

Script for Richard Mulcahy and the Anglo-Irish War Ep 2 of 3 (Because I have feels)

Hi, I'm Sam Amenn and this is the tenth episode of the Art of Asymmetrical Warfare. Today we'll be discussing Richard Mulcahy and the Irish War for Independence.

[Theme song]

BLM Statement

Black lives Matter statement (newest asks from Chicago Alliance, BLM, etc)

Feds in Chicago and Portland

Chicago Alliance asking us to call chief judge evans, cook county states attorney, kim foxx, governor Pritzker to depopulate the cook county jail and provide treatment, testing, and release to the incarcerated population, including torture survivors and wrongfully convicted

Friday, August 28th Movement for Black lives is hosting a National Convention which will be focused on celebrating black culture, black political power building, and a public policy agenda that will set forth an affirmative vision for all Black lives. Link to register?

Blacknovember.org

The breathe act which is a bill that divests federal resources from incarceration and policing and ending criminal legal system harms. Invest in new approaches to community, allocating new money to build healthy, sustainable, equitable communities for all people, holding officials accountable and enhancing self-determination of black communities-website:

breatheact.org

CPAC-keep calling the mayor and aldermen need 26 aldermen to pass, 34 to make it veto proof

No more Columbus statue (yay), but Miracle Boyd-never forget
100 days til the election mother fuckers-how are you voting? Texting and phone banking, postcards (indivisible south Chicago). Three states one mission-focus on winning Wisconsin and Michigan.

Intro-What is a CS?

Last episode we talked about Richard Mulcahy and his role during Easter Rising. Today we'll discuss his role as Chief of Staff of the IRA.

The military responsibility over the IRA was divided amongst three men: Cathal Brugha, Michael Collins, and Richard Mulcahy. Collins oversaw intelligence, although he also worked closely with Mulcahy in crafting a grand strategy. Brugha was the Minister of Defense, nominally Mulcahy's superior, also responsible for the development of grand strategy, and was the bridge between the Dail and the Army. Mulcahy was responsible for everything else.

Mulcahy's main focus during the war was organization and discipline. This seems to be partially because that was his natural strength and partially because the very nature of the conflict prevented him from exerting control over the IRA forces. As we've mentioned in many of our episodes, GHQ's authority over the ground troops was tenuous at best and often times they were responding to developments on the ground as oppose to directing the course of events.

Still, this doesn't mean that GHQ or Mulcahy's contributions to the war effort should be written off. It just means this episode will deal more with the internal IRA's bureaucracy more than on the ground fighting. You've been warned.

Organizing-1919

Mulcahy started his career as Chief of Staff torn between two conflicting impulses. The Dail, led by DeValera and channeled by Brugha, wanted to slow down the pace of violence, believing they were not yet at a stage of outright war. Mulcahy, at the time, supported this stance (most likely because he was looking at the monstrous lift that was needed to organize the Irish Volunteers *into* an army), which put him in direct conflict with some of his IRA commanders. He also worried what affect intense violence may have on the support of the population. Mulcahy had been against the Soloheadbeg attack and Dan Breen and Seamus Treacy never trusted him after the dressing down he gave them following the attack and their escape from South Tipperary to Dublin.

At the same time, he and Collins were devising organizational structures that would allow active commanders to take the initiative. He and Collins decided that the more enthusiastic officers should get larger areas of responsibility. A philosophy that sometimes conflicted with the orders Mulcahy himself would send to officers, since he was always preaching caution but rewarding the most daring officers with more responsibility.

By September 1919, the Dail had been declared an illegal entity and Mulcahy was no longer charged with slowing hostilities down. Instead, he now encouraged attacks and tried to ensure the IRA's efforts were coordinated. He required his commanders to write monthly reports of their activities and to submit plans of action to GHQ to be approved. And yet, he struggled to keep up with local actions and one can see him learning this new trade of war throughout 1919 and 1920. This can be illustrated by his naïve suggestion in August 1920, that IRA units should call for the British troops to surrender before being attacked-thereby eliminating the element of surprise.

Mulcahy and his troops

Some of the commanders would feel that GHQ was disconnected from reality of things on the ground and cared more about reports than actual fighting. Some of this is true. Mulcahy rarely had occasion to travel to the front lines and his main form of communication with his men was via the reports. But again, this shouldn't take away from the structure and military pride and ethos he was able to infuse into the IRA. Additionally, while he was never considered warm, he had an affectionate relationship with many of his officers, for example the Officer commanding of the 3rd southern division wrote to Mulcahy asking for a book on explosives, saying "I know that it is not proper to communicate with you for literature, etc. but I feel that no other officer at GHQ would pay such immediate attention to a matter of this kind." (Valiulis, 73) Sean O'Murthuile would write

"My school was that of Collins... We were a happy carefree lot who, in the hardest of times could be found carelessly congregated at one or another of our various haunts...Of

Mulcahy and MacMahon [quartermaster-general, later to be chief of staff] and their work I knew practically all there was to know, but I had come to regard them as stern silent workers who scorned pleasure and frivolity and who had enslaved themselves to their respective tasks...once I had begun to work and live with [them]...I realized the greatness of their outlook, their tireless devotion to their great task, and their fairness to all within the limits of their responsibilities.”

As we discussed in episode 5, Mulcahy organized the IRA into battalion and brigade levels, allowed soldiers to elect their own officers (but occasionally interfered by trying to plug in IRB men if he felt the chosen officer was unreliable), and encourage initiative when it made sense to him. It seems that for the officers who knew how to approach him, he was a stable source of support. For example, when Terence MacSwiney wanted to inspire an Easter Rising like event in Cork in 1919, Mulcahy suggested he try a staggered attack on three different barracks first. Of the three attacks only one was completely successful, Carrigtwohill (which we discussed in Episode 7), but it provided Mulcahy and the IRA a template they could use for other attacks. He would later conduct an overview of the country to determine which districts could successfully follow Cork’s example. By 1920, the RIC were forced out of small remote barracks and into larger, fortified barracks closer to the major cities.

While the ground troops may have felt that Mulcahy was disconnected from the front, he was obsessive over learning everything he could about his troops and was well aware of their supply shortages and discrepancies in leadership. Mulcahy frequently sent scathing letters to those he felt were not doing enough or who constantly called for supplies but did little to justify spreading their limited amount their way.

Growing as a CS

When he wasn’t trying to keep the IRA organized, he was working with Collins on the many initiatives the famous Corkman was planning. He played a role in organizing the infamous Squad and when Collins was not available for orders, the responsibility fell on Mulcahy and Dick McKee, a member of General Headquarters.

Mulcahy deserved his reputation of conservatism and caution, but he wasn’t above approaching unorthodox plans such as the incineration of more than 300 evacuated RIC barracks and 30 income tax offices in early 1920. He would also assist in the planning of Bloody Sunday. After Collins, Mulcahy, and Brugha picked their targets, Mulcahy helped Collins hand select men from the Dublin Brigade to assist the Squad in assassinating 14 suspected British agents on November 21st, 1920. The attack ended in tragedy when the British retaliated by attacking a local football match, killing 14 and wounding 60 and when the British officers in the Castle murdered Dick McKee, Conor Clune, and Peadar Clancy.

- As we discussed in Episode 5, he took information from the ground and was inspired to formally sanction the use of flying columns.
 - Flying columns created a set of permanent soldiers who would work together in small groups in coordinated attacks
 - The flying columns performed two kind of attacks: auxiliary and independent

- Auxiliary is when a flying column was assigned to a battalion as extra to support local operations already taking place
- Independent is when a flying column would attack a strike attack for an immediate action. Delay was considered fatal.
 - The type of independent actions included harassing small military and police stations, pillaging enemy stores and interrupting communications, and eventually ambushes.
- The columns became an elite and coveted unit and a permanent unit in the army. The soldiers were always on the run and relied on local and battalion support.

In 1920, he asked the Dail to forbid citizens to work on the roads in an attempt to limit the British's mobility. The dock workers and railway workers obeyed forcing the British to run the trains themselves.

Brugha

While all of this was going on, Mulcahy and Collins were battling with Brugha over the idea of an oath of allegiance to the Dail. We spoke about this in Episode 4, but basically Collins and Mulcahy resented political interference about something that-to them-seemed minutia. The army had already sworn an oath to fight for Irish independence, why did it need to take another loyalty oath? Brugha, however, worried about the growing military power Collins and Mulcahy were already amassing at this time and feared an independent military more than the British. As we've mentioned before, his concerns are legitimate. You never want the political wing to be usurped by the military and it seems that Collins and Mulcahy may have needlessly hurt relations by resisting Brugha to arduously. O'Caiomh argues that the oath itself wasn't the real bone of contention between the three men, but it was really the new constitutional clause which stated that the Minister of National Defense in consultation with the Executive Council shall appoint and define the duties of the Headquarters Staff'

As we've mentioned many times before, Mulcahy, while truly believing that the army was subservient to the state, disliked when ministers interfered with army matters. One can only imagine his irritation growing by the end of 1920 when he and his staff are on the run from British officials, trying to control a semi-independent group of men with guns in the Irish countryside, planning assassinations, and now having to deal with whatever minutia the Dail wanted to discuss.

Mulcahy took the threaten to GHQ seriously, arranging it so that the whole staff never met. Instead, he would schedule meetings so that three members would meet at one time and he ensured that members of the entire staff knew what the others were doing, so there wouldn't be gaps in knowledge. His precautions did not prevent his own near arrest in which he escaped with his life, but left behind many, important papers. This, combined with the increased tempo of the war and the increasing demand on his small staff may have convinced him that the IRA was in the need for a reorg. So, in 1921, he introduced the concept of a division.

- As we discussed in Episode 5,

- Divisions took command of large swaths of territory, similar to the warzones.
 - This was to increase the likelihood of brigade and battalion coordination, made the IRA feel like it was growing into a real army, but still allowed (and encouraged) independent command, especially if something were to happen to GHQ
 - It also took some of the pressure off GHQ, since they could now share some of the administrative burden with the Divisional GHQs

As 1920 progressed into 1921, Mulcahy's issues with Brugha grew, with Mulcahy going so far as to cancel Brugha's plans to try once again to assassinate British cabinet members. It is hard to decipher when their relation turned so antagonistic, but it seemed to be because of Mulcahy's close relationship with Collins and Mulcahy's territorial instinct over the army. As Mulcahy, himself wrote:

“His [Brugha's] trouble about me was that I was in a position that he couldn't get at Collins: I was chief of staff and in interfering in any way with Collins or shifting Collins off the Staff, he had me to deal with. I was just a stubborn kind of understanding rock because I couldn't see the organization of the GHQ Staff at that stage changing in such a way that Collins would move off it.”

It could have also been how he coped with stress, as Mulcahy was known to shut down and grow even snippier than usual when under immense pressure. To make matters worse, Brugha had charged Collins with spurious book-keeping regarding the Glasgow gunrunning accounts and called in Mulcahy as a witness. The fight grew so intense that Collins allegedly burst into tears and Mulcahy resented both the waste of time and the risk such a meeting posed to the command structure of the IRA and the Dail.

Mulcahy and Collins also got into a row with Austin Stacks over Stacks' handling of the police force (Mulcahy didn't want good IRA men siphoned off to fill its ranks and one can imagine Collins worried about how it would affect his own intelligence and enforcement monopoly over Dublin). Then Mellows was forced on the GHQ and Mulcahy was at wits end. Later in life, Mulcahy would play the tensions on DeValera and his own difficult relationship with Collins. As 1921 progressed, a split certainly occurred with DeValera, Brugha, and Stacks on one side and Collins and Mulcahy on the other, but how much of this was purposeful on DeValera's part is hard to assess. It can be said with certainty that DeValera's attempts to send Collins to the US and to launch a raid on Four Courts didn't ease relations or tensions at all. (the men would compromise and raid the Custom House instead-costing the IRA 80 men captured and 5 men killed)

But we can't ignore that fact that there was also a real power struggle over control of the IRA. Whether Brugha's concerns about Collins' potential takeover were legitimate or not, they were convincing enough to get DeValera, Stacks, and Mellows involved. Collins and Mulcahy certainly enjoyed a monopoly over violence and, as we have seen, resented when people interfered with their plans. I don't think this suggests that Collins and Mulcahy were seriously planning to challenge the Dail's power (Mulcahy's later actions suggest that this would be against the very core of his character), but it does suggest that they knew the Dail were weak in a guerilla setting.

That the real power laid in their hands and that interference with the Dail wasn't a real threat, but an annoyance when they had far more pressing things at hand. And that the squabbling of Brugha and Dev may have been the squabbles of men without real power. This frustration may have grown when, from their perspective, Brugha either didn't contribute at all or, when he did contribute, only made matters worse. And Dev had been in America since 1919. Who was he to dictate military strategy? It is certainly a worrisome and dangerous mindset for your military commanders to have and does legitimize Brugha's concern.

Brugha, unlike Mulcahy, seemed to struggle understanding how best to implement his power as Minister of Defense, but unlike Mulcahy who forced his way down on the local commanders and fought tooth and nail to defend his position from people like Brugha, Brugha seemed content to sporadically get involved with things and flail around. I don't think it was in Brugha's nature to be attack strategically and that was why tension skyrocketed when Dev returned, because Dev knew how to use his presidential power and no one, not even Collins and Mulcahy, could wear down or outstubborn Dev.

We also have to look at Mulcahy's relationship with Collins. It seems that the two men worked well together because they crafted somewhat strong boundaries. Mulcahy's role was to organize and support the men on the ground while Collins would gather intelligence and prompt direct action. At times, they would be in sync and at times Mulcahy would be urging caution while Collins urged action. There was also tension between Mulcahy and members of the Squad, tensions that Mulcahy seemed content to rely on Collins to resolve, but would later bit both in the ass during the Civil War. At the end of the day, Collins and Mulcahy may not have had a close, warm friendship, but they had an effective, crisp business relationship where Mulcahy trusted Collins with his life and the future of his country and Collins trusted Mulcahy to deal with internal and external pressures and make sure the IRA didn't fall apart. While it certainly seems that Mulcahy admired Collins more than Collins admired Mulcahy, we cannot say that Collins was completely dismissive or distasteful of Mulcahy. He knew he had a man he could count on, in Mulcahy, and that was all that mattered.

Graver War

Again, we must also consider the affect stress was having on all men. By 1921, the British were deploying their own flying columns and the IRA was finding it ever more difficult to launch their own attacks. Collins' headquarters were raided in May 1921 and both the Dail and GHQ made preparations should either body be arrested or killed in mass. On top of that, Mulcahy was facing the grave truth that the IRA were growing more brutal and he was dealing with more and more cases of reprisals and units asking permission to perform reprisals.

In the end, he gave permission to retaliate only if it was a counter-reprisal, and he allowed for the tit for tat kind of reprisals as well. GHQ would determine if the owners of the houses involved in the reprisals would be deported and their land confiscated. He also encouraged acts of arson against houses that were used by the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries.

He also issued an order threatening all those who associated with the enemy with death. There was a court of inquiry and there were different levels of punishment depending on the

level of association. The sentences were to be ratified by the brigade commandant and reports submitted to the adjutant-general. Mulcahy was to be informed of all rulings and he retained the right of final authorization in cases that needed a ruling from GHQ. He also took the responsibility for the execution of spies.

Women spies would have their property confiscated or destroyed, but they were never executed. Mulcahy never issued an official statement regarding the shooting prisoners of wars, even though he was aware it happened frequently and his good friend, Liam Lynch pressured him to make it official policy.

Truce Crazyiness

A truce was declared on July 11th, 1921, but that was didn't solve any of Mulcahy's problems. Instead, things grow exponentially worse.

First, there was the issue of Austin Stacks. By in March 1918, the deputy chief of staff position was held in reserve for Stacks. After he escaped Strangeways Prison, Manchester in October 25th, 1919, he took the position but then resigned in 1920 to commit to the Department of Home Affairs. Then, in 1921, Stacks assumed responsibilities of the DCS, even though Mulcahy no longer wanted him in the position. Instead, he went over Brugha and Stacks' head and appointed Eoin O'Duffy.

Brugha responded by asking to recommission the members of the army, including creating a new GHQ and giving Ginger O'Connell the responsibility of chairing a commission on defense. Mulcahy was also issued out of all treaty negotiations. Mulcahy stood firm and continued to push for O'Duffy as DCS. Brugha assured Mulcahy he would retain the position of chief of staff, but Mulcahy wanted guarantees that he would be able to form his own staff. Mulcahy wrote to Collins who was in treaty land and Collins wrote back saying that there needed to be an acknowledgement of the work which the 'old' army put in and that GHQ should have a meeting On November 25th, right before the Cabinet/GHQ meeting.

During the Cabinet/GHQ meeting civilian control over the army was reaffirmed, but the make up of GHQ did not change. Instead, Mulcahy was given three adjutants, O'Connell as ACS, Stacks as DCS, and O'Duffy as DCS with the responsibility to act as Chief of staff should anything happen to Mulcahy. Additionally, the full responsibilities of the Chief of Staff was still being discussed. The meeting was a seven hour nightmare for all parties involved. Mulcahy's staff and many officers closed ranks around him and O'Duffy considered the entire affair a blemish to his honor. It is said that DeValera ended the meeting by shouting 'ye may mutiny if ye like, but Ireland will give me another army.'

So, even though DeValera could claim victory, it was clear his military would continue to act as it wished and was clearly a formidable opponent to DeValera.

The second issue was the W. G> Robbie affair. Robbie had been an ex-British Officer who owned typewriters. These typewriter ahd once been property of the British so the IRA took them. Robbie fire dhis secretary, thinking she had snitched to the IRA, and he was forced to

leave the country. Mulcahy handed the complaint to Collins and Brugha wrote back claiming that “the handling of this case from start to finish displays an amateurishness that I thought we had long ago outgrown”. He asked Mulcahy to take action against Collins. Mulcahy thought Collins handled the matter fine so he wrote back to Brugha stating, “I consider the tone of your letter of 30th July is very unfortunate.” This just further enraged an already livid Brugha. He wrote back

“The latter’s [Collins’ memo] of July 29th was not the result of your note of the 12th, but of mine of July 28th. – 16 days later – What good purpose was served by your writing 5 weeks after the event is probably best known to yourself. To me it seems a further development of that presumption on your part that prompted you to ignore for some months past the duly appointed Deputy Chief of Staff [Stack]. However, before you are very much older, my friend, I shall show you that I have little intention of taking dictation from you as to how I should reprove inefficiency or negligence on the part of yourself or the D/I [Collins] as I have of allowing you to appoint a Deputy Chief of Staff of your own choosing.”

Exasperated and most likely furious, Mulcahy brought the matter up to Dev. He wrote “I cannot usefully discuss any matter with the Minister of Defense, and in view of the spirit in which the endorsement of the 7th September is written, I cannot accede to his request to preside at or be present at any meeting of the staff”

Brugha gave half-hearted apology and Mulcahy rescinded his protest and then Brugha suspended him. DeValera interceded and Mulcahy and Brugha met again, in which Brugha wept tears and explaining he could do no wrong, which Mulcahy was supposed to take as meaning he only had the best of intentions.

But Mulcahy’s problems with Brugha didn’t even end there. In December, right before the Treaty debate, Brugha dismissed Mulcahy and replaced him with Stacks. The dismissal did not stick.

IRA and Truce

While all of this was going on, Mulcahy and GHQ focused on preparing the army for a resumption of the conflict should the treaty fail. They were facing the dual problem of broken momentum and extreme lax discipline. They also tried to use the truce to fix their constant lack of arms-despite the British believing this broke the truce. The IRA also recruited during the truce and they set up officer training camps and to replace less than stellar commanders. Mulcahy would always have bad luck when it came to reorganizing the army-even that or he always picked the worse times to do it. While trying to stress the need for discipline, he also undercut his argument by saying that men had to be ready to resume conflict at a moment’s notice. This led to deep frustrations and anxiety within the men, but also the lack of battle meant the men had no way to blow off steam. He would start to see the type of discipline problems that became common during the civil war, but at the time refused to acknowledge it or felt he couldn’t acknowledge because of the looming threat of renewed war. People would complain to the president, the cabinet, and chief of staff about lack of discipline. During these moments, Mulcahy would defend his men to the cabinet while turning over every rock to make sure the

accusations were either true or false. However, his constant letters to his officers to investigate every complaint created tension between him and his men. Another element that contributed to issues with the army was lack of funds and unemployment. Mulcahy did his best to create sources of income for his men, but could not prevent the collecting money from the community. Also the British complained to him about every time the IRA 'broke' the truce.

Mulcahy and most of the GHQ would support the treaty. Many people who knew him saw this as an unexpected betrayal and blamed Collins' hold on him. But Mulcahy was, as always, a practical man who knew the IRA's weaknesses better than anyone. He knew they could not win against the imperial army, that the entire IRA strategy had not been complete military victory, but to make the British blink before the Irish did. The British Empire gave in first and this was the best they were going to get. To risk war with the vain idea they could ask for more was suicidal and reckless.

The Treaty was accepted on January 7th, 1922 and Mulcahy was made part of the Free State Government as Minister of National Defense. He and Collins would work together once more to avoid civil war and when that failed and Collins was killed, the responsibility for the military survival of the Free State fell on Mulcahy's shoulders.