

97 when he died on 13 November 1989. Young's faculties were impaired during his final years, so it would not have been possible for him to travel nor to relate events at the site without the knowledge of his family, with whom he lived for the last eight years of his life. They are unable to throw any light on this. However, if Peter Hart revealed the names of AA and AF then the dilemma could be solved.

Hart mentions ten scouts and describes an interview with scout AF (19 November 1989), who gives a graphic description of Barry and Volunteers shooting Auxiliaries in the head in a bizarre situation. (It's unclear, but it sounds as if AF could have done some of this, though being a scout he would have been unarmed and positioned at a distance from the ambush site.) According to the records, just three unarmed scouts were positioned—two north, one south of the ambush site; the last survivor, Dan O'Driscoll, died in 1967. The two unarmed dispatch scouts moved from the scene once the fight began—the last survivor, Seán Falvey, died in 1971. If Peter Hart revealed the identity of scout AF (whom he interviewed on 19 November 1989) then the credibility of this witness's claim could be examined. Named known relatives of Kilmichael participants and people in the locality would welcome the revelation of AA and AF's identity, now over 84 years after the event (28 November 1920).

To state, as Peter Hart does, that Barry's 'history' of Kilmichael is 'riddled with lies and evasions' is an extremely strong accusation, as words such as 'riddled' plus 'lies and evasions' should not be lightly dispensed. The premises for such an accusation require a sound basis. So the non-mention of a false surrender in the IWM report does not seem a valid reason for proposing that there was none. Yet Hart agrees that there was a surrender despite this lack of mention also. Hart expressed wonderment that upon publication of his book so much attention focused on his account of the Kilmichael ambush. Though his awareness of its importance in Irish history is expressed in his book, he

contradicts this view in his interview.

A great number of Irish people will have difficulty in agreeing with Hart that Tom Barry is 'really a very minor character' in the War of Independence, despite his pivotal role (in general and in West Cork in particular) in the fight for Irish freedom, despite Michael Collins requesting him to visit GHQ members and to test a machine-gun, and despite his being the only military man that Collins sent for during the Treaty negotiations.

Hart maintains that Barry was one of the 'hard men' in the Irish fight for freedom in a category where 'there were serial killers on both sides' and where they 'behaved in much the same way and used the same labels and excuses for killing'. These 'serial killers' were 'not necessarily psychopaths'. This categorisation and conditionality is disturbing and in my opinion has little to do with history and more to do with criminal psychology. Hart says that, as Tom Barry with others took it 'upon himself to kill other people', he is amazed if people are amazed at his view. It begs the question, what were the Volunteers fighting for? Why did they make such sacrifices?

Hart says that he tries 'to deal' with 'one of the important aspects of the IRA' to discover 'how many volunteers actually did make a choice and refused to become ambushers and assassins'. Wasn't it a volunteer force? Barry and the Volunteers throughout Ireland who chose to join made sacrifices as they fought for Irish freedom, which ultimately led to the present twenty-six county state.—Yours etc.,

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Sir,—The interview with Peter Hart (*HI* 13.2, March/April 2005) was timely and interesting. I have written on the subjects Peter Hart addressed and on the view of his critics in *The Village* and in *indymedia.ie*. I hope that *HI* will continue to probe the issues that Peter Hart felt able to only partially address within the interview format.

For instance, Brian Murphy has suggested that the product of a



Above: Peter Hart. (Sheillah O'Leary)

sophisticated British propaganda strategy, developed during the War of Independence, has re-emerged as part of the historical narrative. It is a point he addresses to Peter Hart's work. Peter Hart felt unable to comment, on the basis that Murphy's research is not yet published. However, Murphy's lecture on the subject was reported in one daily and one Sunday newspaper. These (and other) reports were reproduced on *indymedia*, on a page that Peter Hart contributed to. Perhaps Peter Hart is referring to first person and/or to academic publication.

One of Murphy's criticisms has been in the public domain since 1999. It is contained in his review of *The IRA and its enemies* (1998). Peter Hart suggested that Protestants were targeted in Dunmanway by reason of their religion. He quoted a sentence from the *British Record of the rebellion* to the effect that Protestants rarely gave information because 'except by chance they had not got it to give'. By implication, many IRA actions were sectarian in intent. Peter Hart omitted the sentences following, which noted that 'an exception to this rule was in the Bandon area' (which includes Dunmanway), and that informers were successfully identified and targeted. This information contradicted the point Peter Hart was making, and he omitted it. Peter Hart has written that the *Record* is the 'most trustworthy' source of information on the period.