

AN T-ÓGLÁC

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STEADFAST!

The war for the liberation of Ireland goes on with increased vigor and intensity, spurred to fresh efforts by the cowardly, treacherous and inhuman measures resorted to by a foe who has fortified all right to be considered civilised. The enemy's "proclamations" in Munster have received their fitting answer in an increasing offensive on the part of the gallant men who are defending the nation's freedom. Not a weapon has been surrendered; there has been no slackening of Volunteer activities; and many noteworthy triumphs have been achieved.

In view of the lying statements so assiduously circulated by the enemy Press it is important that Volunteers should understand that the situation remains entirely unchanged. There has been no change of mind, no slackening of temper on the part of those responsible for the destinies of the Irish Republic. All to a man stand unflinchingly by the Proclamation of Easter Week and the Declaration of Independence of January 21st 1919. The Minister responsible for the waging of war against the enemy is interpreting the unanimous wish of the Republican Government in using every weapon at his command against the brutal instruments which the enemy is employing against the Irish people.

It is necessary to emphasise this fact in view of insidious propaganda carried on by the enemy in the shape of statements about "negotiations for a settlement"—propaganda which has unfortunately been helped on by the action of erratic individuals representing nobody but themselves. It is necessary that Volunteers should know that the only overtures for peace came from the enemy to us not from us to the enemy. Our terms of peace were clearly set out in the Declaration of Independence and the many clear and explicit declarations of the President of the Irish Republic. The enemy can secure peace in 24 hours by agreeing to withdraw his troops from the country.

As Volunteers have to bear the brunt of the warfare, it is important that they should not be misled by the enemy's lying propoganda. It is useful for them to realise that the enemy's need for peace is far greater than ours—that his desperate attempts to create an atmosphere of "negotiations" show how hard hit he is by our guerilla warfare and how he is feeling the strain of his own "special measures."

For Volunteers there is only one counsel—the old one:—Get on with the work! It is particularly a counsel for those parts of the country where the organisation and militant activity of the Volunteers has left much to be desired. It is more important than ever at the present time that those parts of the country which have hitherto taken only a small part in the guerilla warfare should now throw themselves into the campaign with vigor and intensity. By so doing they will help to relieve the strain on the gallant men in the South against whom the enemy is making a military concentration. Not only that but they will help to bring victory appreciably nearer to us.

There are no divided counsels on our side; but on the enemy's side there *are* divided counsels. In the enemy Government there is a peace party and a war party. Any slackening of our offensive at the present time assists the war party; they will claim it as evidence that their policy is succeeding. It is satisfactory to record that no such evidence has been forthcoming. On the country, almost every week shows an increase in the number of attacks on the enemy by our troops. The greater the increase and the more effectively things are brought off the sooner the present regime will be ended.

Volunteers who have made such sacrifices for the cause of the Irish Republic, need not fear that the flag for which so many brave men have died will ever be hauled down. The Irish Republic is an accomplished fact; to it the soldiers of Ireland as well as Dáil Eireann have taken a solemn oath of allegiance.

Our oath is unbroken, our allegiance is unswerving; and we will carry on the fight to triumph. The fate of Ireland depends upon steadfastness, courage, discipline and efficiency at the present time. In courage and steadfastness Irish soldiers have never been wanting; it is for the Volunteers to perfect their discipline and efficiency to enable them to give back blow for blow to the powerful, unscrupulous and savage enemy who is arrayed against us. It is the only argument that is effective with him. English Ministers were never moved by arguments of honour, humanity or justice; but they are moved strongly by motives of self-interest, and this Irish War is a costly, and dangerous undertaking in which they are injuring their international credit and their financial position without gaining any appreciable advantage. It is for us to make it still more costly and still more dangerous. Already a big section of the enemy are "fed up" with it. This section will be considerably increased before we have done with them. We can "stick it" better than the enemy. Fortified by the sense of national duty and the support of the nation and the nation's elected Government, the Irish Volunteers will persevere unspairingly in the fight against the enemy's hired ruffians without rest or respite until they are withdrawn from the country.

Slackness or negligence at the present time on the part of Volunteers is a crime against the nation. It only means a prolongation of the warfare and a delaying of the ultimate triumph. It is for every officer and for every Volunteer to vie in zeal and energy with one another in taking a hand in what may be the last stage of a brave and successful battle for the freedom of our country.

HOW THE WAR IS DEVELOPING

The Irish War of Independence is developing day by day. Now that we have reached the end of the year 1920 we can in a general way review the progress of the military situation to date. Less than a year ago Ireland was held down by a system of observation posts occupied by small parties of R.I.C. The driving-in of these outposts was naturally our first objective. A number of them were captured and others damaged beyond repair and the evacuation of a still greater number was compelled—the evacuated posts being destroyed by our troops in a systematic manner.

Then the enemy adopted the system of a smaller

number of posts, but these strongly fortified and garrisoned. These newer posts were linked up by frequent patrols. Our offensive tactics had to be varied accordingly. The new posts had to be attacked either by elaborate storming arrangements or by stratagem, and now only the very strongest remain in enemy hands. At the same time his patrols were systematically attacked and the system of regular small patrols had to be abandoned.

Now the enemy only sends strong forces in fast-moving motor lorries, and the ambushing of these is our main line of attack at the present moment. Already we have reached a stage where a single lorry is helpless provided the attackers take ordinary care, and the enemy is compelled to use several lorries following one another at a few hundred yards distance. These lorry columns, two, we are now able to tackle successfully.

At the same time as the enemy has had to give ground and go on the defensive in legitimate warfare he has undertaken a campaign of organised savagery in the hope of breaking the spirit of the civil population. As often as not his lorry columns are now wrecking parties of mixed forces. These constitute the real problem at the present time—a problem that we are well on the way to solving.

It is with reference to this problem that a wider spread of our units is most desirable. The Army of the Republic has not been touched by wrecking parties and has on various occasions been able to forestall and punish them. The proper situation is where the wrecking party is tackled in a town, while every road out of the town is beset by other bodies of our troops. This is quite possible by means of a fuller development of our outpost groups. In districts where there are no companies or battalions there should be an Outpost Group in every townland. For the immediate purpose—blocking the exits—small bodies of poorly trained men will suffice at a pinch, later on we can develop their capacity and use them more effectively. The important thing is to *have some men everywhere*; then there is no road of escape open to the wrecking party.

It is necessary to realise that a War of Independence always assumes this form. The fighting gradually becomes more bitter, and more and more of the young men of the country seeking freedom enter its armed forces. It was thus with the German Militia of 1813 in their struggle against Napoleon. With an elementary training and armed with old muskets, scythes and hay-forks they held themselves in readiness as a reserve of national strength to be drawn upon at need. As time went on they got more training and better arms—and two years later they won Waterloo.

It is the same with us. Recruits come in and we go ahead with our training, gradually the nation behind

us becomes more determined. The real sign of the times is not that Irish towns are sacked: the outstanding thing is that the enemy has mentioned the word "EVACUATION." He has not done this officially, but some of his leading men—authoritative soldiers even—have said it. His newspapers have printed it. We must make him carry it out.

DEALING WITH WRECKING PARTIES

Marshal Bugeaud, the conqueror of Algeria, has some remarks on guerilla warfare that are specially applicable to operations against wrecking parties of English soldiers and police at the present time in Ireland. Note the following with the utmost care:

"This war is like a wolf-hunt, and must be worked by surrounding and ambuscades. When there is information that a band has appeared in such and such a village, it is no use to go there in a straight line; detachments must be directed upon the points of retreat, and time given them to arrive before advancing upon the village." Let us apply this method to our own case.

The Battalion Commandant learns that a wrecking party is in a village in his area. He mobilises at once and each Company Captain arranges to barricade the roads in his own area to prevent the raiders escaping. The Company in the area actually attacked engages the raiding party at work and any men that can be spared from adjoining companies come up to reinforce them. What arrangements does this form of action call for?

It calls for (a) Sufficient forces—and sufficiently widespread forces to make sure of sealing the exits, (b) A system of communication able to start all the machinery at short notice, (c) Sufficient training to wipe out the cornered wrecking party. Again let us consider Bugeaud: "The officer in each cantonment ought to have a perfect knowledge of the roads, the paths, ravines and streams in the circle that lies between him and the neighbouring cantonments. The cantonments ought to communicate by signal. The duty of each detachment must be drawn out beforehand, so that where notice is given of a band, everyone can go and take up the post appointed without losing time".

So much for catching and destroying wrecking parties. It is better to meet them coming if possible. "Ambuscades at the crossings of rivers and intersections of roads must sometimes succeed if they are varied and well concealed". These ambushes must be strong, well-chosen, and ready for a sustained fight.

The larger wrecking parties when tackled at work must be dealt with skilfully. They have—as in Granard—a covering lorry. The Colonel of the 9th Lancers thus describes the wrecking party in question. "There

were a number of lorries with police and a protecting party of 8 military in a lorry mounting a Hotchkiss gun... my men had the strictest orders on no account to leave the lorry; they were there for no other purpose than to protect the police." Of course, this covering lorry is only formidable when halted. Moving in column it is neither more or less formidable than any other lorry. This was abundantly proved at Ballinalee.

It is clear, then, that wrecking parties can be badly punished if the proper measures are taken. Frequently the raiders are drunk and undisciplined, but this may not be taken for granted. Many times they are carefully handled and require skill to cope with them. Frequently they fire away ammunition when wrecking, and are thus an easier mark on the return journey. In all cases they can be defeated where our forces are sufficiently numerous and well handled. They are least active where we are most active—the remedy for them is hard fighting and plenty of it.

WINTER CAMPAIGNING

It is necessary that all units of the Irish Republican Army should pay special attention to preparation for a Winter Campaign. A heavy period is before us, and we must not enter on it without proper preparation. If we turn the winter of 1920-21 to the best account it will further our aim to an enormous extent: Winter neutralises many of the enemy's advantages. It is worth while pointing out in what respects.

The English have always been at a serious disadvantage in fighting through the Irish Winters. The climate has always hit them very hard, and we may confidently expect that their young soldiers of the present time will prove no exception. Their morale, too, will suffer from arduous campaigning in the severe season. To get the fullest benefit from this state of affairs it is necessary to take all possible precautions about the health of our troops, that they may not suffer similarly. Officers who omit to take these precautions commit a grievous military crime. More particularly Quartermasters must give attention to these matters.

Another disadvantage of the English is the length of the period of darkness. Summer time disappears and the night begins early. More time is available therefore for night operations in which they are at a disadvantage. For example, their aircraft are helpless for scouting at such times, and so are their patrols in like manner.

The matters to which our Quartermasters must give serious thought are clothing and food. Men must not be kept out on long-sustained enterprises without these. Local arrangements may vary but every Quartermaster must see that the men are warmly clad and dry shod and have food with them. Each area should provide its own units with mufflers, gloves, socks, etc; and arrangements should be made to have

hot drinks—tea, cocoa, or bovril—or porridge ready when there is an opportunity of getting a meal. These are quite as important as arms and ammunition. The health of troops on active service is of vital importance. Lists of the necessary stores should be prepared and money to procure them should be set aside at an early date from the Company, Battalion or Brigade funds. At the moment this is one of our most pressing requirements.

LORRY FIGHTING. I.

The outstanding tactical feature of the present operations in Ireland is the part played by motor lorries. The enemy trusts to the speed of his motor lorries to escape destruction, because the ambushing of a lorry—and still more of a column of lorries is not so easy as that of Infantry, Cavalry, or Cyclists. At the same time it is possible to be carried out, and this is being done with increasing frequency and success. In fact the question of armouring enemy lorries has been considered in their parliament, as also the advisability of replacing the lorries by armoured cars for the more important duties.

The enemy has prepared Standing Orders governing the conduct of Lorry Patrols and these should be carefully studied by all Officers because they will suggest ways and means of dealing with these Patrols.

The weapons used to combat lorries require consideration. A few picked shots with rifles are necessary to pick off the drivers, the look-out men, or the Officer or N.C.O. in charge of the lorry. Grenades must be used speedily and accurately or the lorry will get past before the explosion takes place. For the main strength of the force lying in ambush shot-guns with heavy shot are very valuable weapons. The shot-gun takes effect even when the lorry is netted over with wire netting as is now frequently the case—as a protection against grenades.

Barricades, land mines, or a combination of the two of these are valuable; because if the lorries are brought to a halt they are practically helpless. For purposes of barricades and mines the ground should be very carefully selected; and Engineers should get every facility for preparing it. Trenches can often be dug and camouflaged with straw and earth or road metal. The choice of the best method will depend on local circumstances.

Precautions must be taken to prevent an ambushing force from being outflanked by a second or third lorry when only the head or rear of the column is attacked. Flanking parties should be placed in suitable positions and reserves should be posted in rear of the flanks—“echeloned” behind the flanks as the term is. Reserves so posted are in a position to outflank the outflankers who will thus be taken between two fires and heavily punished.

Such are some general principles of Lorry Fighting.

GENERAL NOTES

The publication of this issue of AN T-OGLACH has been delayed by a series of accidents, which, we hope will be in future avoided.

The Army of the Irish Republic sustained a heavy loss by the deaths of Commandants McKee and Clancy, murdered in cold blood by the enemy in Dublin Castle while prisoners in his hands. Both men were magnificent examples of all that Volunteer officers should be. In cool courage, in thorough-going energy and efficiency, they provided a model of conduct by which all Volunteers who came into contact with them felt themselves benefited. It is of interest to record that Commandant McKee took a considerable part in the production of AN T-OGLACH and was a frequent and valued contributor to it. The memory of these two splendid men will remain dear to all who knew them and will strengthen their determination to carry on the fight relentlessly for the cause for which they died.

The enemy's Intelligence Department has been conspicuously unsuccessful in its efforts to obtain information with regard to the Volunteers. Vast sums of money have been expended by him for that purpose and floods of spies have been let loose on the country. Under those circumstances it is the duty of Volunteers to observe even more than ordinary prudence and circumspection. All strangers should be treated with caution, all loose talking about Volunteer activities should be sternly suppressed. Particular caution should be observed in letters sent through the enemy post. We have recently been afforded some amazing examples of indiscretion in this respect resulting in enemy “court martials” and the acquisition of information by the enemy which fortunately was not accurate. The Volunteers have nothing to dread from informers; the species does not flourish in our present climate; but they have much to fear from imprudent talk and imprudent letter-writing, the repetition of gossip about Volunteers and Volunteer activities “escapes” and men “on the run” by persons who should know better. It is the duty of Volunteers to report any cases of the kind that come under their notice; in the case of Volunteers stern disciplinary action will be taken. Special caution should be observed in regard to letters to or from prisoners. The enemy keeps a close scrutiny on these and acts on any information contained in them.

Statements of “big finds of arms” in different places in the country are continually published by the enemy as propaganda. Such statements in a number of ascertained cases were absolute lies without a tissue of foundation. Volunteers know better how to keep their arms and ammunition.