

AN T-ÓGLÁC

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“GET ON WITH THE WAR”

The soldiers of the Irish Republican Army have every reason to be satisfied with the progress of the War of Independence. At no previous period have we been in a stronger position; at no time were our prospects brighter. The wonderful development of fighting efficiency in our army has opened up immensely greater possibilities than were realised in the earlier stages of the campaign; and the enemy after six months of the most strenuous exertion in which every device of civilised and uncivilised warfare has been resorted to against us finds himself baffled, further than ever from any encouraging tokens of success, in a worse military position than ever before. His “frightfulness” has done useful service to us in putting Volunteers on their mettle and giving them an additional incentive to waging war more strenuously against us. The offensive remains with us and it is going to remain. In the immediate future the enemy may expect a big extension of the guerilla warfare and new and still more effective methods used against him. Opportunities of striking blows at him occur continually everywhere and are being more and more availed of. His communications are being broken and intercepted his transport system has been largely put out of action, and the systematic raiding of his stores is already causing him the greatest embarrassment. Volunteers are quick in learning lessons in warfare and they know now that even where there is no opportunity for bringing off ambushes or big coups there are still a hundred ways of harrassing the enemy and inflicting moral and material damage and loss upon him.

One of the usual symptoms of the enemy's suffering “cold feet” is the circulation by him of stories of “peace moves.” It is a desperate resort when things are going badly with him and his criminal outrages in Ireland are rousing indignation abroad to what he considers an alarming extent. Volunteers will appraise these rumours of “peace negotiations” at their true worth—as mere enemy camouflage. If he is in earnest

in his professed desire for peace he can have it in 24 hours simply by stopping his aggression. All he has to do is to remove his army of occupation, and peace will reign throughout the land. He knows in his heart he will have to do it some day if he cannot succeed in entangling our Government in “negotiations” involving a “compromise.” He will not succeed. There will be no compromise. The Republic of Ireland IS and WILL BE. The orders from our Government are: Get on with the War. It is our business to wage war on the foreign aggressor with every scrap of energy at our disposal. We are waging a great and holy fight for our country's freedom; we have won wonderful victories; and are militarily in a stronger position than ever before. The Army of the Irish Republic and the people of Ireland generally have made great sacrifices and sustained much suffering with splendid fortitude and unbroken spirit. They have nothing worse to dread in the future than what they have already faced. Terrorism as a military policy is always a failure unless it succeeds rapidly. Against a nation of spirit its ultimate effect is always to harden the national resistance.

It is useful for us in considering the sufferings of the Irish people to remember that no nation ever achieved freedom from a strong foreign invader without much bloodshed and suffering; yet they have all thought with Davis “that blood bought Freedom's cheaply bought.” A table of Republican casualties since the inception of the guerilla warfare is now being compiled; it will show when completed, that our losses have been very slight while the losses inflicted by us on the enemy, even according to their own official reports, in which many casualties suffered by them are suppressed have been extraordinarily great. Ireland lost immensely more heavily in any one year of “peace” and British occupation by the emigration of her young and vigorous than she did in all these years of war put together from all causes. The loss of property due to enemy military action is insignificant compared to the tribute

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exacted from Ireland by England during one year of peace. It is also insignificant compared to the amount of money which England makes out of Ireland by selling her exports to her—a source of enemy profit which is slowly but surely being stopped. These considerations, though not strictly military ones, are worthy of repetition to Volunteers and by them to the civilian population. For us the one order, the great and sacred duty of the moment is: "Get on with the War!"

GENERAL NOTES

The diary of the Dublin Brigade for April shows that during the month there were 15 attacks on armed bodies of the enemy in lorries, two attacks on police barracks and one attack on a fortified position in Dublin held by 80 Auxiliaries. Fifteen enemy lorries tenders and cars were captured by our troops, 2 motor bicycles, several bicycles and a large quantity of telephone apparatus and military stores. There were five successful sniping operations and 14 raids in which goods consigned to the enemy were seized. These include 2,040 bed-sheets, 300 military breeches, 60 axes and quantities of food stuffs. Four horses and four mules were captured from the enemy and killed. Four members of enemy forces were disarmed and four revolvers and 30 rounds of ammunition taken. The enemy casualties which could be ascertained were six killed and 30 wounded, but we have reason to believe they were much more considerable. Our casualties were 3 killed and 8 wounded, most of the latter only very slightly.

The following is a complete copy of the letter received by Mrs. Potter wife of the late D.I. Potter of the R.I.C., part of it being suppressed in the public Press:—"Madam: It is my sad duty to inform you that your husband G. Potter was legally executed this morning. Your husband was charged with and found guilty of waging war against the Republic. We tried to arrange for an exchange of prisoners. We offered to release your husband if the British Government would release Volunteer Traynor. Personally I do not believe that the offer went past Dublin Castle. Traynor was hanged on Monday. The law had therefore to take its course. Your husband was treated with the utmost consideration while in our hands.

The enemy published a formidable list of arms and ammunition which he claimed to have captured in a raid on a Dublin stables on April 24th. The list is a tissue of false and misleading statements. He claimed to have captured 11 rifles, 52 revolvers, 11 shot-guns, 13,000 rounds of ammunition, 14,700 shot-gun cartridges and 34 bombs. The rifles consisted of duds and spare parts, and the same applies to most of the other stuff. The "shot-gun cartridges" consisted of

empty cases. The "bombs" were only parts of bombs. His actual haul of serviceable stuff of this kind was only 10 revolvers, 3 shot-guns and 2,000 rounds of revolver ammunition. Other statements issued by the enemy as to captures of arms and ammunition in Dublin and elsewhere have been equally misleading and in some cases sheer fiction.

On the 22nd April 45 men of the East Clare Brigade entered Kilrush where 100 enemy soldiers; 40 marines and a strong party of R.I.C. were stationed. Ambushing parties were stationed on the streets with the result that the enemy had 7 killed (including an officer, a sergeant-major and 2 R.I.C. sergeants) and 22 wounded—18 soldiers, 3 R.I.C. men and a marine. We had no casualties.

On the 29th April a party of 10 of the Waterford No. 2 Brigade ambushed a train containing about 50 enemy soldiers at Ballyhinch. Four of the enemy (including the machine gunner) were killed and 3 wounded. One of our men was slightly wounded.

On May 2nd, 24 men of the Kilkenny Brigade ambushed about 40 of the enemy in 3 lorries at Uskerty 3 miles from Castlecomer. The enemy had 4 wounded, including a D.I. We had no casualties.

On April 27th eight men of the Longford Brigade ambushed an enemy cycle patrol coming from Balinalee at Clonfinn, killing 2 and wounding 4. We had no casualties. Three Black-and-Tans who were removing a Republican flag from a house in the district were wounded by a grenade which was attached to the flagstaff.

The Mullingar Brigade report for April shows extensive road cutting, the destruction of an enemy rifle range and three abandoned barracks, the capture of enemy stores, an attack on a fortified position and an exchange of shots with enemy lorries. The enemy casualties are unknown; we suffered none.

On April 23rd two Black-and-Tans were wounded in an attack on a party of them in the Mid Limerick Area. On the 24th a strong police patrol was attacked by four bombers with what result is not known.

On April 21st in an attack on R.I.C. at Fedamore one enemy was killed, three wounded and two bicycles were captured. We had no casualties.

On May 4th men of the Dublin Brigade carried out a very successful ambush on an enemy lorry on the Naas Road near Crumlin. Four of the enemy were killed and seven wounded. We had one man slightly wounded. No report of this affair was issued by the enemy G.H.Q. nor Dublin Castle Publicity Department but a house in the district was burned as a "reprisal."

Is trua linn go léir bás an Chinn Briogáide Seán de Bháil, fear bréagh dílis cróga do dhein a chion féin go calma i gCogadh na Saoirse. Mothóidh sé go Gaedhal có-bhròn le n-a dhreatháir, an tAthair Tomás de Bháil i dtaoibh a bháis. Ar dheis Dé go raibín a n-ádh.

“HARRASSING THE FOE”

The enemy's habit of describing “unsuccessful attacks on Police Barracks” has become a standing joke to our troops. Here is an example of an “attack” carried out by six men, who threw two grenades and fired 10 service cartridges and 18 .22 cal. cartridges:

“I threw the first bomb which landed at the back door of the barrack and exploded: the second bomb was then thrown but did not explode for about six seconds. The sniper then opened fire, completely shattering the upper windows of the barrack.” Observe that no measure was omitted to make the enemy believe a real attack was intended—explosions near the ground, feigned covering fire on top windows etc. The two grenades and 28 shots were enough: the R.I.C. proceeded to “make a night of it” with a vengeance. “The enemy garrison flung about 12 bombs out and fired several hundred rounds of ammunition. They continued to fire after we had retired. There were about 10 lorries of reinforcements out up to 9.30 the next day”!

Now, which side was successful that time? Certainly not the English. And the beauty of it all is that they can never be sure as the firing breaks their sleep whether it is something like the above or something like Rosscurbery.

LESSONS OF MAAM FIGHT

The long drawn out fire fight at Maam Vally, Connemara on May 2nd gives a very clear idea of what can be expected from the use of the Rifle, and also of what is beyond the power of the Rifle to accomplish. In that fight the two following points were proved beyond dispute:

- (a) Rifle-fire unaided can pin an enemy to a position for an indefinite period.
- (b) Rifle-fire unaided cannot definitely destroy an enemy who keeps his wits about him.

It is proposed to prove these points by extracts from the press report of the fight.

The enemy force consisted of 14 R.I.C. under D.I. Sugrue forming a strong Cyclist Patrol. The Patrol covered 200 yards of road in well opened out files.

At first shot “the police sought any cover they could find, and some of them remained throughout the fight in the water of a brook . . . Indeed some of them had no cover at all, except a fold in the ground, and without any practical means of retreat open to them, as the road on either side was within view of the attackers.”

As regards our troops the press report says: “The Republican forces took up what are described as carefully prepared positions about 300 yards from the road and 1,000 feet above the constabulary . . . The manoeuvre of getting into position was executed with dash and

rapidity. “Such was the position: our troops occupying the commanding ground and the enemy reduced to a passive defensive. In the circumstances D.I. Sugrue's order to husband ammunition with extreme care—passed verbally from file to file along his force—was very appropriate and should be noted. When an enemy sergeant was hit badly “so carefully was the road watched, and so close and accurate was the shooting at times, that none of his companions was able to go to his assistance.” The fight continued thus for 11 hours.

Now when it became clear that the enemy was definitely pinned to his ground the correct course for our troops was to work forward towards him, close with him, and annihilate him. There seems to have been a chance of doing this. The report says: “When a shower obscured the landscape concentrated fire was opened from the hill . . . When the rain or hail storm passed, the concentrated fire immediately ceased.” The opposite method would be the right one. *The rain and mist should have been availed of to crawl forward towards the enemy position, the bright intervals being used to pick him off.* In this way our troops would have got within rushing distance. The advance could be concentrated on a wing of the enemy position when he could not easily reply for fear of his enfilade fire hitting his own men.

Then when our assaulting troops were in good jumping off positions advantage might be taken of a final shower of rain to fix bayonets and close with them. The clatter and click of the bayonets being fixed has a very unnerving sound for men already somewhat shaken by a prolonged fire-fight, and much resistance cannot then be expected from them.

Observe it is only said that this is what should have been done. We do not know enough about the engagement to say definitely whether it actually could have been done or not. Our troops may not have been sufficiently numerous to assault, or they may have had no bayonets, revolvers, grenades or other weapons suitable for hand-to-hand conflict. Until we are definite on these points we must reserve judgement. Indeed, it seems likely that firing during the showers was for fear the enemy might try to make a bolt for it under cover of the obscurity afforded by the rain. Still this could have been prevented by concentrating fire of some parties on the enemy's flanks—which correspond to the head or rear of his column if he tried to move off by road. This would have pinned him, while the remainder moved forward to close with him.

This is an instructive action and can be studied with great profit. It is particularly useful now when the enemy is resorting to Cyclist Patrols, because it shows that even a large and well handled pretty well helpless if we take the proper combat it.

HOW GREENWOOD IS SUCCEEDING

In the English Parliament on April 28th Sir Hamar Greenwood gave the show away badly in trying "to show the House the difficulties of the Irish situation." He stated that on one occasion recently: "Immediately that the news came to Dublin General Tudor got into an aeroplane and went to Tralee . . . He then flew on to Cork, and after a conference with General Strickland, went back to Dublin the same night by aeroplane . . . General Tudor could not have covered the ground in any other way."

On another occasion—just after the cutting-off of General Cummings—General Strickland himself elected to return to Cork from North Kerry by a destroyer rather than venture into the mountain passes where his forces have met with so many reverses.

It is incidents like these which show most clearly the way in which we are steadily tying up the enemy. They also help to indicate the lines along which we must continue to work in order still further to restrain their freedom of movement. The first and most obvious is *Improvement of our Intelligence and Reconnoitring*: the sooner and more completely we are informed, the more carefully we scout both enemy parties and ground, the tighter will be the net drawn about them, and the better we will be able to blind them as to our own moves.

Then there is the attacking of their communications by smashing roads, dominating railways, and tackling their motor and horse transport. None of these is decisive by itself, but the collective effect is very great. Enemy mobility is now not a shadow of what it was even a few months ago. We have actually caught Greenwood telling the truth for once, incredible as it will seem!

Again there is the system of picked snipers firing on selected stretches of road from suitable positions, which can be worked in conjunction with mines. And for this last purpose Engineer units must be increased and made more efficient.

Finally, one of the most effective means of all is the development of our Organisation. All the lines of communication should be dotted along with Outposts Groups. If this is done in a complete fashion it means that no area can be used by the enemy without interruption, that areas through which he can pass at present can be made to bristle with traps for him.

All these suggested minor improvements can be effected at comparatively small cost of energy and military effort, but they require to be judiciously adopted. It is better to do one thing at a time and make a good job of it, than to go slap-dash at a number of developments and leave them all half-completed.

SCOUTING III.

The Scout should be practised in passing on information and orders and in some simple means of visual communication.

(i) VERBAL MESSAGES:—

These should be sent only when it is not possible to send a written message. Verbal messages should be subsequently confirmed in writing when possible.

THE SENDER must be clear in his own mind what he wants to say and state it as clearly and simply as possible. He should be sure that he is understood, and make the messenger repeat it to ensure accuracy.

THE MESSENGER must be sure in his own mind that he understands and should not hesitate to question the sender on any point which is not clear. He must know where to go.

As he goes he should think over the message and any questions he is likely to be asked. If he passes troops who should be informed of his message, he will give them his message in passing and report he has done so on arrival.

He should not get excited or arrive out of breath. He should deliver his message shortly, clearly and smartly.

THE RECIPIENT should clearly understand the message: if not, he should ask, but without confusing the messenger. He should write down any verbal message received.

(ii) WRITTEN MESSAGES:—

Messages must be (a) clear and in good, bold handwriting. Numbers, size and time should be estimated. Nothing vague should be stated: e.g., "a lot of enemy" "a wide river", "a steep hill." Names should be in block letters. Time should be shown "A.M." and "P.M." Where a map reference is necessary the name of the map should be stated. Numbers should be written in words. The word "Not" should be underlined or in block letters.

(b) Concise:— not a word more than is necessary for clearness. Only recognised abbreviations should be used.

(c) COMPLETE:— The message should be read over carefully by the sender and shown to another scout to see if it is clear. If it is very important, two or more messages should be sent by different routes.

The source of information should be stated.

Negative information may be useful.

A copy should be retained by the sender.

A sketch is often of assistance.

The North Roscommon report for April shows extensive road-cutting operations, mail raids and the captures of military stores. The enemy having forced civilians to fill in trenched roads our men forced the same persons to dig them up again.