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W.H. Kautt, *Ground Truths: British Army Operations in the Irish War of Independence*. Sallins, IRL: Irish Academic Press, 2014. Pp. xx, 268. ISBN 978-0-7165-3219-4.

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Archival research is a fascinating part of a historian's profession, but one that can pose problems for those whose resources and time are dwarfed by their inquisitiveness and desire for answers. With *Ground Truths*, Air Force veteran W.H. Kautt (US Army Command and General Staff College) has significantly eased the difficulties of research into his subject by reproducing and offering critical commentary on British War Office file 141/93, the "Record of Rebellion in Ireland, 1919-1921." He also makes suggestions for further study of the British campaign against republican forces in Ireland.

Kautt, in both his scholarly work and his teaching, has sought to convey the "lessons" of the "Record of Rebellion" to future generations of historians and soldiers. His specialties include military organization and logistics, counterinsurgency, and developments in modern warfare, but the Irish War of Independence remains his central interest.¹

As a sourcebook, *Ground Truths* is a distinct departure from the author's previous work, since his contribution here is supplementary to the main text. Apart from an introduction to the volume placing the experiences of Irish Command within the theoretical framework of small wars and detailing the original authorship and coordination of the "Record," Kautt remains on the periphery, though in an important way. Within the eight chapters that document stages and events in the Irish War of Independence, he provides relevant biographical data, alternative perspectives of contemporaries, and references to pertinent further reading. Some two dozen appendices contain primary source reports that enhance an already invaluable collection of contemporary insights.

Ground Truths surveys specific military aspects of the Anglo-Irish conflict, analyzing operational successes and failures. Students of Irish history will not be the book's sole beneficiaries. Contemporary British observations of the various civilian and guerrilla roles in an insurgent society furnish enduring lessons as applicable to the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the ongoing disquiet in central Africa as to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Kautt equips the "Record of Rebellion" with a series of discrete insights set off in boxed inserts, as well as helpful endnotes, thus preserving the flow of the text proper. These interludes open chronological vistas on events outside the knowledge of Irish Command, elusive biographical information about commanders in the field, and counterpoints from the republican and general public's points of view. For instance, as an addition to the text on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), Kautt comments on their living arrangements as follows:

Barracks were the offices and billeting for the RIC. Such structures were usually houses converted for that purpose. Larger barracks obviously housed more men and had higher ranking men in charge, such as a head constable or an officer There were also smaller RIC establishments, or "stations", with only three or four men under an acting sergeant. There were also "huts", which usually supported a larger barracks and were typically no more than raised wooden platforms with four walls and a roof. Since they were designed as outlying observation posts, huts were essentially indefensible and policemen were reluctant to man them. (24)

Elsewhere, the author identifies and criticizes the "logical fallacies, incoherent logic and other biases" (xvi) espoused by Irish Command in the "Record." For example, he openly questions "how considerate

1. In *Ambushes and Armour: The Irish Rebellion 1919-1921* (Sallins, IRL: Irish Acad Pr, 2010), he explored the evolution of Irish Republican Army (IRA) guerrilla tactics and the methods the Royal Irish Constabulary and British security forces used to counter them. Forthcoming publications by Kautt will examine logistics and supply within the IRA during the Irish revolution.

armed men can be when holding people at gun point in the middle of the night, having turned them out from their homes,” following a passage stating that troops were instructed to exercise “the greatest care and consideration for law-abiding people, women and children” during searches (32). These supplements are historically valuable, suggesting both the level of intelligence available to British security forces at the time and the politically neutral writing style of the “Record” following the Anglo-Irish conflict.

Amid the point-counterpoint cadence of the text, readers will find incisive observations on some of the more emotionally charged and controversial episodes of the 1919–21 period. Many of these depart from the operational paradigm of military maneuvers to elucidate what Kautt calls the republicans’ war of perception (4). For instance, the general staffs and headquarters of Irish Command characterized hunger striking as “a means of rousing the sympathy of the Irish people and of the uninformed public in England and abroad[,] ... cleverly engineered by those who knew how to work upon the feelings of all classes of Irishmen” (43). Similarly, Terence MacSwiney’s prolonged hunger strike in 1920 also appeared to be a propaganda stunt: “His case became a ‘*cause célèbre*’ The majority of the English papers and a large and hysterical portion of the British public, forgetting the fate of the victims of his crimes, took up his case, wrote and spoke of him as a hero and a martyr, and clamoured for his release” (74). These and other passages reveal the frustrations of service in Ireland at a time when political considerations had to be weighed in engaging the enemy, including the potential propaganda value any given action could present the Irish cause.

This book offers a firm foundation from which to explore some of the newly established tracts on the Irish independence period.² Moreover, juxtaposing the “Record of Rebellion” with the equally subjective republican testimony of the period³ will allow readers to better grasp the “ground truths” of a complex and traumatic conflict. In this regard, W.H. Kautt’s masterly navigation of the perceptions and realities of the Irish War of Independence has provided student, scholar, and casual reader alike with a unique and accessible archival experience.

2. E.g., David Fitzpatrick, ed., *Terror in Ireland 1916–1923* (Dublin: Lilliput Pr, 2012); David M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920–1921* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2011); Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence 1918–1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Eunan O’Halpin, *The Dead of the Irish Revolution, 1916–1921* (forthcoming 2015).

3. For which, see the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, *Interim Report* (NY 1921).