

AN t-ÓGLÁC

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KEEP UP THE OFFENSIVE.

Since the last issue of *An t-Oglach* has appeared Volunteers have achieved a number of further triumphs over the enemy, and have given some signal exhibitions of military efficiency. We are glad to note, also, that these activities were spread over a larger area than usual. For some time past the overwhelming majority of the successful coups brought off by Volunteers were confined to certain areas, where the organisation, efficiency, skill and military spirit of the officers and men were particularly good. It is satisfactory to note that other parts of the country are waking up and the Brigades everywhere are falling into line and helping in the good work. The enemy's policy was to flood with troops those parts of the country where the Volunteers were strongest and most active, and we have repeatedly pointed out that that plan must be defeated by extending the area of our activities. Every district in Ireland occupied by the enemy should be a "disturbed district," where he lives in a state of constant nervous apprehension, dreading attacks from he knows not where. In those parts of the country which have been evacuated by the enemy it is for the Volunteers to take upon themselves the duty of maintaining peace and order; and that is being done efficiently in most such places.

The "military patrols" on which the enemy proposed to rely have proved poor stuff so far. Quite a number of cases have occurred in different parts of the country where parties of them have been captured and disarmed without a blow being struck. In this respect they present a much less formidable problem than

the enemy "police" whom they are designed to supersede. The more these surprises, captures and disarmings are carried out the more demoralisation will be caused among these largely inexperienced troops, strange to the country, and feeling hopelessly at sea and evidently with no stomach for fighting. Another important method of increasing their disgust with their position is the organisation of a rigid social boycott against them everywhere, and against those who associate with them.

The military lesson of all recent events is the necessity of keeping up our offensive with ever-increasing vigour. All our triumphs of the past ten months were due to our "coming out of the trenches" and taking up a vigorous offensive. The enemy has abandoned fortified positions and evacuated large portions of the country. His outposts are gone; his first instrument of executive power, his eyes, ears and right arm, the R.I.C., has ceased to be effective. His soldiers are not likely to succeed where they failed; but the offensive must be kept up and spread over the widest possible area. The Brigades everywhere must fall into line; must bring their organisation, discipline and efficiency up to the required pitch, and must take their full share in the guerilla warfare that is being waged.

In a recent issue we pointed out that many Irishmen who had joined the "R.I.C." in peaceful times without a clear realisation of the treachery to the Irish nation involved in their act were now heartily disgusted with their position and the dirty work they were called on to perform. The steady and ever-increasing daily trickle of resignations from the force gives evidence of this, and a striking



illustration was afforded by the mutiny of all the police in the Listowel barracks when called upon to enter into a campaign of massacre against their fellow-countrymen. Other barracks in the same part of the country are in the same condition of semi-concealed mutiny, and the enemy's failure to deal with these men is a strong proof of the terror which their attitude has caused him.

While the discipline of the enemy's forces is breaking down, that of the Volunteers should be growing stronger and stronger. The sense of discipline of the Volunteers is not like the machine-made discipline of mercenaries; it has its basis in a lofty ideal of service to and self-sacrifice for the nation. It is strange that men who by their membership of the Army of Ireland show their willingness to risk death for the Republic should in some cases show a reluctance to subject themselves to the slight discomforts and restraints of a strict discipline. At the present critical moment in the war for Ireland's freedom every available man is wanted to throw the full weight of his energy and enthusiasm into the work and leave nothing undone to secure efficient working on his own part and the part of the others. Intemperance, laziness, negligence, should be shunned and discouraged in every way. Every Volunteer should keep himself continually "on tap" ready to be called out on active service. He should do his best to keep himself physically and mentally fit. The responsibility which has devolved on the Volunteers at the present time is a grave and heavy one, requiring men with a high sense of discipline and public duty. They have to wage war against a powerful and numerous enemy; they have also to secure peace and order amongst the citizens of the Irish Republic. This work can only be done by keen, alert, active men whose character and general conduct win the respect of those they have to deal with. The forces we have to fight are so powerful and well-equipped that any slackness on our part at the present time is suicidal.

The Volunteer force, being a voluntary army, has attracted to its service young Irishmen of spirit, courage, and a sense of national duty; but there do undoubtedly remain a large number of young men who would make good Volunteers at present outside the force. This is peculiarly so in some parts of the country, where it is chiefly due to imperfect organisation; but everywhere suitable men are available who for some reason have not been got. Recruiting for such a body as the Volunteers must, of course, be done cautiously. Only suitable men, who are known and vouched for, should be admitted; but there are many such

still untapped, and a serious effort should be made to increase our strength everywhere. Many young Irishmen who are not in the ranks would readily and gladly join, and once they have come under the influence of the Volunteer atmosphere would make good soldiers of Ireland.

It is necessary that all the strength, all the energy, all the enthusiasm and all the efficiency of the armed manhood of Ireland should be thrown into this fight against the enemy at the present time. The more that is done at the present time the less we will have to do against, perhaps, far greater difficulties at a later date. In a warfare such as ours the old proverb holds good: "One stitch in time saves nine." Any cessation of our offensive only gives the enemy breathing-space to recover lost ground and develop new plans of conquest. His strongholds must be attacked, his troops surprised and disarmed, his communications interrupted, his despatches seized, his activities watched, his machinery interfered with, his supplies cut off in every part of the country with such persistence, speed and ubiquity that he will not be able to get his "system" solidly established and working anywhere. If all the country was in an equal state of organisation and efficiency his resources would be strained almost to snapping point. It is satisfactory to note a steady increase in our numbers, an improvement in our organisation, a higher standard of efficiency among officers, and an increasing and more widespread guerilla activity on the part of our troops. But our numbers must be further strengthened, our organisation, training and discipline brought up to the same standard throughout the country, and the warfare against the enemy must be waged with far greater activity in a far larger number of areas before we can begin seriously to congratulate ourselves. Much has been done, but it is little beside what yet remains to do. It is for every Volunteer officer and for every individual Volunteer to ask themselves what they have done, what they are doing, and whether they have any cause to reproach themselves for slackness. Where such fine examples of bravery and skill have been provided in some cases, where men are shedding their blood in the warfare and in some cases have sacrificed their lives, a fine spirit of emulation should exist among officers and men everywhere. All should vie with one another to make themselves fit and worthy soldiers of Ireland and to play a man's part in this glorious war which we are waging for our country's freedom.

LESSONS FROM EAST AFRICA.

V.

We have seen repeatedly how General Lettow-Vorbeck was thoroughly saturated with the idea of the initiative; he never hesitated to attack with vigour wherever there seemed the least prospect of success from such a course of action. At the same time, whenever it seemed unlikely to lead to any success, he knew how to studiously avoid any offensive effort. For example, in one place he says: "All we could do with our rifles was to let the enemy run up against us on suitable ground, and, possibly, to take advantage of any mistakes he might make by skilful and rapid action; but the odds against us being 7 to 1 we could attempt no more.

The circumstances in which detachments of the Irish Republican Army may find themselves may easily prove similar. In certain districts the enemy can assemble enormously superior forces—and indeed has actually done so. Where this is the case it is useless to waste our strength in attacks that are likely to fail. There is danger of misjudging such situations, even Lettow-Vorbeck's admirable officers did so and were often impatient to be allowed to get at the English. The General says: "I could not possibly hope for success. I could not, therefore, accede to the requests of my company commanders that we should attack, but this expression of a bold soldierly spirit gave me strength and hope in the serious situation in which we were placed." In these conditions of facing an enormous superiority "Only the most careful reconnaissance may perhaps reveal some weakness of the opponent."

Such was the spirit of Lettow-Vorbeck's leadership in his hard times; he knew how to take his time and remain patient until his chance came again—and it came again all right, and came many times and was made full use of. So, too, it will be with our town troops. When one division is faced by a great superiority it is necessary for it to preserve a watchful and very cautious attitude. Most often it will be of great profit to spend the lull in extending the theoretical training and tightening up the administration and routine. At the same time it will be possible for other divisions—not faced by such a great superiority—to make a diversion. In this way we can always dictate the character of the operations and retain the initiative. The great point is to refuse to fight where the enemy wishes to have the fight and insist on fighting where, when, and how it suits ourselves.

Never once in four years' constant campaigning did the English succeed in forcing a battle on Lettow-Vorbeck against his will.

THE QUESTION OF BARBED WIRE.

A Press Association telegram of May 15 states: "Large orders for barbed wire have been placed with traders by the R.I.C. The wire is understood to be for a system of defences." We may take it that this laying of barbed wire in quantities is with a view to further strengthening the fortified posts occupied by the enemy police. The aim of the barbed wire defences is to hold off working parties from carrying out mining operations against the walls of the posts attacked. If the working-parties cannot get close enough to lay their charges, then that method of attack is doomed to failure. For this reason, wherever the aim is to destroy the post by mining operations, working-parties must be equipped with suitable tools for rendering the barbed wire useless. Wire-cutters should be supplied to all Engineer units in sufficient quantities. Hurdles of strong wicker-work may also be used; these are light and easily carried, and still are an adequate protection. Stout manure sacks or the like may also be used with advantage.

But it may—and often will—be better to avoid mining operations altogether and to attack the post with suitable grenades thrown from outside the entanglements. For this purpose it is necessary to have plenty of fully dependable grenades and to have the men thoroughly trained in their use. Increased study must be devoted to this branch in view of the employment of barbed wire. It may possibly prove, where the grenade form of attack is used, that the entanglements may prove a death-trap to the garrison. If the post is rapidly destroyed by a heavy, well-aimed shower of grenades the defenders, while endeavouring to escape, may well be hung up on their own barbed wire in the open—an easy target for the hidden assailants.

We must not always expect to have the entire barbed wire entanglement fully visible. Often the wire may be hidden—or at least strands of it may be concealed here and there which would occasion surprise and disaster unless the entire ground was fully studied beforehand. Hence the need for increased vigilance and knowledge of the ground—both by day and night. Furthermore, alarm signals of tin cans or the like may be attached to the wire, and these may be shifted after dark by the garrison.

GENERAL NOTES.

A number of highly creditable successes have been achieved by bodies of Volunteers recently. It is especially satisfactory to note that some of these achievements were brought off in districts which up to recently had been rather inactive. The West is bestirring itself more vigorously at the present time, and some of the Leinster corps are also showing welcome signs of increased activity and efficiency.

In all the newspaper reports of Volunteer raids, attacks, etc., the number of men is usually ludicrously exaggerated. In the case of Rehill, Co. Tipperary, for instance, where Volunteer prisoners were rescued from a patrol of 50 armed enemy soldiers and the patrol put to flight by **two Volunteers** with revolvers, the rescuers were described in the papers as "200 men."

In Co. Leitrim 20 enemy soldiers and an officer in two military lorries were captured by 12 Volunteers. All their arms and ammunition were secured and the two lorries were burned.

A number of cases are reported to us from different parts of the country where patrols of enemy soldiers and police have been disarmed without difficulty by smaller numbers of Volunteers. Some of these cases are not reported in the newspapers and in other cases the details of the occurrence are misrepresented.

The capture of an enemy Brigadier-General in Cork is an achievement for which those responsible deserve the warmest congratulations. It afforded a fine example to Volunteer officers everywhere of the advantage of being alive to all possibilities, quick to seize opportunities, using one's brains and acting with speed, decision and efficiency.

The Dublin Brigade have once again given a fine example of efficiency in the successful raid on the Dublin G.P.O. and the seizure of important enemy correspondence. Every detail had been planned out in the most thorough manner with the result that the operation was carried out with clockwork precision. If all Volunteer officers planned their operations in the same thoroughgoing manner we should have no failures to record.

Kerry Volunteers have taken direct action to prevent emigration. Young men of military age have been arrested and forbidden to leave the country.

Cases have been reported to us of outrages on the part of the enemy "police" in several parts of the country. In Elphin, for instance, an attempt was made to murder some young men in a motor who were singing patriotic songs. In all such cases it is important that the local Volunteers should be prepared to take effective counter action *promptly*. It should not be necessary to send up to G.H.Q. for instructions in such a case. Volunteer officers should have enough knowledge of the outlook of G.H.Q. and enough intelligence and personal initiative to be able to act effectively at once. Prompt action is the most important. Belated counter action loses half its effect even when it is successful; and delay usually diminishes the chance of successful action as has been shown in one or two recent instances.

The Irish Volunteers in Derry did not interfere in any way in the sectarian warfare in that city until it became absolutely necessary to intervene for the protection of peaceful citizens. They then addressed themselves successfully to the task of protecting the lives and property of the peacefully-disposed of all creeds and politics and were able to effect much with only small numbers. The snipers were put to flight, whereupon the enemy soldiers who had remained inactive turned their weapons on the Volunteers. The effect of the Volunteer action was to bring the ugly sectarian riots engineered by the enemy to an end and to vindicate to all peaceful citizens the authority of the Irish Republic as the only safe custodian of liberty, peace, equality and security to all.

The performance of police work by Volunteers is now being organised on a regular basis and is working successfully. The only forces of disorder in the country at present are the armed forces of the enemy, who are in many cases interfering with the efforts of the Volunteers to maintain order.

Tá "cros cogaidh" (comhartha onóra) dá cheapadh ag G.H.Q. i gcóir na nÓglách a dheunfaidh gníomh sár-chróga, sár-éifeachtach. Ní crógacht gan chiall a bhuafaidh é ach crógacht go mbeidh feidhm léi. Ní bhronnfar go bog é. Aon Óglách a gheóidh é, ní miste a rá go bhfuil clisteacht agus éifeacht fé leith agus misneach dá réir teabáinte aige. Bíodh a fhios ag gach Óglách go mbeidh a leithéid de chomhartha ann i gcóir an té thuilleann é. Tá súil againn go dtuillfidh mórán é. Rud eile, tabharfar teisteasaí do ghaoltaibh aon ógláigh a gheóidh bás ag troid ar son na hÉireann.