

AN T-ÓSLÁC

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THE HOLY WAR

When the History of the Irish War of Independence comes to be fully written many thrilling and glorious episodes will figure in it, and many splendid achievements will be given publicity which as yet are known only to a few of the people of Ireland. To those in close touch with the work of the Army of the Irish Republic the development of a first-class type of fighting man, the immense advance in efficiency, outlook and fighting effectiveness of Volunteers generally has exceeded expectations to an almost surprising extent. New possibilities are steadily revealing themselves and it is quite clear that the campaign against the enemy will be carried on in the immediate future with a greatly increased vigour, intensity and effectiveness. The enemy is already in a very much worse position than he was at the beginning of this year. One after another of the devices he has resorted to against us has broken down. For every enemy device a means has been found of countering it. His uncivilised methods of warfare have failed to achieve their object. The Irish people have stood solid against the enemy terrorism and continue to give their support and assistance to the soldiers of the Irish Republic. His campaign of lies and misrepresentations has failed to deceive the Irish people; and means are being found to make the truth known with regard to the War of Independence. No Volunteer and very few of the people of Ireland are foolish enough to attach the smallest credence to the concoctions labelled "Castle official reports." Still less will anybody in Ireland be deceived by the forged publications, the lying posters, the malignant and indecent libels which are being circulated by the enemy. We know that this is an old device of the enemy. He knows the triumph of our cause depends in the long run on the unbroken spirit of the people of Ireland and seeks by these falsehoods to mislead and divide the civilian population; but his work, cunning and malignant as it is, is clumsily done and will deceive nobody.

From the military point of view the enemy's position is bad and has steadily disimproved during the past six months; and we can promise him that he is in for a very bad time of it at the hands of the Irish Republican Army in the immediate future. But when other factors are taken into consideration, factors which though non-military have a bearing on the military situation it will be seen that he is in a very tight corner indeed. The enemy's desperate financial position, his grave political and social troubles at home and the repercussions of the Irish War on international politics render the situation doubly and trebly troublesome to him. His political manœuvres his attempts at secret diplomacy, his spreading rumours of "peace offers" will not avail him or make the situation less troublesome for him. When the enemy is hard hit and finds himself in an impossible position he always endeavours by such underhand methods to undermine the confidence and national solidity of the people of Ireland; but there is no fear to-day that his efforts will succeed. The President of the Irish Republic has clearly laid down the terms on which the enemy can have peace if he wants it. They have always been the same since the establishment of the Irish Republic. The withdrawal of the enemy's forces from our shores will secure immediate peace. While they remain here we will wage war upon them with all the resources at our disposal. An English Cabinet Minister, Mr. Balfour, has in a recent speech described our war on the enemy forces as "steady, systematic, ruthless." That is just what it ought to be. We are fighting for our liberties, for the land we live in for our homes, our parents, wives and children against a brutal foreign invader without a particle of right in Ireland, whose hands are red with the blood of our brothers, whose path through our country is marked by the smoke of burning homesteads, and we promise that while he remains in our midst we will wage war on him with all our energies—steadily, systematically, relentless.

The age-long fight of Ireland for freedom is nearing

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Óglaigh
na hÉireann
DEFENCE FORCES IRELAND

its completion. Never before were the Irish people able to wage such an effective fight, to strike such fatal blows, to bring such organisation, such resources, such trained efficiency and effective methods into play. The whole strength of the nation must be consecrated to this holy struggle. Never again shall we tolerate in our land the truculent foreign savages and their traitorous Irish hirelings dominating our lives and liberties. Even the most timid of our people have had revealed to them what English rule stands for, and look forward to the triumph of the Army of the Irish Republic as a deliverance from the forces of Evil and Darkness.

GENERAL NOTES

The following proclamation has been issued by the Ministry of Dáil Eireann:—

WHEREAS the so-called "Government of Ireland Act, 1920" is illegal inasmuch as it is a foreign statute, although Dáil Eireann has decided to recognise the popular elections under the said statute in order that the will of the people may once more be demonstrated;

AND WHEREAS the Senate of the so-called "Parliament of Southern Ireland" being, for the most part, a nominated body, the resultant composition of that body would not be an expression of the public will, nor an indication of public opinion; the elections thereto would serve no useful purpose; and the recognition of such a body would be contrary to democratic principles;

The Ministry of DAIL EIREANN, therefore, orders that members of County Councils and other bodies who uphold the right of the Irish people to choose their own representatives and Government take no part in the partial election so proposed for the said Senate.

(Signed) Aibhistin de Staic,

Minister for Home Affairs.

28th April 1921:

The rescue of Commandant Fitzpatrick of the Monaghan Brigade from Monaghan Infirmary where he was lying wounded was a fine achievement. The Infirmary, which had formerly been a gaol, was surrounded by a high stone wall and inaccessible except through the main gate which opened on the leading street of the town, almost in view of the police barracks and of the Courthouse, occupied by enemy soldiers. There were two armed sentries in the ward where the

Commandant was and a sentry and five guards at the foot of the stairs opposite the main entrance. The guard was rushed and overpowered by eleven armed men and the wounded man taken away on a stretcher through a "Unionist" district. The rescuers captured seven service rifles and bayonets, 200 rounds of 303, and a loaded Webley.

In consequences of outrages by enemy "special constables" and their camp followers in March the Monaghan Brigade took sharp action to teach them a lesson. Two "special" sergeants were killed and seven wounded. Six rifles, four shot-guns, two revolvers and a hundred rounds of ammunition were taken from the houses of their camp followers which were burned. During March fifty roads in Monaghan were rendered impassable.

Kilkenny Volunteers on April 3rd ambushed two tenders of enemy Auxiliaries and R.I.C. killing one and wounding several. Finding themselves surrounded by an enemy cyclist patrol they fought their way through and escaped without any casualties.

During the month of March the Meath Brigade, among other activities destroyed 18 Bridges.

PROTECTION OF UNITS

No part of Training requires more care than the Service of Protection, whether at Rest, on the March or in Combat. A thorough grasp of the fundamental idea of Protection is the first requirement, and then it is necessary to apply the general principles to our own special circumstances. We need not emphasise the general principles in this journal, because they can be found in any text-book, but some examples will illustrate their application.

The following extract from a recent Clare report is instructive in this context: "We had now a very much improved system of outposts and scouts, having learned a great deal from our experience. As the Column was rather large the men were distributed over a fairly wide area with a cordon of scouts all round. Two scouts were placed on a high hill seven miles away in a position to cover the roads from Killaieo and Tulla. These two made up a pile of hay on top of the hill and took a can of oil to saturate it with. If the enemy passed they had orders to ignite the beacon. Inside cordon were more scouts to waken the men if the enemy was signalled."

Note the various points in this disposition: the cordon of scouts was of course an ordinary measure—routine in fact, but the extra men detailed to rouse the men was a precaution that will often pay well. It is far more useful for purposes of order and speed than any other way. It leaves nothing to chance. Then, observe the posting of detached scouts many miles away: this is real reconnaissance—the

observe the enemy, is right up against his bases. There we have certainty, elsewhere we have only probability at best. But we know where he must start from even if we don't know what road he will eventually take.

But when scouts are pushed out thus far they cannot evidently get back to report. Consequently they must report by signal—in this case by a beacon-fire as they were engaged in covering a night encampment. By day smoke or flag signals, heliograph or church bells, would have to be substituted for the fires. Signallers, at any rate, are essential. And it is to be observed that the more expert the signaller the more detailed information he will be able to send.

Another recent report says: "In a few cases recently the enemy arrived through the fields in open order, the lorries arriving long afterwards." Such an advance as this might possibly enable the enemy to overwhelm a close-in cordon; but with far-flung outposts communicating by signal it could not succeed. If the enemy advances seven miles across country in extended order he will be all night doing it—or all day, as the case may be. Seven miles off he must be on the roads and if he is on the roads he can be located.

On the inside cordon alarms should be fitted up, trip-wires, bells, tin-cans with marbles in them. Such devices are very valuable—the Battle of Magersfontein was lost by the Highland Brigade stumbling on to Boer trip-wires and tin-cans. Sufficient attention does not appear to be given to these; they should be placed on all likely approaches.

Houses for Billets should be selected altogether on account of their military suitability. They should be either naturally strong themselves, or near good defensive positions, or near good lines of retreat such as a wood or rocky or broken ground where concealment was easy. In all cases the ground surrounding Billets should be thoroughly familiar, and should be worked over frequently both in daylight and darkness.

Protection is a matter of taking pains. Slackness cannot be excused. "Why did I dismiss Finck?" Frederick the Great one said to a questioner, "Was it for being beaten? Not at all, for the Austrians were two to one and he could not have avoided it. But he was surprised, and that at least he could have avoided."

ENGLISH FORCES IN IRELAND

In order to operate successfully against the English forces in Ireland it is necessary to understand in a general way their dispositions and strength. If we know that much we know what we have to operate against, and if we know that again we can form some idea of how to operate against them.

For the present we do not intend to refer to their various Police forces, but shall confine ourselves to the Regular Army, that definite reinforcement on which

the Police always have to fall back and without the resources of which they would be wiped out within a month.

At the present time the English Army in Ireland has a strength of Four Divisions with Headquarters as follows: 1st (Belfast), 5th (Curragh), 6th (Cork), Dublin District—which for convenience we shall call the Dublin Division. These divisions are not all equally strong; they vary with the local conditions. For example, the 6th Division in the Martial Law Area contains Four Brigades, while the 1st Division in Ulster contains only two. And the Brigades also vary in respect of the number of Battalions they contain.

In the present article it is not intended to review anything in detail. What is desired is to fix the attention of our troops of all ranks on the Four Enemy Divisions. Regarding his Front in Ireland as facing West, the First Division (Belfast) is his Right Wing and he has left it weak because he trusts to get help from the population. The 6th Division (Cork) is his Left Wing which he has had to reinforce heavily on account of our continued successes in the South. The Dublin Division is his Centre and is designed to maintain his grip on the Capital; while the 5th Division (Curragh) is his Reserve held at a central point, to be used for the purpose of supplying reinforcements wherever he thinks they are required. Such roughly is his disposition at the present time. The police posts and small detached posts of Regular troops are outposts to this system.

When we examine his Divisional Headquarters we see that they are all important strategic points—being railway and road centres and sources of supply etc. The Curragh is also an important Training Ground, and is thus particularly suitable as a centre for Reserves. Full realisation of these points is sufficient for the moment—later on we shall analyse the distribution of the Enemy Brigades, and still later that of his smaller units, Infantry Battalions, Cavalry Regiments, and Artillery Batteries.

"£1000 FOR A MOUSTACHE"

The following extract from the "Irish Bulletin" (official organ of Dáil Eireann) for May 1st deserves reproduction for the readers of AN T-OGLACH:—

On February 3rd 1921, Dublin Castle Publicity Department circulated several fantastic descriptions of a "battle" at Rosscarbery, Co. Cork. The descriptions, differing in unessential points, agreed that 20 constables were surprised by 400 "rebels" who ambushed them and opened fire without warning. The constables "smartly took cover" and after a "fierce engagement" lasting from 3 p.m. until nightfall routed the "rebels." The "rebels" lost six dead, one of whom was Mr. Micheál Collins, Dáil Eireann Minister of

Finance. But unfortunately, though routed they carried away or secreted their dead, who were never found. The Castle Publicity Department worked so energetically in supplying reports of this action that the sober "Irish Times" in its issue of February 4th made the "battle" its chief item, and published several accounts of it under proud headlines.

The 20 Constables, although suddenly ambushed at close range by 400 riflemen, were miraculously saved from suffering any casualties. Therein lay the great error of the Castle reports. No casualties meant no compensation out of the rates. This was a disconcerting circumstance for the brave constables, who nevertheless, were eventually permitted to claim compensation for "injuries." General Macready, unwisely for the credit of the Publicity Department, did not suppress the hearing of these claims which were duly heard by the County Court, and reported at length in the Press of April 25th. The Constabulary who claimed compensation showed a fine sense of loyalty in repeating on oath the fictions of Dublin Castle adding the romantic detail that the rebel cohorts had seven camp fires. Their numbers by the time the claims came to be heard had risen to 500.

More interesting, however, were the details the claimants gave of their own sufferings. Head Constable Downs swore that during the fight a bullet grazed his nose and went through his moustache, and he had suffered from defective memory since. (This last detail was confirmed by his evidence). He was awarded £1,000. Sergeant Twomey swore that while going through a laneway he fell and hurt his knee. He was awarded £35. Constable Davis swore that a bullet hit his wrist watch and went through his coat sleeve. He was awarded £25. Constable Ryan swore that "at the end of the action he felt very nervous and was so still." He was awarded £25. In addition fourteen constables who also "felt nervous" at the end of the action although the enemy was "in flight" were given £25 a piece.

The facts of this engagement are contained in the following official report from the Officer in Command of the I.R.A. detachment in question:—

"On the night of the 1.2.21 the Column composed of 35 men and 2 officers occupied the house mentioned. It was as I stated our intention to wait until the night of the 2.2.21 to attack the Barracks.

At 3.30 p.m. on the 2nd inst. one of our sentries was fired on by a man in civilian attire (presumably a policeman). This was followed by bursts of rifle fire from three sides. The sea was the fourth. This was the first intimation I had that we were surrounded.

I immediately ordered all men to "fall in" in the yard, under cover of the out-houses which formed a square. Here they were immune from rifle bullets. I detailed off 8 men to fortify and occupy the front windows and brought 4 men to each flank. Each

party had strict orders not to fire until the enemy came to a point about 120 yards in their immediate front. During this time the enemy kept up a continual fire from about 300 yards and they were not visible.

The enemy must have been puzzled at their fire not being replied to and they started to advance in "short rushes." They became more puzzled as they reached the points selected to fire on them. Immediately on being fired on the enemy retreated in disorder and we followed them for a distance of about 400 yards towards Rosscarbery. Their forces numbered about 80 police and military.

Immediately on the retreat of the enemy forces we retired by sections in a northerly direction. We suffered no casualties, except one man slightly grazed in the left leg. We lost no rifles or any of our equipment and carried off our explosives (prepared for the Barrack attack) safely.

At 9.30 p.m. on that night I returned to Rosscarbery with a party of 8 men. We occupied a position about 150 yards from the barracks and commanded the barrack door. After waiting for an hour for some police or military patrols returning to the barracks, we opened fire on the barrack door and windows and continued it for about ten minutes, after which we retired. The police casualties were one seriously and two wounded.

During the day's operation the men acted in a calm and disciplined manner, whereas the enemy acted in quite the opposite manner. They seemed to act more as a mob than an army."

Commenting on the O.C.'s report of this affair the Director of Training writes:—

Note the two outstanding features of this defence. The first is the holding in reserve of the defenders fire, and then pouring in a volley at decisive range. We thus obtain the effect of surprise—"unexpected and terrible" in the words of Marshal Foch. Where every shot is made to tell the fullest results can be secured: Fire control is a decisive factor whether in the Defence as here or in the Attack as at Glenwood Belvoir, where the entire ambush consisted of two volleys from our troops.

Secondly, observe the *following up of an initial success*. This also applies to the Defence as well as to the Attack. The only difference is that in the Attack we begin by having the Initiative and continue to keep it, in the Defence we have to seize it and turn it against the adversary.

It is needless to add that only reliable and well-trained troops would be equal to carrying out an action of this sort involving as it did both self-control and readiness. Raw men, however willing, cannot do this. We know this to our cost: ambushes with every chance of success have been followed by an excitable recruit firing too soon.