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'Mutiny under the Sun: The Connaught Rangers, India, 1920'

Abstract

This article re-examines the causes of the Connaught Rangers mutiny and argues that institutional failings in the British Army were far more influential in the breakdown of discipline than the oft-supposed politicisation of its participants. New and under-used source material demonstrates how the popular myth surrounding the actions of James Daly and his co-conspirators was nothing more than a self-serving exaggeration of events designed to fit an idealised Nationalist narrative of Irish resistance to British rule. More compelling is the argument that demobilisation left the regiment with an imbalance in officer-man relations that tipped a combustible situation over the edge.

Key Words

empire, British Army, discipline and morale, officer-man relations, Ireland, demobilization

On 5 July 1920 *The Times* printed an article entitled 'Tampering with the Army. Sinn Féin in India.'¹ It related the course of events, which saw 300 men of the Connaught Rangers stationed in the Punjab ground arms on account of being 'in sympathy with Ireland' following news of British reprisals back home. It was a headline that conjured fearful reminders of Fenian infiltration in the 1860s, the severity of which, coupled with the anxiety surrounding the term 'mutiny' in India after 1857, transformed what was a local incident into concerns for the stability of the Empire.² The fact that Indian nationalists interpreted these events as an act of imperial solidarity following the Amritsar massacre in 1919, merely added to the apprehension.³ As such, it was dealt with in swift and severe fashion, with sixty-one ringleaders being sentenced by courts-martial. The majority were imprisoned, but fourteen were condemned to death. Of these, thirteen had their sentences commuted. Only James Joseph Daly, of Tyrrellspass, Co. Westmeath, was executed for his part in leading an attack on

¹ *The Times*, 5 July 1920.

² K. Jeffery, 'The Irish military tradition in the British Empire', in K. Jeffery (ed.), *'An Irish Empire'? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996), p. 117. For more on Fenianism see, A. Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1999), pp. 93-109; B. Jenkins, *The Fenian Problem: Insurgency and Terrorism in a Liberal State 1858-1874* (McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2008); and contributions in F. McGarry & J. McConnel (eds.), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2009). For more on the Indian Mutiny and the British army, see E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (Longman Group Ltd, London, 1980), pp. 121-144; and H. Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997), pp. 90-91.

³ J. Ohlmeyer, 'Ireland, India and the British Empire', *Studies in People's History*, vol. 2, no. 2, (2015), pp. 179-180. For more on relations between Irish and Indian nationalists, see M. Silvestri, 'The Sinn Féin of India': Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 39, no. 4, (2000), pp. 454-486.

a magazine at the Solon outpost that cost two men their lives and left another seriously wounded. At dawn on 2 November 1920, Daly was shot by firing squad.

Whereas this act brought the event to a close for the British authorities, it provided a martyrdom for the Nationalist narrative to exploit in Ireland's struggle for independence. For here was a young man of twenty, who had dared to strike at the heart of the British Empire on behalf of all Irishmen. More than that, here was a man who, when faced with a choice that struck at the core of his conflicted identity as an 'Irishman in a British uniform', was brave enough to take a political stance inspired by IRA action thousands of miles away – or so the story continues to be told by some.⁴ More recent academic studies have tended to distance the mutiny from the entanglements of political re-appropriation that has promoted a collective amnesia concerning complicit Irish involvement in the British army. Instead, a more nuanced account has emerged which melds together external as well as military factors to explain the breakdown of discipline. Anthony Babington led the way in this regard by expunging the myth developed by T.P. Kilfeather and Sam Pollock in the late 1960s, that somehow the Connaught Rangers mutiny was inspired by Black and Tan atrocities.⁵ Others have corrected the misapprehension that the mutiny took place in 1916, or that it was a pre-meditated Sinn Féin attack led by a politicised James Daly.⁶ Nevertheless, decades' worth of popularisation through print, on screen, and across the airwaves has created a seemingly impenetrable wall of opposition against which historians have had to contend. However, with the release of new source material online, such as the Bureau of Military History (BMH) documents and the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC), as well as material from the National Army Museum (NAM), Imperial War Museum (IWM), The National Archives, Kew (TNA), and The National Archives, Ireland (NAI), revisiting the Connaught Rangers mutiny ahead of its centenary appears a worthwhile endeavour.⁷ Through piecing together these disparate holdings, it is now possible to qualify the political motivations of those involved and reassert the military nature of this breakdown in discipline.

This is not to say that the political dimension should be entirely disregarded. After all, it did form the central theme in the official explanation of events, as well as the mutineers' own accounts after their release from British penitentiaries in 1923. Yet this was largely a narrative of convenience.

⁴ F. Keane in *The Independent*, 9 January 1999.

⁵ A. Babington, *The Devil to Pay: The Mutiny of the Connaught Rangers, India, July, 1920* (Leo Cooper, London, 1991); T.P. Kilfeather, *The Connaught Rangers* (Anvil Books Ltd, Dublin, 1969), p. 2; and S. Pollock, *Mutiny for the Cause* (Leo Cooper, London, 1969), p. 32.

⁶ M. Silvestri, *Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire and Memory* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009), p. 158; and T. Bartlett, 'The Connaught Rangers Mutiny India, July 1920', *History Ireland*, vol. 6, no. 1, (1998), pp. 5-7.

⁷ For some methodological issues concerning the Bureau of Military History witness statements, see F. McGarry, 'Too many histories'? THE BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY AND EASTER 1916', *History Ireland*, vol. 19, no. 6, (2011), pp. 26-29.

For the British authorities, Sinn Féin infiltration in a single Irish regiment was easily containable – particularly when it was shown that only two companies participated, while the rest remained loyal. More problematic would have been the admission that discipline had broken down due to poor officer-man relations resulting from wider structural failings in the post-war army. With the Empire to police and British military commitments on the Rhine ongoing, the potential of repeat instances across any, and all, units did not bear thinking. For similar reasons, Bolshevik infiltration had been blamed for the 1919 demobilisation strikes. However, a recent study has suggested that these were not politically motivated, rather just a breakdown of discipline among disgruntled soldiers whose sense of patriotic duty changed with the Armistice, and whose seasoned officer and NCO cadre had been eroded by demobilisation itself.⁸

For the surviving mutineers, on the other hand, politicising the event provided justification for a series of developments that had begun rather modestly but had spiralled rapidly out of their control. Agitation concerning the state of Irish affairs undoubtedly prompted some men into action, but it was by no means universal nor the solitary reason for joining in the riotous behaviour. It did, however, provide them with an opportunity to recast themselves as political casualties in the fight for Irish independence after the event, as the newly-established Free State sought to compensate the deserving for their personal and material losses at the hands of the British. The mutineers sought to benefit from what David Fitzpatrick has described as ‘the often painful and embarrassing experience of official commemoration in Southern Ireland between 1922 and 1939’, which focussed on compensation rather than memorialisation.⁹ This became the driving force (on both sides) behind establishing the mutiny as a political stand, despite the evidence suggesting that it was little more than a breakdown of regimental discipline resulting from poor officer-man relations.

The first thing to note about the mutiny is that it was fairly modest in size and scope. Wellington Barracks at Jullundur had already been vacated by A Company, which had headed for the hill outpost at Jutogh, and all but fifty men of C Company, which had moved to Solon - each approximately 200 miles away. This left just half the battalion in situ when the mutiny broke out. Initially, only five men (Joseph Hawes, Christopher Sweeney, Patrick Gogarty, William Daly – James’ older brother – and Stephen Lally) found Lance Corporal John Flannery on the morning of 28 June 1920 to state their intentions to ground arms. Flannery, a veteran of the regiment since 1908,

⁸ My thanks go to William Butler who has allowed me to consult a draft of his forthcoming article, ‘The British Soldier is no Bolshevik’. The British Army, Discipline, and the Demobilisation Strikes of 1919’.

⁹ D. Fitzpatrick, ‘Commemoration in the Irish Free State: a chronicle of embarrassment’, in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), p. 186.

attempted to dissuade the men, leading to William Daly's withdrawal. In later years, Flannery would suggest that this was the moment where he assumed the leadership of the mutiny.¹⁰ However, only the four remaining men voluntarily presented themselves at the Guard Room for arrest on account of being 'in sympathy with Ireland.' From here the mutiny spread as more than 200 men were persuaded to follow suit. The officers present heard the grievances put forward by the men through their elected spokesman, Flannery, who by this stage had changed sides. It was understood that the situation in Ireland would prevent the men from soldiering further, but that no violence was intended.¹¹ The authorities were alerted and a relief force sent to reclaim control of the barracks. By the time of their arrival on 1 July, 300 or so mutineers, were marched to a prepared camp outside the compound to await further action. Thereafter, the ringleaders were separated from the majority who were cajoled back to the regiment.

Two days beforehand, on 29 June, the mutineers had decided to send emissaries to A and C companies in Jutogh and Solon respectively, but only succeeded in mobilising the latter into action. Thus, it was only on 30 June that James Daly sprang into action, leading between seventy and eighty men to the Officer's Mess to declare themselves in sympathy with the declarations of their comrades in Jullundur. The Commanding Officer (CO) in Solon, Major W.N.S. Alexander, attempted to reason with Daly and his men, but received little in the way of response. Anxious to avoid bloodshed, an agreement was struck between the officers and the mutineers, via the regimental chaplain, Father Baker, that all weapons and ammunition would be placed under guard in the camp magazine. However, by nightfall Daly and his comrades had decided to reclaim their weapons. The attack that ensued cost the lives of Privates Patrick Smythe and Peter Sears, and seriously wounded Private Eugene Egan, before being abandoned. Daly, who had identified himself as the ringleader during the attack, was among those who was arrested the next day by a detachment of South Wales Borderers who arrived at the camp.¹² Between both Jullundur and Solon, sixty-one ringleaders were tried by courts-martial.

The established view of the Connaught Rangers mutiny is that it was enacted by green recruits who had enlisted in the post-war period and were, as such, unaccustomed to the monotony, rigours and discipline of military life. It provided a simple, and ultimately palatable, explanation for what had occurred, and was heavily stressed by the regimental historian, H.F.N. Jourdain, a former Colonel of

¹⁰ Babington, *Devil to Pay*, pp. 3-6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 27-35.

the 5th Battalion, who was keen to keep the unit's proud history unblemished.¹³ Babington, too, emphasised the fact that out of the 206 men comprising the last two drafts from Britain, 172 were mutineers at Jullundur.¹⁴ However, this did not necessarily mean that they lacked military experience altogether. The Summary of Evidence of the courts-martial held at Solon revealed an entirely different dynamic. Of the sixty-one men tried, the majority were war veterans of considerable service, with thirty of them having spent more than five years in the armed forces. A detailed breakdown of the remainder suggested that four had served for between one and two years, three between two and three years, eight between three and four years, six between four and five years, and ten for an unknown period of time.¹⁵ Some were young and inexperienced, undoubtedly. The muster books for the regiment indicated that at least nine of those sentenced by courts-martial had enlisted as late as 1919, including James Daly. Nevertheless, the regiment as a whole, and the mutineers in particular, contained a significant cadre of experienced and well-drilled men, hardened by years of frontline service. As such, to claim that the mutiny occurred on account of an influx of raw recruits unaccustomed to the strains and drudgery of military life is somewhat problematic.

Indeed, J.C.W. Francis, of the 19th Hussars, and the last surviving witness to the courts-martial proceedings, did not consider the unit's inexperience as a contributing factor to the revolt. Whilst highlighting some of the mitigating circumstances that would have affected all men; 'the hot weather' and 'want of satisfactory occupation and activity', the emphasis was firmly placed on the 'unrest in Ireland'; 'letters from home'; 'very poor discipline indeed and of the entirely unintelligent sort'; and finally 'extremely bad relations between officers and men'.¹⁶ This would suggest that other military factors were the root cause in the breakdown of discipline and that culpability lay predominantly with the individual officers present as opposed to supposed greenness of the men.

The complicated bond of officer-man relations had undergone a significant transformation during the war to accommodate the millions of men joining the colours. The old Victorian principles of sustaining discipline and morale through the carrot and the stick, supplemented by a miasmic concept of regimental *esprit de corps*, were a thing of the past.¹⁷ Britain's new citizen army, as David

¹³ H.F.N. Jourdain and E. Fraser, *The Connaught Rangers*, (3 vols., London, 1926) I, pp. 570-571.

¹⁴ Babington, *Devil*, p. 41.

¹⁵ NAI, 2000/6/11, Summary of Evidence: Solon, 18 August 1920. This counters suggestions made in the Dáil Éireann Debates of December 1930, which suggested a majority of Connaught Rangers mutineers had fewer than three years of service. For more on this, see M. Coleman, 'Financial reintegration assistance for veterans of the Irish revolution (1916-23): post-conflict policy in an historical setting', (Open access working paper, Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice, June 2015), p. 19.

¹⁶ NAM, 7609-35-12, J.C.W. Francis to F.W.S. Jourdain, 21 November 1970.

¹⁷ G. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 4-7; and D. French, *Military Identities: The*

Englander noted, required officers to learn that 'their authority, though in theory non-negotiable, was in practice conditional upon the development of appropriate man-management skills. Inefficiency and incompetence were not easily concealed from men who rapidly became keen judges of officer performance'.¹⁸ Veterans of the Connaught Rangers' campaigns in Mesopotamia, Gallipoli and the Western Front, along with those who had served in other units, remained as acutely critical, and highly expectant, of their officers after 1918 as they did during the war despite the return to 'proper soldiering'. This created a problem for the regiment, whose officers seemed incapable of, or unwilling to, maintain the required standards of paternal command demanded of them by the rank and file.

Many of the officers who remained with the regiment after demobilisation had held regular commissions in the 1st and 2nd Battalions since before the outbreak of hostilities. As such, they were more accustomed to the pre-war concept of discipline than many of their New Army counterparts who had obtained commissions in the Service Battalions during wartime. It created a division of experience between the two that was particularly pronounced in the case of the Connaught Rangers and goes some way to explaining the breakdown of officer-man relations that led to the mutiny. The Regular battalions, except for a brief period in France in 1914, spent the majority of the war in the less intense theatre of Mesopotamia, which meant that they could not draw on the unifying experience of combat to the same extent as other units. Conversely, the 5th and 6th Service Battalions accrued a wealth of experience from their time in Gallipoli and the Somme that fostered a different sense of understanding between officers and men. Discipline remained strict, particularly in the 6th Service Battalion, whose commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel. Rowland Feilding, a Guardsman before his transfer, referred a particularly high number of cases to courts-martial whilst in command.¹⁹ Yet, a combination of trust in his leadership and appreciation for a fair, albeit harsh, justice system, earned him the respect of his men all the same.²⁰ It was a demonstration of how an officer could succeed in implementing regular standards on a New Army unit without crippling morale. However, this was not necessarily the approach taken by the officers who remained with the regiment after the war, the majority of whom had served with the Regular battalions. Their appreciation of discipline remained firmly wedded to pre-1914 concepts on account of their different wartime experience. This proved particularly dislocating for the regiment, whose ranks included men who had served in the Service

Regimental System, the British Army, & the British People c.1870-2000 (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005), pp. 284-287.

¹⁸ D. Englander, 'Discipline and morale in the British army, 1917 – 1918', in J. Horne, ed., *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge, 1997) pp. 127-129.

¹⁹ For more on this, and the Irish case in particular, see, T. Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003).

²⁰ R. Feilding, *War Letters to a Wife: France and Flanders, 1915 – 1919* ed. J. Walker (London, 1929), pp. 79-80 & 108.

Battalions and across a number of other units in the British Army that had been far more receptive to the concept of changing officer-man relations of a citizen army.

Some institutional failings upon demobilisation did little to help the matter either. The move from a wartime to a peacetime footing produced fierce competition for regular commissions among an expanded officer corps. Although vast numbers left the army almost immediately, the number of regular officers who remained in the army resulted in an 'embarrassing surplus.'²¹ During its refitting at the Shaft Barracks in Dover in 1919, the 1st Battalion found itself in a peculiar situation whereby the senior to junior officer ratio was completely out of kilter. F.W.S. Jourdain, the then adjutant, recalled the particularly top-heavy imbalance, which saw three or four majors remain with the battalion for want of anywhere suitable to put them. Ordinarily, one or two would have sufficed. This was compounded by the fact that there were only one or two captains, and that Colonel H.R.G. Deacon was not due to join the regiment until it arrived in India, leaving what were described as 'not a very bright lot' in charge without adequate support.²² The June 1920 Army List confirms that, by the time of the mutiny, the Connaught Rangers possessed five majors and just three captains, whereas the average battalion stationed overseas could count on between three and four majors and five, but usually six, captains.²³ In Jourdain's opinion, this was the main reason behind the breakdown of discipline in the regiment. Without a uniform command structure it became very easy for the majors to detach themselves from the men and subalterns under their command, meaning that they had little understanding of the problems concerning the men about Ireland or the prospect of shipping out to India.²⁴ More to the point, they were equally incapable of satisfactorily controlling the situation once faced with open rebellion.

This was a concerning state of affairs; not least because, as David French has noted, CO's often held the key to maintaining discipline in their unit. The tactless handling of a battalion of Grenadier

²¹ K. Simpson, 'The Officers', in I.F.W. Beckett & K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms: The British Army in the First World War* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2004), pp. 90-91.

²² IWMSA, 11214/7 Interview with F.W.S. Jourdain; and NAM, 7609-35-13, F.W.S. Jourdain to Editor of the Times, 11 August 1969. In this latter account, he states that there were no captains at all, though the presence of Captain Badham at Solon during the mutiny indicates that the initial figures given during his oral interview were correct.

²³ Army List, June 1920. Data computed from a sample of 25 battalions serving overseas. These included; 1/Connaught Rangers; 1/Royal Irish Fusiliers; 2/Royal Irish Rifles' 1/Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders; 1/Gordon Highlanders; 1/Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians); 2/Royal Munster Fusiliers; 2/Royal Dublin Fusiliers; 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers; 2/Lancashire Fusiliers; 2/King's Liverpool Regiment; 2/Buffs (East Kent Regiment); 2/Northumberland Fusiliers; 2/Royal Warwickshire Regiment; 2/Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment); 2/Norfolk Regiment; 2/Lincolnshire Regiment; 2/Devonshire Regiment; 1/Suffolk Regiment; 2/Prince Albert's (Somerset Light Infantry); 2/Prince of Wales' Own (West Yorkshire Regiment); 2/East Yorkshire Regiment; 2/Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment; 2/Leicestershire Regiment; 2/Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment).

²⁴ IWMSA, 11214/7 Interview with F.W.S. Jourdain.

Guards at Pirbright Camp in June 1919 demonstrated that even the most reliable of soldiers could mutiny as a result of poor officer-man relations.²⁵ The mutiny of the 39th Royal Fusiliers (part of the Jewish Legion) in Egypt in July 1919 was, equally, triggered by an officer's summary punishment of a young soldier for what was a relatively minor offence. The fact that this reflected the blatant anti-Semitism among the British subalterns and within GHQ Egypt more widely, only added credence to the idea that minority groups were even more susceptible to this problem.²⁶ Timothy Bowman has made a similar point about Irish soldiers. Often perceived as 'child-like' and more 'politically motivated than their English, Scottish or Welsh counterparts', discipline could often be more strictly administered.²⁷ When this is coupled with the general increase in court-martial ratios across the army in the period 1920-1921, two things become evident. The first is that the military authorities struggled to reassert discipline in the post-war army as a whole.²⁸ The second is that Irish regiments were even more likely, given the highly-charged political climate, to be offered little in the way of leniency by often detached and unsympathetic British officers were there to be a breakdown of discipline.

This was the case in the Connaught Rangers, whose officers, junior ones included, has still not formed the expected paternalistic bonds with their men by the time they had reached India. Brigadier C.I. Jerrard, stationed with the 51st Sikh Regiment at Jullundur in 1920, noted the poor impression given off by the Connaught Rangers' officers when he wrote: 'We played a lot of football against the Rangers but their officers were never present and their teams were run by NCOs. We gained the impression that the officers were not in close touch with their men'.²⁹ In a post-war army, where officers and men shared the field more regularly than they had done before 1914 to encourage regimental *esprit de corps*, morale, and discipline, this may be deemed noteworthy.³⁰ It infers that officers were expected to take part in such activities on a regular basis (doing so in other units) and that their absence in the Connaught Rangers' case was conspicuous enough to merit attention.

Despite Lieutenant Hoseason being caught up in a game of football with his platoon at the time that the mutiny broke out, and Corporal Kelly and Private Oliver speaking well of Lieutenants Sarsfield and Walsh, there was still a sense that all was not well.³¹ The fact that junior officers did not

²⁵ French, *Military Identities*, pp. 199-200.

²⁶ J.T. Saltman, "Odds and Sods': Minorities in the British Empire's Campaign for Palestine, 1916-1919' (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2013), pp. 158-161 & 167.

²⁷ Bowman, *Irish Regiments*, p. 18.

²⁸ French, *Military Identities*, p. 184.

²⁹ NAM, 7609-35-12, Brigadier C.I. Jerrard quoted in letter from Alleyne to McPeake, 15 December 1974.

³⁰ T. Mason & E. Riedi, *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces 1880-1960* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 4, 41, 44-45, 96-98, & 136; and French, *Military Identities*, pp. 118-119.

³¹ TNA, WO 71/1030, Proceedings of General Courts Martial held at Dagshai: Statement by Corporal Kelly, 4 September 1920; and NAI, 2000/6/1, Summary of Evidence: Solon. Lieutenant Walsh's testimony, 18 August 1920.

see eye-to-eye with their superiors either, was perhaps the clearest demonstration of how desperately unhealthy the atmosphere in the battalion was. Indeed, Jerrard commented that the subalterns ‘appeared to have “a chip on their shoulder” and much to say against their Colonel and Adjutant, which was not good especially to an outsider like myself’.³² It paints a picture of unnerving dislocation that could only have significantly contributed to what was already a volatile situation. In a hierarchical institution such as the British Army, whose regimental pride and *esprit de corps* was supposed to run through the entire unit from top to bottom, disharmony and imbalance such as that witnessed in the 1st Battalion Connaught Rangers in 1919 and 1920 must certainly be apportioned a significant amount of blame for the ensuing breakdown in discipline. It naturally reflected poorly on the regiment but, more significantly, on the failures of the army as whole. If it could happen in one regiment, it could conceivably happen in another, and it is for this reason that both the regimental history and the military authorities preferred to explain the mutiny away through politics.

An undercurrent of antagonism towards the officers was exposed during the mutiny itself. In the case of the regimental Adjutant, Lieutenant, L.W.L. Leader the resentment was long-standing and widely felt. Men of all ranks, and even many of the subalterns, particularly disliked him for being ‘sly and untrustworthy’. He was ‘neither loved [n]or respected by anyone’.³³ The Summary of Evidence at Jullundur suggests that there was even open hostility towards him as tension rose during the mutiny. When the group of 200 or so disaffected men went to confront Colonel Deacon at his Bungalow on 28th June, one of their number, Private Scanlon, threatened Leader by stating that he would ‘knock [his] block off’ for having been given several months’ imprisonment by him.³⁴ Deacon himself, was also said to have been a ‘great bully’ who ‘ticked off senior officers in front of the juniors, and what was worse, officers in front of the men’.³⁵ There was similar enmity towards certain officers at Solon. Captain Leslie Badham, for example, showed a complete disregard for common sense on the day of the mutiny when he told the group of seventy men who had congregated outside the officers’ mess to voice their concerns, that their scheduled holiday for the next day was to be postponed until the following Saturday in order to complete a musketry course.³⁶ This was to be two days later than anticipated. Given the heat of the Indian summer, the prospect of further drill when it was expected to have leave did not sit well amongst the already agitated men. Records detailing the day-to-day activities of the detachment in the weeks leading up to the mutiny are, unfortunately, not available,

³² NAM, 7609-35-12, Brigadier C.I. Jerrard, quoted in letter from Alleyne to McPeake, 15 December 1974.

³³ NAM, 7609-35-12, Robertson to McPeake, 3 January 1971; and Brigadier. C.I. Jerrard quoted in letter from Alleyne to McPeake, 15 December 1974.

³⁴ NAI, 2000/6/11, Summary of Evidence: Jullundur. Lieutenant Leader’s testimony.

³⁵ NAM, 7609-35-12, Robertson to McPeake, 3 January 1971.

³⁶ NAI, 2000/6/11, Summary of Evidence: Solon. Captain Badham testimony, 18 August 1920.

but it would appear as if there was a general feeling of being over-worked for want of ideas amongst the officers of how else to keep the men active in the isolated station in the Simla Hills.

Whereas the aforementioned instances were a result of the post-war hangover of command, where pre-1914 concepts of discipline continued to be implemented, other officers were simply unsuited to their commands through vice or over-promotion. Major Payne was a case in point, rarely being seen sober past the hour of six o'clock.³⁷ It was later claimed by one of the mutineers, Joseph Hawes, that Payne was under the influence on the night of the mutiny, which was not altogether improbable given his past history. However, the assertion that he gave orders to have the mutineers shot down like dogs was perhaps an example of the over exaggeration common to Hawes' 1949 statement in which he, himself, declared that allowances ought to be made for lapses in memory and biased opinions.³⁸ Meanwhile, others such as Majors Nolan-Ferral, Lloyd, and Truell were described respectively as having 'no imagination', 'not a particularly distinguished officer', and 'one of these majors who never seem to get beyond that': though it must be noted that the latter was CO of A Company stationed in Jutogh who remained loyal.³⁹ Of the more senior officers, Colonel Deacon and Major Alexander were accused of severe incompetence, with the former being relieved of his command on the 29th for his gross mishandling of the situation at Jullundur and the latter castigated for losing control at Solon. Indeed, Alexander's dithering and refusal to listen to advice from junior officers was viewed particularly poorly.⁴⁰ The subalterns were subsequently blamed by a Court of Enquiry, but this was largely to deflect attention away from the failings of the COs who were clearly not suited to their positions. A combination of outright incompetence and an unwavering adherence to out-dated methods of command were certainly among the most influential factors in sparking the mutiny. Beyond that, blame must similarly be laid at the hands of the army for not rectifying glaring inadequacies in its organisation. Notwithstanding, the general air of unrest over events in Ireland could also have been managed more carefully by the Indian Government through the censorship of mail.

On 9th July 1920, the Army Department of the Indian Government sent a telegram to the War Office in London that stated, 'We have every reason to believe that the whole affair was engineered by Sinn Féin. Large Sinn Féin flags were hoisted in barracks when the mutiny first broke out at

³⁷ IWMSA, 11214/7 Interview with F.W.S. Jourdain.

³⁸ BMH, WS Ref #262, Witness Statement by Joseph Hawes, 13 June 1949, p. 1.

³⁹ IWMSA, 11214/7 Interview with F.W.S. Jourdain.

⁴⁰ NAM, 7609-35-12, MacWeeney to F.W.S. Jourdain, 7 April 1971; TNA, WO 141/88, Remarks by Rev. Dr. Collins on behalf of the men sentenced, 1922; and Babington, *Devil to Pay*, p. 29.

Jullundur. These flags were apparently not made in India. Sinn Féin colours and rosettes were also worn'.⁴¹ Another telegram sent by the Indian Government to the Secretary of State for India on 21st July concurred based on the conclusions of the Jullundur Court of Enquiry. It read, 'The outbreak was a pre-arranged and organized movement. Cause was undoubtedly Sinn Féinism'.⁴² It formed the first pre-conceptions that the regiment had been infiltrated by political radicals intent on disrupting the establishment from within. In the ensuing months, the courts-martial proceedings at Solon and Dagshai further solidified this stance when the mutineers themselves began to suggest that their protest was politically inspired. A number of witnesses recalled the signing of rebel songs, the self-reference as Sinn Féiners, the wearing of rosettes, as well as the flying of a tricolour.⁴³ Yet despite this seemingly unanimous view that subversive Sinn Féin elements had made their way into the regiment prior to embarkation for India, there are a number of inconsistencies that remained unresolved.

Firstly, there were conflicting accounts regarding the obtaining of the Sinn Féin rosettes and flag, which became central to the narrative of a pre-meditated political strike. In a 1963 radio broadcast scripted by Sam Pollock, an attempt was made by Joseph Hawes to suggest that the appearance of the flag and rosettes were unaccounted for.⁴⁴ However, his own witness statement to the Bureau of Military History fourteen years earlier is quite clear about the fact that material was bought from the bazaar to make the tricolour.⁴⁵ This was confirmed by Corporal P.J. Kelly's recollections of finding a number of men sitting in No. 26 Bungalow with 'rebel badges' where he was told by Private Devers that he ought to wear one of the hundred rosettes that had been ordered from the bazaar.⁴⁶ Lieutenant Leader, too, remembered seeing Hawes wearing a Sinn Féin badge in Jullundur, whilst Captain Badham asserted that a flag was hoisted atop a bungalow in Solon.⁴⁷ Yet, despite the incontrovertible evidence regarding the presence of such items during the mutiny – irrespective of their origin – Lieutenant MacWeeney wrote to F.W.S. Jourdain in 1971 declaring the exact opposite. 'Let me explode a few myths', he wrote, 'There was no tricolour flown or displayed at Solon. Where could it have come from & they were rare enough in Ireland at the time?'⁴⁸ His postulation has some merit, and whether his recollection was precise or not given the numerous

⁴¹ Babington, *Devil to Pay*, p. 41.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴³ NAI, 2000/6/11, Summary of Evidence: Solon, Corporal Kelly's and Lieutenant Walsh's testimony, 18 August 1920; Summary of Evidence: Jullundur, Corporal Murphy's testimony and Annex 'A' Note by Sinn Féiners of the Connaught Rangers; and TNA, WO 71/1030, Proceedings of General Courts-Martial, Dagshai, Sergeant-Major White's and Captain Badham's testimony, 4 September 1920.

⁴⁴ NAM, 6312-219, 'In Search of a Mutiny' Script by Sam Pollock, BBC Home Services, 1963, p. 15.

⁴⁵ BMH, WS Ref #262, Witness Statement by Joseph Hawes, 13 June 1949, p. 9.

⁴⁶ NAI, 2000/6/11, Summary of Evidence: Solon, Corporal Kelly's testimony, 18 August 1920.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Summary of Evidence: Jullundur, Lieutenant Leader's testimony.

⁴⁸ NAM, 7609-35-12, MacWeeney to F.W.S. Jourdain, 7 April 1971.

accounts that suggest there was a flag present, it casts further doubts over an organised Sinn Féin cell operating in the Connaught Rangers. Indeed, without Hawes' revised statement in the radio broadcast, there would be no evidence at all that the flag had been brought from Ireland and the matter would never have been opened.

Quite apart from anything else, the presumption that a pre-meditated political attack on British rule in India would be confined to one regiment, and even just three companies of that regiment, lacks conviction. Certainly, fears of Sinn Féinism spreading to, or already being present in, other Irish units were of immediate concern. It was suggested in the republican *Irish Press* of Philadelphia, for instance, that the events would encourage other Irish regiments to follow suit.⁴⁹ However, apart from one telegram received from Lord D'Abernon, the British Ambassador to Berlin, who had concerns about the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Regiment that was 'full of Sinn Féin', the 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Irish Guards, no other unit appeared particularly threatening in the immediate aftermath.⁵⁰ Indeed, reports of the 8th (King's Royal Irish) Hussars indicated that they were composed of about half Catholic and half Church of England men, and that most of the former had enlisted to escape Sinn Féin. The 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers were shown to be only approximately thirty per cent Irish, mostly from the North and therefore presumed to be reliable, the Iniskilling Fusiliers were eighty per cent from the North, whilst 'there was not a more contented unit in India' than the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment.⁵¹ Indeed, an examination of the Connaught Rangers' disbandment would also suggest that the authorities were not particularly concerned about the reliability of the remainder of its ranks as twenty-six were given military pensions, 131 ended up at the Royal Military Hospital Chelsea, and 103 were transferred to other regiments in the British armed forces.⁵²

There is actually scant suggestion that the mutineers were politically radicalised at the time of the mutiny. This came predominantly from the official reports and latterly from the mutineers themselves many years after the event. In the summer of 1920 the political motive was relatively modest, being simply a spontaneous response to 'the state in Ireland'.⁵³ While this was enough of a political gesture to warrant a reaction from the battalion's British officers to constitute mutiny, it lacks the conviction of a long-standing enmity towards British rule. Naturally, news received from home detailing some of the horrors committed in their absence by the British Auxiliaries was a significant contributing factor in their decision to down arms. However, it must not be forgotten that in the

⁴⁹ Silvestri, *Ireland and India*, p. 145.

⁵⁰ Babington, *Devil to Pay*, p. 85.

⁵¹ L/MIL/13314-107, Copy of Telegram from Viceroy Army Department to Secretary at the War Office, 15 July 1920; and Jeffery, *'An Irish Empire'?*, p. 117.

⁵² NAM, 2006-11-9, List of Connaught Rangers Post-Disbandment Destinations, 1923.

⁵³ NAI, 2000/6/11, Summary of Evidence: Solon, Lieutenant Walsh's testimony, 18 August 1920.

searing heat of India, where boredom dominated military life, the men of the Connaught Rangers would have been particularly susceptible to any such stories, which, according to *The Sunday Express*, may have been somewhat exaggerated by relatives in Ireland at the time.⁵⁴ Crucially, though, their reaction to what they had read was not pre-planned.

This was precisely the conclusion arrived at by the Committee set up by the Minister of Finance in the Irish Free State to look into the compensation claims of the mutineers in 1925. It reported,

The Committee are satisfied from the evidence at their disposal that the Mutiny had its origin in a desire on the part of the men concerned to protest against the condition of affairs existing in Ireland at the time and that the protest which was made was entirely spontaneous. [...] The Connaught Rangers on the other hand were not serving in Ireland and were not acting under directions from, nor because of any appeal from, nor association with those who were conducting affairs in Ireland.⁵⁵

Equally, Ernest Blythe was quoted as saying in the Dáil Éireann that some Committee members had found that ‘in the case of their mutiny, patriotism was an afterthought’.⁵⁶ Although it was likely that these comments and the Committee’s decision were largely based on financial considerations and the unwillingness to set a precedent for pension claimants, it still demonstrates the level of scepticism surrounding the political nature of the mutineers’ motivations. The fact that their own government, who had fought hard to secure their release from British detention, was not prepared to support their assertions and use them for political purposes is telling.

There were of course claims that some mutineers had experienced violence at the hands of the British Army whilst on leave prior to embarkation, or at least heard of it through friends and relatives. Whilst scouring Ireland for oral testimonies for their upcoming radio programme, Pollock and his producer, Maurice Brown, encountered a number of men with such recollections.⁵⁷ For instance, Joseph Hawes was in a crowd that was turned away at bayonet point from a hurling match in October 1919. Along with questioning his own loyalties, on account of having a brother in the IRA, he later revealed that this was the turning point that led him to want to ‘redeem’ himself.⁵⁸ According to Pollock, Daly, too, was aware of the Republican Movement prior to his enlistment as he was supposedly a politically conscious individual and an ‘active sympathiser with Sinn Féin’.⁵⁹ Indeed,

⁵⁴ *The Sunday Express*, 12 January 1964.

⁵⁵ NAI, 2000/6/11, Committee’s Report to Minister of Finance, 21 July 1925.

⁵⁶ Dáil Éireann Debates (DD), Vol. 29, 18 April 1929.

⁵⁷ NAM, 7609-35-12, Advertisement for ‘In Search of a Mutiny’, 1963.

⁵⁸ NAM, 6312-219, ‘In Search of a Mutiny’ Script by Sam Pollock, BBC Home Services, 1963, p. 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Hawes spoke of a note Daly had written prior to his death in which the latter had written 'Up Balbriggan! Up Balbriggan!' because it had been burned by the Black and Tans. This had occurred on 20th September 1920, meaning that firstly, he might only just have received word of it before his execution on 2nd November 1920, but more importantly, that it cannot have been among his motivations to mutiny in July. His sister's recollections that this was what he had been shouting at home before embarkation was, as Babington notes, ridiculous and a clear demonstration of the politicisation of the event after it had happened.⁶⁰

The emotive subject of the Black and Tans is an interesting sub-plot to the narrative of the mutiny as a whole. Although it gained significant traction in the 1970s, the mutineers themselves began to see the value of adding it into their accounts much sooner. As early as October 1927, Lance-Corporal John Flannery wrote to the Minister of Defence, Desmond FitzGerald, on behalf of the ex-Connaught Rangers who, in his words, mutinied 'as a protest against the ill-treatment of the Irish people by the Black and Tans.'⁶¹ It was designed to raise the profile of the mutiny and its participants at a time when so many men and women were seeking recognition for their part in the struggle for Irish independence at home. The fact that it was a complete fabrication and that it had not been cited in the courts-martial proceedings appears to have been completely glossed over by all and sundry, whose collective memory of events (and their timings) loosely complemented the mutineers' accounts.

In later years, the story of the mutineers' motivation and Black and Tan reprisals were inseparably intertwined. It became a justification of their actions as much for themselves as for the authorities with whom they were in constant dialogue regarding compensation. Flannery continued to champion this idea in his witness statement to the Bureau of Military History in 1949, for example, placing it on the record for posterity.⁶² Frank (Francis) Moran, although not directly mentioning the Black and Tans, intimated in 1953 that the value of the mutiny was as important in challenging 'John Bull's Empire' as the actions of the IRA were in Ireland and that this ought not to be forgotten.⁶³ Again, this was an attempt to draw comparisons with the Irish case for those at home to relate to. Likewise, Thomas Tierney recalled on the airwaves that 'every soldier of the Connaught Rangers that took part in it, took part as a protest against the outrages committed by Crown Forces in this country. For what happened in Cork today could happen in Galway tomorrow.'⁶⁴ Over time it cemented the view that the heroes and martyr of the Connaught Rangers mutiny were inspired by the same political motives

⁶⁰ Babington, *Devil to Pay*, pp. 68-69.

⁶¹ MSPC, DOD/2/13627, Flannery to FitzGerald, 17 October 1927.

⁶² BMH, WS Ref #287, Witness Statement by John Flannery, 1 September 1949.

⁶³ MSPC, Con.Ran.16, Moran to Traynor, 27 December 1953.

⁶⁴ NAM, 6312-219, 'In Search of a Mutiny' Script by Sam Pollock, BBC Home Services, 1963, p. 5.

and feelings of indignation at British atrocities as those who had fought in Ireland. However, not only was this a deceitful misconception, but also suggested that all 200-300 men who initially took part, but were not subsequently tried by courts-martial, were similarly moved.

The very idea that men had either joined as a result of displaying solidarity with their disaffected comrades or due to intimidation was firmly buried beneath the political myth. Yet this had proven to be the case in a number of instances. Charles Kerrigan, for example, later claimed that he was not motivated by news of Black and Tan atrocities, personally, as he had not received any such information from home. In the case of Solon, he also believed that the uprising was more a demonstration of solidarity with their pals at Jullundur than anything else.⁶⁵ Another stated that it was a result of false reports that the mutineers at Jullundur had been massacred.⁶⁶ Only through the strong personality of Daly did the course of events at the hill station develop as they did. This further questions the validity of a pre-meditated Sinn Féin operation as well as the motivating influence of the Black and Tans for Daly and his compatriots.

Equally, despite some claims to the contrary – namely from the mutineers themselves – a number of men who took part in the events at Jullundur, but more particularly at Solon, were coerced into doing so. Private Frank Rye, an Englishman, was most careful about what he said to the mutineers, especially with regard to Ireland.⁶⁷ A more serious case was the attempt to terrorise Corporal T. Murphy into joining the rebels. Despite being intimidated by Lance-Corporal Keenan who threatened to ‘beat [his] Fucking jaw and get [him] out by Fucking compulsion’ if he did not submit.⁶⁸ Corporal Kelly also pleaded in his defence that he acted under duress, whilst the hard-line approach adopted by the mutineers at Solon was encapsulated by the establishment of a ‘court’ in the canteen, presided over by Daly that summarily tried Lance-Corporal Nolan to death in connection with a family affair.⁶⁹ This goes to show how politics was not at the heart of everyone’s incentive to fall in with the ringleaders as well as how the infectious furore of a mass uprising allowed events to spiral out of control and into the hands of a few strong-willed individuals.

The issue of motivation, and the alleged political undercurrent, was once again brought into question following the return of the remaining mutineers to British shores. They were to serve varying

⁶⁵ S. Barr, ‘Charles Kerrigan and the Mutiny of The Connaught Rangers at Solon, 1920’, *Journal of the Westport Historical Society*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1990), p. 87.

⁶⁶ NAM, 2001-07-1173-5, Unknown Newspaper Clipping entitled ‘Englishman who joined Irish Devils’ mutiny’. Date unknown.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ NAI, 2000/6/11, Summary of Evidence: Jullundur, Corporal Murphy’s testimony.

⁶⁹ Babington, *Devil to Pay*, p. 30.

degrees of imprisonment across the country ranging from one year to life sentences of penal servitude. Joseph Hawes, whose death sentence had been commuted, was among those with the latter. Whilst in Maidstone prison, he penned an interesting, though often misspelt, letter to his mother that is worth quoting at length.

When is the election coming of and what side will get in, Free State, or Republic. Who is opposing De Valera for our county Clare. I myself think the Free State Gov should be returned as we now have got the same freedom as Australia and Canada. we would take a Home Rule in 1914 this is more than I expected ever we would get. But Irishmen fought and spilt blood for this, so we need not thank any Country for what the green ile has got today. Other Countrys that Irishmen fought for, stood aloft, and looked camly on, while our dear Country was going through the furness. don't think Mother for one moment that I would not wish Ireland to get a Republic. I would walk smiling to the scaffold tomorrow. If I thought we had a chance of a Republic. But I think we have no chance at present. So I hope peace will be soon restored as it looks very bad over here for the Irish to be fighting among themselves. If we get anything its by uniting together we shall get it.⁷⁰

It reveals an appreciation of the state of affairs in Ireland as well as an interest in its political future, which was firmly behind the success of the pro-treatyites. Despite his support for the moderate wing of Sinn Féin appearing well thought out and even long-established, it does not corroborate some of his other comments made in later years that suggested he was very much considering his own loyalties after being forcefully removed from the aforementioned hurling match in 1919. Similarly, it does not follow the more radical political outlook expressed by the mutineers as the basis for their motivations in the decades after their release. If anything, it was an early glimpse of the mercenary approach taken by the mutineers in securing the support of those who could best serve their interests. In this particular case, the fact that a solicitor sent by Michael Collins had been to visit the mutineers in an attempt to get them released was reason enough to support his party.

Similarly, twenty-eight petitions were written by ex-Connaught Rangers whilst in prison in 1922 revealing comparable views. In a bid to have their sentences reduced, the almost identical appeals state that news of the deaths of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith now lay behind their dutiful feelings to support the Provisional Government of Ireland against the rebels.⁷¹ Indeed, all but one expressed a desire to fight in the Free State Army, with six of them demonstrating a willingness to

⁷⁰ MSPC, Con.Ran.116, Joseph Hawes to Mother, 18 May 1922.

⁷¹ TNA, WO 141/90, Report from Adjutant General concerning petitions from 28 men, 1922.

return to prison to complete the remainder of their sentences afterwards were it deemed necessary.⁷² Michael Kearney was one such petitioner, who claimed that other mutineers with ‘more grievous offences’ than him had already been released and were, but with the exception of one or two, already fighting on behalf of the Free State. In his opinion, this ought to allow him to do the same; even were it just on parole.⁷³

Even more revealing were the noticeable references in at least five petitions to their wartime service, which alluded to a certain degree of pride in having served in the British Army. There was a tangible appreciation of some of the noble traditions of the army and the regiment as an institution, as well as an understanding of the significance of the struggle in which they were involved. This was also the case in a song composed by a Connaught Ranger about the mutiny, presumably whilst in prison pending court-martial. In it, due deference is paid to certain officers, the regiment’s famous history and the sense of military discipline expected of them.⁷⁴ Surprisingly, eight of the petitioners declared a renewed willingness to prove their loyalty to King and Empire that belie the firm political motivation that had allegedly spurred them into action in the first place.⁷⁵ Silvestri terms this the blending of patriotism with loyalty to the Empire and a desire to serve the legitimate government in Ireland, in which there may be more than a modicum of truth.⁷⁶ Yet, in pursuit of recognition and financial compensation from the Free State Government, such knowledge might have proven catastrophic. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it was quickly hushed-up following their release from prison in early 1923. If anything, it was a clear demonstration of the self-serving, mercenary attitude that would come to characterise the mutineers’ actions over the ensuing decades.

The history of the Connaught Rangers is littered with a number of conflicting narratives such as this, but it is worth highlighting that of one actor in particular who became instrumental in the post-event writing of the mutiny; John Flannery. After initially attempting to dissuade the four instigators of the mutiny at Jullundur from downing arms, he joined their ranks and was never shy to exaggerate his role in the subsequent orchestration of events. However, he was neither as influential as some of his writings would later make out, nor as convinced in the righteousness of his cause. Indeed, according to several reports, Flannery authored a note on the penultimate day of the trial in which he informed the members of the court that he had only joined the mutiny in order to keep the officers

⁷² Ibid., Petitions from 28 men, 1922. The exception was Patrick Mannion who pleads for an early release due to his good character in order to support his destitute wife.

⁷³ Ibid., Michael Kearney’s petition, 1922.

⁷⁴ NAM, 2001-07-1173-3, Song composed by a Connaught Ranger who took part in the Mutiny at Jullundur, 28 June 1920.

⁷⁵ TNA, WO 141/90. Petitions from 28 men, 1922.

⁷⁶ Silvestri, *Ireland and India*, p. 149.

of the regiment abreast of the rebels' actions, as well as to prevent them from doing anything extreme. His treachery enraged the other mutineers to such an extent that the authorities were forced to segregate Flannery from them for the remainder of the trial and upon their return to Britain.⁷⁷ Yet, when tackling the issue in his witness statement for the Bureau of Military History (BMH) three decades later, he was quoted as saying, 'But if the officer only knew what was at the back of the N.C.O's mind, he would not have been so delighted with the offer'.⁷⁸ When faced with the possibility of a death sentence, Flannery's decision to throw in his lot with the officers and plead innocence was both callous and calculated, but not exactly unexpected. However, his true colours as a self-serving ego-centric were later revealed. Whilst in a position of relative comfort, his statement to the BMH claimed that he was playing the role of a double-double agent for the mutineers.⁷⁹ No clearer demonstration is needed of how this episode has been moulded *ex post* by individual agendas. The note was real, and Flannery had indeed intended to save himself. It was an act that Joseph Hawes, as the second most vocal veteran, never forgave.

A fierce dialogue between the Irish Free State and British Government broke out over the release of the Connaught Rangers mutineers in 1922. It was to be the first step along the road of a long and strenuous relationship between the ex-servicemen and their political representatives in which the former sought compensation for their defiant act, whilst the latter appeared to see them purely as a means to a political end. The President of the Executive Council, William Cosgrave, was firmly behind securing their release as part of a broader attempt to settle Irish affairs down in the counter-revolution, though his initial approaches were met with some opposition.⁸⁰ The British were unwilling to co-operate, despite the decision to disband the Connaught Rangers in 1922, as they could not be seen to reward mutiny. The potential ramifications for the rest of the British army if it was 'thought for a moment that soldiers, guilty of the most serious of military crimes, could get release from their punishment by means of political agitation' were unthinkable.⁸¹ Additionally, in most cases where sentences of this sort had been remitted and the prisoners discharged, it was usually done without any 'flourish of trumpets'. It was the view of the Secretary of State for War that, once released, the general population tended to swallow up such men with the consequence that the rest of the army remained unaware of their fate, which was the desired intention given that it was the

⁷⁷ Babington, *Devil to Pay*, pp. 50-51.

⁷⁸ BMH, WS Ref #287, Witness Statement by John Flannery, 1 September 1949.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ The term President under the 1922 Constitution referred to the Head of Government, with powers usually associated with a Prime Minister.

⁸¹ TNA, WO 141/91, Adjutant General's reply to further appeal from Dennis. J. Hannon, November 1922.

sentence, and not the early discharge, that affected discipline.⁸² However, a case of this high a profile was unlikely to avoid such attention.

In an interview held with Cosgrave and FitzGerald, the Secretary of State sought assurances that the release of the Connaught Rangers, if it were to proceed, would not be used to score political points over the British Government. The response was hardly convincing. He reported that 'while saying that they could not guarantee to prevent publicity, said that they would spare no effort to prevent it'.⁸³ Notwithstanding, he recommended the mutineers to be released in order to secure the passing of the Indemnity (Amnesty) Bill in the Dáil, which would secure an agreement to exchange political prisoners on both sides. The inclusion of the Connaught Rangers was deemed essential to this following increased pressure from a number of Irish Deputies. The complication for both Cosgrave and the British Government was the concurrent movement to secure the release of the recalcitrant Joseph Dowling who had been court-martialled in July 1918 for his involvement in the Roger Casement affair. It was the strong view of the Prime Minister, Andrew Bonar Law, that Dowling ought to be released to avoid running the risk of losing the Amnesty Bill or having it held up for a period in circumstances that could give rise to further disturbances in Ireland, though only as a last resort. The Cabinet agreed to allow the Secretary of State for the Colonies to inform the Free State Government that they would be prepared to advise the King to grant the Connaught Rangers a free pardon, 'but that they were prepared to make this great concession with great reluctance' and only if it would guarantee the immediate passing of the Bill through Parliament. The caveat was that it would not be extended to include the case of Dowling.⁸⁴

Cosgrave returned to the Dáil on 4 January 1923 to announce the inclusion of the Connaught Rangers in the amnesty, which he conveyed as 'further proof of the British Government's desire to efface bitter memories of recent trouble.'⁸⁵ The expected desire to seamlessly pass to a Second Reading of the Bill, however, was curtailed by those intractable Deputies (Members of Parliament) who had noticed the absence of an official mention of Dowling and a number of other political prisoners still held in Scotland and Belfast. The Minister of Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins, attempted to reassure members of the House that they had not been forgotten and that it was likely that they would be included in the general amnesty anyway as the British Government and military authorities were unlikely, 'having swallowed what must have seemed to them the camel – the release of the Connaught Rangers – will strain at what is comparatively the gnat'.⁸⁶ The Bill was passed soon after

⁸² TNA, WO 141/87, Statement by Secretary of State for War, 31 January 1922.

⁸³ TNA, HO 144/3724, Offences of an Irish 'Political Character', report from Masterton Smith, November 1922.

⁸⁴ TNA, WO 141/92, Cabinet Minute, 29 December 1922.

⁸⁵ DD, Vol. 2, 4 January 1923.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

and the remaining mutineers were gradually released back into society. Dowling would remain in British custody until February 1924 by which time circumstances in Ireland dictated his immediate release from Liverpool prison. It marked a turning point in Cumann na nGaedheal's policy towards the Connaught Rangers, who after scoring a political victory in securing their release, turned their attention to more pressing matters. Among other things was the introduction of the Military Service Pensions Act (1924), used to placate mutinying officers of the National Army who felt that reorganisation and demobilisation following the end of the Civil War was diluting republican sentiment and favouring former British Army officers over former Irish Volunteers (IRA).⁸⁷

The mutineers returned home to a brief flurry of attention and adulation, being met by a Republican delegation at Victoria Station as well as an official Reception Committee at the ferry port in Dun Laoghaire in January 1923. The latter included four Dáil members and the Chairman of the Irish Self-Determination League, whose publication *The Irish Exile* for May 1922 had expressed concern over the continued imprisonment of the Connaught Rangers and of Joseph Dowling.⁸⁸ The fanfare quickly evaporated as the conflicting realities of these national heroes' status as British army veterans competed with the long-standing republican prejudice against Irishmen who donned the 'red livery of shame'.⁸⁹ Many mutineers soon found themselves unable to obtain employment and largely fell into a state of poverty and destitution as their story fell from the public gaze.

A veritable political storm arose as indignant Deputies continued to fight for the impoverished mutineers whose sea of letters in search of work and compensation swamped the Government. Alfred Byrne, the Deputy for North Dublin, was particularly keen to see that the ideals for which these men had endured hardships since 1920 were not forgotten and encouraged the Government to make gratuities, compensation, and employment available to them as a reward.⁹⁰ A committee was set up to look into the pension claims of the Connaught Rangers, but after furnishing their report in November 1925, the Minister of Finance was not prepared to recommend them any such payment. However, those who had not already turned down the opportunity of Government employment would be afforded a chance to obtain such work.⁹¹ Few men took up this offer, relying more heavily on charity or their military experience. Indeed, twenty-three enrolled in the National Army and nine

⁸⁷ M. Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions for Veterans of the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923', *War in History*, vol. 20, no. 2, (2013), pp. 205-206.

⁸⁸ NLI, Ms. 8456/2, Art Ó Briain Papers, Report by ISDL for May Issue of *The Irish Exile*, April, 1922; and Silvestri, *Ireland and India*, p. 146.

⁸⁹ Silvestri, *Ireland and India*, p. 146; and T. Denman, "'The Red Livery of Shame": The Campaign against Army Recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 29, no. 114, (1994), pp. 208-233.

⁹⁰ DD, Vol. 7, 19 June 1924; and Vol. 10, 25 March 1925.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, 12 November 1925.

in the Civic Guard, though this did little to enhance their pension claims at the time, despite continued support from some quarters.

Miles Keogh wrote to John Flannery, who had become the leading figure of the Association of the ex-Connaught Rangers, declaring in 1926 that they 'deserve the whole-hearted sympathy of their admirers' and 'a satisfactory recognition of your action'.⁹² Similarly, Sean O'Laidhin and John Lyons harangued the Government to include the time spent in prison as 'military service' to contribute towards their pension claims. The draft reply suggested that the Government was not prepared to introduce legislation of that nature, whilst a section of supplementary remarks noted: 'Apart from this an attempt to amend the Act would bring a hornet's nest about your ears. Many Volunteers who were imprisoned and who served the Army have not been granted pensions. The Act permits recognition of imprisonment when it is immediately preceded by pensionable active military service' to which the Connaught Rangers could not claim.⁹³ Lyons was told the same thing in the Dáil in September, which prompted him to exclaim, 'Then those who fought for Ireland fought in vain.'⁹⁴ The same debate continued into 1927 and Ernest Blythe was forced to defend the policy to refuse the mutineers compensation on account of the subsequent difficulties that would ensue with regard to claims from ordinary Irish civilians who gave assistance to the national struggle at heavy material loss and at great risk to themselves.⁹⁵ Just because they had worn a uniform did not distinguish the ex-Rangers from those who had not, whilst sceptics continued to question the impact of the mutiny on British rule in Ireland when compared to the effect of Royal Irish Constabulary resignations.⁹⁶ It was the clearest sign to date that the Government was prepared to wash its hands of a difficult situation that had the potential to deteriorate into unmanageable levels of time and monetary loss.

Realising that their chance for a successful negotiation of their position with Cumann na nGhaedheal was somewhat limited, the mutineers once again changed tack and began to promote themselves as supporters of the opposition party. This rather reflected the move towards De Valera made by old IRA members, who equally felt that the current administration had conveniently forgotten them during the land division of 1923-1932.⁹⁷ The moderate stance for Irish freedom in India now appeared slightly more radicalised as they attempted to draw some personal gain from promises

⁹² MSPC, DOD/2/16327, Keogh to Flannery, 9 December 1926.

⁹³ Ibid, Question No. 25, which appears on the Order Paper for today's meeting An Dáil, 8 December 1926.

⁹⁴ DD, Vol. 17, 8 September 1926.

⁹⁵ Ibid, Vol. 21, 10 November 1927. He reiterated this point in April 1929, Ibid., Vol. 29, 18 April 1929.

⁹⁶ Coleman, 'Financial reintegration', p. 19.

⁹⁷ T. Dooley, 'IRA Veterans and Land Division in Independent Ireland 1923-48', in F. McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland* (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2003), pp. 92-103.

made by Fianna Fáil prior to the 1932 General Election.⁹⁸ Progress was slow, due largely to the volume of claims applications that were received when it was announced that the Connaught Rangers were to receive their due recognition. These had to be carefully vetted and cross-referenced as the single gratuities of up to £150 for claimants who had enlisted on a short-service engagement after 18 April 1918, and pensions of ten shillings per week supposedly earmarked for those with long-service engagements predating the war, were likely to have a significant impact on the Government's finances given its significant investment in welfare amidst the effects of the great depression and the on-going Trade Wars with Britain.⁹⁹ Not only that, as Marie Coleman has stated, it also reflected the desire to placate any 'political disquiet about rewarding men who had enlisted voluntarily in the British Army after a crucial moment in the independence campaign'.¹⁰⁰

Even Daly's family faced certain difficulties securing financial compensation due to the wording of the legislation only permitting widows and children of the deceased to apply. A letter to the Secretary of the Claims Committee from his sister, Theresa Maher, outlined the deplorable financial situation of the family, which, despite the hardship, had remained loyal supporters to Fianna Fáil at both Dáil and Local Government elections.¹⁰¹ Eventually, the Minister for Defence, Frank Aiken, was able to secure a dependent's allowance for Daly's father in accordance with Section 8 of the recently passed Connaught Rangers (Pensions) Act (1936), amounting to ten shillings a week. This was in line with the compensation awarded to seven others who had forfeited their earnings-based British pensions due to them upon completion of twelve years of service.¹⁰² It was a political coup for De Valera and was greatly received by the mutineers after many years of toil. Fianna Fáil took over custody of the Connaught Rangers from Cumann na nGaedheal at this juncture after the latter had allowed their interest to cool following the amnesty in 1923. In the mutineers' continued pursuit of their self-interest, it is not surprising that their political loyalties began to lie increasingly with the former. In the ensuing decades, the account of the mutiny would echo this stance by assuming a more radical political tone.

Years later, the Connaught Rangers mutiny continued to influence diplomacy and politics on account of its re-appropriation. The conflicted relationship of commemorating an Irish martyr who had willingly served in British uniform proved difficult for both sides to reconcile. When the United States' military attaché laid a wreath at the James Joseph Daly memorial in Glasnevin Cemetery during

⁹⁸ MSPC, Con.Ran.116, Joseph Hawes to Aiken, 22 October 1932; and Con.Ran.2, John Flannery to Aiken, 7 October 1934.

⁹⁹ Jackson, *Ireland*, pp. 289-293.

¹⁰⁰ Coleman, 'Financial reintegration', p. 20.

¹⁰¹ MSPC, Con.Ran.23 (DP 17), Theresa Maher to Secretary of Claims Committee, 11 June 1935.

¹⁰² Coleman, 'Financial reintegration', pp. 19-20.

the annual Connaught Rangers Mutiny Commemoration in 1959, the British ambassador to Dublin felt moved to remark ‘the extreme impropriety of honouring mutiny in the armed forces of a country that ha[d] been an ally in two wars’. This was particularly the case given its timing (3 November) and its proximity to Remembrance Sunday.¹⁰³ Even in 1970, on the fiftieth anniversary of the mutiny, the repatriation of Daly’s remains to Ireland for reburial was more of a political event relating to current affairs than anything else. The role of the State remained somewhat of a complicated issue, despite having arranged and contributed to the cost of it all, with the decision regarding military participation not being cancelled by the Taoiseach until the very last moment. In fact, the Department of External Affairs’ view was to ‘play the whole affair by ear’.¹⁰⁴ He was reburied in Tyrellspass, with Joseph Hawes, then aged seventy-seven, in attendance, whilst the remains of the two others shot during the raid on the magazine at Solon were reinterred at Glasnevin Cemetery where the Connaught Rangers Cenotaph had been unveiled in 1949. Commemorations in Tyrellspass began on 30 August, predating the return of his body by two months, with the unveiling of a memorial to the men of Westmeath and Offaly who had died on Irish soil and foreign wars of independence. It is estimated that 2,000 people attended this service, though this was eclipsed by the 6,000 who turned out to witness Daly’s reinternment, which bore all the ceremonial hallmarks reserved for a republican martyr.¹⁰⁵ It was a moment, which demonstrated that both his personal sacrifice, as well as the political narrative subsequently attributed to the actions of the Connaught Rangers mutiny as a whole, would endure.

In conclusion, it must be said that the Connaught Rangers mutiny was primarily a disciplinary issue stemming from poor officer-man relations and only latterly of a political nature. The combination of the Indian heat, boredom, detached officers and, of course, news of the situation in Ireland, created a combustible situation that was only ignited by a few strong individuals and allowed to develop through incompetent leadership. The political angle was subsequently adopted by both sides who found a ready-made excuse for the escalation of events. The British authorities, unwilling to allow attention to fall on the post-war institutional failings of the army, were keen to suggest that Sinn Féin infiltration was to blame but that it had been quickly dealt with and had not affected any other units. The mutineers themselves, although rather more moderate in their testimonies during the court-martial proceedings, would later find value in elaborating their story to include this political element. The addition of the Black and Tan atrocities proved especially emotive. This was further propagated

¹⁰³ D. George Boyce, ‘No lack of ghosts’: memory, commemoration, and the state in Ireland’, in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), pp. 255-256.

¹⁰⁴ MSPC, DOD/3/47020, Interdepartmental Meeting. Department of External Affairs; Repatriation of Remains of Pvt. James Joseph Daly, Connaught Rangers from India, 19 February, 1970.

¹⁰⁵ Silvestri, *Ireland and India*, pp. 171-172. For more detail on the repatriation process, see pp. 159-175.

by Sam Pollock in his radio programme 'In Search of a Mutiny' and his subsequent publications, though even he was forced to admit that 'the cause of what happened at Jullundur may not have been entirely political, but one suspects that politics played a part in the publicity given to it'.¹⁰⁶ This, coupled with mutineers' insistence to pursue the line of least resistance with regard to improving their personal situations, whether it be re-declaring their allegiance to King and Country, self-promoting to Cumann na nGaedheal, or claiming to be ardent supporters of Fianna Fáil, must certainly mean their actions were not motivated by a political ideal.

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Author Biography

Mario Draper is a Junior Lecturer in Modern British and European Military History at the University of Kent. He undertook his BA in War Studies at the University of Kent; his MSt in Modern British and European History at the University of Oxford; and wrote his Ph.D on the subject of the Belgian Army and Society back at Kent.

¹⁰⁶ NAM, 7609-35-12, 'No Pirbright Walk-Out', Sam Pollock's discussion of his radio feature 'In Search of a Mutiny', 1963.