

Colonel Eamon Broy's Role in Irish espionage.

Eamon Broy, the unsung hero behind Ireland's most successful spy network.

Commonly known as Colonel 'Ned' Broy, he was born in Ballinure, Co. Kildare in 1887. He joined the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in August 1910 and promptly left three weeks later! In 1911 he joined the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP). At the time the DMP was an unarmed police force deployed into small to medium sized groups throughout the Dublin region.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century the lower-class areas of Dublin showed widespread bitterness towards the DMP. In 1925 after the amalgamation of the DMP and An Garda Síochána, Eamon Broy was appointed Superintendent for the Dublin Metropolitan Division.

In order to monitor the 'political pulse' of the capital the DMP included within its structure a political section known as 'G' Division. 'G' Division's primary role was to report and collate snippets of information picked up from the streets to the DMP political section. At the end of everyday every member of the 'G' Division would copy and transfer notes to the records section in Pearse Street Station. Members of the station party had free access to these records. Some members of 'G' Division men roamed the streets and punished people who were suspected of being disloyal to the Crown.

At this time, Eamon Broy was a serving detective attached to Pearse Street Station. Broy was a committed nationalist at heart and viewed these activities as unpatriotic. Since 1916 Broy had volunteered to hand over information to members of Sinn Féin, however they treated him with suspicion and did not encourage his efforts. However, in March 1918, Broy met with Collins and outlined his views. Collins quickly recognised the potential of having a spy within the DMP and Broy agreed to play a key role in the Collins spy network. Collins trusted Broy and was fully aware of the risks involved in acting as a double agent. If discovered, Broy would be immediately arrested, tortured and eventually shot for treason.

German spies were sent to Ireland during World War 1 to monitor the situation and report back to Berlin. The German High Command was of the view that any enemy of Britain was a friend of Germany. The German agents were tasked with fermenting dissent and assisting insurgents with any likely uprising. Collins was aware that his activities were being monitored by Germany. Broy was able to give Collins early notice when he gave him the tip off for the German Plot in 1918.

Revisionists have failed to adequately address the following questions:

- 1) Why is has Eamonn Broy not been given the credit for the integral part he played in the Sinn Fein Intelligence network?
- 2) Why has he remained in relative historical obscurity?
- 3) Why was his contribution not been acknowledged in life or in death?
- 4) Has one to fall in battle before one's sacrifice is recognised?

He was also a member of the old IRA and the Irish army. He was commissioner for An Garda Siochana from 1933-1938. The political role of the RIC and DMP has been exaggerated quite frequently when in fact; they performed regular non-political tasks and regular day-to-day tasks. The situation took a dramatic change from 1919 -1921. The police in Ireland at that time were split into the Royal Irish Constabulary throughout the countryside and the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) in Dublin. Eamon Broy had close contacts with the director of intelligence for the old IRA, Michael Collins during this relationship is specifically effective in the War of Independence.

Collins was appointed IRA director of Intelligence in 1919. He had studied previous Irish risings and recognised what impact espionage had on their failings. Collins was intelligent and took risks. His guerrilla warfare strategy proved a success and has been adopted by rebels all over the world. His spies such as Broy and Neligan kept him informed as to the movement and decisions of British forces. Collins Squad, which was his spy network, was set up to identify, locate and execute British solidiers.

After the first Dail in 1919, the British focused their attention back to Ireland. Collins managed to avoid imprisonment due to the tip-offs he received from his "G" men agents. Collins set up "drops" in Dublin Castle. These were varied locations where agents could leave information found.(This system is still in use today by the various intelligence agencies throughout the world). The locations changed to avoid being caught by the RIC.

On the 7th of April 1919 Broy smuggled Collins into G Division archives on Pearse Street. The two men spent eight hours going through files which contained political and military information from around Ireland. There were police files on the Irish Volunteers. Collins even managed to read his own file. The information obtained enabled Collins to identify six G division men, who would be killed by the IRA. Collins then realised that in order to defeat Britain they would have to take out their spies as they would be unable to replace them. Collins was then reportedly to have stated to Broy "I am a builder, not a destroyer. I get rid of people only when they hinder my work." Along with Broy Collins had recruited other "G" men, one of these was David Neligan. Neligan like Broy, had offered services to Sinn Fein but was turned

down. He left the DMP in 1920 but Collins encouraged him to rejoin as a spy. In 1921 Neligan then allowed himself to be recruited into British Intelligence in Dublin Castle which was the centre of British Intelligence in Ireland. As a result of this placement, Neligan was able to pass on the British Oath of Allegiance, passwords and identities of British agents to Collins. Neligan gave false reports to the DMP claiming that the IRA were much bigger and better equipped than they actually were. This may have influenced the British cabinet to grant the Irish Free State independence.

In February 1921, Broy was arrested by the RIC on suspicion of collaboration with the enemy. He was sent to Arbour Hill prison for interrogation. Collins persuaded another detective to flee the country, which therefore lifted the suspicion off Broy. When he was released from prison Collins removed Broy from active service for the duration of the war. Collins recognised the key role that Broy had played in the War and was fully cognisant of the risks that he had taken. Collins clearly felt a deep sense of gratitude for the efforts made by Broy and demonstrated this in ensuring his safety.

After the Civil War, the RIC disbanded and Michael Collins pushed for the establishment of a Civic Guard. On the 8th August 1923 the newly established Irish Government created An Garda Síochána. The DMP later merged with An Garda Síochána in 1925. With the establishment of An Garda Síochána Eamonn Broy left the Irish Republican Army and joined the newly established police force.

In the 22nd of February 1933 Taoiseach Eamonn de Valera fired General O' Duffy and Eamonn Broy succeeded O' Duffy as Garda Commissioner. After receiving orders from his political masters Broy set up an armed auxiliary force that consisted of former IRA men and former Republican prisoners. This group became known as the 'Broy Harriers'.

While all this was going on, Eoin O' Duffy went from being the strongest defender of the Irish Free State to the greatest threat to its existence. In 1933 he became the leader of the extreme right wing movement the Blueshirts. De Valera originally wanted the Boy Harriers to act as body guards for Free State ministers but they were eventually used against the Blue Shirts.

The Broy Harriers had a controversial history. They were involved in a controversial shooting which resulted in the death of a Cork farmer. In the 1940s the Broy Harriers and the CID (criminal investigations department) were merged together into the Special Branch. During the 1950s the CID started to look down on the Harriers as they only saw them as gunmen. By the 1960s the Harriers had faded into retirement. Although Broy had nothing to do with the force during the brutal activities that took place, he was still linked with them in name. The Broy Harriers were an extreme but also

violent force. They were disliked by many. The Broy Harriers started to become unpopular after Broy had served as Garda Commissioner.

I believe that the questions posed at the outset can be answered as follows:

- The huge contribution made by Broy was overshadowed by the historical giant that is Michael Collins. (Arguably made in death what he was not in life).
- The reputation of the new Provisional IRA and the old IRA and becoming intertwined in the public psyche. Public ignorance and guilt by association.
- The fear of confronting the past and a wish to move forward and let 'sleeping dogs lie'.
- The actions of the 'Broy Harriers' despite the fact that Broy was no longer commissioner at the time of the controversial events.
- The unique hatred by the Irish people of the double agent.

In 1990 attempts to award Eamonn Broy with the credit he deserves were stymied once again. In 1990, Broy briefly came to light when the film Michael Collins was released. However, once again his role was completely misrepresented. In fact, Broy is portrayed as having been murdered by British Forces and eliminated all together!

Conclusion

History tells us that Eamonn Broy served his country well. He demonstrated his bravery time and again while working at the very heart of the British war machine as a double agent. He was arrested, jailed and narrowly avoided death for his beliefs. He later continued to serve his country by joining An Garda Siochana in 1933 where he rose to the rank of Commissioner. He eventually retired in 1939.

It is to our national shame that we fail to commemorate his memory and recognise his contribution to Irish history.