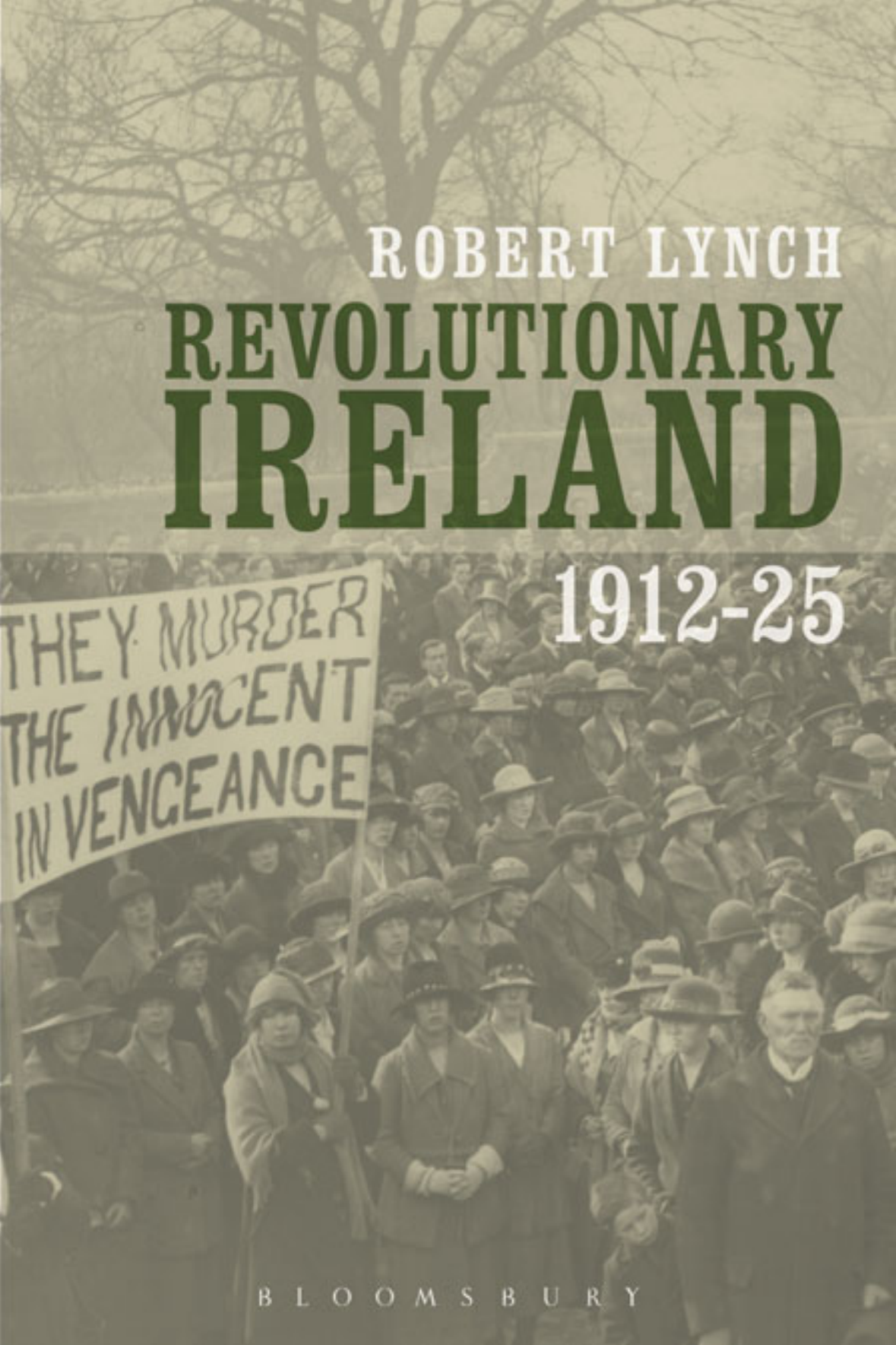
ROBERT LYNCH

REVOLUTIONARY IRELAND

1912-25



BLOOMSBURY

Revolutionary Ireland, 1912–25

Revolutionary Ireland, 1912–25

Robert Lynch

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

B L O O M S B U R Y

LONDON • NEW DELHI • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

BLOOMSBURY and the Diana logo are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published 2015

© Robert Lynch, 2015

Robert Lynch has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury or the author.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4411-5704-1
PB: 978-1-4411-5838-3
ePDF: 978-1-4411-8689-8
ePub: 978-1-4411-6861-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

To Yvonne, with thanks for all your endless love and support

CONTENTS

Map viii
Chronology ix
Who's Who of the Irish Revolution xiii

Introduction 1

1 Background to the Revolution 5

2 The Ulster Crisis, 1912–14 21

3 The Easter Rising, 1916 31

4 The Rise of Sinn Fein, 1916–18 45

5 The War of Independence, 1919–21 61

6 Truce and Treaty 81

7 The Establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920–5 93

8 The Irish Civil War, 1922–3 117

Conclusion 131

Documents 135
Notes 165
Select Bibliography 169
Index 175

MAP OF IRELAND

CHRONOLOGY

1884	November	Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) formed by Michael Cusack
1886	June	First Home Rule Bill defeated in Westminster
1891	October	Death of Home Rule leader Charles Stewart Parnell
1892	November	Gaelic League founded by Douglas Hyde
1893	September	Second Home Rule Bill defeated in House of Lords
1900		Home Rule Party reunited under John Redmond
1902		Independent Orange Order formed
1903		Wyndham's Land Act
1905	March	Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) formed Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein formed
1906		Liberal landslide general election victory
1910		Two general elections in January and December
1911	August	Parliament Act
1912	11 April	Third Home Rule Bill introduced in House of Commons
	28 September	Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant signed on 'Ulster Day'
1913	31 January	Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) founded
	24 September	UUC calls for creation of Ulster Provisional Government if the Home Rule is enacted
	19 November	Irish Citizen Army founded in Dublin
	25 November	Irish Volunteers founded at Rotunda in Dublin
1914	20 March	Curragh 'mutiny'
	2 April	Cumann na mBan founded in Dublin
	24 April	Weapons landed at Larne to arm UVF
	25 May	Third Home Rule Bill passed for third time by the House of Commons
	26 July	Weapons landed at Howth for Irish Volunteers
	20 September	John Redmond makes Woodenbridge speech urging Irish Volunteers to enlist in the British Army
	15 September	Third Home Rule Act suspended for duration of the war pending an amendment for special treatment for Ulster
	24 September	Split in the Irish Volunteers

1915	May	Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) form Military Committee to plan insurrection
	7 August	10th (Irish) Division lands at Gallipoli
1916	21 April	Roger Casement arrested in Kerry and gunrunning ship *Aud* intercepted by Royal Navy
	22 April	MacNeill countermands order for Volunteer manoeuvres set for Easter Sunday
	24 April	Easter Rising begins in Dublin
	29 April	Easter rebels surrender; Martial Law extended to the rest of Ireland
	3–12 May	Fifteen rebels executed in Dublin
	1 July	36th (Ulster) Division decimated on the first day of the Somme offensive
	3 August	Roger Casement hanged at Pentonville gaol in London
	4 November	Martial Law ended, Maxwell replaced as army commander
	23 December	Remaining internees released from Frongoch internment camp and Reading Gaol
1917	5 February	Count Plunkett wins by-election victory in North Roscommon
	16 June	Remaining prisoners released from prison
	10 July	Eamon de Valera wins by-election in East Clare
	25 July	Irish Convention opens in Dublin
	26 October	De Valera elected President of Sinn Fein
1918	6 March	John Redmond dies, replaced by John Dillon as leader of the Home Rule Party
	9 April	Military Service Bill introduced clearing the way for possible extension of conscription to Ireland
	18 April	Anti-conscription conference held in Dublin
	18 May	'German Plot' arrests of republican leadership
	11 November	Armistice ends the Great War
	14 December	Sinn Fein win seventy-three Irish seats in general election
1919	21 January	Dáil Eireann convened at Mansion House in Dublin; Two Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) constables shot dead in attack by Volunteers at Soloheadbeg in South Tipperary
	1 April	Eamon de Valera elected President of Dáil
	11 June	De Valera leaves for the United States
	28 June	Treaty of Versailles signed
	12 September	Dáil made illegal
	26 October	De Valera elected President of Sinn Fein

1920	2 January	Recruitment begins for 'Black and Tans'
	25 February	Government of Ireland Act introduced in House of Commons
	4 April	Irish Republican Army (IRA) launch attacks on over 300 unoccupied RIC barracks across Ireland
	June	Sinn Fein and Nationalists make substantial gains in local elections following on from victories in urban elections in mid-January
	21 July	'Shipyard Expulsions' in Belfast leads to three days of rioting
	27 July	Auxiliary Division formed
	6 August	Dáil instigate Belfast Boycott
	1 November	Recruitment started for new Ulster Special Constabulary
	21 November	'Bloody Sunday' in Dublin
	28 November	Kilmichael Ambush
	23 December	Government of Ireland Act becomes law
1921	13 May	Sinn Fein candidates victorious in elections, form Second Dáil
	24 May	Unionists win substantial victory in elections to new Northern Ireland parliament
	22 June	Northern Ireland parliament opened by King George V
	9–14 July	Sustained sectarian rioting in Belfast leading to twenty deaths
	11 July	Truce implemented ending War of Independence
	16 August	Second Dáil meets in Dublin
	26 August	Dáil elects Eamon de Valera as President of the Irish Republic
	11 October	Anglo-Irish negotiations begin in London
	22 November	Security and policing powers transferred to new Northern Ireland government
	6 December	Anglo-Irish Treaty signed
	14 December	Dáil Treaty debates begin
1922	7 January	Dáil approves Treaty
	21 January	First Craig-Collins Pact
	12 February	Violence erupts in Belfast after IRA shootings along the border, leading to almost thirty deaths in three days
	26 March	Army Convention establishes IRA Executive
	30 March	Second Craig-Collins Pact
	7 April	Northern Ireland government introduce the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act
	May	Ineffectual IRA offensive launched in Ulster

	23 May	Mass internment of hundreds of Republicans in Northern Ireland
	31 May	Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) established
	16 June	Pro-Treaty candidates win substantial majority in elections for constitutional assembly
	22 June	Sir Henry Wilson assassinated in London
	28 June	Provisional Government troops open fire on the Four Courts thus initiating Irish Civil War
	30 June	Four Courts garrison surrenders followed by sporadic fighting in Dublin
	12 August	Arthur Griffith dies
	22 August	Michael Collins killed in ambush in West Cork
	11 September	Proportional Representation for local government elections abolished in Northern Ireland
	28 September	Dáil votes to create special military courts
	10 October	Catholic Church issues pastoral excommunicating members of the anti-Treaty IRA
	17 November	First executions of Republican prisoners take place
	7 December	Northern Ireland parliament votes to opt out of the Irish Free State
1923	10 April	Liam Lynch killed in ambush in Knockmealdown mountains
	27 April	Suspension of IRA campaign, finalised on 24 May with Frank Aiken's 'Dump Arms' order
	15 August	De Valera arrested in Co. Clare and interned until July 1924
	27 August	Cumann na nGaedheal wins general election
	10 September	Irish Free State admitted to the League of Nations
1924	6 March	'Army Mutiny' in response to plans to reduce army numbers
	10 May	Northern Ireland government refuses to nominate candidate for Boundary Commission
	6 November	Boundary Commission convened following Labour government's legislation allowing the British Government to appoint a representative for the Northern Irish government
	24 December	Last internees released by Free State government
1925	7 November	Leaked Boundary Commission report published in *Morning Post*
	20 November	Eoin MacNeill resigns from the Boundary Commission
	3 December	Final settlement of boundary and financial arrangements between British and both Irish governments in London

WHO'S WHO OF THE IRISH REVOLUTION

Frank Aiken (1898–1983): IRA Commander from South Armagh. Became IRA Chief of Staff after the death of Liam Lynch in April 1923. Prominent later member of Fianna Fail and close ally of Eamon de Valera, later holding various ministerial posts including most notably Minster for External Affairs from 1957–69.

Tom Barry (1897–1980): Prominent IRA guerrilla leader. Led the West Cork Flying Column during the War of Independence which carried out the Kilmichael Ambush, the most successful guerrilla ambush carried out by Republicans during the conflict. Later published a book about his exploits, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Mercier, 1955).

Richard Dawson Bates (1876–1949): Senior Ulster Unionist politician. Secretary of the UUC, elected MP for East Belfast in 1921. Became the first Minister of Home Affairs of Northern Ireland where he introduced the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act in 1922. He would remain in office until 1943.

Ernest Blythe (1889–1975): Leading pro-Treaty politician from Lisburn, County Antrim. Elected to First Dail in December 1918. Irish Free State Minister for Local Government and later Minister for Finance. Prominent in pushing for a 'peace policy' in regard to Northern Ireland in the autumn of 1922.

Dan Breen (1894–1969): IRA leader from South Tipperary who took part in the Soloheadbeg Ambush of January 1919, seen as the starting point of the War of Independence. Like Barry wrote a bestselling memoir, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Tralee, 1964).

Sir Edward Carson (1854–1935): A prominent Dublin lawyer who was leader of the Ulster Unionist Party from 1910–21. Prominent in Ulster Unionist protests during the Ulster Crisis and instrumental in the machinations at Westminster which led to the Government of Ireland Act in 1920.

Roger Casement (1864–1916): An Irish-born British diplomat who travelled to Germany to acquire guns for the Easter Rising. After the failure of his plan he was arrested and hanged in Pentonville prison in August 1916.

Robert Erskine Childers (1870–1922): British-born author and propagandist for Sinn Fein. Acted as secretary to the Sinn Fein Treaty delegation in London. Opposed the Treaty on return and helped launch the Republican propaganda efforts during the Irish Civil War. Later captured and executed by Provisional Government authorities in November 1922.

Thomas Clarke (1858–1916): Veteran IRB member and prominent leader of the Easter Rising after his release from prison. Executed in the aftermath of the Rising.

Michael Collins (1890–1922): Republican revolutionary from West Cork. After spending over a decade working in London, returned to take part in the Easter Rising. Rose to prominence while interned and emerged to become a leading member of the IRB, IRA and Sinn Fein. Appointed Minister of Finance, Director of Intelligence of the IRA, he was also head of the Supreme Council of the IRB. Later prominent signatory of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, becoming Chairman of the Provisional Government. Killed in an ambush in West Cork during the civil war in August 1922.

James Connolly (1868–1916): Irish Trade Unionist and Socialist activist who led his Irish Citizen Army alongside the Irish Volunteers during the Easter Rising. Executed in the aftermath of the Rising.

William Thomas (W. T.) Cosgrave (1880–1965): Sinn Fein leader who became Minister for Local Government in the revolutionary Dáil and later Chairman of the Provisional Government. Would remain leader of the new Irish Free State until 1932.

Sir James Craig (1871–1940): Ulster Unionist leader who played a prominent role alongside Carson in resistance to the Third Home Rule Bill. Later to be the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, a position he held until his death in 1940.

Joseph Devlin (1871–1934): Home Rule (later Nationalist) MP for the Falls Road area of West Belfast. Prominent leader of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and unrelenting critic of partition.

John Dillon (1851–1927): Key leader of the Home Rule Party becoming its leader after the death of John Redmond in March 1918.

Arthur Griffith (1871–1922): High-profile Dublin journalist and founder of Sinn Fein. Became prominent figurehead for the movement after its rebirth in the wake of the Easter Rising. Acted as President of the Dáil during de Valera's absence during the War of Independence and later became President after the Treaty split. Signatory of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Thomas Johnson (1872–1963): Dublin Trade Unionist, prominent in the Dublin lockout of 1913. Later drafted Sinn Fein's Democratic Programme. Emigrated to the USA.

Liam Lynch (1893–1923): Cork IRA commander of the 1st Southern Division during the War of Independence. Later became the Chief of Staff of the anti-Treaty IRA during the civil war before his death in an ambush in April 1923.

Sean MacDermott (1883–1916): Belfast-born IRB organiser and later signatory of the Easter proclamation. Executed in the aftermath of the Rising.

Eoin MacNeill (1867–1945): Academic and founder of the Irish Volunteers in 1913. Became Free State representative on the Boundary Commission of 1924–25.

Mary MacSwiney (1872–1942): Sister of Terence MacSwiney who became a Sinn Fein TD and later one of the strongest opponents of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Member of the Republican government under Eamon de Valera during the civil war.

Terence MacSwiney (1879–1920): Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Cork and IRA commander who died while on hunger strike in Brixton prison in October 1920.

Constance Markievicz (1868–1927): Countess, due to marriage to a Polish count, who took part in a number of radical suffragist, socialist and Irish nationalist organisations. Commander of a detachment of the Irish Citizen Army during the Easter Rising. Sinn Fein Teachta Dála (TD) and the first woman to be elected to Westminster although she never took her seat. Opponent of the Treaty and later supporter of Fianna Fail.

Richard Mulcahy (1886–1971): IRA commander from Waterford. Became Chief of Staff of the IRA during the War of Independence. Backed the Treaty and became Commander in Chief of the new Free State Army after the death of Michael Collins. Later to become leader of Fine Gael.

Rory O'Connor (1883–1922): Prominent leader of the anti-Treaty Executive IRA faction during the early stages of the Irish Civil War. Led the occupation of the Four Courts in March 1922. Captured during the battle for Dublin and later executed in December 1922.

Eoin O'Duffy (1892–1944): Monaghan IRA leader. Became pro-Treaty Chief of Staff of the IRA in 1922 and was prominent in organising a covert offensive against the Northern Irish government prior to the outbreak of the

civil war. Served as Commissioner of the new Free State police force, the Garda Siochana. Later established the pseudo-Fascist 'Army Comrades Association' and 'League of Youth' (also known as the 'Blueshirts').

Kevin O'Higgins (1892–1927): Prominent pro-Treaty Sinn Fein and Cumann na nGaedheal politician. Elected Sinn Fein MP for Laois in 1918. Assistant Minister for Local Government to W. T. Cosgrave in the First Dáil. Vice-President of the Executive Council and Minister for Justice in the Irish Free State government where he oversaw policy of executions of Republican prisoners. Assassinated by the IRA in Dublin, 10 July 1927.

Patrick Pearse (1879–1916): Gaelic cultural activist, poet, teacher and IRB member. Nominal leader of the Easter Rising. Read the proclamation of the Irish Republic outside of the General Post Office on 24 April 1916. Later executed.

Count George Noble Plunkett (1851–1948): Dublin-born papal count, academic and father of Joseph Plunkett, one of the leaders of the Easter Rising. Became first Sinn Fein MP after victory in the North Roscommon by-election in 1917.

Joseph Plunkett (1887–1916): One of the signatories of the Easter proclamation. Prominent in the military planning for the Rising. Executed in its aftermath.

John Redmond (1856–1918): Leader of the minority Parnellite faction of the Irish Parliamentary Party and later leader of the reunified Home Rule Party. Allied with the Liberals in the wake of the 1910 elections and supported the passing of a Third Home Rule Bill for Ireland. Died in March 1918 to be replaced by his deputy John Dillon.

Eamon de Valera (1882–1975): Born in New York, returned to Ireland at the age of two after the death of his Spanish father. Brought up by relatives in County Limerick. Commander of a detachment of Irish Volunteers during the Easter Rising. Became leader of Sinn Fein in 1917 and President of Dáil Eireann from April 1919 and later President of the Irish Republic from August 1921. Prominent opponent of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Later established Fianna Fail becoming President of the Executive Council in 1932 and later President of the Irish Republic after leading several Fianna Fail governments.

Sir Henry Wilson (1864–1922): Irish-born Field Marshall and former Chief of the Imperial General Staff of the British Army. Later appointed as Military Adviser to the Northern Irish government until his assassination in London in June 1922, an event which was key in precipitating the outbreak of the Irish Civil War.

Introduction

The Irish revolution remains not only the great foundation myth of the southern Irish state but also that of all shades of Irish Nationalist opinion, from moderate constitutionalists through to physical force Republicans. The events themselves have engendered an enormous amount of popular and scholarly interest producing best-selling memoirs by leading radicals, a whole host of biographical studies of leading political figures and numerous television documentaries and cinematic dramatisations.

Portrayals of modern Irish history have been dominated by a variety of what have been termed Nationalist narratives of the period. Such narratives have essentially told the Irish story as a deliverance tale where a subjugated and distinctive ethnic national group managed, after many attempts, to finally throw off the yoke of British colonial oppression to establish its own native government. That achievement was only partial in 1922, however, and it was only after many decades of further political struggle that a full Republic was declared in 1949. For many radical Nationalists the revolution remains unfinished due mainly to the continued existence of partition in the form of the six county state of Northern Ireland. In such perceptions it is only with the achievement of Irish unity under a fully separatist government that the Irish revolution will be complete. At the other end of the scale many Nationalists have also argued for a long revolution spanning many decades prior to the moment of independence, harking back to the Famine of the 1840s or even Wolfe Tone's rebellion of 1798 as a starting point. In such views the various political movements, both constitutional and militaristic, are linked together in one long unbroken liberation struggle.

Thus any description of what occurred in Ireland between 1912 and 1925 as a 'revolution' is by its very nature a contentious claim. However, despite such opposition there can be little doubt that, even if the term 'revolution' proves problematic for many, revolutionary change did occur in Ireland in between the years 1912 and 1925, most of its consequences largely unforeseen. For example, the Ulster Unionist threat to create its own

provisional government in 1913 was, despite their professed loyalty to Britain, a revolutionary act. The transfer of power from Britain to two new Irish states was achieved through an unprecedented political mobilisation of the Irish population, evidenced in membership of mass political organisations, transformative election results, labour agitation and, perhaps most prominently, sustained political violence ranging from sectarian rioting to government authorised reprisals and widespread guerrilla warfare.

The study of this period has undergone its own historiographical revolution in recent years which has done much to challenge the predominant Nationalist paradigms. Dismissed by critics as 'revisionism', the reality was that a growing sophistication in terms of research methodology and the release of substantial new primary sources, led to a whole range of fresh historical perspectives. In the mid-1970s, amidst the re-emergence of Nationalist inspired violence in the shape of the Northern Irish 'Troubles', two groundbreaking studies in the shape of Charles Townshend's *The British Campaign in Ireland* and David Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life*, set the agenda for a whole new generation of scholars. In particular the violence of the revolution, so often glorified in popular histories of the period, has come under increasing academic scrutiny in recent years. Peter Hart's controversial book *The I.R.A. and its Enemies* sought to reveal the previously hidden reality of Irish Republican Army (IRA) violence in the provinces, arguing that far from having a symbiotic relationship with the people, the IRA were engaged in a campaign of terror, with their activities characterised largely by brutal reprisals and focused on soft targets within local communities, in particular Protestants who accounted for over a third of civilian deaths despite being only a small minority of the overall population in Cork, the area of his study.[1]

Hart's approach to the topic, studying the local realities of the revolution on the ground, away from the rhetoric of national politics, has been mirrored by the emergence of a whole host of local and county studies which seek to examine the reality of revolution in the Irish provinces by analysing the growth of advanced Nationalist sentiment in the south and west of Ireland and the process by which British authority collapsed or was made unworkable. What emerged was in effect a whole host of mini revolutions taking place under the umbrella of the national Sinn Fein revolution and driven by a heterogeneous series of local factors and priorities concerning what participants thought the revolution had set out to achieve.

The release of large numbers of new archival sources has managed to both broaden academic understandings of the period and also keep the subject fresh in the public mind with all manner of new revelations. Even now amidst the centenary celebrations of the revolutionary decade, substantial amounts of documents are still closed to researchers and major releases in the South, such as the hundreds of statements from IRA veterans in the shape of the Bureau of Military History collection and the newly opened pension applications from political activists to the southern

government, have led to a whole host of new studies and reassessments. Similarly in Northern Ireland the opening of previously closed security files from the Ministry of Home Affairs has done much to enlighten understanding of how partition was achieved and how the new northern state managed to consolidate its position in the early years of its existence.

The aim of this book is to provide both students, and those studying Irish history for the first time, with a general introduction to the key events and contemporary debates within Irish revolutionary studies. Due to the often confused and complex flow of events a chronological, rather than thematic, structure has been favoured. While there are numerous very valid critiques of the periodisation of the revolution, the most widely used delineation of events has been employed.[2]

This book will largely look at the political revolution which saw the creation of two new partition states in Ireland which embodied the most extreme manifestations of Irish nationalism and unionism in the shape of Sinn Fein and Ulster Unionism. The reason for this is that the Irish revolution is notable by the fact that it was overwhelmingly a revolution about constitutional symbols and the origins of political authority. The social side of the revolution was minimal. It can be argued that Ireland's social revolution had already occurred long before the political revolution began. By the early twentieth century Irish land grievances, which had been the most prominent cause of mass political protest in the nineteenth century, had largely been met with the passing of a series of revolutionary Land Acts by the British Government which placed almost three-quarters of Irish land in the hands of native Catholic farmers. Indeed ironically while that class of farmers had been the most prominent component of the radical land agitation campaigns of the 1870s and 1880s, by 1912 they represented the backbone of the moderate conservative constitutional Home Rule party which would soon be swept away by the dynamic separatism of the Sinn Fein movement which emerged in the wake of the Easter Rising. The revolution would thus have little directly to do with social and economic change. As one prominent Sinn Fein member noted, this was a conservative revolution: 'Getting rid of foreign control rather than vast social and economic changes was our aim.'[3] Thus if one seeks to create a simple definition of the Irish revolution it would be almost wholly limited to struggles over the extent and nature of Irish independence.

Each chapter concludes with advice for further reading and a series of key questions about each topic which form the basis of popular essay questions and historical debate. Numerous web links have also been included to allow students to explore certain aspects of the various subjects in greater detail. At the end of the book a number of the most important documents have also been included. These, along with a select bibliography of the most significant works on the period, have been chosen to give students as broad a range of primary and secondary references as possible.