

Secret Intelligence Reports made to the Irish Command Headquarters by Intelligence officers of the Southern, Central and Northern Army Districts September 1916 to January 1917

An internal memo of December 1916 notes that these are “received occasionally and not systematically” and recommends that they be circulated among the Civil Executive as a useful supplement to the monthly reports of the C. J.s .

These reports from September 1916 to January 1917 have been misfiled with military reports on the state of the railways, CSO 904.157 and are transcribed here for the benefit of historians researching the aftermath of the 1916 Rebellion when the country was under martial law and conscription was being actively considered.

They are divided into the three districts, Southern, Central and Northern, The report topics covered were: 1) General State of the District, 2) State of Public Feeling, 3) Cause of Discontent, 4) State of Political Societies, 5) Concealment of Arms and Ammunition, 6) Administration of the Law, 7) The Local Press, 8) Feeling of People towards Recruiting, 9) Labour Troubles, and 10) General Remarks and Suggestions

Southern District, September 1916

1 The area is generally peaceful; there is no proof of any organised effort to revive the Irish Volunteers. Portions of the Counties of Kerry and Wexford, and the Western portion of the County of Cork are still disturbed and may give trouble during the winter.

2 All shades of opinion, both Unionist and Nationalist, are very bitter against the Civil Authorities. From the point of view of the latter this may be treated to

a) The Prime Minister’s visit and subsequent offer of Home Rule. The Nationalists now believe that this was entirely due to fear, and many of them have, as a natural result, become believers in the Irish Volunteer Movement. The later collapse of the negotiations was looked upon as a breach of faith on the part of the Government

b) Mr Dillon’s speech after the rising and the present friendly attitude of the Irish Parliamentary Party towards the Sinn Feiners

c) The sympathy shown to the movement by the younger Roman Catholic Clergy

d) The local men still in internment who took no direct part in the Dublin rising

e) The opportunities afforded extremists of meeting each other and expressing their views to people generally at large G.A.A. and Gaelic meetings

f) The fear of conscription, which would be bitterly unpopular

There appears to be no unfriendly feeling towards individual soldiers, but the Sheehy-Skeffington incident and allegations made against the conduct of the Troops in Dublin have left a certain amount of ill-feeling, which appears to be subsiding. There is no religious antagonism, and the feeling between classes is normal. In Cork, Kerry and Limerick, the All for Ireland League is a constant source of discord. This is supported by the Sinn Feiners and opposes as a matter of principle any effort towards understanding made by other parties. The official paper, the *Cork Free Press* always shows great hostility towards both the Civil and Military authorities, and covertly supports the Sin Fein movement.

The Unionist section are very nervous and have no faith in the Civil Government, but very little open hostility is shown towards them,

3 The National Volunteers, as an active organisation, no longer exists. Many of these are now in sympathy with the Irish Volunteers, and the reliance placed on them during the Rising could not now be safely repeated.

Both the Gaelic League and the G.A.A. are very active, and have attracted all the extreme section to their ranks. I have no doubt that considerable hostile propaganda is carried on by these societies and I regard many to their meetings as simply cloaks for seditious purposes.

The Irish Volunteers are quiescent; there is no open attempt to attract recruits or re-organise their branches. The more prominent members meet constantly at each other's houses but nothing takes place in public. Although the actual membership is about the same as before the rising, I could not even approximately estimate the number of persons now in sympathy with this body, but if they are permitted to renew their activities, I have no doubt that their numbers will be increased by thousands in this area.

4 There are very few rifles in this area in possession of disloyal persons, but there are a large number of shot-guns and revolvers still available. The National Volunteers have a certain number of effective rifles, but these are not in possession of members, being stored by the leaders, who are as a rule loyal. It is not believed that any drilling is taking place, but there are persistent rumours that arms are coming into Kerry by sea. The coastline is being carefully watched for any attempt, so far without success.

5 The Press generally is favourable, all newspapers showing themselves friendly to the Military Authorities and the Allied cause. Any temporary departure from this course may be generally traced to local or political reasons. The *Cork Free Press* has been consistently hostile to the Military and Civil Authorities, this being partly due to the fact that some of the Staff are prominent Sinn Feiners and partly because it is the paper read by that party, to keep who custom the paper must express their views.

Owing to the fact that the standard of education is very low, the Press has great influence in the country Districts, the views of the people being drawn from the local paper, the Priest and the National Schoolmaster. Anything that appears in print is quoted as truth and a paper like the *Cork Examiner* which is read through the South of Ireland, has great possibilities for mischief or otherwise.

6 Practically no recruits are being obtained. This I consider due to the following reasons:

a) The labouring class, which has supplied all the recruits up to the present is now exhausted and very few more may be expected from this quarter

b) Political Reasons: there is an inherited distrust and dislike of the Army which is difficult to overcome, and the Sinn Feiners make great efforts to keep this feeling alive

c) The fact that the Roman Catholic Clergy, as a whole, have either discouraged recruiting or taken no part in assisting the movement

d) Social reasons: It is an undoubted fact that practically all the recruits so far obtained have been of the labouring classes. The farmers' sons, both those engaged on the farms and in commercial life, the clerks and the shop assistants will not enlist in the same regiments as men they consider socially far beneath them. If a regiment like the South Irish Horse is

thrown open to take all the recruits they can get and members of this regiment worked locally near their own homes, I believe that a very considerable number would enlist. A lot of men will join up with a member of the Regiment who would not go to a police barracks to do so.

e) The attitude of the Press, which is lukewarm. They write as a rule to the effect that sufficient has been done by Ireland, and the constant correspondence about "English shirkers" etc., in the English Press is quoted in justification. If the Press would lend its assistance, it would do considerable good.

f) "Soreness" caused by matters arising out of the Rebellion. The feeling is dying out rapidly.

g) No material advantage to be gained by enlisting. The available men are mostly unmarried, so the separation allowance is no inducement. If it was, for instance, arranged that ex-soldiers should have prior claim to all re-distributed land, etc., and this fact was widely known, it would have a most beneficial effect on public opinion generally and recruiting in particular.

h) Farmers are anxious to keep their sons on their farms for economic reasons, as labourers are scarce

7 No labour troubles are anticipated. If universal service is enforced, it will meet with considerable opposition. The Roman Catholic Clergy, the local members of Parliament, the Press, the Gaelic Societies and the Volunteer bodies will oppose it strongly. If introduced speedily and strong measures are used to repress any organised opposition by any persons, no matter how influential, the great majority of people, I believe, would fall into line. A certain proportion will resist by force any attempt to enlist them, but if this matter is firmly handled, there is no reason to fear a general outbreak. Clare, Kerry and Cork are probably the only counties which would offer any serious resistance, which would, largely consist of shooting from farm-houses on search parties, and gathering in small armed parties to resist arrest.

8 I would suggest that the Police be given some control over the supply of petrol or that the Supply Committee should refer to them for advice. Sinn Fein dealers and merchants are apparently able to obtain supplies exceeding requirements for their own use, whilst loyal inhabitants, many of whom use their cars for military reasons, find they are unable to obtain even a reasonable amount

I would draw attention to the number of disloyal persons employed in the Post Office service. These persons are as a rule employed in the Post Office near their home, and are thus in touch with other Sinn Feiners. For instance, four of the postmen at least in Caherciveen are Sinn Feiners. At Ferns, Michael O'Neill, the Chief Clerk (arrested and released) attended the drills of the Irish Volunteers, and associates constantly with suspects. The rebel flag which was used at Enniscorthy was the property of this man. James J Breslin, also at Ferns, is a well-known Sinn Feiner, and was also arrested as dangerous. This man arranged the defence of and attended the trial of the Wexford Sinn Feiners who were tried for gun-running last spring. He is constantly in the company of suspects. John O'Neill at Enniscorthy, also arrested, associates with extremists, and the same thing perhaps to a lesser degree is common in many of the local Post Offices. These three men were all re-instated without the Police being called to give evidence. Four postmen were also arrested in Co Wexford and lately re-instated. I would suggest that suspected men should be moved away from their present stations.

National Schoolteachers, too, are very disloyal in this area. They are well-educated, poorly paid, and, as a result, discontented and good subjects for the Sinn Fein movement, but it is difficult to obtain proof of disloyalty other than their association with suspects and their

interest in the Gaelic League. The last is as a whole most disloyal, and all prominent Sinn Feiners are active members

T W Dickie Captain Intelligence Office, Cork

Southern District, October 1916

1 The area generally is very quiet and no disturbance is anticipated

2 There is no change in public feeling. The only public matter in which any interest is shown is the Conscription question, which is consistently being brought forward by the Press, politicians, and public bodies, and which they always represent as the removal of all men of military age, however employed. The 'Manchester Martyrs' processions may lead to trouble as the Irish Volunteers have, I believe, been asked by the Young Ireland Society to march in it as a body. If they do so, it may lead to demonstrations towards them both hostile and friendly so causing considerable disturbance. In addition, if they are allowed to march in one procession as a formed body, they will continue to do so on future occasions

3 There has been an abortive attempt to revive interest in the National Volunteer Movement. The more loyal and respectable members are at present holding aloof. The explanation generally given of this movement is to enable the Volunteers to be prepared to resist Conscription by force.

The Irish Volunteers are meeting in large numbers at their halls, but are doing nothing openly. They are now in such close touch with the Gaelic League and G.A.A. that it is difficult to distinguish between their several activities. For instance, an 'Irish Club' has been started in Kilkenny, ostensibly to study the Irish language etc., but it has been started and is being run by the Irish Volunteers

There is no general movement of suspects through the area other than Gaelic League organisers

4 There is no reason to suppose that any additional arms have come into the area, or that clandestine drilling is taking place. The Police assisted by a small party of Troops, carried out two searches for arms in West Cork without result, beyond the arrest of John Hegarty

5 The local Justices, as a whole, have convicted when necessary, but the penalties imposed are practically always inadequate

6 The Press remains friendly but is carrying on active opposition against conscription. The only papers which show covert and sometimes open hostility to the Government are the *Cork Free Press* and the *Kilkenny People*. The latter has a very large circulation among the lower classes, and I consider it one of the main causes of unrest and disaffection in that district.

7 Recruiting remains stagnant and but few recruits are being obtained. I would again suggest that the South Irish Horse should be permitted and encouraged to recruit beyond establishment. In a regiment of this kind, if one man is enlisted from a village or townland, it is certain that several of his friends will join up also

8 No labour troubles are anticipated

9 Submarines have been active on the West and South-West of Ireland during this month. One case of supposed communication with the shore was reported at Tramore, Co Waterford,

but I consider the information unreliable. All H.M. Patrol Vessels have special instructions as to observing and reporting any case of this kind

T W Dickie, Captain, Intelligence Officer, Cork

Southern District, November 1916

1 The area is generally very quiet. In portions of Kerry there is still unrest and hostility is openly shown towards the police

2 There appears to be a somewhat general lessening of sympathy towards the Irish Volunteers and the official Nationalists are not associating themselves with the movement as they have been, but there is no doubt that the Sinn Feiners are still stronger as a whole than before the rebellion.

The Manchester Martyrs processions and meetings passed off quietly and were smaller than in previous years. In most districts only the extremists took any part in the demonstrations. In Youghal four windows were broken in the recruiting office by stones thrown from the torch-light procession, and in Cork the note-book of the police reporter was snatched from him by a local 'rowdy', but it was later returned. In Limerick about 500 Irish Volunteers marched in military order in the procession. Practically all these processions were held in open and deliberate defiance of General Maxwell's Order dated 11th May, 1916.

On 15th November the Parliamentary election for West Cork took place. Mr O'Leary, Barrister-at-Law, an unofficial Redmondite, being returned by a small majority. The defeated candidates were suspect Frank Healy, official O'Brienite, and Doctor Michael Shipsey, Independent, the latter only receiving about 300 votes. The election passed off very quietly and little interest was taken in it although the poll was large.

3 The National Volunteer revival has not been a success. As stated last month, this now relies for support on the anti-conscription movement and anti-conscription 'recruiting' posters have been posted up in some places. The Irish Volunteers remain quiescent. There is great activity in Gaelic circles, meetings and concerts taking place nightly all through the district.

4 It is not believed that any arms have come into the area or that clandestine drilling is taking place. The drilling near Cork referred to by Major Newman in the House of Commons was a very trivial matter.

5 There were only thirteen prosecutions under D.R.R. 27 during the month, two of which were tried by Court Martial. The decisions and penalties in these and the other D.R.R. cases were very satisfactory as a whole, but the penalties imposed by Listowel, Co Kerry, bench, were, as usual, totally inadequate.

6 The local press remains friendly. The only papers which still show hostility are the *Cork Free Press* and the *Kilkenny People*. On Monday 13th inst., the plant and type of the *Southern Star*, Skibbereen, were seized by order of the G.O.C. in Chief

7 Recruiting is dull, but a number have been obtained in the Western area, and the usual few elsewhere

8 No labour troubles are anticipated

9 The order prohibiting parades, processions, etc., is a source of friction, as well-disposed persons who apply for permission are laughed at by extremists who never do so. I would

suggest that in view of the recent amendment to the Defence of the Realm Regulations, which gives the necessary power to prohibit meetings or processions, the formal withdrawal of the order be considered.

Unnamed captain, Intelligence Officer, Cork

Southern District, December 1916

1 There is no sign of hostile movement in the District. Kerry is quieter than it has been for some time past and the feeling between troops and the people generally is still good, although several incidents have taken place during the month in which friction occurred.

2 Public feeling remains the same. The Conscription 'scare' is not now so much in evidence. The unconditional release of the Frongoch prisoners is regarded by all classes as a triumph for the Sinn Feiners but its effect is not yet perceptible. The return of these passed off very quietly, without demonstrations of any kind.

3 No activity is shown by any organisation other than the Gaelic League, which exists, I consider, in this District, merely as a cloak for disloyal and anti-British propaganda. This is now a very influential and numerous body and is afforded support by most of the younger R. C. clergy. A Concert announced to be held by the Gaelic League in the City Hall, Cork, on the 26th inst was prohibited by order of Headquarters, Irish Command. It did not take place and there was no disturbance.

4 I do not consider any appreciable amount of arms have come into this District since Easter last, but in many districts there are still a small number of rifles and guns which cannot be traced by the police. There are a large number of revolvers in the possession of disloyal persons everywhere in the District. Five rifles were stolen from Cork Barracks through the connivance of a soldier. One Irish Volunteer is awaiting trial on the charge of receiving, and it is hoped that further arrests will be affected.

Reports have been received from Limerick of weekly drills taking place in Daly's Hall there. Only 30-40 men attend these meetings and the police have not been able to identify any person as taking part in them. It is believed that these will very shortly cease. No general attempts to drill are reported.

5 There was a considerable diminution this month in prosecutions for breaches of the Defence of the Realm Regulations. The penalties, if any, imposed by Justices were as a rule quite inadequate, but convictions were obtained in almost every case.

6 The local press remains friendly. The *Cork Free Press* has suspended publication for the present. The *Southern Star* plant and property has been returned to them and they have resume publication

7 A few recruits of the usual class are being obtained. There does not appear to be any organised opposition to recruiting. Little interest is taken in it by anyone. About 360 recruits were obtained in the District during the month.

8 Towards the middle of the month dissatisfaction among the railway servants on the Great Southern and Western Railway became acute and a strike was feared. The question was settled by Government taking over the line with other Irish railways and no further trouble is anticipated.

The Trafford Park Engineering Co Manchester, are in treaty for the lands of Cork Park, and have been granted an option to purchase these lands and a quay frontage by the Cork Corporation and the Harbour Board. This option expires on 31st inst. but I am at present unable to ascertain whether it is proposed to exercise it. It is proposed to expend a sum of about £200,000 on a factory and various buildings which are to employ about 2,000 skilled workers. An Act of Parliament will be necessary to enable the Harbour Board to grant the necessary facilities, so it is presumed the matter is not urgent. I am submitting a full report to you at an early date.

9 I would suggest that newspaper proprietors in this District be directed to submit a proof of any proposed publication about local military affairs or matters which directly refer to or reflect on the Military, to this office for approval before publication

T W Dickie Captain Intelligence Officer Cork

I have nothing to add, except some steps seem necessary to control the publication of paragraphs in which reference is made to Military troops. During the past ten days, local paper has published some glaring inaccuracies and grossly exaggerated accounts of minor street troubles. I have no control, I am led to understand.

B Doran Major General Cork

Southern District, January 1917

1 The area generally is very quiet, and there is no sign of any hostile movement. Two shots from a miniature rifle were fired into Boherbue R.I.C. Barracks about 12.30am on the 15th inst., but it believed this has no disloyal significance

2 Public feeling remains apathetic towards political subjects

3 The Cork Irish Volunteers held a conference in Cork on 27th inst. About 100 in all attended, 30-40 of which came from outlying parts of the county. Nothing is yet known of the result.

A general attempt to revive interest in the United Irish League has just been started by the Nationalist Party which is being supported by the local press

The attempt to revive the National Volunteers has been a complete failure in this area

4 There is no reason to suppose that clandestine arming or drill is taking place. The drilling formerly reported at Limerick has now entirely ceased.

5 Five Courts Martial of civilians took place during the month. A conviction followed in each case.

The findings by courts of summary jurisdiction were as a rule fair and the sentences adequate.

There has been no increase of prosecutions under the D.R.R.

6 The local press remains favourable, but no direct encouragement to recruiting is given by the Press.

7 No interest is taken in recruiting, only boys and a few of the labouring class join up; the latter being attracted by the separation allowances.

8 No labour troubles are anticipated. A certain section of the railway men are dissatisfied with the bonus but not sufficiently to take action.

9 Submarines are very active round the South-west coast. I have arranged especial precautions with the police and patrol vessels to prevent any communication between them and the shore.

J W Dickie Capt. I.O. Cork

Southern District February 1917

1 The area is very quiet, and there is no sign of any hostile movement. Two shots from a miniature rifles were fired into Boherbue R.I.C. Barracks about 12.30 am on the 25th inst but it is believed that this has no disloyal significance.

2 Public feeling remains apathetic towards political subjects

3 The Cork Irish Volunteers held a conference in Cork on the 2th inst. About 100 in all attended, 30-40 of which came from outlying parts of the county. Nothing is yet known of the result.

A general attempt to revive interest in the United Irish League has just been started by the Nationalist Party which is being supported by the local press

The attempt to revive the National Volunteers has been a complete failure in this area

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On 10/1/17 at Killarney Quater Sessions the County Court Judge decided that singing *Easter Week* was not a statement within the meaning of the D.R.R. 27 and the Court also reduced a fine of £10 to £2.10. This will not encourage Petty Sessions Courts to do their duty

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J W Dickie Capt. I.O. Cork

Midlands and Connaught District, September 1916

General state of the District: The general state of the District is outwardly peaceful, and no serious acts of lawlessness or sedition have taken place during the month of September

State of public feeling: a) The state of public feeling is not consistently legal and a number of sympathisers with the Sinn Fein movement has undoubtedly increased to a great extent

b) It is doubtful if the majority of the later recruits to the Sinn Fein Society are genuine. More probably, many express sympathy with the society through fear of Conscription and openly shelter behind Sinn Feinism without in any way knowing what it means. This they find they can do with complete safety, especially as they see no action is taken by the authorities to prevent Sinn Fein badges from being worn in public

c) The movements of small military units through various parts of the district on their way to Winter billets seems to have had a good effect and everywhere the troops were well received and in most cases hospitality extended to them.

Feeling of various classes: Discontent and disloyalty is limited entirely in the country to the sons of farmers, and in towns to shop assistants; the former, it is believed, largely through fear of Conscription, the latter because they get together in the evening and discuss politics and are easily influenced by the political agitators and grievance mongers.

School teachers are a doubtful quantity, and it is probable that many of them are Sinn Feiners at heart. It is difficult to prove that even these teach it in the schools

The labouring class as a whole is loyal and has found the majority of recruits for the army especially in the western Counties, Galway and Mayo

Many of the younger clergy – both parish priests and curates – are strongly anti-English, especially in the Western Counties. The Rev H Feeney, who took an active part in the recent rebellion and was suspended for absenting himself from his parish (Clarenbridge, Co Galway) was reinstated at the beginning of the month and appointed to the parish of Oughterard.

Cause of Discontent: Disappointment still exists strongly all through the District – to a lesser degree in the Counties of Meath, Wicklow, Carlow and Kildare, as regards the Home Rule Settlement and the continuance of Martial Law, and there are very few, whether Unionists, Redmondites or Extremists, who have a good word to say for the Government

Martial Law seems to have had a wonderful effect, although it is merely a name, and its continuance is to a great degree responsible for the absence of trouble. All thinking persons advocate that it should not be done away with during the war.

State of Political Societies and Associations: The Sinn Fein Society is still, as far as is known, without leaders and very disorganised, but reports have recently come in from Athlone that prominent Sinn Feiners are beginning to be active and endeavouring to organise secret meetings. Two men, both well-known Sinn Feiners, who were arrested at Tullamore at the end of August and let off, had evidently been travelling round the Western Counties, organising and interviewing the prominent members of the Society in the towns which they visited.

As yet, however, there is no doubt that little active organising has been commenced, and that most of the new recruits to the Society have joined for reasons stated in 2b

The Gaelic Athletic Association under the guise of football and hurling is getting young fellows into its clutches throughout the District and especially in Galway, and these youths, when they see that they have joined for something more than sport, cannot draw back.

The Association appears undoubtedly to be most disloyal and always to have been so, and yet the Government exempts its meetings from taxation, and allows them to be held without restriction.

Cases have occurred during the month in Co Westmeath, King's Co and Galway of football teams of the Association using seditious language, singing *Who fears to speak of Easter Week* etc., and wearing Sinn Fein badge and crepe armbands in a body.

Concealment of Arms and Ammunition: As far as is known there are very few arms and very little ammunition buried or hidden in the district, and no reports or rumours of clandestine arming or drilling are to hand

Administration of the Law: Some of the punishments awarded at Petty Sessions by Courts of Summary Jurisdiction for cases tried under the Defence of the Realm Regulations are ridiculously inadequate. Chief among these are cases under Section 27 for using seditious language – Thomas Cooney, who was tried at Edenderry Petty Sessions (King's Co) for shouting "Up the Sinn Feiners" in the public streets of Edenderry was fined 10/6 and costs last week – and cases under 28, for selling hay without a permit, which are invariably punished with a fine of 2/6d.

It is most essential that cases under Section 27 should be severely punished. If this is not done the use of such terms as "Up the Sinn Feiners", "God Strafe England", "Up the Kaiser" in public will become common and have a very bad effect

The Local Press: There are some 50 local papers in this District. As a whole their tone has been mild, though lately some strong anti-English articles have been written on the subject of Conscription. A copy of an article from the *Longford Leader* is attached (as an example, September 30th)

The papers are a very powerful influence in the district and a complete and careful censorship is essential, at the same time it is suggested that much good can be done by interviewing and talking over questions with the editors of all provincial papers, even the worst, which are often the most widely read.

The *Irish Nation* which circulates in Co Meath has a very bad tone indeed and consequently a bad effect. It is understood that its circulation is increasing, and it is difficult to see that any good can come by allowing this paper in its present form to be published.

Feeling of People towards Recruiting: Recruiting has almost ceased, especially in the Western Counties. No active opposition is given to recruiting meetings, but they are simply ignored. It is believed that in spite of the violent press articles and the obvious antagonism of those who will be chiefly affected, Conscription if properly and firmly applied would succeed with very little active opposition

Labour troubles: No labour troubles are anticipated, though this question would have to be watched if Conscription were brought in

General Remarks and Suggestions:

- a) Continuance of Martial Law is advisable
- b) That rebel prisoners who have been tried and sentenced should be kept out of Ireland until after the War. Most of these still in prison are the former organisers of the Sinn Fein movement. (There are still 8 prominent Westport Sinn Feiners interned who would do great harm if released). It does not appear to be the case that the released rebel prisoners have come back in any chastened frame of mind.
- c) That route marches through the country should be kept up as much as possible, and that the O.C of the Column should be authorised to enlist recruits

A E Sandbach Major General, Curragh

Midlands and Connaught District, October 1916

General state of the District: The general state of the District is peaceable and no serious acts of disloyalty or sedition have taken place during the month of October. The presence of the military and the rapid dispersal of all armed bodies in the past rebellion have put an end to all hope of success by armed opposition in the future and the extremists recognise this

State of public feeling: The state of public feeling is not loyal, though it varies throughout the towns in the District. In Ballinasloe, Loughrea, Galway, Ballina and Sligo in the West, Mullingar, Trim, Tullamore and Carlow in the Midlands and South, the feeling of the poorer classes is more or less loyal; on the other hand, towns like Athlone, Athenry, Westport, Roscommon, Longford and some of the smaller villages and towns are distinctly disloyal. In many cases this can be put down to

- 1 Sinn Fein organisers making these places their headquarters previous to the rebellion
- 2 Unrest caused by returned Sinn Fein prisoners
- 3 A false sympathy that has grown up since the execution of the Sinn Fein leaders
- 4 The action of the G.A.A. and the A.O.H. and other political bodies
- 5 The fact that all are united under any cloak to show opposition to conscription

All organisations now vie with each other in passing resolutions opposing conscription in order to try and gain popular support for their different associations. There is no animosity shown to the troops, on the contrary in many places when out on route marches they have met with great kindness from all classes. Occasional movements of military units throughout the District would have a good effect.

Farmers' sons: Any marked disloyalty can be put down to 1) the younger sons of farmers who in ordinary times would emigrate to the U.S.A. and now cannot do so. They have nothing to do at home, will not enlist in the Army and spend their time hatching mischief or brooding over old wrongs which their forefathers suffered under English rule; 2) shopkeepers' assistants, who are employed in large numbers in country towns, and who, to save themselves from serving their country or the terrors of conscription, meet together and join any political society that is anti-English.

School-teachers: School-teachers – male and female – are a doubtful body but except from hearsay it is impossible to prove that Sinn Feinism is openly taught.

Labourers: The labouring classes, on the whole, have done best and found the great majority of the recruits.

Clergy: As regards the R.C. Clergy it may be broadly stated that the younger clergy have distinct Sinn Fein sympathies and are anti-English; the senior clergy are for peace and good government, and are opposed to the secret ramifications of Sinn Fein and its connection with Socialism and anti-Clericalism. Much depends on the attitude taken up by the Bishops of Diocese. In many places the priests came out and aided the R.I.C. in keeping the rebels in check, e.g., the parish priest at Craughwell, Co. Galway, told the police to fire on the Sinn Feiners if they came there. The Archbishop of Tuam and his bishops have done everything to keep Sinn Fein in check.

Causes of Discontent: There is no real discontent; such as exists is political. The country has never been more prosperous, the only supposed cause for discontent and unrest is that Home Rule is no in operation, that the country is not ruled by Irishmen, and that it should be thought necessary to keep Martial Law in existence. The real reason for any unrest is the fear of being taken from comfortable homes to fight under any flag. As regards the public peace the continuance of Martial Law is necessary and this especially applies to those parts of the District where disaffection exists, notably around Galway, Athenry, Gort, Tuam, Westport, Athlone, Roscommon, parts of counties Sligo, Westmeath and Meath.

The fact that a military tribunal can try offenders deters those who would like to commit outrages, and give expression to seditious sentiments, while the law-abiding country people and all those who have a stake in the country and its welfare at least are glad of its existence. The Defence of the Realm Regulations should be kept in force and promptly and firmly applied.

State of Political Societies and Associations.

Sinn Fein: The Sinn Fein party still lacks leaders and has no active organisation. Reports state that around Gort, Athenry, Tuam, Roscommon and Athlone the Sinn Fein prisoners who have been released are endeavouring to reorganise their branches and holding secret meetings.

The release of interned Sinn Feiners of note has without doubt done much to revive support for its cause and increased the number of sympathisers with it. Whether these latter would be active or passive would depend on the success any fresh rising had at the start and certainty of foreign aid.

Irish Republican Brotherhood: In some parts of Galway there are rumours that branches of the Irish Republican Brotherhood are to be started, but no confirmation of this has been received

Gaelic Athletic Association: The Gaelic Athletic Association is undoubtedly a most disloyal anti-English body; in many counties it has been organised by prominent Sinn Feiners – notably in Co Galway, and its members compelled to join Sinn Fein Volunteers.

Sinn Fein colours, badges and belts are won at all their athletic meetings, while excursion trains bring to many centres crowds of people who see these displays go unchecked and who hear seditious shouting and see disloyal conduct at many railway stations

Ancient Order of Hibernians: The Ancient Order of Hibernians are becoming very active and at many branches violent opposition to conscription and anti-English resolutions have been passed. An attempt is being made to re-organise the branches of the Irish National Volunteers.

Concealment of Arms and Ammunition: The serviceable arms in the District are few. Such as exist, and have not been surrendered are hidden in bogs, ditches, etc. Ammunition also exists, but both arms and ammunition are a mixed lot and not very serviceable. Shot guns and revolvers are very largely in possession of all classes. The use of explosives, if such could be obtained, might be attempted, but there is not much probability of this in this District. No reports of clandestine arming and drilling are to hand, and, so far as can be ascertained none have taken place.

Administration of the Law: The reliability of magistrates varies. In some places magistrates endeavour to do their duty fairly; in others it is useless to send cases under the D.R.R. before them, for the fines and punishments (if inflicted) are totally inadequate. This especially applies to cases under Section 27 – use of seditious language and disloyal behaviour – and under Section 28, where the Regulation permitting sale of hay only to military authorities is constantly broken.

As regards trial by jury no conviction would be obtained of any person brought under the Defence of the Realm Regulations for any offence against those Regulations.

The Local Press: About 50 local papers circulate in the District. They publish, impartially, articles praising men fighting in our Regiments at the front side by side with articles praising the lives of the Sinn Feiners or giving histories of how they died. The tone of the local Press is anti-conscription, with one exception – *The Western News* published at Ballinasloe. In some cases, articles are written “that Ireland has done more than enough for England in the war and should do no more”. Articles on and photographs of the Sinn Fein leaders appear in these local papers and cannot have but a bad effect in the country, in which they are widely read. Some method of censoring these papers should be adopted if such articles are to cease appearing.

Copies of articles from the *Roscommon Herald* and *Connacht Tribune* attached. The *Irish Nation* and papers of its class circulating from Dublin have a very bad effect.

Feeling of People towards Recruiting: Voluntary recruiting does very little good, though a few recruits are still obtained throughout the District. It is suggested that if ever voluntary recruiting is to meet any success again 1) the Irish Division, or some of their units, should be sent to Ireland and the men allowed to go to their home in town and country, act as recruiting officers and try by this means to get their friends to enlist; 2) some of the R.C. chaplains, in France, who have a powerful influence, should come home and help to get recruits. But, even if this was tried, it is more than doubtful if sufficient numbers could be obtained. The alternative to voluntary recruiting is Conscription. This could be put into force by means of the Ballot Act whereby the eligible men in each District should be balloted for and enlisted as they were wanted. If measures were taken to put this into force quietly and firmly it could be done without great trouble, except perhaps in a few localities. In this way, if a determined attitude was taken up on the question, the number to make up the Irish Divisions could be obtained without serious active opposition.

Labour Troubles: No labour troubles are anticipated. If Conscription was enforced the question of farm labour would have to be carefully gone into. A great amount of labour,

which is needed for Army purposes, is now employed in the shops throughout the large and small towns in Ireland doing work that could be done by old men, women and boys.

General Remarks and Suggestions:

i The continuance of Martial Law, even though cases are not tried by Courtmartial, is most advisable. It gives a feeling of security to all who wish to live and do their business in the country, and the class who commit crime are afraid to do anything that will bring them within the clutches of the Military Authorities.

It would be advisable if any serious cases are reported in known disaffected areas to try them by Court-Martial. No trial before magistrates can be relied on, and trial by jury is a farce

ii Rebel prisoners ought to be kept out of Ireland. If released they only recommence activities, and are looked upon as heroes who have suffered to right Ireland's wrongs

iii The movement of prominent Sinn Feiners ought to be watched, for if leaders are released undoubtedly the organisation will revive. It was in the West and islands of the Coast that Sinn Fein leaders met before the Rebellion; moreover, Roger Casement visited parts of Galway and Mayo, accompanied by an editor of a German newspaper to find suitable landing places for troops and harbours of refuge for submarines only a short time before the war was commenced. Others like Pierce McCann of Cashel, Tipperary, and Darrel Figgis of Achill Island, went to live among the people in the Islands for a time and there met other organisers. However, these leaders, for local reasons, have now no weight with the people there.

iv To revive any interest in military life, the Troops ought to be seen throughout the country, and if it were possible that these regiments were Irish Regiments back from their own Division from the front, it might perhaps change, at least, the apathetic attitude of the people to one of interest

As regards the remarks made on the attitude of the R.C. Church, it must be remembered that the clergy are recruited from the people and live by what support they receive from their parishioners. It cannot be expected that they would take a strong line in support of getting recruits for the Army. Taking it broadly, however, the Church is opposed to Sinn Fein and all secret society work, and though many of the younger clergy hold Sinn Fein views, others have given or are willing to give their lives as Chaplains in His Majesty's Services

F C Burke, Major, Intelligence Officer, Curragh Camp

Midlands and Connaught District, November 1916

General State of the District: The general state of the District is outwardly peaceable: no serious acts of disloyalty or sedition have taken place. Lawlessness prevails still to a certain extent in Galway W.R. a raid for arms being made near Tuam by armed moonlighters. Secret society work exists in this area and is used by the Sin Feiners to extend their propaganda.

The extremists of the Sinn Fein party recognise that without foreign aid, no further armed opposition is possible; their organisation is paralysed by the want of leaders of note. The only possibility of foreign aid would be the landing of arms on the coast of Galway, Mayo and Sligo in this District, and though this might be possible, except around Galway very little support would be given those attempting to land arms. Eleven trawlers patrol this coast from Galway and Westport as well as the R.I.C. and Coastguard and Coast-watchers.

State of Public Feeling: The state of public feeling cannot be said to have undergone any changes. It is not loyal though it varies in Counties and districts. The most disaffected portion of this District is practically the western portion of Galway W.R. embracing the area from Spiddle, N.E. to Tuam, thence to Athenry and Gort; also Westport, Co Mayo, some villages in Sligo, Roscommon, Athlone, and generally Sinn Fein has a following wherever the R.C. clergy give it their support. Sinn Fein still has a hold: (1) wherever it was strongly organised previous to the rebellion; (2) wherever large numbers of released prisoners have returned; (3) where the G.A.A. is active and holds meetings, and football and hurley matches where Sinn Feinism is openly displayed; (4) where there are large numbers of available men either on farms or in shops who are in dread of conscription.

All political parties still vie with each other in opposing conscription; they are afraid to do otherwise as if they did they would lose their hold on the great mass of the electors of the country

There is no hostility or ill-feeling shown to the military. The presence and movement of military throughout the country has a very good effect. The most disloyal classes in the country are (1) farmers' sons, who are idle at home, have a certain amount of money to go to football matches and race meetings where they meet, and all are agreed that they will never serve in the Army, and in some cases they will oppose conscription by force. (2) Shopkeepers' assistants; in all the towns very large numbers of men of military age are employed. They are most disloyal and they do not want to fight under any conditions. They are really a contemptible body, and if handled firmly should be brought in to serve. (3) The teaching in schools is known in many places to be disloyal, but evidence is not procurable to prove this. (4) The labouring class have given most support to the Army and are ready to help those working for Army charities, etc.

The attitude of the R.C. clergy still remains one of aloofness; it may be sympathetic, it may be one of veiled and hinted opposition, and in a few cases of open opposition to British rule. Much depends on the attitude taken up by the Archbishops and Bishops of Dioceses. Taking it broadly the Clergy are opposed to Sinn Fein as they think it interferes with their hold on the people, that it is socialistic and is a secret society. The Senior Clergy and Bishops are generally opposed to it as they believe that Ireland's cause is only to be gained by constitutional means. Some of the younger clergy espouse its views, as they prefer to believe and teach that Ireland should be an independent State free from the hated English rule. The hold the Clergy had on the people is gradually slipping away from them and they are afraid to lessen it till further by supporting any unpopular move such as conscription or even to urge numbers to join the Army voluntarily. The Clergy live by the people, some from the people, and in many cases seem to guide where really they are led.

Causes of Discontent: Such as exist are political. The country generally is prosperous. The farming and shopkeeping classes are making large fortunes; the small farmer and labourer is not so well off. This class feel the rise in all prices and will find it hard to pay their way if prices continue to rise. The non-payment of rents in the future may be a cause of discontent and the small farmer may not be able to pay his rent to Government (under Irish Land Act) and have to surrender his holding or be evicted.

The political reason of unrest is supposed to be the non-passing of the Home Rule Bill. Home Rule as such is desired by the people as a matter of sentiment, and if it imposes no further financial burdens on them; otherwise, if left to themselves, the mass of people wish no change.

The real reason now for any support (outside those well-defined areas) of Sinn Fein is the dread of conscription... though such is dying down as the fear of conscription passes away.

State of Political Societies and Associations: The Sinn Fein party throughout the District has a numerous following and no doubt in the event of any success attending their efforts would be joined by the majority of people. This party is not now actively organised as its leaders are interned and as long as they are kept in internment no danger from Sinn Fein may be feared; lack of leaders, money, arms, and organisation, render their efforts nugatory, while the fact that a sufficient force is kept in this country overawes them and prevents acts of lawlessness and crime. The dread of trial by martial law being another deterrent.

No proof of the starting of branches of the I.R.B. can be obtained

The G.A.A. through its branches and meetings is an active Sinn Fein organisation

The A.O.H. is being revived throughout parts of the District and is strongly opposed to conscription or recruiting unless Home Rule is granted

Attempts, without much success, have been made to revive the Irish National Volunteers. The young men of military age are afraid to join as they might give away their numbers by so doing, and think they might be rushed into the army

Concealment of Arms and Ammunition: Serviceable arms exist in certain numbers and are concealed in bogs, etc. Ammunition also is concealed, but these arms are of different patterns, the ammunition also is varied, and long disuse will not improve such numbers as are hidden away. Revolvers and shotguns are in possession of all classes and are a source of danger.

No reports or information of clandestine drilling can be obtained; some rumour of such around Athenry has not been verified by me.

The Local Press: About 50 local papers circulate throughout counties in this District. Their tone is anti-conscription, but none of them take up the Sinn Fein cause openly. Since last report all articles and advertisements on Sinn Fein and its leaders have ceased to appear; this is undoubtedly a good thing as the circulation of Sinn Fein articles, advertisements, etc., and papers printed in Dublin has a bad effect in the country.

Feeling of People towards Recruiting: There is no possibility of obtaining any further large numbers of recruits by voluntary methods; no matter what inducement is held out the farming and shopkeeping classes will not join the Army. The idea that the passing of Home Rule would bring in recruits is a fallacy; nothing short of conscription, under whatever name it is called, will fill the ranks of the Irish Divisions.

Labour Troubles: No labour troubles are anticipated. A strike of malsters occurred at Tullamore. This caused a split in Sinn Fein party there; it is purely a small local affair.

In the event of conscription, the question of farm labour would have to be carefully gone into. In some places there is plenty of labour, in others labour is scarce. In towns in the shops practically all male labour of military age (*last page missing*)

Midlands and Connaught District, December 1916

General State of the District: The general state of the District is as previously reported outwardly peaceful. No serious acts of disloyalty or sedition have taken place, Cases of

singing seditious songs, shouting seditious words and performing seditious plays have been reported from District, though perhaps trivial, it shows the tone throughout parts of the District where such plays and concerts are still received and reported.

State of Public Feeling: No change in state of public feeling. Public feeling cannot be said to be loyal, the people as a whole are indifferent to everything relating to the war and are centred on making money, amusing themselves at football, coursing and race meetings, and the war appears very remote from them; except the poorer classes who feel the rise in all necessaries of life, the war might be said not to affect the life of the mass of the Irish people, i.e. the farming and shopkeeping class.

Sinn Fein cannot be said to be on the increase, at present, but whether the release of large numbers of prisoners will affect the country remains to be seen. It will certainly will not make the people more loyal and their influence is always thrown against recruiting and everything that might help England. Sinn Fein at present has no active organisation and as previously stated the mass of the people want to be left alone, and if they will not loyally support the Empire they will not encourage Sinn Fein, as they are afraid of the consequences and have seen enough to know that Sinn Fein can never succeed. The most disloyal classes are the same as previously reported. The attitude of the R.C. Clergy remains the same. The younger clergy espouse the Sinn Fein cause from the standpoint of the ancient hatred of England and its misrule in Ireland. Their attitude can be shown from cases reported at Kiltyclogher, Co. Leitrim, and in other parts of this Command.

Causes of Discontent: There is no serious cause of discontent, any such is on the surface and is political and kept up by politicians for their own ends, the idea that Home Rule would satisfy the people and encourage recruiting is fallacious. Home Rule is desired if it leaves the people as well off as they are. Voluntary recruiting will never again bring in large numbers, and the dread of conscription is the only cause of discontent the people have, except the poor who suffer from the enormous increase in prices, and who really were the class from whom the Army received most support and for whom more ought to be done.

State of Political Societies: The Sinn Fein party throughout the District as far as open opposition to law and order goes a negligible quantity, but the feeling is still there, and given any chance of seeming apparent chance of success, would meet with support from the mass of the people, but lacking leaders, or organisation, and aid from abroad, it cannot effect much. The presence of the Military and the dread of trial by martial law keep Sinn Fein in check.

The G.A.A. through its branches and meetings is an active Sinn Fein organisation

The I.R.B. has not been revived as far as is known

The A.O.H. is endeavouring to spread its branches throughout the country.

The attempt to revive branches of the Irish National Volunteers has not met with any success.

Concealment of Arms and Ammunition: Nothing is known as to any increase of arms and ammunition; the arms known to exist etc., cannot be improving. Large numbers of permits for sale of ammunition sporting have been issued; this would show that shot guns are still in large numbers in the country. Revolvers are also in large numbers in possession of all classes. No reports of clandestine drilling received.

The Administration of the Law: The law, taking it as a whole, is fairly administered by the magistrates, though the sentences under certain sections of the D.R.R. Section 27, often are

inadequate; still, in spite of the local justices' dislike of prosecutions under D.R.R. (as they hold the Military ought to deal with this class of offence themselves or leave it to the civil law) convictions are generally obtained. Trial by jury would be useless for any case of sedition, etc.

The Local Press: About 50 papers circulate. Their tone remains anti-conscription, with two exceptions – the *Western News* and *Sligo Independent*. Some articles copied from the *Catholic Bulletin* of a Sinn Fein character appeared in the *Roscommon Herald* otherwise all Sinn Fein articles and advertisements have ceased to appear.

Feeling of people towards recruiting: There is no hope of obtaining recruits voluntarily from the class who have steadfastly refused to join up to this. Nothing short of compulsion will bring the farming and shopkeeping class in.

Labour troubles: No further labour troubles are anticipated. The threatened railway strike is ended. Local small strike at Tullamore is ended. There is no scarcity of male labour in Ireland if properly worked and organised. In all classes of towns male labour is employed in work that could be as well if not better done by women.

General Remarks & suggestions: The release of Sinn Feiners ought not to go any further than those released at present. All prominent leaders and those undergoing terms of p.s. ought not to be released or allowed to return to Ireland at least for the period of the war.

The question of conscription still remains to the fore; if the Irish Divisions are to be kept up as such it is the only way, call it by Ballot Act or any other name, that recruits will now be obtained from this country, and in spite of whatever opposition it would meet with in certain places throughout the greater part of the country, it could be put in force without much trouble and would eventually tend to settle the Irish Question.

The continuance of Martial Law and prosecutions under D.R.R. is most advisable

A strict censorship ought to be kept over all Sinn Fein literature; most of it is published in Dublin, is circulated in the country, and is a source that encourages Sinn Fein sympathy and support.

The running of excursion trains to football and hurley meetings, special trains to race meetings and coursing matches, etc., ought not to be allowed; this especially applies to Sunday excursions under the G.A.A. and to local race meetings where the farmers' sons, who do nothing to support the war, either by personal service or by monetary contributions, congregate.

The holding of all public meetings (thinly veiled, but really of a Sinn Fein character) in memory of some dead Fenian or rebel leader ought not to be allowed. All concert parties or plays of a seditious nature ought not to be let take place, and if held those singing the songs or managing the plays ought to be prosecuted

A H Burke Major

Midlands and Connaught District, January 1917

General State of District: As previously reported, the general state of District is peaceable, that is outwardly so. A strong undercurrent of disloyalty and sedition prevails in certain areas and towns, but no serious acts of disloyalty or sedition, beyond those reported in Intelligence

Summary every week, have occurred. Such acts, as reported, performing seditious plays, singing rebel songs and shouting seditious words (the latter often by men in a semi-drunken condition); though these may appear trivial they show the tone that exists and what is attempted to be fostered in this District.

State of Public Feeling: No marked change in state of public feeling. In some Counties in this District Sinn Fein has scarcely any hold on the people. In others it has (in well-defined areas) a very strong hold, and this especially applies to those places where the influence of the R.C. Church is thrown into active support of Sinn Feinism. No County can be wholly said to be in favour of Sinn Fein or free from it, but as reported parts of Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim and Westmeath are strongly Sinn Fein, also certain important towns such as Athlone, Westport, Roscommon, Athenry and Baltinglass.

In those Counties where Sinn Fein is not particularly active, and in fact in all Counties in this District, the people are wholly indifferent, taken as a class, to the War; their whole aim is centred in making money out of the war, in amusing themselves at coursing, football, and race meetings, and, except the poorer classes (who feel the rise of prices in all the necessaries of life), the War is only a means of gain to the mass of the Irish people of the farming and shopkeeping class who have done nothing to support the Allied cause and who are the open or secret supporters of Sinn Fein, and opposed to all Military Service.

Sinn Fein, at present, has no actively open organisation and without leaders of note, money, organisation and foreign aid cannot be dangerous as long as this country has a sufficient Military force and that such force is known to exist and mobile throughout the country.

Causes of Discontent: No real cause for discontent – any discontent that exists is political among the well to do classes; among the poorer classes (who were, and are, the most loyal) it arises from the enormous increase in cost of living, and from political agitators.

Political discontent is supposed to be caused by the non-passing of the Home Rule Bill; in reality most of the farmers do not care if Home Rule is passed; they only want to make money, avoid serving in the Army and be left to their own devices.

State of Political Societies: Sinn Fein at present not openly active, but given the chance it would become so. The presence of the Military, dread of Martial Law and Defence of the Realm Act keeps the Sinn Fein party in check.

The G.A.A. is an active Sinn Fein organisation.

The Gaelic League also is supported by Sinn Fein though it is supposed to be non-political and non-sectarian. A meeting to form a branch of the Gaelic League at Tullamore on 23-1-17 was attended by all the prominent Sinn Feiners of the town.

The I.R.B. is non-existent as far as is known

The A.O.H. has started many branches throughout the country.

The movement to revive the I.N. Volunteers has met with no success; dread of conscription keeps the young men of the country from joining any semi-military body.

Concealment of Arms & Ammunition: As previously reported; no new supply being brought into the District. Shot guns and revolvers in large numbers are in possession of all classes.

Report of clandestine drilling near Mullingar received but I cannot verify it; also rumours of such in other places but when investigated have proved to be untrue.

The Administration of the Law: The law, as reported, is, considering the dislike of the local magistrates to the D.R.R. fairly administered. For any serious case of sedition, or open acts of disloyalty, or interference with soldiers, the offenders ought to be tried by Courtmartial. Trial by jury would be useless for any case of sedition or treason felony.

The Local Press: About 50 papers circulate; none of them express Sinn Fein views openly though, with two exceptions the *Western News* and *Sligo Independent*, they are all anti-Conscription and afraid to adopt a pro-Ally tone. Any Sinn Fein literature that circulates comes from Dublin.

Feeling of People towards Recruiting: Remains the same. There is no hope of obtaining any large number of recruits voluntarily. Noting short of the Military Service Act, Ballot Act or Conscription, whatever name it is given, will bring in recruits from the shop-boys and farmers' sons. The number of able bodied men in agricultural districts in Galway, Limerick and other parts, who are doing nothing, is appalling.

Labour Troubles: No Labour troubles anticipated. Compulsory tillage may give rise to a demand for increased wages among the labouring class; if so, the farmer is well able to pay it and the labourer deserves it; he has been miserably paid by the farmers in the past.

General Remarks and Suggestions: A careful watch ought to be kept on the movements of all prominent Sinn Feiners who have been released; they will try to keep their hold on the young men of the country and foster everything that is anti-British.

The question of conscription or Military Service still remains to the fore; if determined on it can be enforced, the opposition would be in those parts of the Command already reported on. In other Counties and Districts it could be enforced without much trouble and would finally tend towards settling the Irish Question.

The continuance of Martial Law is most advisable. A strict censorship ought to be kept over all Sinn Fein literature. No public meetings, or plays, or concerts of a Sinn Fein character ought to be allowed to be held.

An election is being held for Parliamentary representative for N Roscommon; a Sinn Fein candidate – Count Plunkett – is nominated and receiving the support of a large number of R.C. Clergy. His election or rejection will go to show the hold the Church and Sinn Fein have upon the mass of the people. The official Nationalist candidate is opposed by an Independent Nationalist, thus splitting the Redmondite vote.

F C Burke, Major, I.C., Curragh Camp

Midlands and Connaught District, February 1917

General State of District: As previously reported, the general state of the district is peaceable, that is outwardly so. A strong undercurrent of disloyalty and sedition prevails in certain areas and towns, but no serious acts of disloyalty or sedition, beyond those reported in Intelligence Summary every week, have occurred. Such acts are, as reported, performing seditious plays, singing rebel songs, and shouting seditious words (the latter often by men in a semi-drunken condition); though these may appear trivial they show the tone that exists and what is attempted to be fostered in this District

State of Public Feeling: No marked change in state of public feeling. In some Counties in this District Sinn Fein has scarcely any hold on the people. In others it has (in well defined areas) a very strong hold, and this especially applies to those places where the influence of the R.C. Church is thrown in active support of Sinn Feinism. No County can be wholly said to be in favour of Sinn Fein or free from it, but as reported parts of Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim and Westmeath are strongly Sinn Fein, also certain important towns such as Athlone, Westport, Roscommon, Athenry, Baltinglass.

In those countries where Sinn Fein is not particularly active, and in fact in all Counties in this District, the people are wholly indifferent, taken as a class, to the War; their whole aim is centred in making money out of the war, in amusing themselves at coursing, football and race meetings, and, except the poorer classes (who feel the rise of prices in all the necessaries of life), the War is only a means of gain to the mass of Irish people of the farming and shopkeeping class who have done nothing to support the Allied cause and who are open or secret supporters of Sinn Fein, and opposed to all Military Service.

Up to the present, though it is known that in some towns and villages the returned Sinn Fein leaders and organisers are trying secretly to gain a hold upon the young men around their own vicinity, it cannot be said that Sinn Fein has largely increased its following, but it is too early yet to say what effect the release of these prisoners will have, but undoubtedly their influence, as so far seen, will not foster loyalty to the British cause and will be in opposition to any move made to attempt to gain recruits for the Irish Regiments.

Sinn Fein, at present, has no actively open organisation and without leaders of note, money, organisation and foreign aid cannot be dangerous as long as this country has a sufficient Military force and that such force is known to exist and mobile throughout the country

Causes of Discontent: No real cause for discontent – any discontent that exists is political among the well to do classes; among the poorer classes (who were, and are, the most loyal) it arises from the enormous increase in the cost of living, and from political agitators.

Political discontent is supposed to be caused by the non-passing of the Home Rule Bill; in reality most of the farmers do not care if Home Rule is passed; they only want to make money, avoid serving in the Army and be left to their own devices.

State of Political Societies: Sinn Fein at present not openly active, but given the chance it would become so. The presence of Military, dread of Martial Law and the Defence of the Realm Acts keeps the Sinn Fein party in check

The G.A.A. is an active Sinn Fein organisation

The Gaelic League also is supported by Sinn Fein followers and is practically an offshoot of Sin Fein, though it is supposed to be non-political and non-sectarian. A meeting to form a branch of the Gaelic League at Tullamore on 23-1-17 was attended by all the prominent Sinn Feiners of the town.

The I.R.B. is non-existent as far as is known

The A.O.H. has started many branches throughout the country

The movement to revive the I.N. Volunteers has met with no success; dread of conscription keeps the young men of the country from joining any semi-military body

Concealment of Arms & Ammunition: As previously reported; no new supply being brought into the district. Shot guns and revolvers in large numbers are in possession of all classes.

Report of clandestine drilling near Mullingar received but I cannot verify it; also rumours of such in other places but when investigated have proved to be untrue

The Administration of the Law: The law, as reported, is, considering the dislike of the local magistrates to the D.R.R. fairly administered.

For any serious cases of sedition, or open acts of disloyalty, or interference with soldiers, the offenders ought to be tried by Courtmartial. Trial by jury would be useless for any cases of sedition or treason felony

The Local Press: About 50 local papers circulate; none of them express Sinn Fein views openly though, with two exceptions the *Western News* and *Sligo Independent*, they are all anti-Conscription and afraid to adopt a pro-Ally tone.

Any Sinn Fein literature that circulates comes from Dublin

Feeling of People towards Recruiting: Remains the same. There is no hope of obtaining any large numbers of recruits voluntary. Nothing short of the Military Service Act or Conscription, whatever name it is given, will bring in recruits from the shop-boys and farmers' sons. The number of able bodied men in agricultural districts in Galway, Limerick and other parts, who are doing nothing, is appalling

Labour Troubles: No labour troubles anticipated.

Compulsory tillage may give rise to a demand for increased wages among the labouring class; if so, the farmer is well able to pay it and the labourer deserves it; he has been miserably paid by farmers in the past.

General Remarks and Suggestions: A careful watch ought to be kept on the movements of all prominent Sinn Feiners who have been released; they will try to keep their hold on the young men of the country and foster everything that is anti-British.

The question of conscription or Military Service still remains to the fore; if determined on it can be enforced, the opposition would be in those parts of this Command already reported on. In other Counties and Districts it could be enforced without much trouble and would finally tend towards settling the Irish question.

The Continuance of Martial Law is most advisable. A strict censorship ought to be kept over all Sinn Fein literature. No public meetings, or plays, or concerts of a Sinn Fein character ought to be allowed to be held.

An election is being held for Parliamentary representative for N Roscommon; a Sinn Fein candidate – Count Plunkett – is nominated and receiving the support of a very large number of the R. C. Clergy. His election or rejection will go to show the hold the Church and Sinn Fein have upon the mass of people. The official Nationalist candidate is opposed by an Independent Nationalist, thus slitting the Redmondite vote

Major F C Burke I.O.

Northern District, September 1916

1 The area outwardly has been peaceful

2 There seems to be a good deal of covert disloyalty at present, it would probably become open, if allowed to do so. This feeling took shape in the new Irish Nation League. I attended the opening meeting in Belfast. The chief feature of it was that the audience was evidently much more advanced than the speakers and was disappointed at the mildness of the speeches. This was especially noticeable in the case of the only speech made by a priest, Rev Fr Shiels; this seems to show that there is a restraining influence at work.

The Irish Nation League itself so far seems to be a failure – its chief feature is opposition to the present Parliamentary Party and here in Belfast it does not seem to be effecting much in that way. Another item in its programme which seemed to rouse a great deal of enthusiasm was opposition to conscription. In this it probably represents a large section of public opinion, though I have been assured in the country that conscription would meet with little opposition – e.g. in and around Dungannon.

3 Political Societies and leagues show little change and all seem to be in a very quiet state. The Police statistics show their strength, but it should be remembered that there is a good deal of overlapping e.g. one man belongs to more than one league and may thus be counted several times over. Large numbers of course are only nominal members and take no active part.

4 A case of drilling is reported from Clogher district and further report is awaited. This place has a bad reputation. No other cases have been heard of: there is no reason to believe any arms are being illicitly imported

5 This unsatisfactory. Cases under the D.R.R. are very often dismissed or only nominal penalties imposed. The T. O. Lough Swilly has no confidence in any of the Co Donegal benches. There is a want of uniformity in the penalties, whenever they are inflicted, e. G. On 7-9-16 at Donaghadee D Ross fined 20/- and costs for bright lights in motor car. On 13-9-16 A Orr same offence 2/6 and costs at Bangor. Many of the J.P.s are uneducated and do not realise the seriousness of the situation or the importance of carrying out D.R.R. They are also liable to be canvassed by the accused or his representative.

6 There is very little to report as regards local Press. The *Donegal Vindicator* was extremely critical of the I.P. Party, but seems to have changed its tone lately and now defends it

7 There is very little recruiting. I have been told that the view is that the N have done their part and won't do any more till the S join better than they have: but I do not know whether there is any foundation for this view.

8 There was a Carter's Strike in Derry, but it was quite local and has been settled.

9 The most important matter seems to me the administration of justice. The present constitution of the C.S.J.s nearly everyone admits to be unsatisfactory. In a thinly populated country like Ireland, it is unreasonable to expect an uneducated farmer or shopkeeper who has to live by and amongst his neighbours to display independence as a magistrate. A far better tribunal would be composed of two R.M.s and 1 local J.P. There are far too many J.P.s. When a R.S. takes place it is impossible to tell how many will be present – men may attend who have not done so for months or the business may be transacted by the R.M. and 1 J.P. a regular attendant.

On two occasions I attended at Petty Sessions when cases were heard under the D.R.R. and in both cases the parties were convicted. I am inclined to think the presence of a Military Officer has a good effect on the bench and makes them realise the importance attached by the G.C.C. to these matters.

Geo Whitfield, Captain, Intelligence Command, Belfast

Northern District, October 1916

1 The area has been outwardly quite peaceful

2 There is undoubtedly a feeling of bitter hostility to the British Government, this feeling appears to be widespread, but probably a good deal of it is due to a kind of sentimental tradition. In time – a long time – it will probably wither away, if treated carefully and firmly

The feeling against conscription is strong, and there is a very real fear of it. If it is going to be introduced it would be best if it were done so at once. The longer it is delayed the more time there will be for organisations to be formed to resist it

3 Irish Nation League: There was a meeting on Sunday 22-10-16, and a very strong speech was made by Mr Bernard Campbell, Solicitor. Efforts are being made to popularise this Society, but so far without much success. The power of the U.I.L. seems too great for it

The Gaelic League held their annual meeting in Belfast on 4-10-16. The speeches were fairly strong, especially those of Father Wall, and Father Fullerton. Great stress was laid on the importance of schools, and parents were urged to insist that their children being taught Gaelic. The ultimate aim of the Society seems to be to make Ireland an entirely Irish speaking country, when it is expected complete national independence will follow.

4 A case of drill was reported at Clougher, Co Tyrone. I think it done for bravado more than anything else. I spent a few days in the neighbourhood. The Clougher Valley is in the south of the County Tyrone, and is separated from Co Monaghan – a predominantly R.C. and Nationalist part – by a range of hills. The inhabitants of the Valley are mixed but the Protestants are in a majority. I spoke to several people, and was much struck with the state of apprehension in which the Protestants seem to live. Some of them seemed to think it quite likely that an Army might descend on them from the Monaghan side at any time. They had no confidence in the R.I.C., many of them are R.Cs.; also a Police Barrack in Augher had been closed lately, this increased their apprehension.

I understand the Protestants have patrols out quietly at night. There are also frequent reports of signalling on the hills around, but the Police have caught no one. It seems a pity that there are no troops closer than Omagh; the hills South of Clougher Valley would make a fine training ground. In any case law abiding people ought not to be compelled to live in such a state of anxiety

5 I have nothing to add to what I said in my last report about the administration of the law

6 There is nothing to report

7 There is very little recruiting and the feeling about it shows no change. If Military Service is introduced the Tribunals would have to be differently constituted to the English; an R.M., a

Military Officer, and a local man, say the Chairman of the County Council, would I think make a fair body

8 There is nothing to report

9 I was told in Clougher that the local schoolmaster was an advanced Sinn Feiner, that two postmen were also Sinn Feiners, and used their positions to distribute seditious literature. I was also told that the Postmaster at Ballygawley was Secretary of the local Sinn Fein Branch. A man named O'Donnell is being prosecuted for using very seditious language at Downpatrick. He is an employee of the Irish Lights Board.

Whatever truth there may be in these reports, they seem to point to a serious state of things. A man who is in the Public Service and in receipt of public money should be above suspicion as regards his loyalty. I would suggest that steps should be taken to investigate these cases without delay

Geo Whitfield, Captain, Intelligence Officer, Belfast

Northern District, November 1916

(missing)

Northern District, December 1916

1 The area has been peaceful during the last month

2 The feeling against Military Service continues strong and constitutes a bond of union between different types of Nationalists

I have reason to believe that there is a considerable evasion of the Military Service Act going on. I am informed that numbers of Englishmen of military age are coming over to Ireland to escape service

3 The various political societies show no change. An attempt was recently made to form a committee of the Irish Nation League for Belfast; very few attended and I understand names of persons were published as being on the committee who were not present at all.

Returned prisoners – I am informed that several of these are employed in the Docks – men who took part in the Rebellion. I understand the Police have reported this to the proper authorities. Seven prisoners of those recently released arrived in Belfast, there was no demonstration on their arrival. None of them as far as I know are employed in the Docks.

4 There is no reason to suppose that any drilling is taking place – the case in Tyrone has ceased, A report as to two motor cars with rifles being seen in Co Antrim is being investigated

5 I have nothing to add to what I said in previous reports as to the administration of the Law.

6 I have nothing to report

7 (blank)

8 There have been no labour troubles of any importance. Statements have appeared in the Press as to the destitution in Belfast on account of the present high prices. I can see no

evidence of it. The labouring classes are earning very high wages and there is no difficulty in obtaining work. Large amounts of money are being spent on alcohol, picture-houses, music halls and lady's furs

(Handwritten note) I regret that various circumstances prevented me visiting the District during the past month. This means my report less complete than I could wish

Geo Whitfield, Captain, Intelligence Officer, Belfast

Northern District, January 1917

I The area continues in a peaceful state, the great majority of cases tried under D.R.R. are for carrying arms, chiefly shotguns, without a permit. There is undoubtedly a wide-spread feeling of hostility to the British Government, and I have been impressed by the belief which I have found fairly common, that another rebellion is at hand. One informant tells me it is to take place before May Day, but I have not got any more accurate information yet. The peaceful state of things I suspect really means that only for the presence of a large military force and constant vigilance on the part of the Government, there would be an outbreak. I am afraid it cannot be taken to mean any disappearance of disloyalty

II There are symptoms that the wild wave of enthusiasm which came into being after the rebellion is passing away to some extent. Such large numbers became Sinn Feiners at that time that a great many did so only in name: for instance it is probably that many supporters of the Parliamentary party now call themselves Sinn Feiners although they would not take part in an armed rebellion and have not altered their political creed. Sinn Feinism in other words represents in some aspects a criticism of the Parliamentary party, and to that extent, of course it is harmless, if not actually beneficial.

Religious antagonism remains what it always was. A deep feeling of mutual mistrust. I noticed it is especially strong in Antrim where to a stranger it is simply incredible. It has reached such a pitch there that the tendency seems to be for one townland to be wholly Roman Catholic and the next wholly Protestant – to form separate camps. Such a state of things, though deplorable, tends to prevent anything like rebellion, because one side can always be relied on for help against the other. On the other hand it makes it very difficult to obtain any reliable information as one camp never knows what is going on in the other, and the wildest rumours are believed.

III The Sinn Feiners in Belfast are forming a club, In Dundalk they meet in the Gaelic League Hall and in one another's houses. They are very sober, a state of affairs which is to their credit but renders it difficult to get information.

IV I am told that arms are being imported: it is said in the S and W from America, but I have not been able to learn anything more definite yet. A certain number of rifles, I am informed, are obtained from soldiers from time to time by theft or purchase. ~~In this connection it is difficult to say why soldiers on leave from the Front should bring their rifles with them, they would be safer in store in France.~~ (strikethrough initialled by G W)

There is no reason to believe that any drilling is taking place

V I have nothing to add to what I have said previous reports as regards the Administration of Law.

VI I have noticed a milder tone lately in the Irish Papers as *The Irishman*, *Irish Opinion* etc. *The Irishman* of 12.1.17 contained an article of a distinctly anti-clerical tone, reprinted from the *English Review*.

VII Recruiting continues on the smallest possible scale

VIII Labour affairs are satisfactory

IX I am informed at Carrickmacross that a Mr Bernard O'Rourke was distributing calendars with portraits of Pearce, McNeill and other rebels. At Bundoran picture post-cards with similar portraits are on sale in the Post Office. I understand these pictures are produced in Dublin.

In cases of carrying arms without a permit I would suggest that when the arm is a revolver or any arm of a military nature, it should be confiscated permanently – this is done to some extent now: where the arm is a shot gun it should be confiscated for a limited period, say three months.

Captain Geo Whitfield