

AN T-ÓGLÁC

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STILL FORWARD

We are glad to be able to congratulate the Volunteers upon the greater and more widespread activities to their credit during the past month in the guerilla warfare which is being waged in defence of our independence. Areas hitherto inactive have begun to do good work; everywhere, North, South, East and West the pressure against the enemy is being kept up, and his scheme of concentrating on the most active areas in the South-West is being defeated. But the pressure everywhere must be greatly increased to be fully effective. The offensive must be carried out vigorously and persistently all over the whole front. If this is done the enemy will require more men to deal with the situation than he can afford to spare at present. This is the point that should be realised by all. Every Brigade that is not doing its full share in the offensive and thereby helping to relieve the pressure on the points where the enemy is concentrated is failing badly in its duty to the devoted men in the gap of danger. Volunteer companies should not be satisfied with minor exploits like the capture of enemy mails or burning of unoccupied barracks, still less with mere police work; if they have organisation, skill and efficiency to do these things well they should also be well able to do bigger things and take a full part in the guerilla warfare.

A study of the war map published in our last issue will help to give Volunteer officers a clearer idea of the relation of their own share of the work to the military operations as a whole. It will be noted that large areas still remain almost entirely inactive. This is not as it should be. Our latest map, which will be published in our next issue, shows an improvement in this respect, but very much more still remains to be done. The inactivity of certain areas is due primarily to the lack of proper organisation, and that in turn points to a lack of officers imbued with the true Volunteer spirit; but there are many other causes. For

instance in some places which are almost blank on the war map a great deal of arresting criminals, closing public houses, suppressing poitin stills and the like by Volunteers is reported. This is all good and necessary work; but it looks as though in such places Volunteers were allowing police work, which is only a secondary duty, to monopolise their attention and divert them from what is their primary work and the real object of their existence—to wage war against the enemy with all the energy and skill at their command. It is no excuse to say that the enemy has evacuated portions of the country and that in those places the principal work for the Volunteers is to enforce peace and order. If the enemy has evacuated large portions of the country to concentrate in strong fortified positions, it is as the result of our offensive; and that advantage should be followed up. It is the business of Volunteer officers to set their wits to work and decide after a careful study of local conditions upon what can be done in their districts to keep up the offensive and harrass the enemy most effectively. What is feasible in some places is not feasible everywhere; and the men to be depended to carry on the work are not as well organised and trained nor as experienced in some areas as in the parts where the best work is being done; but everywhere something could be done. Occasional failures should not discourage Volunteers. In every war some failures must be expected and some casualties must take place, but our percentage both of failures and of casualties has been exceedingly low. Men who have done badly in their first appearance in action may prove efficient soldiers in their second action. We should learn from our mistakes. At the same time it is our business to go into action with the determination that we are not going to fail or make any mistakes. Every action taken must be carefully thought out beforehand in all its details and as far as possible every contingency must be foreseen and provided for.

The enemy's campaign of murder pillage and arson against peaceful citizens of the Irish Republic will not deter the Volunteers from striking against him again and again everywhere possible with all our strength. Rather it will nerve our energies and stimulate our zeal in the warfare against the cowardly brutes and their traitorous Irish associates. These burnings lootings, orgie of wild shooting, murders of women and children, are only symptoms of disordered nerves, broken-down morale and discipline, and a consciousness of defeat. For all these outrages they will pay dearly. The Irish Republic will exact compensation to the fullest extent. Meanwhile the Irish Volunteers will go on with their work as coolly and determinedly as ever, throwing all their energies into the perfection of their organisation and training and the carrying on of the guerilla warfare against the enemy everywhere in the most effective manner and by the most effective means at their command.

A SUCCESSFUL OPERATION

The capture of the post of Drangan, Co. Tipperary on the night of June 3rd—4th last, furnishes an instructing example of a successful operation.

Drangan as the crow flies, is about six miles North-West of Fethard and nine miles West by South of Callan. There is no other town of much size nearer than Cashel thirteen miles to the West—Thurles being fully fifteen miles to the North-West. In making arrangements for the attack the lie of these towns was taken into account with reference to covering the operation; besides the force which actually carried out the attack there were three covering bodies—towards Cashel, towards Fethard and towards Callan. The line of retreat was Westward in the Cashel direction and was patrolled. Due Southward towards the Anner—"at the foot of Slievenaman"—the nature of the country did not call for any protective detachments. The total force employed was 70 men and of these 40 were divided between the covering detachments.

The actual attack was carried out by 50 men of whom 8 had rifles, the remainder shot-guns and revolvers. The attacking force was divided into three positions—a storming party and two covering parties. The fortified barrack was situated on the South side of the road pointing North and the storming party made their attack from an empty house just alongside the barrack on the Eastern flank. One covering party was to take up a position in a yard across the road and the other was to work round to the South or rear of the barrack and cover the attack on that side. The remaining side of the barrack—i. e. the West side did not figure in the operation. The handling of the two covering parties was very faulty: there had been no proper previous reconnaissance which must have

been quite possible. There was delay on the part of the party working round in rear and the party on the North side of the road found that their hearsay good position was a trap. In short, the covering parties were not in a position to cover at all; and the storming party was left quite on its own as far as effective work went.

The storming-party attacked the roof in two places (1) The slates near the gable were smashed with a sledge and tin-can grenades and bottles of petrol were thrown in (2) gelignite was held on the roof with a pole until it exploded and broke holes in it. Paraffin and turpentine were then pumped on to the roof and into these holes and set on fire. The roof burned rapidly and when about two-thirds of it had taken fire the garrison of 11 men surrendered with all the arms that remained serviceable, 8 rifles and 3 revolvers.

The attackers certainly displayed an "imperturbable offensive spirit" and this was what won for them. But an encounter with a police patrol from the barrack early on endangered the whole enterprise. This resulted in an exchange of shots between the patrol and the front covering party and seems to have been quite unnecessary; and, of course gave the alarm to the garrison. This encounter was simply more faulty reconnaissance: the patrol should have been observed in time and let pass. Faulty reconnaissance seems also to have caused a delay at the start: the attacking force assembled to the West of the village at 12.5 a.m. and the patrol was met at 12.30 by the covering party moving into position. With proper reconnaissance and more care the several parties could have got to their action stations with much greater speed and less risk. We cannot repeat too often that for successful night operations previous reconnaissance by daylight is absolutely imperative. There was a second delay of three-quarters of an hour from the encounter with the patrol until the storming-party got to work in the empty house: these delays between them lost fully an hour—and besides giving the alarm greatly increased the danger of a relief force being able to come up. It took about an hour to start the roof on fire and the surrender did not take place until well after daylight.

The plan was good and the means available were turned to very good account. Also the carrying out shows in a high degree "an imperturbable offensive spirit and a uniformity of mind and feeling of duty that guarantees the resolute and steadfast action of everybody"—to quote General Bernhardt. But the attacking force could have made their task much easier by a fuller thinking out of details before hand, by thorough reconnaissance of the ground by day, by more careful scouting and also possibly by previous practice of night manoeuvres. With these they would have secured the advantages of surprise, have gained much precious time and altogether made their work far easier and safer.

EXTENDING OUR ORGANISATION

We find it constantly necessary in this journal to urge the more complete development of our military organisation. The aim of G.H.Q. is to have units spread as plentifully as possible all over Ireland—"the more the merrier," in fact. That this aim is perfectly correct is proved by a recent admission of Sir Hamar Greenwood, who stated in the English Parliament that it was very difficult to provide guards for all the points in Ireland that it was desirable to guard.

The fact that even now the forces of the English Occupation find it difficult to guard everything, should prompt us all to do our utmost to spread our effective organisation so as to increase their difficulties to the greatest possible extent. We must be in a position to slack at every point. Let us take to heart the saying of Frederick the Great, that "*he who tries to defend everything will end by defending nothing,*" and let us try and put the English into that position.

It is necessary for all our officers to look beyond their own neighbourhood and to realise that their activities have a widespread general effect. Nothing they do is isolated and if any district is slack then that slackness is not isolated either. It enables the enemy to mass at some other point—and at the present time he is trying to mass in the South-West. He must not be allowed to mass there—or anywhere.

There is still a wider aspect to this question. The Irish War of Independence is not the only war England is engaged in. She is fighting over half Asia against Arabs, Turks, Persians and Russians and must provide men, stores, and money for those operations. The plain fact is that England now has her hands full and is finding it increasingly hard to maintain her wars. Additional pressure on any one front makes their task more difficult on all the others. As the Great Elector said "Allies are good, but our own strength is better." We here in Ireland cannot guarantee that the English will be beaten by the Turks or Arabs, but we can guarantee that they will take no troops to Asia because they were safe from us.

Our system of Organisation makes special provision for the convenient establishing of small units over a wide area of country—by means of our outpost groups. Not only so, but our methods of Administration and Training have been specially designed to meet the existing conditions. Every Officer, every N.C.O., every private must realise that our whole system fits together—our Scheme of Organisation; our service journal, An t-Oglách; our Training Manuals; the practical training of our companies; our tactical action. G.H.Q. is not working in the dark; it is tackling its work with the "imperturbable offensive spirit" that is held up for the emulation of all.

Even in the less organised districts it is imperative to have this point of view, to develop a sense of the

importance of each district—even if only a dozen good fighting men are mustered in it. Every day in the newspapers can be read the story of successful enterprises carried out by a dozen men or so: the only thing necessary has been that the men were disciplined and efficiently led. Fitness for military work is not peculiar to any part of Ireland; what can be done in one district can be done in all by taking the requisite trouble. But the trouble must be taken.

Let the man who wishes to begin operations in his own area study carefully the instructions in No. 1 Handbook, the "Introduction to Volunteer Training." Training is now beyond all question easier than it was half a year ago, before the R.I.C. were penned into their fortified posts. Advantage is being taken of this fact, but the advantage must be pressed to the utmost. We can, and must, multiply enormously the number of outpost groups. Those who are inclined to be slack must be reminded of the words of the '98 ballad:

"For sure poor old Ireland would be free long ago
If her sons were all rebels like Henry Munro."

But he who is too lazy to be a soldier—whatever his good-will can never claim to be "like Henry Munro."

"THE PLACE TO OURSELVES"

"We have the place to ourselves" was the phrase used recently by a Volunteer from the country to a Staff Officer in Dublin: he meant that there were practically no enemy forces in his home area, and that was the reason why there were no successful enterprises to report from his part of the country.

This is satisfactory as far as it goes, but we must again point out that such a state of affairs affords golden opportunities for perfecting the Organisation and Training of local men. We must refer to the last paragraph of the "Introduction to Volunteer Training"—and especially to the last two lines: "War tests the military machine, but it is during peace that the military machine must be formed". It can be laid down definitely that no corps can be well enough trained: the best is not too good, and all are far from being the best.

Where "we have the place to ourselves" is just the place where we can spare time for Drill and for Field Training—in fact for that part of our life that gives the proper military stamp. Also for Bayonet-fighting, Grenade instruction and theoretical instruction of all kinds. Our troops in areas where they have not the place to themselves would give much for a similar chance of overhauling things and smartening up. Perhaps a time may come again when we won't have the place to ourselves in localities where our sway is undisputed now. If that is so we shall bitterly regret any present slackness or omission to increase our efficiency in such

areas. It is not enough to have no opposition—the aim must be to see that the opposition never comes back again.

But quite apart from that the country as a whole will benefit enormously if undisputed areas become the centres of intensified training and routine activity. Opportunities will occur of directly relieving areas that are the scene of actual operations, and it greatly lightens the burden of General Headquarters to have any area in a fully satisfactory state of training. The War of Independence will continue to sway to and fro, flaring up, intensively now here now there; it is necessary to be ready everywhere. Of the Great Frederick's troops it was said in that most crucial hour: "In this world it much becoms the brave man, uncertain about so many things, to be certain of himself for one thing"—and to enable his superiors to be certain of him too.

NEW ENGLISH CONCENTRATION IN DERRY

What is called "an important decision on the part of the War Office authorities" has recently been taken. Derry is to be made a Divisional Headquarters. The two main centres are to be Derry and Donegal; with a strong post at Lifford in a central position, commanding the railway junction at Strabane, and an aerodrome at Lough Enagh three miles North-East of Derry and half-way to the mouth of the Foyle.

This move of the English is a important milestone in our War of Independence, because it has been done against their will and as a direct result of the operations of our troops in Donegal. Hitherto the aim of the English has been to concentrate in the South of Ireland, hoping to be able to strip the North of Ireland. A Divisional Headquarters in Derry is a confession that they have failed in their aim. It makes a distinct strategic gain for our guerrilla warfare.

The case is exactly parallel with the Spanish War of Independence of 1804-14. In that case the French constantly sought to concentrate against the English Army on the side of Portugal in the West, but the ceaseless harrying of their posts and columns in the East of the country always prevented their being able to do so. The continual worrying tactics of the Spanish guerrillas pinned them and wore them down. Moreover the "Spanish Ulcer" as it was called undermined the French Empire and enabled Napoleon's armies to be defeated in Russia and Germany; we similarly are helping to weaken the English in their Eastern commitments.

This latest English move is a direct incentive to revived and increased activity by our troops in other

districts. We have no intention of tamely allowing a big concentration in the North-West any more than in the South-West; we are not going to change our tactics. On the contrary, we regard this as a proof that we are on the proper lines.

The Donegal terrain is most suitable for us and most unsuitable for the English whose heavy transport is badly suited to such a mountainous region. Besides, the weather gets worse the longer the locality of their troops in such a place. Henry and Thomas to develop their Organisation and Organization service, to improve their training, and above all to study and re-study the ground.

GENERAL NOTES

A secret order from an enemy Brigade Major at the Curragh addressed to officers commanding certain enemy troops was captured by Volunteers from a military dispatch rider. It contained the following which will be read with interest and instruction by Volunteers:

"It is possible that rumours may shortly be published making me the hero of the Irish Volunteers or the Irish Republican Army in offensive itself.

"In view of the extreme importance to secure evidence likely to convince a court-martial as to the rank, position and membership in the Irish Volunteers or Irish Republican Army of any known or suspected leaders of members.

"Officers commanding detachments will endeavour to secure such evidence and will be ready to arrest at short notice any members as above against whom evidence exists.

"Rapid action may be necessary to prevent the escape of suspects and escorts may be strong enough to prevent rescue."

An amusing example of an enemy officer's sense of truth was afforded by the evidence of Colonel Mills at an enemy "court-martial" in connection with the capture of enemy troops and a military lorry at Ballingearry. Colonel Mills declared that when the lorry broke down "they were attacked by 140 or 150 men armed with rifles and shot-guns and compelled to surrender." This statement is an audacious lie at the same time palpably absurd. But it would not do for Colonel Mills to confess that a fully armed and equipped enemy patrol yielded without an effort at resistance to a small handful of men armed only with a few revolvers.