The Rising day by day

In the weeks leading up to the Rising, even the most optimistic members of the Military Council must have known that the possibility of success was slight. In Dublin, the combined forces of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army amounted to only about 3,000 and the number of Irish Volunteers in the country as a whole was no more than 10-12,000. With such small numbers and being as lightly armed as they were likely to be - even if Casement’s German guns did materialise - they could hardly have expected their forces to be a match for those of the British army with their virtually unlimited numbers, machine guns and artillery.

Once it transpired that the German arms had been lost, any expectations of success must have ebbed away. Moreover, MacNeill’s countermand effectively scuppered any remaining chance. In the face of these two catastrophes, the signatories must have been fatalistic: presumably, they now hoped that the Rising and their personal martyrdom would be of symbolic value and would shock Irish nationalists into reappraising their destiny.

The strategy was to occupy a number of defensible sites in Dublin and hold out until there was a general insurrection by the Irish Volunteers throughout the country. There was also the hope that some of the National Volunteers (then numbering possibly 150,000) would rise in support. In addition, there was an expectation that Germany would launch a
6.2 The Rising day by day

diversionary offensive on the Continent and that it might provide naval support. As it turned out, apart from relatively small numbers in parts of counties Wexford and Galway, the Irish Volunteers obeyed MacNeill’s countermand and stayed at home, nor did any of the National Volunteers turn out. In Dublin, the total number that reported for duty on Easter Monday amounted to possibly 1,400, counting Irish Volunteers, ICA, Fianna Éireann, Cumann na mBan and perhaps 30 Hibernian Rifles, a force consisting of members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

In the following sections there are many images illustrating various aspects of the actual fighting. One aspect, however, which is not documented in the imagery available in the National Library of Ireland is the human carnage resulting from the Rising: while there are many images of ruined buildings there are none of ruined bodies or ruined lives, none either of mourning families with their now unrealizable hopes and dreams. This gap in the documentation is of such significance that it must be highlighted. Over 400 people were killed and well over 1,000 injured, the majority - as almost always in such strife - being civilians. But there are no images of dead or maimed bodies, which would have been a major feature of the scene at the time. The existence of this most significant gap or lacuna in the evidence provided in this on-line presentation might well be borne in mind when considering certain other aspects of the Rising.
Easter Sunday, 23 April

MacNeill’s countermand appeared that morning in the Sunday Independent. The Military Council met in Liberty Hall to consider the implications of the countermand. They decided to go ahead with the Rising, but postponed it until noon the following day, Easter Monday, to give them time to send couriers throughout the country to inform the Irish Volunteers that the Rising was indeed taking place. On Sunday the Proclamation was printed on the press in Liberty Hall which was there for the use of the ITGWU. As there was not enough type of the required size to set the entire document, the type-seeing and printing was done in two stages, which partly accounts for the different densities of ink on the upper and lower halves of the Proclamation.
Easter Sunday, 23 April. The Sunday Independent made grim reading for the IRB Military Council which met at Liberty Hall: it featured MacNeill’s countermand, a reference to Casement’s arrest in Kerry, and news of the accidental drowning of three men on their way to set up a transmitter for signaling the Aud.
Easter Monday, 24 April

Most of those who took part in the Rising assembled at Liberty Hall and proceeded from there to their allotted positions, most of which were occupied by noon. Following the occupation of the GPO, Pearse proclaimed the establishment of the Irish Republic. As Commandant General of the Dublin Brigade of the Army of the Irish Republic, in theory James Connolly directed the military operations of all the positions held in the name of the Irish Republic; in practice, however, due to his inability to provide worthwhile reinforcements or armaments, the commandants of the outlying positions generally had to rely on their own devices. In the course of Monday afternoon and evening the British organised a hurried response and engaged most of the positions occupied by the insurgents. City Hall came under intense attack and the officer in charge, Captain Seán Connolly, was shot dead. The few remaining members of the garrison surrendered later that night. Commandant Ceannt’s position at the South Dublin Union also came under intense pressure but the garrison repulsed the attacks. An outpost set up by Commandant Mallin in J.&T. Davy’s public house at the junction of South Richmond Street and Charlemont Mall had to abandoned within a matter of hours in the face of intense fire.
Easter Monday. This flag of the Irish Republic was raised over the GPO soon after the building was occupied. (National Museum of Ireland).
Easter Monday, 24 April

Easter Monday. Dr Edward McWeeney reading a copy of the Proclamation on Easter Monday, 24 April. Seeing it posted on the railings of 86 St. Stephen's Green, McWeeney, a University College Dublin academic, took it to the garden at the back where he had this photograph taken by Fr Sherwin CC. (PC04, Lot 28).
Tuesday 25 April

General W.H.M. Lowe was given command of operations in Dublin. Army reinforcements from Belfast, the Curragh, Templemore and Athlone enabled the British to begin the cordonning off of the positions held by the insurgents. Machine-gun fire from the Shelbourne Hotel forced Commandant Mallin to evacuate most of St Stephen’s Green and concentrate his forces in the Royal College of Surgeons. Looting became widespread in the city centre. That evening the Viceroy, Lord Wimborne, proclaimed martial law throughout Dublin city and county.
Tuesday 25 April

Tuesday. Much of the newspaper reportage of the Rising was inaccurate: this early report in a New York paper mistakenly claims that the GPO had been recaptured by the British. (The Evening Sun, 25 April 1916).
Wednesday 26 April

Commandant Ned Daly’s men in the area of the Four Courts burned the Linenhall Barracks. At noon Commandant Seán Heuston and the garrison at the Mendicity Institution were forced to surrender. The military cordon separating the insurgents to the north and south of the river Liffey was extended and strengthened as reinforcements became available. The gunboat Helga on the Liffey and field guns to the south of the Liffey commenced shelling Liberty hall and the area around the GPO. Army reinforcements from England arrived at Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) but were held up at Mount Stree Bridge (an outpost of Commandant Eamon de Valera’s position at Boland’s bakery) on their way into Dublin. The British suffered heavy losses before the few surviving Volunteers were forced to withdraw. General Maxwell was appointed to take command of the forces in Ireland. In the inner city there was great scarcity of essential foodstuffs such as bread and milk.
Wednesday 26 April

A proclamation issued by General Friend who was in England when the Rising broke out. (Proclamations).
Wednesday 26 April

A proclamation issued by King George V. (Proclamations).
Wednesday 26 April

**Important Announcement**

**By the Lord Lieutenant.**

The Lord Lieutenant has issued the following statement from the Vice-Regal Lodge:

During the night the Royal Naval Reserve Gunboat on the Liffey shelled, and the Troops subsequently occupied Liberty Hall (Headquarters of Sinn Fein Force). Meanwhile large reinforcements have arrived in Dublin, including detachment of 10,000 troops from England, with Artillery, Engineers and Medical Corps.

In other portions of the city the situation is well in hand.

Repairs to telegraph lines now being rapidly effected.

**By Order.**

Dated 26th April, 1916.

Wednesday. A proclamation issued by Lord Wimborne.
(Ms. 15,000(6), de Courcy-Wheeler Papers).
Thursday 27 April

Chief Secretary Birrell arrived in Dublin but had little function as the military were now in control. Artillery pounded the east side of Sackville Street setting Clery’s and other buildings on fire. The Helga shelled Commandant de Valera’s position at Boland’s bakery but its fire was mainly directed at an empty distillery. The British launched a major assault on Commandant Ceannt’s position at the South Dublin Union; while they captured and held some buildings within the Union complex, the engagement resulted in stalemate. While directing operations in Middle Abbey Street, James Connolly was seriously injured in the ankle but continued to direct military operations. As the military cordon now effectively separated the insurgents to the north and south of the river Liffey, Connolly’s lines of communication with most of the outlying positions were severed and there was no longer any form of command structure.
Thursday 27 April

Thursday. By Thursday the military had surrounded the city as indicated by the light outer red line. They had also separated the insurgents to the north and south of the river Liffey, severing their lines of communication. This is shown by the thick red line running eastwards from the area of Kingsbridge (Heuston) railway station. The insurgents’ positions are indicated by the small red circles. (Weekly Irish Times, Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook, 1917).
Friday 28 April

General Maxwell arrived in Dublin early that morning. Also that morning Pearse issued a statement admitting that the Rising was almost over, but claiming that the Volunteers would win the fight “although they may win it in death.” At Ashbourne, Co. Meath, Thomas Ashe and the 5th Dublin Battalion had the greatest success of the Rising when they forced a large contingent of police to surrender. By evening the GPO was on fire; the garrison evacuated to houses in the Moore Street area. The O’Rahilly was mortally wounded while leading a charge to clear the way for the evacuation. That night there was intense fighting in the North King Street area held by Commandant Ned Daly’s men.
Friday 28 April

General Sir John Grenfell Maxwell (1859-1929) was born in Liverpool. He had some previous knowledge of Ireland as he had served at army headquarters in the period 1902-1904. He arrived in Dublin early on Friday 28 April, by which time the army already had the situation under control. (Illustrated London News, 6 May 1916).
Friday, 28 April

Almost all Irish and British newspapers were opposed to the Rising, this being a fairly typical example. (The Cork Examiner, 28 April 1916).
Friday 28 April

Friday. An artist’s impression of the scene at O’Connell Bridge following the bombardment that began on Wednesday. (P&D HP (1916) 3).
On Saturday morning the five members of the Provisional Government, who had evacuated from the GPO the previous evening, decided to negotiate a surrender to prevent further loss of life. Nurse Elizabeth O’Farrell delivered a message from Pearse to General Lowe who would agree only to unconditional surrender. That afternoon Pearse surrendered unconditionally to General Lowe. Connolly, Clarke, MacDiarmada and Plunkett and their forces in the Sackville Street area surrendered later that day and were held in the grounds of the Rotunda Hospital overnight. Commandant Daly and most of the men in the Four Courts area also surrendered late on Saturday.
Saturday 29 April

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS in different parts of Ireland certain evil disposed persons and assocations with the intent to subvert the supremacy of the Crown in Ireland, have committed divers acts of violence, and have with deadly weapons attacked the Forces of the Crown, and have resisted by armed force the lawful authority of His Majesty’s Police and Military Forces, and Whereas by reason thereof several of His Majesty’s loyal subjects have been killed and many others severely injured, and much damage to property has been caused.

And Whereas such armed resistance to His Majesty’s authority still continues.

Now I, Lord Churchill, Duke of Wimborne, Lord Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland, by virtue of all the powers reposed in me enabling...

Do hereby proclaim that from and after the date of this Proclamation, and for the period of one month thereafter unless otherwise ordered, that part of the United Kingdom called Ireland is in a state and subject to Martial Law.

And I do hereby call on all loyal and well-disposed subjects of the Crown to aid in upholding and maintaining the peace of this Realm and the supremacy and authority of the Crown, and to obey and conform to all orders and regulations of the Military authority, and I warn all pacific and law-abiding subjects in Ireland of the danger of frequenting or being in any place in or in the vicinity of which His Majesty’s forces are engaged in the suppression of disorder.

And I do hereby declare that all persons found carrying arms without lawful authority are liable to be dealt with by virtue of this Proclamation.

Given at Dublin this 29th day of April, 1916.

WIMBORNE

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Saturday. A proclamation issued by Lord Wimborne. (Proclamations)
News of the surrender was conveyed to the positions that still held out, mainly the South Dublin Union, Jacob’s Biscuit factory, the Royal College of Surgeons and Boland’s Bakery, all of which surrendered reluctantly. The police and military turned their attention to rounding up those suspected of being directly or indirectly involved in the Rising, a total of approximately 3,500 being arrested throughout the country, of whom about 2,000 were interned.
Sunday, 30 April. An inaccurate report issued by the military authorities on Sunday, at a time when the GPO garrison had already surrendered. It reflects the confusion that was fairly general among both the military and insurgents throughout the Rising. (Ms. 15,000(6), de Courcy-Wheeler Papers).
Progress of Military Operations against the Rebels.

J. Connolly, Sinn Fein leader, who was believed to have been killed, surrendered unconditionally last night to G.O.C.-in-chief, Ireland. He has signed a notice to other leaders and their parties, both in Dublin and the country, calling on them to surrender as their cause is hopeless. A large number of men surrendered last night and this morning, and it is expected that others will follow in the course of the day. Flying columns will at once proceed to various points to stimulate the surrender of parties in the country. Emissaries have come in from the S.F. party about Ashbourne & Swords, and from Wexford to verify the fact of the above surrender, with a view to their immediate surrender.

BY ORDER.

Dated 30th April, 1916.
Sunday 30 April

Unconditional Surrender
OF THE
REBEL FORCES.

The following document signed
by the leaders of the Rebels was
published in Dublin last night at
10.20 p.m.:-

“...In order to prevent the further slaughter of un-
armed people, and in the hopes of saving the lives of
our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly out-
numbered, members of the Provisional Government
present at Headquarters have agreed to an un condi-
tional surrender, and the commanders of all units of the
Republican Forces will order their followers to lay
down their arms.”

(Signed) P. H. PEARSE.
Dated 29th April, 1916.

Published by Order, on this 30th
Day of April, 1916.
Sunday 30 April

Sunday. Distributing food. It was only with the return of some degree of normality that the authorities made any concerted effort to arrange for the distribution of food and other supplies, by which time many civilians were in a desperate plight. (Daily Mail, 3 May 1916).

Sunday. With the return of normality the authorities began to organize a search for the many bodies buried in the rubble. (Daily Mail, 3 May 1916).
Sunday 30 April

A view of Sackville (O’Connell Street) and Eden Quay. In the centre is the O’Connell Monument. In 1829 Daniel O’Connell (revered in nationalist tradition as ‘The Liberator’) succeeded in wresting Catholic Emancipation from an intractable British government by peaceful means; he would hardly have regarded the Rising as the way to achieve political objectives. (Manchester Guardian History of the War, 16 Aug. 1916).
Sunday 30 April

Sunday. Another view of Sackville Street as it appeared after the Rising.
(Irish Independent Collection 22B).