the leg.

Seán Brady, a Fianna boy, remembered that Cathal Brugha had come out alone with a revolver to confront the pro-Treaty troops and was shot in the groin area. According to Brady, 'his face was very sallow' and he was told by Dr Brennan, who treated him, that Brugha was in great pain.<sup>30</sup> It is possible that the pro-Treaty troops were trying not to kill Brugha by shooting him in the leg, but the bullet severed his left femoral artery and, despite undergoing an operation, he died of blood loss two days later in Dublin's Mater Hospital. Brugha was one of the last of about seventy-five combatants and civilians killed in the first week of the Civil War in Dublin.<sup>31</sup>

Of all the decisions that Brugha took around the outbreak of the Civil War, the one to come out alone and armed to face a unit of soldiers who were heavily armed and had taken casualties at the hands of his men is undoubtedly the strangest and most confounding. The circumstances around his death led many who knew him and who served with him in his final days to speculate that he was seeking martyrdom. One, John Homan, thought that he had 'a resolve not to leave the house alive if he could find death without committing suicide'. Kathleen Barry thought that he was 'making up his mind to immolate himself'. Linda Kearns, a Cumann na mBan member who was with Brugha in his last hours, recalled that she asked him whether he was wise in 'going to his death', and that Brugha said, 'Civil War is so serious that my death may bring its seriousness home to the Irish people ... if it put a stop to the Civil War, my death would be worthwhile'.<sup>32</sup>

If this statement is true, like many of Brugha's decisions that week it makes little sense. Surely the death of a high-ranking republican figure at the hands of Free State troops would be more likely to inflame factional passions than to calm them? Moreover, his own decisions that week had escalated rather than limited the outbreak of fighting. His undoubted physical bravery, which he had previously demonstrated in the 1916 Rising, in which he had been badly wounded, should not obscure this.

Éamon de Valera certainly appears not to have approved. Unaware of the extent of Brugha's injuries, he wrote to him: 'Had you gone down and been lost to us the cause would have suffered a blow from which it would have hardly recovered. You were scarcely justified, therefore, in taking the risk you ran.'<sup>33</sup>

When he learned that Brugha had died, de Valera lamented that ‘our lion heart is gone ... oh cruel, cruel that it is by Irish men that he should be killed’.<sup>34</sup>

Brugha’s final motivations ultimately remain unknowable. If his intention was to end the Civil War through his own death, he was certainly unsuccessful. Perhaps, however, the last word should be given to his one-time comrade, long-time rival and finally bitter enemy, Michael Collins. As Brugha was being buried in Dublin’s Glasnevin Cemetery, Collins wrote: ‘Because of his sincerity, I would forgive him anything ... at worst he was a fanatic ... At best [he] gave his all that this country would have its freedom.’<sup>35</sup>

# 10. ‘when many of us are forgotten cathal brughá will be remembered’:<sup>1</sup>

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## Brughá in memory and commemoration

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CAITLIN WHITE

Increasingly topical over recent years thanks to the success of the Decade of Centenaries programme, commemorations have long been a feature of Irish life.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the political power of commemorations was recognised by all sides involved in the War of Independence and Civil War, with a flurry of commemorative activity evident in the 1920s and 1930s in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Commemorations can reveal more about those staging them than about the people or events they commemorate. Collective commemoration confers honour and distinction on the person or event being commemorated and should be treated with great sensitivity. This became obvious to both the Irish public and the Irish government in view of the public backlash in January 2020 following the announcement of a commemorative ceremony for the Royal Irish Constabulary in Dublin Castle.<sup>4</sup>

Commemorations also fulfil a very practical function, as they are central to the creation and consolidation of group identities. They unite people under the banner of a goal or idea and use the past to validate a group’s aims or even its very existence.<sup>5</sup> By definition, however, in uniting one group they exclude others. They are public events, marked by ritual and ceremony. They are the group identities and collective memories of a public made manifest. Commemorations, whether big or small, require the backing (both ideological and financial) of a group united in respect of the idea, event or person being commemorated.

Memory, on the other hand, can cost nothing. Memory can be on an individual, a collective or a social level and is sustained through memorabilia, culture, songs, poems etc. Guy Beiner’s seminal research study on forgetting (which is, of course, closely tied to memory) in Ulster after the 1798 Rebellion highlights the potential of the deeply personal and intimate nature of collective memory.<sup>6</sup>

The tension between private memory and public commemoration is particularly evident in the afterlives of Cathal Brugha. The ownership of this memory and the question of who could wield it were issues that surfaced

frequently in relation to Brugha. An examination of his commemoration and the treatment of his memory reveals a lot about power dynamics and priorities for successive governments and individuals in the century since his death.

Commemoration is a far more politically charged sphere than memory. Whether it be through remembering or forgetting, those who seek to extend, consolidate or access power 'have a vested interest in the ways in which the past is represented' in the public space.<sup>7</sup> This shaping of history becomes especially crucial during periods of state formation, when, as Beiner observes, governments often attempt to erase the violent narratives on which the state was built.<sup>8</sup> The Cumann na nGaedheal government swiftly incorporated the collective memory of figures like Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith into their narrative, exemplified by the erection of the Cenotaph on Leinster Lawn in 1923 and the memorial at Béal na Bláth.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Fianna Fáil recognised the importance of curating historical narratives in both the political and public spheres. Since its foundation in 1926, Fianna Fáil had been actively cultivating its preferred version of history, emphasising its connections with veterans of 1916 and claiming allegiance to key anti-Treaty figures who died during the Civil War, often through their surviving families and comrades. In doing so, the party participated in the figurative 'scramble over the bones of the patriot dead' to bolster its political standing and influence.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after taking office in 1932, de Valera made it clear that he intended to integrate the memories of prominent anti-Treaty figures, such as Cathal Brugha and Austin Stack, into the Fianna Fáil narrative. Busts of Brugha and Stack were commissioned to adorn de Valera's office, and he also expressed interest in acquiring the completed busts of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, sculpted by Albert Power and originally commissioned by the Cumann na nGaedheal government, which had not yet been installed in Leinster House.<sup>11</sup> This was seen by some as motivated by a desire to heal the wounds of the Civil War but further solidified his position as a traitor in the eyes of hard-line republicans.

The plan to commission Brugha's bust met with resistance from his widow, Caitlín Brugha, who refused permission for her husband's death-mask to be used and publicly condemned the effort as a 'gross impertinence' on the part of the 'men who have abandoned the ideals for which Cathal Brugha died to attempt to shelter themselves in the reflected glory of one who died for the Republic'.<sup>12</sup> Despite her opposition, the commission proceeded. After Albert Power, described by Síghle Bhreathnach Lynch as 'Ireland's leading sculptor' of the period, decided not to proceed with the government commission in 1939, the sculptor Oliver Sheppard, renowned for his work on the 'Death of Cúchulainn'—a piece that de Valera had selected for the GPO to symbolise the sacrifices of

the 1916 Rising—sculpted Brugha’s bust using photographs.<sup>13</sup> Owing to delays caused by the Second World War, however, the bust was not cast at that time; following Sheppard’s death, the plaster was presented to the state and remained in storage for a number of years until in 1950 a Swiss firm was contracted to produce a bronze cast of it, which was loaned to the National Gallery for display.<sup>14</sup> In June 1953 reproductions in bronze of the busts of Cathal Brugha and Austin Stack were ordered ‘for Leinster House’, which were then placed in the chamber of Leinster House (alongside busts of the seven signatories and Thomas Davis) in 1963, four years after Caitlín’s death.<sup>15</sup>

After he had bowed out of the state commission to produce the contentious bust, Caitlín privately commissioned Power to create a commemorative sculpture of her late husband using his death-mask, which took the form of a low relief on a plaque that was erected on the premises of the family business, Kingston’s, where it can still be found today. This was widely accepted to be superior in quality to that sculpted by Sheppard, which is unsurprising given the material from which each artist had to work.<sup>16</sup> Caitlín, and her supporters, had made it clear that she would not allow politicians to manipulate the memory of her late husband as easily as they might have expected.<sup>17</sup>

In this flurry of reinstatement of anti-Treatyites into the pantheon of Irish heroes, a government building was dedicated to the memory of Brugha in 1934. Located near where he was fatally shot, Áras Brúgha was the new site for the National Health Insurance Buildings. A plaque was due to be unveiled at the opening ceremony, but Caitlín Brugha’s objections to the use of her husband’s memory for political gain were steadfast. Having initially granted permission for the use of his name on the understanding that the building was free from party politics, she later withdrew it, stating that she could not allow her husband’s name to be exploited by political parties.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently the plaque, four reproductions and the plaster cast were stolen from the premises of Messrs McGloughlin of Pearse Street, resulting in the building being named in his memory but remaining plaque-less on the big day.<sup>19</sup> The plaque was subsequently discovered in 1950 amongst the possessions of Una Stack, widow of Austin, Brugha’s colleague and comrade, after her death.<sup>20</sup>

Caitlín Brugha’s opposition to the use of her husband’s name and memory was not due to an aversion to public commemoration of him but rather to its appropriation by other political parties for their political gain. The official naming of the street near where he died as ‘Cathal Brugha Street’ by Dublin Corporation in 1932 does not seem to have attracted her ire.<sup>21</sup> The street had been known as ‘Cathal Brugha Street’ soon after his death, and the name first appears in print in the *Irish Times* in 1927.<sup>22</sup> When Dublin Corporation made it official in 1932, the

media of the time did not register it as being a significant event, perhaps because they were adopting a name that had been unofficially chosen by the wider public.

Similarly, the renaming of Portobello Barracks as Cathal Brugha Barracks in 1952 (a ‘fitting and appropriate’ way to honour the man, according to the *Irish Press*) did not attract public criticism from Caitlín.<sup>23</sup> Records in the National Archives of Ireland reveal that the Madame Markievicz Memorial Committee contacted the Department of Defence in 1952 to propose renaming the barracks after Constance Markievicz, as they feared that her contributions to Irish freedom were slipping from public memory. Minister for Defence Oscar Traynor decided that the name Markievicz would be too difficult for many people to spell and pronounce, and so it was decided that it would be renamed for Cathal Brugha instead.<sup>24</sup> A note in the files records that the Minister for Defence would arrange to inform Mrs Brugha of the decision in advance of any public announcement.<sup>25</sup> It is not unlikely that the renaming of the barracks after Cathal Brugha rather than Countess Markievicz had as much to do with gender ideology as with spelling difficulties. This was a woman who, at an unveiling of a bust of her in 1932, had been described by de Valera as a ‘bean dílis duthrachtach, bean caomh charthanach, saighdúir a throid go calma i measg na fear ar son saoirse na tíre’:<sup>26</sup> the public should not forget that she was, first and foremost, a woman who never lost the placidity and femininity fitting to the nature of women. It is also not unlikely, however, that the government, recognising the lack of acknowledgement of Brugha in the public space, saw the appropriateness of this gesture for a former Minister for Defence.

While Brugha continued to be commemorated by various successive governments intermittently in the public space, such as by a commemorative stamp in 1987, the omission of the centenary of his death from an official governmental programme was cause for criticism from some quarters in 2022.<sup>27</sup> Recently a memorial dedicated to him was unveiled at Cathal Brugha Barracks to mark the centenary of his death, and his inclusion on plaques at St James’s Hospital and Belvedere College ensures that there is no lack of Brugha’s name in the public sphere.<sup>28</sup>

As evidenced by the tensions surrounding his commemorations and the use of his legacy in the public space, the public memory of Cathal Brugha was a highly curated one. Even Brugha himself contributed to its formation. While other authors in this volume delve into the details of his experiences at the Hammam, Gresham and Granville hotels in his final days, it is clear that Brugha was a man acutely aware of the consequences of his actions. Documents in the Military Archives can shed some light on his reasoning. Linda Kearns, a nurse and member of Cumann na mBan who was stationed at the hotels during that battle,

recalls a conversation with Brughá as being ‘the most poignant moment of her life’ when, in response to whether he was acting wisely in going to his death, he replied that his death in these early days of the Civil War might bring it to an end, which would then be worth the price.<sup>29</sup> His decision to order his unit to surrender while choosing to face his enemies alone epitomised the discipline and honour by which he lived, a reflection of his adherence to the last orders of his friend and former commanding officer Éamonn Ceannt from the 1916 Rising to fight to the finish.<sup>30</sup> His biographers Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley have described this act as ‘a final gesture of unwavering fidelity to the Irish republic’.<sup>31</sup>

Brughá’s death and his actions in the days and hours before it were influenced by, and engaged in, what Beiner calls ‘prememory’, a phenomenon whereby memory shapes unfolding historical events as they are understood and interpreted through the memories of previous historical events.<sup>32</sup> Arguably understanding his present through the lens of his recent past, Brughá’s visions of a future after his sacrifice were informed by the impact of the executions of 1916. In an attempt to avoid a bitter civil war and to join the ranks of Pearse, McDonagh and Connolly, he decided to face his enemies and reportedly delope, preventing (as he thought) further unnecessary bloodshed.<sup>33</sup>

Cathal Brughá died on 7 July 1922, killed by a single bullet that he had hoped never to die from—a bullet shot by an unknown National Army soldier, a fellow Irish soldier.<sup>34</sup> He was shot on 5 July and spent two days in hospital, having had treatment and surgery, in the company of his family and friends. Caitlín issued a statement to the press which specified that the women of the republican movement would, alongside his family and close friends, form the guard of honour. She further requested that representatives or members of the Free State government not attend. Her request was a protest against the ‘immediate and terrible civil war made by the so-called Provisional Government on the Irish Republican Forces’.<sup>35</sup> Brughá was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, alongside famous patriot Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa and in the midst of the emerging ‘republican plot’ area of the cemetery.<sup>36</sup> The stage was set for Brughá to become to the Civil War what the executed leaders of 1916 were to the memory of the Rising.

For Caitlín, Cathal’s memory had been entrusted to her, and she sought to preserve and perpetuate it as he would have wanted. This often involved working towards the Irish republic for which he died, in her own capacity as a Sinn Féin TD for Waterford or by private remembrance in the form of anniversary Masses. It should not be forgotten that Brughá was an incredibly devout man whose faith was a central part of his life.<sup>37</sup> July 1923 marked the first anniversary of his death and, in a similar vein to his funeral, up to 400 members of Cumann na mBan and the Women’s Defence League were involved in the event. Beginning with a Mass

for the repose of his soul at Whitefriar Street church, the procession marched to O'Connell Street, where wreaths were laid in his memory and prayers were said before continuing on to his grave in Glasnevin, where the Rosary was recited.<sup>38</sup> The annual anniversary Mass continued to be a cornerstone of remembrance for his own family and old comrades, as evidenced by the repeated notices for his Mass and lists of notable attendees in the decades following his death.<sup>39</sup>

A pageant—a ticketed event held in Dublin's Olympia Theatre—staged in 1972, fifty years after his death, sought to represent him and his life to new audiences. The part of Cathal was played by his grandson, Cathal MacSwiney-Brugha, with accompanying music and ballads from the Wolfe Tones and the Éamonn Ceannt Céilí Band.<sup>40</sup> While not a state-organised event (with tickets being sold at Caitlín's successful business premises of Kingston's on O'Connell Street and Cathal MacSwiney-Brugha in the starring role, this was presumably a family affair), political tensions still raised their head, with an interruption by Brugha's former comrade and local councillor Joe Clarke to protest against the government's treatment of IRA prisoners.<sup>41</sup> Even fifty years after his death, Brugha's legacy was a powerful platform from which to speak. The most recent theatrical commemorative piece, ANU's *HAMMAM* at the Abbey Theatre in December 2023, was at once a continuation of the legacy of theatrical commemoration and a ground-breaking new piece that sought to interrogate the turmoil of Brugha's mind in those final hours.

The commemoration of Brugha highlights the complex interplay between memory, politics and power. While governments and political parties have often sought to appropriate the legacies of such figures to legitimise their own narratives, the resistance of individuals like Caitlín Brugha underscores the enduring struggle to preserve the true intentions and ideals of those who sacrificed for the nation. This tension between public commemoration and private memory serves as a reminder that the past is not just a source of national pride but also a battleground for political influence and historical integrity.

That the government was engaged in a concerted effort to commemorate and claim Brugha's legacy is not surprising. How he came to be remembered is a testament both to the power of Cathal Brugha's legacy and to Caitlín's tenacious spirit and her resolve to ensure that his memory was not appropriated or manipulated to bolster ideals to which he did not subscribe. She became the keeper of Cathal's flame in the public arena.

In the years after his death, the lyrics of *The Foggy Dew* firmly placed Brugha in the pantheon of Irish heroes. In the 1960s a poem was found in the collection of a former solicitor-general for Ireland, Arthur Warren Samuels, in which Brugha and Boland are remembered 'on every hillside and every mart'.<sup>42</sup> As we reflect

on the legacy of Cathal Brugha, it becomes clear that his memory, fiercely guarded and carefully curated, continues to resonate through the years. His and Caitlín's story is a testament to the enduring power of personal conviction in shaping public memory, reminding us that true, ethical commemoration of a person lies not in the number of monuments or streets bearing a name but in a remembrance that adheres to the ideals that he or she steadfastly upheld.

#### **Author's note**

This paper was written for a conference in April 2024. On 16 April 2025 a plaque that is a copy of the Albert Power sculpture on O'Connell Street was loaned to Cathal Brugha Barracks by Cathal McSwiney-Brugha on behalf of the family and is on display at the gate of the Barracks. The sculpture is another example of Cathal Brugha's commemoration and remembrance in the public space.

## 11. 'SINCERE AND WHOLEHEARTED LOYALTY':

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Caitlín Brugha (1879–1959)

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JOANNE ROTHWELL

Following the death of Cathal Brugha, his wife Caitlín issued a statement to the press that, apart from the family, the chief mourners and the guard of honour 'should only include women of the republican movement'.<sup>1</sup> It was the women of Cumann na mBan who would oversee his remains, standing vigil and directing his funeral procession, providing crowd control and a guard of honour against any encroachments by pro-Treaty government members. This moment of tremendous personal tragedy clearly demonstrates Caitlín Brugha's will and conviction in honouring the memory of her husband and taking control of the narrative against any attempts of the government or, indeed, any anti-Treaty members to do so. This determination to remain true both to the memory of her husband and to her own political beliefs remained steadfast and true in the face of any attempts to portray her as the silent grieving widow or, later, as a frail female being taken advantage of by the manipulations of the IRA, or to control the manner in which she supported the Sinn Féin party. These were not the actions of a mere cipher of her husband; while she definitely shared his political views, she was her own person with her own place in the story of Irish independence.

Kathleen Kingston was born on 9 December 1879 to William Kingston and Catherine Roche in Birr, Co. Offaly. Her father was a shopkeeper in Birr's Main Street, selling groceries, spirits and delft. She was one of five children, two of whom entered religious life. Her brother Charles was county secretary in Offaly County Council during the period 1920–1. She was educated in Roscrea and, like many in Ireland at that time, she became interested in Irish language and culture through the Gaelic League. It was through her work as an organiser for the Gaelic League in Birr<sup>2</sup> that in 1909 she met Cathal Brugha, who had a practice of attending local Irish classes provided by the Gaelic League when he was travelling for his work at Lalor Brothers. William Kingston had died in 1904, and Caitlín, her mother and sister continued to run the business until they sold up and moved to 5 Fitzwilliam Terrace in Dublin in 1910. She married Cathal Brugha on 8 February 1912 and, in keeping with their shared love of the Irish language,

recorded their names in Irish—to some confusion in the registration, with errors in the names of Cathal Brugha, Caitlín and her sister Máire, who was one of the witnesses.

The couple stayed in the Kingston family home in Fitzwilliam Terrace, in the house named ‘Rosacree’ or ‘Ros na Rí’. On 10 November 1912 their first child, Máire, was born. They had six children between 1912 and 1922, and throughout this time Cathal Brugha was becoming more deeply involved in the fight for Irish freedom. During Easter Week in 1916 Áine Ceannt, wife of Éamonn Ceannt, commander of the 4th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers and Cathal’s superior officer, spent most of the week at the house. In her witness statement for the Bureau of Military History, Áine Ceannt recalled that:

**‘Early on Friday morning we were awakened by military raiding the premises. Naturally they were wondering at finding so many women in the house and no men, but Mrs Brugha said that her husband was a traveller and had been held up in the country.’<sup>3</sup>**

While Cathal was indeed a commercial traveller, Caitlín was well aware that he was with his comrades and fighting in the Rising. What she did not know was that he was seriously wounded at the time, and when she did find out it was some days before she was permitted to see him. During this visit he passed on instructions to destroy plans for the Rising that had been hidden in the back garden of Fitzwilliam Terrace. She visited him on 5 May and gave birth to their daughter Brenda on 18 May, a month before her due date, a possible indication of the terror and stress of the situation at the time.

Although not fully recovered from his wounds, Cathal Brugha was released from hospital in August 1916. He immediately began the work of reorganising the Volunteers, calling a meeting of the Dublin battalions at their home in Fitzwilliam Terrace. The house was host to many in this period, including Michael Collins, Austin Stack and members of the Dublin battalions. As time went on, the Brugha home would come to the attention of the British authorities. In the 1918 general election Cathal was selected to contest the Waterford County seat, which he won. Much of the campaign was conducted in his absence by members of Waterford Sinn Féin because in mid-November Caitlín contracted influenza. She was seriously ill and was also pregnant. Fortunately, she recovered and in May 1919 she gave birth to their daughter Fidelma.

Sinn Féin won the general election and established Dáil Éireann, the Irish parliament, and Cathal was appointed Minister for Defence. During the War of Independence he was very much a ‘wanted man’ and was frequently away from his home, which was raided on numerous occasions by the British authorities.

During one such raid, on 23 October 1920, five lorry-loads of troops descended on Fitzwilliam Terrace in an effort to capture him. Caitlín was seized, still in her nightdress, and kept on the street, away from the children. In an account of the raid, Caitlín related to the *Evening Herald* that:

‘armed men rushed into the hall. One of them seized her by the arms, and immediately she was pushed out into a Crossley lorry being lifted up by the armed men. She had only an overcoat over her night attire and had to remain under guard for an hour. “Why do you treat me like this” she protested. “I am not able to do anything to you. Why don’t you allow me in to my babies? They will be frightened”. Her pleadings were in vain.’<sup>4</sup>

Following this event, the family moved to An Rinn in County Waterford and then to Ballybunion, Co. Kerry, where they remained until the Truce in July 1921. These connections to An Rinn and to Waterford remained strong throughout the lives of Cathal and Caitlín Brugha and were to prove important in her later political life.

Cathal Brugha voted against the Anglo-Irish Treaty. He was re-elected to Waterford County in the June 1922 general election, but within days the Civil War began. Cathal was mortally wounded during the fighting in Dublin. He died on 7 July and his funeral was held on 10 July.

In the aftermath of her husband’s death, Caitlín did not simply reply to votes and letters of condolence but took on the mantle of campaigner, and in September 1922 she was in Glasgow with two of the children, fund-raising. She was in Waterford on 19 November 1922 at a public protest at the treatment of political prisoners in Waterford. Caitlín, Dr Kathleen Lynn and ‘local ladies’ were barred from entering the Theatre Royal so instead held a public meeting at the People’s Park, where Caitlín addressed the crowd and spoke against the executions of anti-Treaty men that had occurred two days before.<sup>5</sup> The National Army arrived to disperse the crowd, so they moved to the cathedral in Waterford, where a rosary was said in Irish for those who were executed. On leaving the cathedral, Caitlín was hoisted onto the shoulders of the members of Cumann na mBan. She then moved to the Metropole Hotel, where she again addressed the crowd, which was dispersed when shots were fired by the National Army. By 6 December 1922 she was in London at a meeting of the Irish Self-Determination League to protest the Treaty. In January 1923 she was back in Glasgow with Dr Lynn, addressing republican meetings.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that she was chosen to contest the 1923 general election in Waterford. She threw herself into the campaign. On Sunday 5 August 1923 she had a heavy schedule of nine meetings set up throughout Waterford. She took on the mantle of reorganising the Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin

party and, in particular, campaigned to raise funds for republican prisoners and their families. At a meeting on 17 July in Waterford she stated that £600 a week was needed for the families of republicans in prison, and she spoke of the effort to reorganise Sinn Féin:

**‘That effort was arousing the whole country for the people were determined at last not to let the name of Ireland be disgraced throughout the world, especially now that the whole world was standing aghast at the proposed Public Safety Bill’.<sup>6</sup>**

In August 1923 she presented her nomination papers to the returning officer in Waterford, M.P. Devereux. The family connections to An Rinn are clear in the long list of supporters listed in her nomination papers.<sup>7</sup> Her election agent was Nicholas Whittle, who was badly injured in the Pickardstown ambush of 7 January 1921, in which an unsuccessful attempt to ambush British troops resulted in the death of two members of the Waterford Volunteers, Michael McGrath and Thomas O’Brien. Cathal had unveiled a memorial to them in Pickardstown on 6 March 1922.

The results of Caitlín’s active campaigning and her Waterford connections were clear in the results: she topped the poll, receiving 8,265 first-preference votes and exceeding the 6,512 quota required. Captain William Redmond was her closest rival, polling 6,441 first-preference votes, with Nicholas Wall and John Butler trailing behind at 3,142 and 2,771 votes respectively. She successfully held the seat for Sinn Féin, and as Waterford TD she continued in her efforts to secure the release of republican prisoners. She wrote to Waterford Corporation on 2 June 1924 in response to their call for the release of Éamon de Valera and other political prisoners:

**‘Since the Irish Republic was established Waterford has been in the foremost place in the National movement and I am glad that the Corporation ... has taken the part of those who stand for freedom of thought and who have remained true to principle’.<sup>8</sup>**

She also focused on the need to buy Irish and to support Irish businesses—perhaps a not entirely unbiased stance to take, given her own involvement in Irish business.

Caitlín refused to accept any form of support from the Free State government, and in the immediate aftermath of Cathal’s death Lalor Brothers paid her a weekly allowance. Within a short time she was financially independent. With help from her brother Charles, she established a leather goods business

in Nassau Street, Dublin. In 1924 she established Kingston's Ltd, a drapery business on O'Connell Street. Charles was director of the company and Caitlín was a partner. The business focused on men's clothing and it flourished, with advertising slogans such as 'A Kingston Shirt Makes All the Difference' and 'Kingston Quality is the Last Word'. The business expanded into George's Street and Grafton Street. To establish a new and successful business is in itself an impressive feat, but to do so while raising six children and carrying out a busy and active role in political life is something that deserves recognition and admiration. Caitlín had the benefit of strong family support, from her sister Máire in the household and her brother Charles in the business, which enabled her to go above and beyond in her contributions to Irish life.

Caitlín was Honorary Secretary of the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis in October 1923 and served on the party's executive as Honorary Treasurer. The latter role gave her a very clear view of the financial position of the party. In 1927 there were two general elections held in Ireland. Caitlín contested the first of these in June 1927 and was re-elected (though no longer at the top of the poll).

She addressed a Sinn Féin meeting in Dungarvan in May 1927 and it is interesting to note that the *Irish Examiner* in its report of 31 May 1927 quoted two men, a Mr Ryan from Dublin and a Mr Hearty from New York, but not the candidate, Caitlín Brugha, although this may have been because Mr Hearty told the people:

'... to vote for Mrs Brugha for the Republic, and they would have twenty millions exiles coming back from America, and they would have two hundred million pounds sent them that was now held in America for the Irish nation'.<sup>9</sup>

The *Dungarvan Observer* of 6 June 1927 further reported that:

'She went on the usual lines. Her address was marked with grace and dignity, and no word was said of an offensive character. She held that they should have the Republic which the men fought for and which they proclaimed'.<sup>10</sup>

While such statements were welcomed by a supportive crowd, Caitlín Brugha did not quite top the poll in the June 1927 election. On that occasion Captain William Redmond claimed top spot for the National League with 7,687 first-preference votes, while Caitlín polled 3,579. This reduction in the vote owes much to the establishment of the Fianna Fáil party by Éamon de Valera in 1926. The Fianna Fáil candidate, Patrick Little, polled 3,769 in Waterford. It would seem, therefore, that the republican vote in Waterford was split fairly evenly between

the Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil candidates. It is important to note, however, that Caitlín Brugha was one of just five Sinn Féin TDs elected to the Dáil in the June 1927 elections.

The 5th Dáil was short-lived, and a new election was called for September 1927. Caitlín did not contest the election, however; Sinn Féin did not have the funds to campaign in Waterford, and no one was better placed to understand their financial position than she, having served as Honorary Treasurer. It is no surprise that as a successful businesswoman she was not inclined to support ill-advised financial decisions.

This did not end her involvement in political life. She resigned from the Sinn Féin party in 1934 following Mary McSwiney, who had resigned the previous year, but she continued as a member of the Easter National Commemoration Committee and continued to campaign for Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependants. She was among those to speak at a meeting organised in Waterford in January 1935 that was denounced by the bishop of Waterford and Reverend Kinnane of Lismore. She refused to co-operate at a seizure of funds by the Gardaí at an IRA sweepstake fund-raiser in June 1935. Of interest here is the attempt by the Gardaí to avoid detaining her: she was told that '... she could go if she undertook not to remove any counterfoils. She refused.'<sup>11</sup> In October 1935 she wrote to the *Irish Independent* to complain that the government was opening and detaining her post. She remained loudly and publicly opposed to any attempts to silence her.

In 1942 the Brugha home was raided, and German agent Gunther Schultz was found and detained. Her son Ruairí had joined the IRA and had been detained in 1940; he was released in November 1941. Her daughter Noírin was also detained in 1942 and released on parole in July of that year. The government at the time presented Caitlín Brugha as a poor unsuspecting widow taken advantage of by the IRA, and this is something that her daughter-in-law, Máire MacSwiney Brugha, also believed, writing in her memoir:

'The German spy, Gunter Schultz, was harboured for a while in Ros na Rí, the Brugha house, because no one else would take him in. I think, as usual, the Republican movement was using Mrs Brugha. I actually met Gunter there one afternoon when I was visiting ... There were posters of Gunter everywhere with the words, HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN? As we were getting onto the tram Malmuire (O'Rahilly) said to me "I wonder where he is" to which I answered, "Yes, I wonder!". As I said before I always lived a double life.'<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to reconcile any such image of Caitlín with the forceful manner in which she defended her strongly held views.

Efforts were made by successive governments to take control of Cathal Brugha's image and memory, but these were always resisted by Caitlín. In 1934, having initially approved a proposal made by the United National Health Society in 9–10 O'Connell Street to use Cathal Brugha's name, she later withdrew her approval after becoming aware of its connections to the government. The government had also commissioned a bronze bust of Cathal Brugha. Three raiders subsequently entered McGloughlin's Metalworks in Pearse Street, where the bust was being cast, and demanded the bust and four reproductions on the premises.

In January 1939 it was announced that a bust of Cathal Brugha would be displayed in Leinster House. Caitlín rejected the notion as 'a piece of gross impertinence'.<sup>13</sup> It had to be completed from photographs, as she refused to make his death-mask available. Owing to the controversy, the bust was not displayed in Leinster House but was put on display in the National Gallery in 1948. Caitlín privately commissioned Albert Power to create a bust from Cathal's death-mask.

In 1946 she unveiled the new memorial in Pickardstown for the National Graves Association and in her speech spoke of:

**'... what they owed to those brave men who had died for Ireland. They could only repay that debt by, at all times, giving sincere and wholehearted loyalty to their country and by steadfast adherence to their ideal of a free Ireland.'**<sup>14</sup>

This is a clear statement of her own belief regarding what she owed to her husband and to all of those who had fought and died for Irish freedom. She spent her life in steadfast adherence to the ideal of a free Ireland.

Caitlín died on 1 December 1959. The *Evening Herald* reported:

**'For some years she had been an active worker in the fight for independence but on her husband's death she was left with a family of six young children.'**<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, most of the newspapers reported her death as 'the widow of Cathal Brugha', giving many the impression that she was a mere torch-bearer for her husband's memory and that any active work for independence had been sacrificed to the raising of her six children. This reporting completely ignored her long and active campaigning and her own political life. Her vociferous and dedicated career requires acknowledgement in its own right. She was a match for Cathal Brugha in belief and in steadfast dedication to those beliefs, and she was a match for anyone who thought they could control or silence her voice.

# AFTERWORD

CATHAL MACSWINEY BRUGHA

Of all Cathal Brugha's grandchildren, as 'the one with the famous name', I have had many opportunities to listen to a very wide range of reflections about him, about that whole period, about 1916, about the War of Independence, about the Civil War, about who hated whom, and about the 'whys' of what happened, the gain, pain, blame and shame. I believe that he would have wanted me to try to reconcile these reflections and divisions, just as the descendants of the people who were involved, many of whom were for a time united but were later divided, are now being reconciled.

I first got to hear about him, as a seven-year-old boy in my first week in Gonzaga College, when I was informed that 'Cathal Brugha hated Michael Collins'. It struck me as sad that the parents of my classmates still believed this 'line' that had been used to divide the people in 1922. What should I do, I asked my dad? 'Just ignore them', he said. So, who was Cathal Brugha, and how could he have been so criticised?

My parents never discussed the past: history, the Civil War, who was right and who was wrong. They always talked about the future, especially Europe, and about 'uniting the country', as in the people of Ireland. Getting to know my grandfather involved learning what he fought for and how he arrived at his position on issues to do with independence. Central always was his concern for good governance, for protecting people.

A person who shared his values was Terence MacSwiney, my mother's father. Getting to know this grandfather was relatively easy, because MacSwiney promoted his views extensively through his writings. It is not a coincidence that the only child of MacSwiney married the only son of Brugha. Both worked closely together for Irish independence. Their similarities stem from their commonalities of background. Although ostensibly very different, one interested in sport and the other in literature, both were involved in business and grew up in a city, one in Dublin, the other in Cork. And both had a mixed heritage. Terence MacSwiney's mother was a Wilkinson from London and brought to the family a strong awareness of the colonisation culture that dominated in Ireland.

The starting-point for understanding Cathal Brugha is that he was born Charles Burgess and was the child of a mixed-religion family; his mother, Marianne Flynn, was a Catholic, and his father, Thomas Burgess, was a Protestant and descended from a family who had immigrated from England

maybe in the fourteenth century. Like many others before him, Cathal was amazed to learn, after he had left school, that the Irish had their own language, culture and history. This led him to critically question what he had been taught in school about history and who was to blame for seven centuries of British rule, culminating in the Famine period from 1847 to 1851, with the population declining from 8 million in 1840 to 4.4 million in 1900. Born in 1874, just twenty years after the Famine, this coloured his view of governance, of Irish history, the part that Ireland had played in spreading the British Empire and the part that Britain was playing in the destruction of the Irish people. Like many others before him with parents from different backgrounds, on discovering that he also had an Irish inheritance he switched to becoming 'more Irish than the Irish themselves'. He spent much of his spare time talking to older people in the Waterford Gaeltacht and joined the Gaelic League, where he rapidly learned Irish, becoming fluent in a few years and beginning to use the Irish version of his name; he travelled the country teaching the language, promoting Irish culture, and then recruiting and training Irish Volunteers. At the same time, he set up a church candle company to give Irish people jobs providing the candles sold in Catholic churches throughout Ireland.

Brugha was able to combine a successful business life with spending much of his daily life in prayer in churches and monasteries throughout Ireland. Subsequently these became very convenient 'safe houses' for his work for the Irish nation, and the priests to whom he sold his candles became his minders. In his subsequent life, whenever considering a decision, he would spend much time in prayer to determine what was right. The value systems that he came to adopt were those of the early Irish monastic Christian Church, of *Is giorra cabhair Dén ná an doras*, 'the help of God is closer than the door'.

In 1916 he was second in command of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers, at the South Dublin Union (now St James's Hospital). Left for dead with twenty-five injuries from bullets and shrapnel, he was not on the list for execution with the other leaders. He slowly recovered, although left in pain and with a limp. In Dublin he was hailed in song and story as a hero. In 1917 he started to recruit, equip, train, discipline and organise the many different groups of the Irish Volunteers into one army.

Just two years later he was elected for Waterford, where he had previously learned the Irish language, in Sinn Féin's landslide win at the 1918 general election. Because Éamon de Valera was in prison, in January 1919 Brugha was chosen to be president of the new Dáil. On de Valera's return Brugha was appointed Minister for Defence. His military strategy was to avoid open engagement with the enemy, who were well versed in open warfare and the best-equipped army in the world.

The British found it difficult to arrest Brugha, as he avoided being photographed, always carried a gun and avoided regular visits to his home and office. His business, Lalor Bros, gave him a cover to travel the country solidifying the military position.

Despite facing a very small army that was up against the might of the British Empire, by July 1921 the British army had conceded that they had lost control of Munster. Britain called for a truce to stop the tide towards independence in Connaught and began to seek a two-state solution, to divide and rule. To protect against this, Brugha proposed an oath of allegiance to the Irish Republic and to Dáil Éireann for the army and Dáil deputies, which was seconded by Terence MacSwiney.

As Minister for Defence in the Irish Republic of 1919–22, and responsible for managing the military campaign to defend our newly asserted independence, for reasons of security he kept few notes and didn't write to justify himself and his actions. Had he not died a fortnight before his forty-eighth birthday, trying to stop a civil war which was being foisted on soldiers of the army that he had led, he would have explained this better himself.

He would most regret that this 'split' has continued for a century, dividing communities: Republicans versus Free Staters, Catholics versus Protestants, Southerners versus Northerners, Nationalists versus Unionists, Republicans versus Loyalists. Since the Centenary Commemorations, a 'Treaty Generation Descendants Group' has been meeting and successfully resolving these divisions. It includes descendants of Cathal Brugha, Michael Collins, Harry Boland, Arthur Griffith, Erskine Childers, Robert Barton and others who had been involved in the Treaty negotiations.

Cathal Brugha and W.T. Cosgrave had been the senior officers in the 4th Battalion in 1916, under Éamonn Ceannt, who was executed as one of the 1916 leaders. W.T.'s son Liam and this author became friends as members of the Fourth Battalion Descendants' Group. In his last conversation with the author, referring to what was done to 'Rory, Liam, Dick and Joe', and many other things, he reflected that 'we were forced'.

Brugha believed that ending the Irish Republic of 1919–22 and rejoining the British Empire would not be a 'stepping-stone' to independence. When the Republicans lost the vote on the Treaty, he intended leaving politics and returning to work for the Irish language. The one exception that he made, and the last sentence spoken at that meeting in the Dáil, was that he would try to keep discipline in the army, i.e. not allow the split to descend into the army. He tried to persuade the Republicans who occupied the Four Courts to leave, believing that it was a trap to facilitate starting a civil war. This was a 'conversation' that

continued for decades and finally ended a few days before the socialist leader Peadar O'Donnell died in 1986, when he admitted to my father, Ruairí Brugha, that 'the Four Courts were wrong'.

Subsequently, when Brugha saw that the soldiers he had led were under attack by the new Free State army, his loyalty impelled him to defend and protect them. When this failed, he was prepared to risk his life in the hope that one high-profile casualty might wake people up to the senselessness of civil war. In walking out into Thomas Lane and confronting his attackers, he risked getting killed. One shot severed his left femoral artery. Nurse Linda Kearns, who was with him, stopped the bleeding. She accompanied him on the short trip to the Mater Hospital and kept the pressure on the artery. She subsequently fainted and then found herself being brought to her home in the same ambulance. In her Bureau of Military History Statement she questioned why Brugha was left without treatment for a further two hours, until he had lost too much blood. Ninety years later, Ireland's leading cardiologist, Dr Brian Maurer, related to me that this question had bothered the medical people in the Mater at that time. Cathal Brugha could have been saved. Why was treatment delayed? He himself was conscious and expressed the thought that he might lose his leg. This was not the comment of someone who had had a death wish, as some later claimed. He had been prepared to risk his life, if his death might have woken people up to the senselessness of civil war. He had survived twenty-five major wounds in 1916 and intended to survive this one injury to his leg.

After he died, the archbishop of Dublin refused to allow his body to be brought into the Pro-Cathedral for his funeral service, despite his having been shot just outside its walls. This was the man who had, briefly, been Ireland's first president, and whose church candles were used in Catholic churches throughout Ireland. Cathal Brugha was buried from St Joseph's Church, Berkeley Road, with over eighty priests walking as part of his funeral procession.

His legacy to me includes phrases that ring in my mind, which I often heard my father use. One of them is 'That is not right', as in 'might or right', meaning that it would be right to confront the might of the invader. The other is 'That will split the country', as in the need to 'unite and reconcile' to counter the invader's tactic of 'divide and rule'. Pearse is remembered for his noble idealism, Connolly for his social and economic philosophy, and Brugha for his fighting and courageous heart. However, I am struck by the strength of his mind and his determination to empower the public to achieve independence. The more I have learned about my grandfather, the prouder I have become of his nobility, his integrity and his dedication to bettering the lives of his people.

# About the Authors

**Commandant Daniel Ayiotis** is an army officer and the director of the Military Archives. He is the author of *The Military Archives: A History* (Eastwood, 2022) and *Moral Formations: Discipline and Religion in the Irish Army 1922–1932* (Eastwood, 2024).

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**Pat McCarthy**, a native of Waterford city, holds a Ph.D in chemistry and an MBA from UCD and worked for many years in the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. As a historian, he has published several books about Waterford during the revolutionary period and a history of the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry in Ireland. He has also contributed to journals, especially *The Irish Sword*, the journal of the Military History Society of Ireland.

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# notes

## Abbreviations

|       |                                      |
|-------|--------------------------------------|
| BMH   | Bureau of Military History           |
| IMA   | Irish Military Archives              |
| MS(S) | Manuscript(s)                        |
| MSPA  | Military Service Pension application |
| MSPC  | Military Service Pension Collection  |
| NLI   | National Library of Ireland          |
| TCD   | Trinity College, Dublin              |
| UCC   | University College Cork              |
| UCDA  | University College Dublin Archives   |
| WS    | Witness Statement                    |

## Foreword

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- 1 Collins's reference to 'attack' is to Brugha's verbal one during the Treaty debates. See Rex Taylor, *Michael Collins* (new edn, London, 1970), p. 193.

## 1. Cathal Brugha and the Gaelic League

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- 1 Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), p. 20.
- 2 For full biographies of Brugha see Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'*; T. Ó Dochartaigh, *Cathal Brugha: A Shaol is a Thréithe* (Cathair na Mart, 1969); and F. O'Farrell, *Cathal Brugha* (Dublin, 2018).
- 3 See J.E. Dunleavy and G.W. Dunleavy, *Douglas Hyde: A Maker of Modern Ireland* (Berkeley, 1991), pp 182–5, for a full account of this speech.
- 4 Proinsias MacAonghusa, *Ar Son na Gaeilge: Conradh na Gaeilge 1893–1993* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1993), p. 131.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 6 *Cork Examiner*, 17 June 1908.
- 7 *Freeman's Journal*, 17 June 1912.
- 8 Agnes Dodd Kilgallin, privately held papers.
- 9 Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, Seán T. (Gaillimh, 1963), p. 88.
- 10 Seán Ua Ceallaigh (Sceilg), *Cathal Brugha* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1942), p. 3.
- 11 *Kilkenny People*, 26 June 1909.
- 12 *Freeman's Journal*, 29 July 1913.
- 13 Ua Ceallaigh, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 10.
- 14 Micheál Ó Cionnfhaoilaidh, *Beatha Mhichíl Turraoin* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1956), p. 147.
- 15 James Kavanagh, IMA, BMH, WS 889, p. 18.
- 16 Brigid Ní Dhiscín, IMA, BMH, WS 484, p. 1.
- 17 *Irish Independent*, 10 March 1910.
- 18 *Waterford News and Star*, 17 October 1919.
- 19 *Killarney Echo*, 6 December 1919.
- 20 *Irish Independent*, 26 April 1922.

## 2. ‘God Save Ireland’:

### Cathal Brugha and the 1916 Rising’

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- 1 Joseph Doolan, IMA, BMH, WS 199, Appendix p. 1.
- 2 The Gaelic League was founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill to restore the Irish language. The organisation was so popular that by 1908 there were over 670 branches.
- 3 Other members of the Keating Branch included Richard Mulcahy and Piaras Béaslaí.
- 4 The Irish Republican Brotherhood was a secret oath-bound society founded by James Stephens in 1858. Its aim was to achieve Irish independence through force of arms. The Fenian Brotherhood, also established in 1858, was the organisation’s American wing which would provide funds for such activity.
- 5 For more details see Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: An Indomitable Spirit* (Dublin, 2022), pp 18–38, and Fergus O’Farrell, *Cathal Brugha* (Dublin, 2018), pp 6–14.
- 6 In September 1912, over 200,000 northern unionists signed the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, declaring their opposition to Home Rule.
- 7 Ceannt joined ‘A’ Company while Brugha was a member of ‘D’ Company. Ceannt was also appointed to the provisional committee of the Irish Volunteers.
- 8 Despite the efforts of the police and military, the Irish Volunteers successfully landed 900 weapons and 26,000 rounds of ammunition at Howth. Brugha was also present at Kilcoole, where the Irish Volunteers successfully landed a second shipment of arms on 1–2 August.
- 9 Brugha actually buried the plans in his garden, and later retrieved and destroyed them.
- 10 Áine Ceannt, IMA, BMH, WS 264, p. 24.
- 11 Gerald Doyle, IMA, BMH, WS 1511, pp 5–6.
- 12 J.V. Joyce, ‘Easter Week, 1916: The defence of the South Dublin Union’, *An tÓglách*, 12 June 1926.
- 13 Peadar Doyle, IMA, BMH, WS 155, pp 11–12.
- 14 James J. Burke, IMA, BMH, WS 1758, pp 4–5.
- 15 A tricolour flag was later flown from the building.
- 16 Joyce, ‘Easter Week’.

- 17 Interview with James Coughlan, *Portraits*, RTÉ, 16 January 1966.
- 18 Joseph Doolan, IMA, BMH, WS 199, pp 5–6.
- 19 The 2/7th and 2/8th suffered heavy losses at Northumberland Road/Mount Street at the hands of members of the 3rd Battalion, Irish Volunteers, under the command of Michael Malone, while the other units made it safely to the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham.
- 20 Interview with James Coughlan, *Portraits*, RTÉ, 16 January 1966.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Joyce, 'Easter Week'.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Joseph Doolan, IMA, BMH, WS 199, Appendix, p. 3.
- 25 Interview with Joe Byrne by Ernie O'Malley, University College Dublin Archives, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/122, 46-R.
- 26 Joyce, 'Easter Week'.
- 27 Joseph Doolan, IMA, BMH, WS 199, Appendix p. 4.
- 28 Joyce, 'Easter Week'.
- 29 Joseph Doolan, IMA, BMH, WS 199, Appendix p. 4.
- 30 Patrick Pearse had surrendered unconditionally on Saturday 29 April. Nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell, who was with the Headquarters Garrison, was tasked with delivering the order to surrender to all the other garrisons in the city.

### 3. 'Spared to do great work for Ireland in the years that followed'

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- 1 Account by Seán McGlynn for Ed Keegan of his experiences during the surrender of the 4th Battalion after the Easter Rising, 24 May 1936 (NLI, Ceannt and O'Brennan papers, MS 41,479/8/3).
- 2 Sceilg, 'The South Dublin Union', in *Dublin's Fighting Story, 1916–21: Told by the Men who Made it* (Dublin, 2009), p. 76.
- 3 Sworn statement made by Douglas ffrench-Mullen before the Advisory Committee, 12 June 1937, in Douglas ffrench-Mullen, MSPA (IMA, W/MSP/34/REF/2061).
- 4 Henry S. Murray, IMA, BMH, WS 601, p. 3.
- 5 Frank Henderson, IMA, BMH, WS 821, p. 1.
- 6 Sworn statement made by Liam Clarke before the Advisory Committee, 5 September 1935, in Liam Clarke, MSPA (IMA, W/MSP/34/REF/8875).
- 7 Fergus O'Farrell, *Cathal Brugha* (Dublin, 2018), p. 26; Michael Ó Cilín, 'Cathal Brugha 1874–1922', *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 38, no. 4 (September 1985), p. 143.
- 8 Honor Ó Brocháin (ed.), *All in the Blood: A Memoir of the Plunkett Family, the 1916 Rising, and the War of Independence by Geraldine Plunkett Dillon* (Dublin, 2006), p. 253.
- 9 Gerald Byrne, IMA, BMH, WS 668, p. 3.
- 10 Gerald Byrne, IMA, BMH, WS 143, p. 10.
- 11 Seán Ó Muirthile memoir (UCDA, Richard Mulcahy papers, P7/A/209 (52)).
- 12 Florence O'Donoghue, 'The re-organisation of the Irish Volunteers, 1916–1917', *Capuchin Annual* 1967 (Dublin, 1967), p. 381.
- 13 Richard Mulcahy, 'The Irish Volunteer Convention, 27 October, 1917', *Capuchin Annual* 1967 (Dublin, 1967), pp 407–8.
- 14 Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), p. 71.
- 15 John O'Beirne Ranelagh, *The Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1914–1924* (Newbridge, 2024), p. 154.
- 16 Frank Henderson, interview (UCDA, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/99 (28)).
- 17 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 73; Liam Manahan, interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/106 (125)).

- 18 Notes on Cathal Brugha [IRA paper] (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/D/1); George Lyons, IMA, BMH, WS 104, p. 6; John P. Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 31.
- 19 Richard Walsh, IMA, BMH, WS 400, p. 162.
- 20 Notes relating to a lecture on the Dublin Brigade given to the 1916–21 Club (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/D/97).
- 21 Seán Ó Muirthile memoir (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/A/209 (51)).
- 22 Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman: Kathleen Clarke, 1878–1972: An Autobiography* (ed. Helen Litton) (Dublin, 1991), p. 141; Éamon T. Dore, IMA, BMH, WS 392, p. 8.
- 23 Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1926), p. 161.
- 24 Frank Henderson, interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/99 (34)).
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 James Quinn, 'Brugha, Cathal', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography [DIB]* (Cambridge, 2009) (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/brugha-cathal-a1077>; accessed 22 August 2024).
- 27 Fintan Murphy, interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/109 (120)).
- 28 Brian P. Murphy, *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal* (Dublin, 1991), p. 31.
- 29 Fr Patrick Gaynor, 'The Sinn Féin árd fheis of 1917: a North Tipperary priest's account', *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1997), p. 60.
- 30 O'Farrell, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 29.
- 31 *Irish Independent*, 22 May 1917.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 William O'Brien, *Forth the Banners Go: Reminiscences of William O'Brien as told to Edward MacLysaght* (Dublin, 1969), p. 135.
- 34 *Irish Independent*, 21 May 1917.
- 35 Áine Bean Éamonn Ceannt, IMA, BMH, WS 264, p. 49.
- 36 *Hansard*, 15 June 1917, 94, col. 1384; Béaslaí, *Michael Collins*, p. 157.
- 37 Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin Party, 1916–1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 76.

- 38 Geraldine Plunkett Dillon, 'The North Roscommon by election', *Capuchin Annual* 1967 (Dublin, 1967), pp 338–40.
- 39 Ulick O'Connor, *The Troubles: The Struggle for Irish Freedom, 1912–1922* (London, 1989), p. 115.
- 40 Thomas Dillon, 'Birth of the new Sinn Féin and the Ard Fheis 1917', *Capuchin Annual* 1967 (Dublin, 1967), p. 396.
- 41 O'Brien, *Forth the Banners Go*, p. 155.
- 42 Dillon, 'Birth of the new Sinn Féin and the Ard Fheis 1917', p. 396.
- 43 Robert Mitchell Henry, *The Evolution of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1920), p. 240.
- 44 Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 121.
- 45 O'Farrell, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 33; David McCullagh, *De Valera: Rise, 1882–1932*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 2017), p. 134.
- 46 Scheme of organisation, rules etc. to be proposed by Éamon de Valera (NLI, MS 33,905 (19)); cf. Scheme of organisation proposed by Cathal Brugha (NLI, Dulcibella Barton papers, MS 8,786/2/77).
- 47 Scheme of organisation proposed by Cathal Brugha (NLI, Dulcibella Barton papers, MS 8,786/2/77).
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 33; cf. Robert Barton, interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/99 (55, 59)).
- 49 *Nationality*, 3 November 1917.
- 50 James Curry, 'Remembering Cathal Brugha', in Mary Muldowney and Catherine Scuffil (eds), *History on your Doorstep 5* (Dublin, 2022), pp 50–63.
- 51 Austin Stack, 'Cathal Brugha', *Wolfe Tone Annual* 1933 (Dublin, 1933), p. 29.
- 52 Brian Ó hUiginn, 'The story of Cathal Brugha', *Wolfe Tone Annual* 1962 (Dublin, 1962), p. 13.

## 4. Deliberate amnesia?

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- 1 Collins was arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act for a speech he had made in County Longford, allegedly urging his listeners to seize arms. He was released on bail two weeks later. Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins* (2005), pp 159–68.
- 2 Richard Walsh, IMA, BMH, WS 400, pp 39–40.
- 3 Newspaper editors were also proposed as targets, but once in London the assassins focused their attention on ministers.
- 4 For a more detailed account of what happened in London see Fergus O’Farrell, *Cathal Brugha* (Dublin, 2018).
- 5 William Whelan, IMA, BMH, WS 369, p. 65.
- 6 Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (New York, 1996), p. 95.
- 7 Richard Walsh, IMA, BMH, WS 400, pp 39–40.
- 8 Tomás Ó Dochartaigh, *Cathal Brugha: A Shaol is a Thréithe* (Cathair na Mart, 1969), p. 76.
- 9 *An tÓglach*, 14 September 1918.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 30 September 1918.
- 11 UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7b/190.
- 12 Piaras Béaslai, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland* (Dublin, 1926).
- 13 UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7b/190.
- 14 *Ibid.*, P7b/181.
- 15 Richard Mulcahy, quoted in Risteárd Mulcahy, *My Father, the General: Richard Mulcahy and the Military History of the Revolution* (Dublin, 2009), 56.
- 16 UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7b/190.
- 17 *Ibid.*, P7b/212.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Ó Dochartaigh, *Cathal Brugha*.
- 20 UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7b/216: Mulcahy’s note to himself, 16 June 1967.
- 21 Mulcahy, *My Father*, p. 134.
- 22 Maryann Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the Founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992).
- 23 Patrick Murray, ‘Obsessive historian: Éamon de Valera and the policing of his reputation’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. 101C (2001), pp 37–65.

## 5. A reluctant politician

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- 1 Pat McCarthy, *The Irish Revolution, 1913–23: Waterford* (Dublin, 2015), pp 7–13.
- 2 *Waterford News*, 27 September 1918.
- 3 Patrick Maume, ‘James John O’Shee’, in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography [DIB]*, vol. 7 (Cambridge, 2009), pp 946–7.
- 4 *Munster Express*, 24 July 1915.
- 5 See Uinseann MacEoin, ‘Pax O’Faolain’, in MacEoin, *Survivors* (Dublin, 1980), p. 138, for the initial local reaction to the selection of Brugha.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Seán Ua Ceallaigh, *Cathal Brugha* (Dublin, 1942), p. 62.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin Party, 1916–1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 156.
- 10 James McConnel, ‘The franchise factor in the defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2004), p. 377.
- 11 P.C. O’Mahony, IMA, BMH, WS 745, pp 1–2.
- 12 McCarthy, *The Irish Revolution*, pp 54–5; Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 128–40.
- 13 David Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland’s Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2004), p. 109; Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 141.
- 14 *Waterford News and Munster Express*, 23 November 1918.
- 15 *Waterford News*, 6 December 1918.
- 16 *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 November 1918.
- 17 Henry O’Keeffe, IMA, BMH, WS 1,315, p. 2; Patrick Ryan, IMA, BMH, WS 1,314, pp 2–3.
- 18 *Irish Independent*, 13 December 1918.
- 19 *Waterford News*, 20 December 1918.
- 20 Patrick Ormonde, IMA, BMH, WS 1,283, p. 7; Tommy Mooney, *Cry of the Curlew—A History of the Deise Brigade IRA* (Dungarvan, 2012), pp 87–8.
- 21 *Waterford News*, 19 October 1919.
- 22 James Quinn, ‘Cathal Brugha’, *DIB*, vol. 1, pp 952–3.
- 23 *Munster Express*, 11 March 1922.

- 24 Notes by Brugha on the treaty, no date [1922] (in possession of Cathal MacSwiney Brugha), cited in Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), p. 143.
- 25 *Waterford News and Munster Express*, 24 March 1922.
- 26 *Irish Times*, 20 March 1922; Emmet Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State 1921–1923* (Alabama, 1980), pp 174–6.
- 27 *Dáil Debates*, 17 May 1922, vol. S2, no. 11.
- 28 The fighting in O'Connell Street and Brugha's death are covered in more detail in 'Death in Dublin—Cathal Brugha's last act', by John Dorney (Chapter 9, below).
- 29 The *Waterford News* was one of only three Irish newspapers out of more than a hundred local and national newspapers to oppose the Treaty.

## 6. ‘Deire le ré na cainte’

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- 1 *Iris Dáil Éireann: An Cheud Tionól: 21 Ianuar 1919* [Dublin, 1919], p. 17.
- 2 Talking doesn’t do any work. ... We are doing little for Ireland other than talking.’ Quoted by Maine, ‘Comhairle an Phiarsaigh’, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 18 March 1911.
- 3 ‘... if a society could be set up through which Irish-speakers could express and put into action their opinions on political matters’: Pádraic Mac Piarais to Seaghán T. Ó Ceallaigh, 17 February 1912 (NLI, MS 10192/9). Obvious typing errors and missing sínte fada have been corrected here. The same letter was sent to several others.
- 4 Republished as Pádraic Mac Piarais (ed.), *An Barr Bua* (Dublin, 2012).
- 5 *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 4 April 1908.
- 6 Mac Piarais (ed.), *An Barr Bua*, p. 114.
- 7 See Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh, *Athrú ag Teacht: Conradh na Gaeilge, Ardfheis 1915 agus Éirí Amach na Cásca* (Dublin, 2016).
- 8 P.H. Pearse, ‘The coming revolution’, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 8 November 1913. Pearse had broached the same theme a year and a half earlier: *An Barr Bua*, p. 193.
- 9 *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 26 July 1913.
- 10 Eoin Mac Néill, “‘The North began’”, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 1 November 1913.
- 11 Liam Ó Briain, *Cuimhní Cinn* (Dublin, 1951), pp 153–4.
- 12 IMA, BMH, CD 94/4/3.
- 13 Minutes, Sinn Féin Standing Committee, 6 September 1918 (NLI, P3269).
- 14 Statement by Micheál U. Ó Donnchadha, BMH, WS 1781, p. 42.
- 15 ‘... it is on you and people like you that we depend now ... you understand what the true spirit of the Gael is’. ‘Mór-Thoghadh Cho. Phortláirge, 1918: Sceul Chathail Bhrugha’, NLI, EPH Acc. 2022/31.
- 16 ‘... we would not be able to assert to the world that we are a separate people’.
- 17 ‘What would a farmer do with an old plough that he couldn’t plough the land with? Wouldn’t he get one fit for the work? What would a fisherman do who had useless bad nets? Wouldn’t he look for serviceable nets, especially if they could be got for nothing? Yes, indeed. Those I belong to, those with the battle cry “Sinn Féin”, we have a policy which will put Ireland on the right course.’

- 18 '...and no wonder, as we were depending on talk'.
- 19 *London Gazette*, 29 January 1919, pp 1367–8.
- 20 *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, cxii, p. vi.
- 21 There are few Gaels in Ireland who don't know Cathal Brugha ... his Irish is as fluent as any Irish-speaker in Kerry', *Fáinne an Lae*, 11 January 1919.
- 22 Piaras Béaslaí, 'Cathal Brugha was Dail's first President', *Irish Independent*, 24 January 1962.
- 23 *Irish Independent*, 21 January 1919.
- 24 *Cork Examiner*, 21 January 1919.
- 25 NLI, Piaras Béaslaí papers, MS 33912(14). 'Reachtair', originally a steward or administrator, was by now in use to describe someone presiding over an organisation.
- 26 '... the most important work done in Ireland since the foreigners came'. *Freeman's Journal*, 22 January 1919. Similarly, the Sinn Féin paper *Nationality*, 25 January 1919, has 'an obair ba thabhairtáighe ó tháinig na Gaill go hÉirinn'.
- 27 '... since the day the Gaels came to Ireland': *Iris Dáil Éireann*, p. 5.
- 28 'Perhaps there are some people present who don't understand Irish': *ibid.* The *Freeman's Journal* report claims that this remark was said in English too.
- 29 *Freeman's Journal*, 22 January 1919.
- 30 '... imprisoned by the foreigner'; three were 'ar díbert ag Gallaibh': 'banished by the foreigner'. *Iris Dáil Éireann*, pp 8–10.
- 31 '... the bravest and most courageous woman ever born in any country, i.e., Countess Markievicz': *ibid.* The *Freeman's Journal*, 22 January 1919, quotes this in a slightly different form without mentioning Markievicz by name.
- 32 *Iris Dáil Éireann*, p. 11; *Freeman's Journal*, 22 January 1919.

- 33 Deputies of the Dáil, you will understand from what has been affirmed here that we are now separated from England. Let the world know that, and those it concerns. Whatever comes from what has been said here—war to the knife or death—the age of talk is finished in Ireland, and not before time—nonsense is finished.’ *Iris Dáil Éireann*, p. 17. The *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 January 1919, gives ‘réim na cainnte’, which would be the ‘reign’ of talk. For further comparison of the sources see Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh, *Ainm na Saoirse: Gaeilge Dháil Éireann 1919–22* (Dublin, 1919), pp 35–40, 112–20.
- 34 ‘Let us unite and no one divide us, and we are in no danger.’ *Iris Dáil Éireann*, p. 18.
- 35 ‘Dail Eireann: Orders of the Day’, 21 January 1919 (NLI, George Gavan Duffy papers, MS 15440/6/4).
- 36 P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union 1801 to 1922* (London, 1952), p. 727.
- 37 Seán T., ‘The drafting of the Programme’, *Irish Press*, 27 July 1961.
- 38 Béaslaí, ‘Cathal Brugha was Dail’s first President’.
- 39 *Iris Dáil Éireann*, pp 26–7. A French version of the programme had to wait another few months: République irlandaise, *Déclarations de l’Assemblée constituante ou Dail Eireann* ([Dublin,] 1919), p. 8.
- 40 Dáil Éireann, *Miontuairisc an Chéad Dála, 1919–1921: Minutes of proceedings of the first Parliament of the republic of Ireland* (Dublin, 1921), p. 26.
- 41 ‘Dáil Éireann: Standing Orders’, undated (Gavan Duffy papers, MS 15440/6/19(1)). However, another (presumably later) version of the standing orders (MS 15440/6/19(2)) omits this clause.
- 42 *Cuntas na hÁrdfheise*, 1919 (Dublin [1919]), p. 8.
- 43 *Miontuairisc an Chéad Dála*, pp 162–3 (27 October 1919).
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp 172–3 (29 June 1920).
- 45 ‘... asking the Dáil to make the work of the Irish language into a Government department’: Piaras Béaslaí, “Seana-Ghleus Caithte”—agus Gleusa Nua’, *Iris an Fháinne*, August 1920.
- 46 Statement of Mr J.J. O’Kelly (Sceilg), IMA, BMH, WS 384, p. 54.
- 47 *Cúntas na hÁrdfheise 1920* (Dublin [1920]), p. 6.
- 48 Statement of O’Kelly, p. 53.

- 49 'We are split from top to bottom.' Tomás Ó Dochartaigh, *Cathal Brugha: A Shaol is a Thréithe* (Dublin, 1969), p. 153.
- 50 The question of the Irish language is an educational question': Piaras Béaslaí, 'Cúrsaí na hAimsire: Smaointe Seachránacha', *Misneach*, 27 November 1920.
- 51 '... because of that kind of education which has long existed in Ireland': *Iris Dáil Éireann*, p. 6.
- 52 *Miontuairisc an Chéad Dála*, pp 153–4 (20 August 1919).
- 53 *Connacht Tribune*, 29 April 1922.
- 54 For example, *Nationalist* and *Munster Advertiser*, 14 June 1922.
- 55 'I have no intention of doing any such thing at all': Seán Ua Ceallaigh, *Cathal Brugha* (Dublin, 1942), p. 299. According to Micheál Ó Cillín, 'Cathal Brugha 1874–1922', *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 38, no. 4 (1985), p. 148, his words were 'Níl aon chuimhneamh agam ar a leithéid a dhéanamh', but this must be a retranslation.
- 56 Copy of report from Capt. Dalton, 4 July 1922 (Ernie O'Malley papers, NLI, MS 10,973/11/15).

## 7. Duty, conspiracy and enmity

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- 1 Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), pp 100–5.
- 2 Tadhg Kennedy interview with Ernie O'Malley (UCDA, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, 17b/102).
- 3 *Waterford News and Star*, 16 June 1922.
- 4 Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government in Ireland: Dáil Éireann, 1919–22* (Dublin, 1995).
- 5 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 31–2. Their sixth and youngest child was born just three months before Brugha's death in 1922.
- 6 5 Fitzwilliam Terrace is now 177 Upper Rathmines Road.
- 7 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 115.
- 8 Richard Mulcahy, 'Notes on Cathal Brugha and others' (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/D/96).
- 9 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 105.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp 111–12.
- 11 Tadhg Kennedy interview with Ernie O'Malley (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, 17b/102).
- 12 Seán Healy, IMA, BMH, WS 1479, pp 51–3.
- 13 Alfred Burgess, IMA, BMH, WS 1634, pp 6–7; Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 116.
- 14 Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government*, p. 55; Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 105.
- 15 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 66. Note: in March 1928 Brugha's bicycle was offered as the prize in a draw to raise money for the Irish Prisoners' Dependants' Fund. See Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 166.
- 16 Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918–23* (London, 2013), p. 87
- 17 Robert Brennan, IMA, BMH, WS 779, p. 22. Brennan produced the *Irish Bulletin* during the War of Independence and was appointed under-secretary of foreign affairs by de Valera. Brennan claims that the source of his information was the notorious Dublin Castle intelligence officer Captain Jocelyn Hardy. See Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 114.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp 113–14.

- 19 Kevin O'Shiel, IMA, BMH, WS 1,770, pp 962–3.
- 20 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 106.
- 21 *Waterford News and Star*, 25 April 1919.
- 22 'Oath of Allegiance', *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. F, no. 13, 20 August 1919.
- 23 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 108–9.
- 24 Liam Deasy interview with Ernie O'Malley (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/86). On the killing of Mulhern, see Eunan O'Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin, *The Dead of the Irish Revolution* (New Haven and London, 2020), p. 154.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 120; Oscar Traynor interview with Ernie O'Malley (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/98).
- 27 *Irish Independent* and *Freeman's Journal*, 7 February 1921; O'Halpin and Ó Corráin, *Dead of the Irish Revolution*, p. 293.
- 28 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 92
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- 30 Mulcahy, 'Notes on Cathal Brugha and others' (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/D/96).
- 31 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 111.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- 34 Anne Dolan and William Murphy, *Michael Collins: The Man and the Revolution* (Cork, 2018), p. 150.
- 35 Éamon de Valera, 'Recollections by de Valera of his arrival in Dublin from America in Dec. 1920' (UCDA, Éamon de Valera papers, P150/1415); Mulcahy, 'Notes on Cathal Brugha and others' (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/D/96).
- 36 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 117–18; Patrick G. Daly, IMA, BMH, WS 814, p. 20.
- 37 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 118; Seán McLoughlin, IMA, BMH, WS 290, pp 46–7.
- 38 Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 263; Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 118.

- 39 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 119.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p Times New Roman p 119–20.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- 43 On the executions and killing of Lindsay see O’Halpin and Ó Corráin, *Dead of the Irish Revolution*, pp 315–17, 332–4.
- 44 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 112–13; Minister for Defence to Ethel Benson, 29 July 1921 (NLI, Seán O’Mahony papers, MS 44,045).
- 45 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 87–90.
- 46 *Ibid.*, pp 120–1.
- 47 Seán MacKeon [Mac Eoin], IMA, BMH, WS 1,716, pp 158–66.
- 48 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 122.
- 49 *Ibid.*, pp 14, 81, 128, 174.
- 50 *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. T, no. 8, 7 January 1922.
- 51 Ernest Blythe, IMA, BMH, WS 939, pp 126–7.
- 52 Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1926), pp 51–2.
- 53 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 122–3; Ernest Blythe, IMA, BMH, WS 939, pp 129–30.
- 54 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 123–6.
- 55 *Ibid.*, pp 127–8; de Valera to McGarrity, 21 December 1922 (NLI, McGarrity papers, MS 17,440).
- 56 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 128.
- 57 Brugha to Mulcahy, 6 September 1921 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7A/1); see also Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 129–30.
- 58 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 131–3.
- 59 *Ibid.*, pp 135–6; Úna Stack, IMA, BMH, WS 418, p. 54.
- 60 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 138–40.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

## 8. Would prefer to die by an Orange bullet or an English bullet'

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- 1 All quotes from the *Irish Times*, 9 December 1921.
- 2 Ronan Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: A Will to Power* (London, 2015), p. 9.
- 3 *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. T, no. 5, 17 December 1921.
- 4 *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. T, no. 15, 7 January 1922.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 For one concise summation of the proposed Document No. 2 see David McCullagh, *De Valera, Vol. 1: Rise 1882–1932* (Dublin, 2017), pp 250–1.
- 7 *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. T, no. 15, 7 January 1922.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), p. 140.
- 10 McCullagh, *De Valera: Rise*, p. 262.
- 11 Interview with Christie (Kit) Byrne by Ernie O'Malley (UCDA, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/96, 57R-55R).
- 12 *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. T, no. 16, 9 January 1922.
- 13 Brugha to Eoin O'Duffy, 12 January 1922 (NLI, Eoin O'Duffy papers, MS 48,281/2/3).
- 14 *Skibbereen Eagle*, 18 February 1922
- 15 Poster announcing formation of Cumann na Poblachta, 7 April 1922 (private collection).
- 16 J. Anthony Caughan, *Austin Stack: Portrait of a Separatist* (Kildare, 1977), p. 204.
- 17 *Republic of Ireland [Poblacht na hÉireann]*, 3 January 1922. The newspaper seems to be extremely rare; most of its issues can be found in the NLI, Florence O'Donoghue papers, MS 31,545.
- 18 *Ibid.* In another front-page editorial in the issue of 21 February 1922, Brugha implores those at the pending Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis not to accept the Treaty (NLI, Florence O'Donoghue papers, MS 31,545).
- 19 All letter text from the *Irish Independent*, 25 March 1922.
- 20 *Irish Times*, 23 March 1922.

- 21 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 148. It is alleged in one account that Tom Barry rejected Brugha as chairman of the Army Convention; see interview with Michael ‘Archie’ Doyle by Ernie O’Malley (UCDA, Ernie O’Malley notebooks, P17b/105, 7L).
- 22 Thomas J. Morrissey, *Laurence O’Neill (1864–1943): Patriot and Man of Peace* (Dublin, 2014), p. 212.
- 23 *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. S2, no. 3, 2 March 1922.
- 24 *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. S2, no. 11, 17 May 1922. All subsequent quotes from this session unless otherwise indicated.
- 25 See McCullagh, *De Valera: Rise*, pp 271–2.
- 26 *Evening Echo*, 18 March 1922.
- 27 Typescript copy of an article, ‘Cathal Brugha’, by William O’Brien, n.d. (NLI, William O’Brien papers, MS 15,704/7/4), in which O’Brien gives his recollections of Brugha throughout the revolutionary period.
- 28 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 150.
- 29 *Irish Independent*, 14 June 1922.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 13 June 1922.
- 31 *Waterford News*, 24 August 1923.
- 32 Joseph O’Connor, IMA, BMH, WS 544, p. 6. O’Connor notes that Brugha was key to having both sides meet.
- 33 Florence O’Donoghue, *No Other Law: The Story of Liam Lynch and the Irish Republican Army, 1916–1923* (Dublin, 1954), p. 258.
- 34 Sceilg, *A Trinity of Martyrs: Terence MacSwiney, Cathal Brugha, Austin Stack* (Dublin, 1947), p. 87.
- 35 Oscar Traynor’s untitled account of revolutionary experiences, n.d. but prior to December 1963 (UCDA, de Valera papers, P150/3297).
- 36 ‘The faith of Cathal Brugha’ [handbill], n.d. (NLI, Joseph McGarrity papers, MS 17,654/6/14); see also *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. T, no. 15, 7 January 1922.
- 37 Liam Lynch to Caitlín Brugha, 15 July 1922 (UCDA, Moss Twomey papers, P69/92(317)).

## 9. Death in Dublin

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- 1 They were, on the pro-Treaty side, Michael Collins, killed in an ambush in August 1922; Seán Hales and Séamus Dwyer, assassinated in separate incidents in Dublin in December 1922; and Kevin O'Higgins, assassinated in 1927. On the anti-Treaty side, as well as Cathal Brugha, Harry Boland was shot and mortally wounded during arrest later that month; Séamus Devins was killed along with five others on Ben Bulbin in Sligo in September 1922; Erskine Childers and Liam Mellows were judicially executed by the Free State in November and December 1922 respectively; and Joseph MacDonagh died because of various illnesses during imprisonment in December 1922. To these can be added Arthur Griffith, who died of a stroke probably brought on by the intense stress of Civil War in August 1922; Dr Francis Ferran, who died during imprisonment in the Curragh camp in July 1923; and Seán Etchingham, who died shortly after release from imprisonment in 1923.
- 2 Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), p. 153.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- 4 Joseph O'Connor, IMA, BMH, WS 544, p. 11.
- 5 Oscar Traynor to Joe O'Connor, 29 June 1922, IMA, ACC-2012-07.
- 6 MSPC, Nominal Rolls, 4 Battalion, 1 Dublin Brigade.
- 7 O'Connor, IMA, BMH, WS 544, p. 12.
- 8 Christie (Kit) Byrne, interview (UCDA, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/96). My thanks to Aaron O Maonaigh and Gerard Shannon for access to transcriptions of these interviews.
- 9 Frank Henderson, interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/99).
- 10 John Callanan, interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/115).
- 11 Tommy Doyle and Seán O'Shaughnessy, interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/115).
- 12 Peter Ward, MSPA 1934 REF1474.
- 13 Diarmuid O'Connor and Frank Connolly, *Sleep Soldier Sleep: The Life and Times of Pádraig O'Connor* (Kildare, 2011), p. 108.
- 14 MacMahon testimony to Army Inquiry 1924 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/C/14).

- 15 Chief of Staff correspondence, M to CS, 2 July 1922 (UCDA, Twomey papers, P69/77).
- 16 David McCullough, *De Valera, Vol. 1: Rise, 1882–1932* (Dublin, 2017), pp 288–9.
- 17 Joe O’Connor, IMA, BMH, WS 544, p. 12.
- 18 McCullough, *De Valera: Rise*, p. 289.
- 19 Todd Andrews, interview (UCDA, O’Malley notebooks, P17b/88).
- 20 C.S. (Todd) Andrews, *Dublin Made Me* (Dublin, 1979), p. 251.
- 21 O’Connor, *Sleep Soldier Sleep*, pp 104–7.
- 22 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, pp 154–5.
- 23 Reports to GHQ (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/106).
- 24 *Irish Times*, 5 July 1922.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 National Army reports (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/40).
- 27 Paddy O’Connor, interview (UCDA, O’Malley notebooks, P17b/101).
- 28 O’Connor, *Sleep Soldier Sleep*, p. 109.
- 29 National Army reports (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/40).
- 30 Seán Brady, letter to Éamon de Valera, 1966 (UCDA, De Valera papers, P150/1634).
- 31 See UCC Civil War Fatality Project Index (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/theirishrevolution/irish-civil-war-fatalities-project/fatalities-index/>).
- 32 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 156.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- 35 *Ibid.*

## 10. 'When many of us are forgotten Cathal Brugha will be remembered'

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- 1 Michael Collins, quoted in Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'An Indomitable Spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), p. 161.
- 2 The Decade of Centenaries programme was a public history initiative funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to complement the ongoing programme of state commemorations with special centenary commemorative events on the anniversaries of key historical developments in Ireland from 2012 to 2023.
- 3 See Caitlin White, 'Memory wars: the curation of the history of World War I in the public space of Dublin, 1922–39', in Joanna Wojdon and Dorota Wiśniewska (eds), *History in Public Space* (London, 2024); Caitlin White, 'The role of the public in shaping new collective memories: the Irish public and their representation of history during and after the Irish Civil War of 1922–23', in Joanna Wojdon and Dorota Wiśniewska (eds), *Public in Public History* (London, 2021).
- 4 Una Mullally, 'Ireland's controversial centenaries are exposing the divides deepened by Brexit', *The Guardian*, 14 January 2020.
- 5 See John Gillis, 'Memory and identity: the history of a relationship', in John Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, 1996).
- 6 Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and a Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford, 2018).
- 7 Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, 2007), p. 224.
- 8 Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance*, p. 446.
- 9 Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923–2000* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 15; Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin, 1970).
- 10 *United Ireland*, 20 April 1935. See also Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Commemorating the Rising, 1922–65: "a figurative scramble for the bones of the patriot dead"?', in Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan (eds), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007).
- 11 Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Ireland's Art, Ireland's History: Representing Ireland, 1845 to Present* (Michigan, 2009), p. 170.
- 12 *Irish Independent*, 26 January 1939.

- 13 Síghe Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Expressions of Nationhood in Bronze and Stone: Albert Power RHA* (Dublin, 2019), p. 102.
- 14 Emma Keating, Jacqueline Moore and Síghe Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Art in State Buildings, 1922–1970* (Dublin, 2000).
- 15 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 170; *Irish Independent*, 17 October 1963.
- 16 Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Expressions of Nationhood*, p.148.
- 17 See Síghe Bhreathnach-Lynch’s discussion of the ‘depth of feeling’ felt at the government’s attempt to use Brugha’s memory, based on an interview with Rory Brugha, son of Cathal Brugha, on 21 February 1989. Bhreathnach-Lynch, ‘A Dublin sculptor: Albert Power RHA’, *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2002), p. 28.
- 18 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 169.
- 19 *Sunday Independent*, 8 July 1934.
- 20 Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Expressions of Nationhood*, p. 121.
- 21 Séamus Conboy, ‘Changing Dublin street names, 1880s to 1940s’, *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2011), p. 217.
- 22 *Irish Times*, 9 September 1927.
- 23 *Irish Press*, 27 May 1952.
- 24 NAI, TAOIS S 15313A, ‘Memorandum from the Department of Defence relating to the renaming of Portobello Barracks, Dublin, 30 April 1952’.
- 25 NAI, TAOIS S 15313A, ‘Minute to the Private Secretary, Minister of Defence, 10 May 1952’.
- 26 In English it means ‘a faithful and loyal woman, a kind and charitable woman, a soldier who fought calmly amongst men for the cause of Ireland’, in the *Irish Press*, 4 July 1932.
- 27 Ronan McGreevy, ‘Cathal Brugha remembered 100 years after his untimely death in the Civil War’, *Irish Times*, 9 July 2022; ‘Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and Minister Catherine Martin announce the 2022 Programme for the Decade of Centenaries’, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Press Release, 23 February 2022.
- 28 See photos of these memorials on [www.irishwarmemorials.ie](http://www.irishwarmemorials.ie) (accessed 5 June 2024).

- 29 Linda McWhinney, IMA, BMH, WS 404, p. 20.
- 30 Piaras Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words: Letters and Statements of the Leaders Executed after the Rising at Easter 1916* (Dublin, 1990).
- 31 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 158.
- 32 Beiner, 'Probing the boundaries of Irish memory: from postmemory to prememory and back', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 154 (2014), p. 300.
- 33 Deloping was the practice of shooting into the air during a duel to deliberately miss your opponent but retain your honour by not showing cowardice.
- 34 *Dáil Debates*, vol. S2, no. 11, 17 May 1922.
- 35 *Poblacht na hÉireann*, 11 July 1922, quoted in Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 159.
- 36 Bláthnaid ní Rathaille, 'A complicated patch of land: the evolution of the republican plot in Glasnevin Cemetery 1916–1930', *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 69, no. 2 (2016), pp 236–48.
- 37 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*.
- 38 *Freeman's Journal*, 9 July 1923.
- 39 See, for example, notices in *Munster Express*, 8 July 1949; *Irish Press*, 7 July 1961; *Irish Examiner*, 27 July 1970; *Irish Press*, 30 June 1972.
- 40 *Irish Press*, 30 June 1972.
- 41 *Irish Independent*, 10 July 1972.
- 42 Unknown, 'In Memory of Cathal Brugha and Harry Boland': TCD Library, OLS Samuels box 5, no. 72.

## 11. ‘Sincere and wholehearted loyalty’

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- 1 Daithí Ó Corráin and Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: ‘An Indomitable Spirit’* (Dublin, 2022), p. 159.
- 2 Deirdre Stuart, *Caitlín Kingston Brugha (1879–1959): A Contribution to the Decade of Centenaries* (<https://offalyhistoryblog.wordpress.com/>).
- 3 Áine Ceannt, IMA, BMH, WS 264, 27 May 1949.
- 4 *Evening Herald*, 25 October 1920.
- 5 *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 November 1922.
- 6 *Irish Independent*, 18 July 1923.
- 7 *Waterford News and Star*, 24 August 1923.
- 8 Waterford City Council Minute Book, 1 April–3 September 1924 (Waterford City and County Archives, IE-WCA-LA1-1-A-35).
- 9 *Irish Examiner*, 31 May 1927.
- 10 *Dungarvan Observer*, 6 June 1927.
- 11 *Irish Press*, 1 June 1935.
- 12 Máire MacSwiney Brugha, *History’s Daughter: A Memoir from the Only Child of Terence MacSwiney* (Dublin, 2005), p. 196.
- 13 Ó Corráin and Hanley, *Cathal Brugha*, p. 169.
- 14 *Munster Express*, 26 April 1946.
- 15 *Evening Herald*, 1 December 1959.





**“When many of us are forgotten,  
Cathal Brugha will be remembered.”**

**Michael Collins, 17 July 1922**



**Óglaigh  
na hÉireann**  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

