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The Third Tipperary Brigade (1921-1923)

PART I—From Truce to Civil War

by an tAthair Colmcille, O.Cist.

INTRODUCTION

— Editor, *Tipperary Historical Journal*

An tAthair Colmcille O Conbhuidhe, a native of Clonmel (which made him a freeman of that city in 1989), is one of the most prolific writers, in both Irish and English, that county Tipperary has produced in the past half-century. His extensive output, to be found in books and in historical and religious journals, covers medieval Irish history, Irish religious history, devotional studies - but above all the War of Independence (1916-1923). Under the pen-name Colm O Labhra he wrote the seminal *Trodairí na Treas Briogáide* in 1955, and under his own name gave a detailed account of the military struggle in Tipperary in 1920 in the *Capuchin Annual* of 1970.

Over a period of 65 years this distinguished member of the Cistercian Order has painstakingly compiled, through interviews with the actual participants (now all dead), the story of the entire military campaign in County Tipperary from 1918 to 1923. From this major hitherto unpublished manuscript of some 75,000 words the *Tipperary Historical Journal* has edited the portion dealing with the period from the Truce (July 1921) to the end of the Civil War (April 1923).

It is proposed to publish this first-hand account of those momentous years in this county in consecutive annual instalments in the *Tipperary Historical Journal*. Part I takes the reader to the capture by the forces of the Irish Free State of the town of Clonmel during the Civil War. To facilitate serious students, it is intended to deposit the original unedited manuscript with the County Library in Thurles. It is also hoped to include, after the final instalment, a complete bibliography of the published writings of an tAthair Colmcille.

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The Truce was regarded by the Volunteers as a triumph - as indeed it was. By its guerilla tactics the Irish Republican Army had achieved what a regular army could never have achieved against the military might of Britain. It had forced the British to make a truce and to waive the preliminary conditions, until then insisted on, that the Volunteers should surrender their arms before there could be any negotiations.

The announcement of the Truce was welcomed by the people generally. Many thought recognition of the Republic was but a matter of time. The long nightmare period of terror was over, and people assumed that victory had already been won.

In many places bonfires were lit; these were extinguished by the Volunteers, who saw the necessity for restraint. The Truce might prove to be just a breathing-space before hostilities reopened. Meanwhile, the morale, both of the army and people, must be preserved, and discipline maintained by the Volunteers.

In the beginning the Truce was well observed by both sides. However, soon the Black and Tans committed many breaches of the terms agreed on between the two armies. Liaison officers were



appointed by both sides to ensure observance of the Truce and to fix responsibility for breaches.

The Chief Liaison Officer for the I.R.A. was Commandant Eamonn Duggan. Because of the special conditions prevailing in the martial law area of Munster, Commandant-General Tom Barry was appointed Chief Liaison Officer (I.R.A.) for that area. Sean Fitzpatrick, Brigade Adjutant, 3rd Tipperary Brigade, became Liaison Officer for South Tipperary.

At first the British Army observed all the proprieties, taking care to give Republican officers their titles. A change soon came. When Commandant-General Barry called on Brigadier-General Higginson wearing the uniform of an I.R.A. officer, Higginson refused to see him unless he appeared in civilian dress.

A similar situation developed in Limerick. There the Liaison Officer, Comdt. P. Barry, was so addressed by Col. Commandant Cameron in correspondence, and received by him in the New Barracks. Soon this changed and letters were address to "Mr. P. Barry". Recognition of the Irish Army was withdrawn.

The Irish officers were told that instructions had been issued by British HQ that British liaison officers were to deal with Irish counterparts only as civilians and as representatives of Mr. de Valera. The Irish officers then refused to deal with the British except in their military capacity, and Tom Barry instructed his liaison officers to cease co-operation with the British forces.

Eventually the difficulty was solved by an arrangement made by Irish HQ. Reported breaches of the Truce were investigated by the I.R.A. Liaison Officer, and a report sent to the Chief Liaison Officer in Dublin, who dealt directly with the British.

At the commencement of the Truce training camps were set up throughout Ireland to perfect the efficiency of the Army in the event of a renewal of the war. In Tipperary an Officers Training Camp was organised in Ballinard Castle, near Drangan. Commandant John Prout, later Commandant Denis Lacy's opponent in the Civil War, was appointed Training O/C at Ballinard, and officers from every battalion of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade attended the courses.

Another training camp was at Glenpatrick in Co. Waterford; this was a Battalion 5 Camp under Commandant Paddy Dalton ('Big Paddy'), O/C 5th Battalion, and was attended by the men of the No. 2 Flying Column and



Comdt. Denis Sadlier, killed accidentally before the Truce, buried secretly and exhumed and re-buried publicly after the Truce.

(COURTESY PIKE COLLECTION, CARRICK SOCIETY)

several others. A camp at Grantstown catered for the 4th Battalion, and one at Galtee Castle (later commanded by Prout) was in the 6th Battalion area. A camp for engineers at Rochestown was under Sean Cooney, O/C Engineers, 5th Battalion.

The Truce period was used in many places to disinter the remains of Volunteers who had been given secret burial. These were now re-interred with the solemnity due to men who had given their lives for Irish freedom.

One such ceremony was that of the re-interment of the former O/C of the 5th Battalion, Commandant Denis Sadleir, who had been accidentally killed by a comrade's rifle shortly before the Truce. His remains were removed from a temporary resting-place in Grangemockler and re-interred in the family plot in Drangan on 11 August 1921. That day was kept as a general holiday and a day of public mourning in Clonmel, Carrick-in-Suir, Cahir and Fethard.

High Mass in Grangemockler was attended by members of Clonmel Corporation, headed by the Mayor, Ald. Frank Drohan TD. The coffin was draped in the Republican colours, and Kilkenny War Pipers Band headed the procession, in which thousands marched.

A bodyguard of Comdt. Sadleir's fellow-officers of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade marched alongside the bier. Three battalions of Volunteers in military formation and a long line of horse-drawn vehicles and motor-cars completed the cortege, which took an hour to pass.

As the months went on, breaches of the Truce became more frequent and were not confined to the Black and Tans. A sensational shooting took place in Tipperary town on 28 September. A civilian (Patrick Corbett) was shot dead and a Miss Tierney, Volunteer Joseph Cahill and a Private Cooper of the Lincolnshire Regiment were wounded, by shots alleged to have been fired by two Black and Tans.

Comdt. George Power of Cork No. 2 Brigade, Liaison Officer for the district, visited Tipperary to hold an inquiry; this placed the blame for the shooting on two Black and Tans in uniform, who had opened fire without provocation. The British authorities concluded that the firing was a deliberate attempt by certain I.R.A. members (including Cahill) to murder two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

The event resulted in the arrest of Cahill by the British and his court-martial in Waterford on an attempted murder charge. Found guilty, he got penal servitude for life. However, since the Anglo-Irish Treaty had meanwhile been signed by both Governments, the sentence was remitted and Cahill released.

The first anniversary of the burial of Vice-Brigadier Sean Treacy (killed in action in Dublin on 14 October, 1920) was observed all over South Tipperary as a general holiday. Business in the towns was suspended for the day. Masses were said in all churches in the area for the dead leader, with army units attending.

In Killeacle (where Treacy is buried) the eight battalions of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade were represented at Mass and at the impressive ceremonies, Vice-Brigadier Dinny Lacy being in charge. Lacy and the commandants were in uniform. Units present were under the command of their own officers - 1st Battalion, Comdt. Jerome Davin; 2nd Battalion, Comdt. Sean Downey; 3rd Battalion, Comdt. Tadhg Dwyer; 4th Battalion, Comdt. Brian Shanahan; 5th Battalion, Comdt. Patrick Dalton; 6th Battalion, Comdt. Sean Prendergast; 7th Battalion, Comdt. Sean Walsh; and 8th Battalion, Comdt. Sean Kilmartin.

As the political negotiations dragged on, breaches of the Truce became more frequent and more serious, and a spirit of indiscipline grew in the I.R.A. Observers detected a growing militaristic attitude among Volunteers, and some officers provoked criticism by their aggressive attitude towards civilians.

In October 1921 the Army authorities found it necessary to warn Volunteers against adopting such an attitude towards civilians. This warning was contained in *An tOglach*, the official organ of the Irish Army. That it was necessary is clear from what has already been related, and will be even



clearer from events shortly to be recorded.

A glaring breach of the Truce occurred in Tipperary town on Monday 19 October, when a policeman was fired at and seriously wounded in a publichouse. That there was a growing laxity in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade in observing the Truce is clear from another incident early in November, involving the seizure of 70 rifles from British military hutments at Tipperary.

The rifles seized were in the East Camp 20 yards from the road, entry being effected by cutting through barbed wire entanglements. Beside the rifles, a box of bombs and quantity of ammunition and two Lewis guns were also taken.

Indignant at such a grave breach of the Truce, the British demanded the return of the missing articles from Irish GHQ. Negotiations for a Treaty, proceeding in London just then between representatives of both Governments, had reached a critical stage. Naturally this Tipperary episode placed the Irish delegation in a very awkward position; Irish GHQ were forced to take immediate action.

Frank Thornton, a leading officer of the Dublin Brigade, was believed to have gone down from GHQ to investigate the affair, and blame was fixed on the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. However, when ordered by GHQ to return the seized rifles the O/C 3rd Brigade refused, on the ground that the seizure was legitimate, not being an act of war. This overlooked the fact that among the terms of the Truce was an article agreed to by the Irish Army, which ran: "No interference with Government or private property".

The next serious breach of the Truce in South Tipperary occurred in Cashel, three days after the signing (on 6 December 1921) of the Treaty. While walking in the town at night, two policemen were fired at, one being seriously wounded. This shooting was the act of two men in civilian dress, seen by Fr. Duggan C.C. running up a side-street afterwards. Both Capt. Sean Fitzpatrick, Liaison Officer, 3rd Tipperary Brigade and his British counterpart visited Cashel to inquire into the matter.

The Dail Cabinet now issued a statement condemning the attacks on British forces, and directed the Ministers for Defence and Home Affairs to make every effort "to bring the perpetrators to justice". A statement was also issued by the Chief Liaison Officer, expressing the view that such deeds were not the acts of I.R.A. members, but those of cowardly individuals trying so to cloak their misdeeds that they would be interpreted as actions of the I.R.A.

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Following the signing in London on 6 December 1921, between representatives of the Irish Republican and the British Government, of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, a prolonged and acrimonious debate took place in the Dail over 13 days (three of them in secret session) before and after Christmas. Eventually on 7 January 1922, by a majority of only seven votes (64 to 57) of 121 Deputies attending, the Treaty, recognising Ireland's position as a Dominion of the British Empire, received Dail approval.

Immediately after this vote President de Valera and his Cabinet resigned, and Arthur Griffith was elected President of the Republic in succession to de Valera. A new Cabinet was formed, all the members of which had voted for the Treaty, and which was therefore pledged to work for the disestablishment of the Republic and the substitution in its place of the new Irish Free State.

These events in the political sphere had a disastrous effect on the Army, the morale of which had been much lowered during the long Truce period. To the split in the nation was now added a split in the Army. However, while the majority of the nationalist community was prepared to accept the Free State as the most that could be hoped for at the time, the majority of the Army was violently opposed to it. Moreover, Army leaders, especially in the South and West, made it clear that they were prepared to resist the implementation of the Treaty, by force if necessary.

The question of the Oath to the Republic now greatly agitated Volunteers; so inevitably the Army was drawn into this political controversy. It became clear that a section of the Army was prepared



to repudiate the Dail's authority. This section held that, by approving the Treaty, the Dail had exceeded its authority and, by violating its obligations to the Republic, had forfeited its right to the obedience of the Army.

Opponents of the Treaty also pointed out that constitutionally the Army was independent of the Dail, being under its own executive, and had only agreed to the Dail's authority when that body had become the *de jure* Government of the Republic, elected by the free votes of the Irish people. On the other hand, it was also argued that for two years the Army had been subject to the Dail and operating under the Dail Ministry for Defence, and that all Volunteers had taken an oath of allegiance to the Dail as well as to the Republic.

To those Army officers opposed to the Treaty the vital issue now was that of Republic versus Free State, or to put it another way, Dominion status versus sovereign independence. To accept the Free State envisaged by the Treaty was to them to violate their oath to the Republic, to surrender the independence of the nation and to accept the status of British subjects - precisely what they had been fighting against for three years.

Although the rank-and-file of the I.R.A. were undoubtedly Republican in sentiment and prepared to resist any attempt to subvert the Republic, a large section, including a majority of the GHQ staff, was ready to accept the Treaty as a stepping-stone to the Republic. The attitude of this influential group was stated in an article in the Army organ, *An tOglach*, in January 1922 shortly after the election of Griffith to the Presidency.

"Dail Eireann, the sovereign representative body to whom the people of Ireland owe allegiance, has by a majority taken a definite decision in a matter around which political controversy has raged . . . the result has been the election of a new President and Cabinet. The situation as far as the army is concerned remains unchanged.

"Our army remains the army of the Irish Republic, which . . . will continue until such time . . . as the Irish people at a general election . . . decide on some other form of government. The army will remain in command of the same officers . . . and any attempt to impair its discipline and solidarity by introducing political controversies into its work will be sternly resisted . . .

"The Irish Volunteers . . . established to safeguard the common rights and liberties of all the people . . . are the servants and defenders of the nation, and can never be made the organ of a party or faction . . . those in control of the army will tolerate no indiscipline, no insubordination or mutinous conduct, no intimidation of civilians . . . and . . . are prepared to take strong steps should the necessity arise . . ."

Reading between the lines of this article, one can see GHQ already preparing the rank-and-file for the substitution of the Free State for the Republic, and the merging of the I.R.A. into the new Free State Army soon to be set up. Stress is laid on the fact that "the people of Ireland owe allegiance" to "Dail Eireann, the sovereign representative body". However, the majority of GHQ staff when this article was written were members of a secret organisation which did not recognise Dail Eireann as the *de jure* Government of the Irish Republic.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.), to which they belonged - and continued to belong even after the Free State had been set up - recognised only one legitimate authority in Ireland until the Irish Republic was established, the I.R.B.'s own Supreme Council, whose decrees overrode those of the Dail. The army had been brought under I.R.B. control, and every effort was being made to see that effective control of the army would remain in the hands, not of the Dail Ministry of Defence, but of the I.R.B.

Many things in the *Oglach* article were admirable in theory - for example, the warning that any attempt to introduce political controversies in the army's work would be sternly resisted. However, the article overlooked the fact that, because of the circumstances in which the I.R.A. came into existence, it was not an ordinary military force.

The I.R.A. Volunteer of 1922 could not be expected to view the political situation as if he were



gazing on it from some remote planet. To him it could not be divorced from the military situation. A heated political debate had just concluded in the Dail on the Treaty, in which two GHQ members (one the Chief of Staff) had adopted a very decided attitude in favour of the Treaty, while another GHQ member had taken an uncompromising attitude in opposition to it.

In the Dail then were many soldier-deputies. Some favoured acceptance and others rejection of the Treaty, and during the Civil War which followed deputies fought on opposite sides. In such circumstances it was futile to speak of "no politics in the army".

Comdt. Séamus Robinson, TD for Waterford and East Tipperary and then O/C, the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, reminded the Dail that Volunteers had always held political views - that if they had not, they would not have been soldiers at all. They were not a national army in the ordinary sense, but a citizen army with political views as soldiers. In judging the situation arising in the army after the signing of the Treaty, one cannot lose sight of this fact.

The last paragraph in the *Oglach* article was a threat to those in the army refusing to acquiesce in the abandonment of the Republic. These included the overwhelming majority of officers and men in the martial law area in Munster. Most of the men in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade looked on language of the kind in the article as a threat, and decided to direct all their efforts to prevent disestablishment of the Republic.

That they acted rashly in the means they adopted cannot be denied. That they acted precipitately may also be admitted. However, that they acted in good faith, and in a sincere desire to preserve the independence of the Irish nation which they felt threatened by the Treaty, there can be no doubt.

Their methods were in some cases deplorable; but their motives cannot be questioned. That they were later prepared to give their lives for the principles they believed in is proof of this. History alone can vindicate or condemn their attitude and its results.

By the Summer of 1922 militarism had become rampant, a statement applying equally to both sections of the army. The country was moving into a state of chaos, and while the two parties wrangled in the Dail the military situation got beyond the Dail's control. In these circumstances the warring sections of the army found it more convenient to use military means to settle their differences. This was the beginning of a drift towards civil war.

With the majority of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade opposed to the Treaty, a proclamation against the Treaty was drawn up and sent to the Clonmel *Nationalist* for publication. When the editor refused to publish it, he was warned that his paper would be suppressed. He notified the Minister for Defence, and was assured that steps would be taken to prevent interference with his paper. In spite of this assurance, the *Nationalist* was suppressed by the I.R.A. and its machinery dismantled.

Meanwhile bands of armed men, taking advantage of the political unrest and the unsettled conditions, roved through the land, in many cases representing themselves as I.R.A. members. Murders were committed in the belief that the crimes would be attributed to the I.R.A. Republican police actively combatted these criminal activities, and in some cases found it necessary to proclaim martial law.

After the murder near Dundrum of John Barrer, a Protestant farmer, the O/C, 3rd Battalion of 3rd Tipperary Brigade, Tadhg O Duibhir, declared martial law in his area from Monday 30 January, 1922. The area concerned comprised the parishes of Knockavilla, Annacarty, Hollyford, Rossmore, Clonoulty and parts of Boherlahan. A proclamation stated, amongst other things, that anyone found in possession of arms without a permit from the O/C "will be liable to suffer the extreme penalty", that all public houses were to close from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. and that everybody was to remain indoors between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Evacuation of military and police barracks in South Tipperary commenced in late January 1922. Smaller country police barracks were first abandoned; in most cases the I.R.A. took them over. In late January and early February the police barracks at Bansha, Dundrum, Annacarty, Limerick Junction, Cahir and Carrick-on-Suir were evacuated, and the garrisons withdrawn to Clonmel and



Tipperary.

Smaller military posts were also evacuated and their garrisons transferred to larger barracks. Clogheen was evacuated on 25 January, and on 29 January British forces left Cahir barracks - the first major military post in Tipperary to be evacuated. Immediately after the evacuations of Cahir and Clogheen, local I.R.A. units of the 6th Battalion marched in; soon the Irish tricolour floated where formerly the Union Jack had flown.

Events now moved quickly. On the night after the evacuation of Cahir military barracks the magazine in Fethard barracks was raided by the I.R.A. and a large quantity of ammunition and two Lewis guns removed, the captured material being taken to Burgessland near Newcastle. This raid was clearly a flagrant breach of the Truce.

Soon after this raid Fethard barracks was evacuated and the 1st Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade occupied the building. This was quickly followed by the handing over of Clonmel infantry and artillery barracks, when friction developed between the Provisional Government representative and the Republican forces.

It was announced in the *Nationalist* that Clonmel barracks had been taken over by the I.R.A. in accordance with the arrangement with the Provisional Government. This statement led to a repudiation of any such agreement by Comdt. Patrick Dalton O/C, 5th Battalion in a letter published in the same paper on 13 February. Dalton's letter produced a reply from Staff-Capt. McKenna for the Government, asserting that the barracks had been occupied by him on the authority of the Provisional Government.

These apparently contradictory positions may be reconciled. It is certain that Dalton, in taking over the barracks, acted solely on instructions from his superior officers in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. It is equally certain that every barracks handed over to the I.R.A. at that time was handed over under an arrangement with the Provisional Government made by GHQ in Dublin, it being Government policy then to hand over barracks to local Volunteers, even where the latter did not see eye to eye with GHQ.

On 7 February the Comdt. of Tipperary No. 2 Brigade issued a proclamation bringing the 12 parishes of Drombane, Upperchurch, Inch, Ballycahill, Castleiney, Moyne, Templetuohy, Loughmore, Clonmore, Drom, Templemore and Killea under martial law because of outrages in the area. Curfew was introduced, and use of motor-cars during curfew hours prohibited except by permit.

Some days later the O/C 2nd Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade made a similar order for his area from 13 February, "owing to the numerous acts of lawlessness, destruction and commandeering of property". The area affected in this case included the parishes of Kilfeacle, Golden, New Inn, Cashel, Dualla and Ballyfowloo.

On 16 and 17 February 1922 the last detachments of British troops in South Tipperary left when the military hutments and barracks in Tipperary town were evacuated. The buildings were occupied by Republican forces and the tricolour hoisted.

Only three years earlier, in February 1919, the 3rd Tipperary Brigade had ordered British forces, under pain of death, to leave South Tipperary - an order derided by the pro-British elements in the county and denounced by the moderate nationalists as folly. Now, however, in February 1922 the British Army was gone, and the barracks once held by English troops was in the hands of Irish soldiers.

To finance a still unpaid volunteer army, a practice had begun in 1921 whereby levies were exacted in the name of the Republic, including seizures of goods in some cases. Now in 1922 this custom became irksome for the civilian population, and led to much resentment.

In February 1922 the official Army organ, *An tOglach*, stated: "Reports have reached GHQ . . . that levies are being exacted in the name of the Irish Republican Army in the Clonmel and Carrick-on-Sure areas . . . no such levies have been sanctioned by GHQ and . . . exacting of levies . . . from the civilian



population is entirely unauthorised". Following this reminder a proclamation was issued by the O/C of 3rd Tipperary Brigade, that from 19 February all seizures or commandeering of motors or goods in lieu of levy in the name of the I.R.A. from residents in the Brigade area were illegal.

However, one of the reasons for the continued exaction of levy was that the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, with all the other Brigades of the 2nd Southern Division (except East Limerick) had refused to accept maintenance from the Provisional Government, since they did not recognise that body's authority. Indeed, they went further in a proclamation:

"The setting up of the Free State Government is inimical to the Republic. A majority of the Dail and the GHQ staff . . . conniving at the creation of the Free State, the Government forfeited the allegiance of all citizens and soldiers. The Republican Army is determined to rouse the nation from its lethargy to resist the treacherous inclusion of Ireland in the British possessions. The orders and decrees of the Free State Government and headquarters staff have no binding force on the people".

This was the state of affairs when on 26 February a coup was brought off which dismayed the Provisional Government. This was a raid on Clonmel RIC barracks, which resulted in the capture of a huge quantity of arms and ammunition by Republican troops. The operation was carried out by men drawn from each of the eight battalions of the Brigade; men of Clonmel military barracks also took part.

The Clonmel garrison consisted of some 70 men awaiting demobilisation. The raid, near midnight on a Sunday, was carried out with the connivance of some of the police. The rest of the barracks garrison, however, were indignant at this flagrant breach of the Truce, which they had observed since the previous July. The police were lined up in the day-room awaiting roll-call when the raiders entered. Since the arms had been prepared for transfer to Dublin, they had no difficulty in gathering the spoils.

According to a British Government statement, the material captured consisted of 11 motor-cars, 293 rifles and guns, 273 revolvers, 45 shotguns, 324,000 rounds of ammunition, 4,247 cartridges and sundry small stores. According to Lieut. Sean Cooney, Engineering Corps, 5th Battalion, the material taken comprised 273 revolvers and pistols, 300 rifles, 3 Lewis guns, 200,000 rounds of rifle



Members of the Fifth Battalion, Third Tipperary Brigade — photograph taken during the Civil War.

ammunition, 300 rounds of revolver ammunition, a large quantity of bombs, grenades, bayonets and equipment, 3 armoured Lancia cars, 12 Crossley tenders and one armoured car. Either way, it was a big haul.

In the British Parliament, in reply to questions, Mr. Winston Churchill for his Government admitted that the condition of parts of Tipperary was a source of anxiety to the Government. He stated that representations had been made to the Provisional Government and that he was supplying that Government with means to assert its authority.

A further source of anxiety to both Governments was an ambush of RIC men in the main street of Tipperary town, as they were leaving the town in cars for Dublin for demobilisation. When attacked the police returned fire, the head constable being shot dead and four others wounded. One of these had to have a leg amputated and died. The police were relieved of their arms.

Three policemen were arrested in Dublin for complicity in the affair. That such an attack should have occurred when the RIC were being disbanded and during a truce period indicates the chaotic state of the country then.

As the split in the army developed, the Provisional Government began to organise a regular force, so that the Volunteers now began to be dubbed irregular. However, the IRA was still legally functioning under Dail authority, for the Provisional Government had no legal authority to raise an army.

The new regular force came under Provisional Government control. The new Dail Cabinet, appointed after the vote on the Treaty in January 1922, was handing over its powers to the Government, now becoming the real Government of the country.

Attempts made to organise the new regular force in South Tipperary met with little success; so the pro-Treaty forces decided to bring in strong garrisons. For this purpose they tried to get pro-Treaty units into key points such as Kilkenny, Templemore and Limerick. Soon a major crisis developed in Limerick city.

It had been arranged that British troops would evacuate the various city barracks there on 23 February, and it had become usual for barracks to be taken over by local units. Since the whole of the 1st and 2nd Southern Division (except East Limerick) were anti-Treaty, it became GHQ's objective to see that in future barracks would not be handed over to local units. Instead, men from pro-Treaty areas would be drafted in, to avoid any danger of more barracks falling into the wrong hands, from the Government viewpoint.

The reason for this policy change was that on 18 February, five days before the Limerick barracks were to be handed over, the O/C, Mid Limerick Brigade announced that his men no longer recognised the authority of the chief of Staff, Eoin O'Duffy, because "the aims of the head of the army and the majority of its GHQ staff are . . . to subvert the Republic, support the Provisional Government and make possible the establishment of the Irish Free State".

Capt. Hurley, Brigade Q.M., who was in favour of the Treaty, was ordered to organise a local pro-Treaty force; before he could do so, he was arrested by anti-Treaty forces. Pro-Treaty forces then entered the city and took over all the barracks, but one, remaining in British hands.

A situation now developed in which a jail, a hospital and seven barracks were held by pro-Treaty forces from outside areas, while reinforcements from South and West poured into the city in hundreds to strengthen the Republican troops. Leading hotels were occupied by them, among them units of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, a section of which (from Clonmel) was billeted in a mental home.

The position became so serious that the leaders in Dublin held a conference, after which Liam Lynch and Oscar Traynor (two leading anti-Treaty officers) travelled to Limerick to avert what threatened to be the start of civil war. After prolonged negotiations agreement was reached. All troops brought in from outside were withdrawn, and barracks evacuated were occupied by maintenance parties drawn from Mid-Limerick Brigade, from which the repudiation of the Chief of Staff had originated.



A general convention of the IRA, to have been held on 26 March, which had already been summoned by Comdt. General O'Duffy (Chief of Staff) was suddenly prohibited by President Griffith, who feared it would repudiate the Treaty. Preliminary brigade conventions that had been held to elect delegates showed that from 70% to 80% of the army were opposed to the Treaty, suggesting a decisive anti-Treaty vote at the general convention.

The Republican section of the army now decided to call the convention in defiance of the prohibition. The Minister for Defence then ruled that any officer attending this convention would lose his post.

On 23 March a manifesto signed by 50 senior officers summoned a general convention for 26 March. The convention, attended by 220 delegates from 49 brigades, re-affirmed allegiance to the Republic and set up an executive in which was vested supreme control of the army.

The new executive appointed an Army Council, headed by Liam Lynch as Chief of Staff. The officers and men of 3rd Tipperary Brigade gave their allegiance to the new executive. Ernie O'Malley, O/C 2nd Southern Division, was appointed Director of Organisation by the Army Council; his place as O/C 2nd Division was taken by Brigadier Seamus Robinson, who was succeeded as O/C 3rd Tipperary Brigade by Comdt. Denis Lacy. Comdt. Paddy Dalton, O/C 5th Battalion, became Vice-Brigadier, Comdt. Jack Lonergan succeeding as O/C 5th Battalion.

Divisional, Brigade and Battalion HQ were now moved to Clonmel military barracks. The new Executive made all matters regarding the army subject to military censorship before appearing in the press. A notice to this effect was served on all editors in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade area, and from 11 April 1922 newspapers in the area were to that extent censored by the IRA.

On 13 April the Republican Army Council set up a military GHQ in Dublin and occupied the Four Courts. The military situation now rapidly worsened, and it became clear that only a supreme effort could avert civil war. Negotiations between the two sections of the army had failed to secure agreement; so had efforts by the Dail.

Private talks took place between officers on both sides. A tentative agreement, an attempt by individuals to avert hostilities, was repudiated by Republican GHQ.

After accepting that "conflict of comrades is inevitable" if "the present drift is maintained", and "would leave Ireland broken for generations", this agreement suggested to all political and military personnel "a union of forces" on a three-fold basis - (1) "acceptance of the fact . . . that a majority of the people . . . are willing to accept the Treaty"; (2) the holding of an election to form a new Government "which will have the confidence of the whole country"; and (3) army unification.

On 10 May the 10 officers who had signed this document - Dan Breen, Tom Hales, H. Murphy, S. O'Hegarty, F. O'Donoghue, Sean Boylan, R. J. Mulcahy, Owen O'Duffy, Gearoid O'Sullivan and Micheál O Coileáin, were received by the Dail, and O'Hegarty addressed the House. A Dail Committee was appointed to consider the proposals. The result was the Collins-de Valera Pact, which held out the hope that the Republican movement might be re-united on the basis of the officers' agreement.

So it might, perhaps, had not the British Government intervened and made it clear that it would not tolerate a coalition Cabinet in which Republicans were represented. The Pact was broken by the pro-Treaty party, and the country rushed into civil war.

Meanwhile, the situation in the South was unchanged. Recruitment for the Free State Army was prohibited in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade area, and Volunteers believed to be proceeding to Kilkenny to join up were placed under arrest in Clonmel barracks.

Tom Carew, former Intelligence Officer to the Brigade, who had taken the pro-Treaty side, tried to organise a pro-Treaty force in its area. He was unable to do so, and the few South Tipperary Volunteers who joined the new force did so in Kilkenny, where they remained till the advance into South Tipperary of the Free State Army in the following August.

Towards the end of April 1922 trouble broke out at Annacarty in West Tipperary between local



IRA and pro-Treaty forces. The latter under Carew had occupied the local police barracks, which had been manned by men favourable to the Treaty.

On 29 April the building was invested by Republican troops drawn from all over the Brigade area, and at night they opened fire on the Free State forces. Carew and 30 of his garrison were wounded and on 2 May surrendered. All but Carew (who was taken to hospital in Tipperary town) were taken to Clonmel, and released after some days.

All the arms, ammunition and equipment in Annacarty barracks fell into IRA hands. The attacking party was commanded by Brigade Adjutant Tom Lynch and the surrender taken by Comdt. Michael Sheehan. Lieut. Sean Cooney was in command of a Clonmel contingent.

On returning to Clonmel the Republican troops were ordered to Kilkenny, where fighting had broken out between Free State troops stationed there and the local IRA force. Dinny Lacy took command of a motorised column of about 200 men. The first encounter took place at Cuffe's Grange; here a Republican machine-gunner had the Lewis gun shot out of his hand by a Free State armoured car manned by Joe Leonard of the Dublin Guards.

Hostilities then ceased under an agreement reached in Dublin between officers from both sides. The latter, including Dan Breen, Sean Moylan and Gearóid O'Sullivan came to Kilkenny, and in Hayden's Hotel in Callan the terms were put to the men and, as they allowed the IRA to retain certain posts in Kilkenny, were accepted by the latter.

Meanwhile in Tipperary (as elsewhere) labour trouble had broken out. The workers, who had been denouncing equally the militarism of both sides, set up 'soviets' all over the South. Among other undertakings Cleaves creameries and milk plants were taken over and the Red Flag hoisted.

When farmers refused to deliver milk to these creameries, workers in several Tipperary towns intimidated them into doing so and tried to prevent them selling butter to shops in the towns. Disorderly scenes followed, and in Clonmel conditions became so bad that the IRA detachment had to fire over the heads of the crowds before order was restored.

Comdt. Dan Breen eventually intervened in the Clonmel dispute, inviting both parties to a conference. He made proposals which, if accepted by the Dail, would form the basis of a temporary agreement. This was accepted by both sides.

Elsewhere, especially in Tipperary town, the Red Flag regime refused to come to terms with the creameries, and the dispute dragged on until the evacuation of the town by the IRA at the end of July 1922. By then the creamery had been destroyed by fire. The IRA were accused in some newspapers as responsible for the destruction of Tipperary creamery. However, this had been solely the work of the local Red Flag supporters.

— 3 —

Early on Wednesday 28 June 1922 British guns delivered to the Free State Government were placed in position around the Four Courts in Dublin, and at 7.04 a.m. the Free State Army commenced the bombardment of the building. The Civil War had begun. The next day Harry Boland TD came to Clonmel, seeking assistance. A column of 125 men, commanded by Michael Sheehan and drawn from every battalion of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, was sent at once.

On 5 July another motor column under Brigadier Lacy left Clonmel for Kilkenny to attack that city, then being used as a base of operations by Free State forces under Col. Comdt. John Prout. This latter column included some 40 men of the 1st Southern Division (Cork No. 2 Brigade) under Vice-Brigadier Dorney Regan, which had come from Fermoy military barracks. Other Cork officers were Capt. Dick Smith, Liam Kearns, Jack Lane and Lieut. Leo Skinner.

In the South all of the counties Cork, Kerry and Waterford, the greater part of Co. Limerick, the whole of South Tipperary and a large portion of Kilkenny were held by Republican forces. The city of Limerick was occupied by both armies; Thurles and Kilkenny were held by Free State forces.

The aim of the Free State Army at this period was to free Limerick city from Republican control,



while other columns were advancing from Thurles and Kilkenny towards Tipperary and Waterford. The aim was to turn the Republican flanks at Limerick and Waterford; they had also decided to land troops by sea in the rear of the Republican forces.

The column which left Clonmel for Dublin under Sheehan proceeded by Waterford, New Ross, Enniscorthy and along the coast to Blessington. Here they met the South Dublin Brigade columns who, having burned their barracks in South Dublin and Wicklow, had obeyed Comdt. General Oscar Traynor's order to go to Blessington to meet the Eastern and Southern Divisions moving towards Dublin.

The united forces advanced on the city under Ernie O'Malley, O/C Eastern Command. They got as far as Crooksling; there they got word from Traynor that fighting had ceased in Dublin, so they retired to Blessington. Here the Tipperary column divided into three sections. The first (under Comdt. Martin Breen) went over the Dublin Mountains to the city; of the 20 or so in this group, most were captured near Kingsbridge (now Heuston station).

The second section, some nine under Capt. Bill Tobin with a few local Volunteers, were placed in fighting positions north of Blessington. Four of them - Tobin, Ned Carrigan, Tom Condon and Bill Donnell - made a raid on Nass and captured a motor-car containing two Free State officers. At daybreak on 4 July Free State forces attacked the Republican positions, intending to take them by surprise. They were spotted and fighting lasted till Friday, when the Republicans withdrew through Glenmalure to Glendalough.

Reaching Glendalough on 9 July, the column billeted at Richardson's Hotel. A Free State column appeared, so the Republicans retired south to Aughavannagh, where they billeted at the home of the former Irish Party leader, John Redmond. The next day the local O/C, Bill Blake, procured motor cars at Tinahely and brought the column to Bunclody, where the men rejoined the main Tipperary column under Sheehan.

Sheehan's column (the third Tipperary section) had remained with the Eastern Command men under O'Malley and had proceeded south to Enniscorthy, taking the castle and the Free State barracks after over a day's fighting. War materials captured here included 28 rifles, one Lewis machine-gun, 13 revolvers, 2,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, 36 hand grenades and 10 shotguns.

After Enniscorthy the column took Ferns and Borris barracks, placing a garrison in Bunclody. At Ferns they captured 28 rifles, 400 rounds of .33 ammunition, 40 grenades and 37 shotguns; at Borris the booty was 10 rifles, 630 rounds of .303 and 11 grenades. The column now proceeded towards Waterford to relieve that city, then being besieged by the Free State forces under Prout.

Meanwhile, around midnight on 5 July Lacy's motor-column had left Clonmel. Reaching Callan in the early morning, it continued towards Kilkenny after a short rest. The men were in Crossley tenders, lorries and private cars, one lorry containing a ton of high explosive for demolition operations. Having circled part of Kilkenny city, the column retired to Cuffe's Grange; word had come that Templemore was threatened by an advance from Dublin, and Lacy was ordered to go to its relief.

The column took the Ballingarry road, and after a short delay proceeded to the Commons; Templemore was not entered. A halt was called at Templetuohy, where the people received the men hospitably and gave them tea in the village hall; the men were billeted in the district that night. On the next day, Tuesday 7 July, they moved towards Urlingford to attack the barracks there, held by a Free State garrison under a Capt. Holland.

On the way to Urlingford detachments were sent to occupy positions in the bog. One outpost, a Cork unit, captured four Free State officers. An outpost at Longford Pass bridge had a brush with Free State forces. A Crossley tender carrying Free State soldiers approached from Urlingford and was fired on; the tender was captured and one prisoner taken.

That night Urlingford barracks was attacked. It surrendered early next morning, Comdt. Tom Bellew's men distinguishing themselves in the attack, approaching to within a few yards of the



barracks to use grenades. All 22 defenders were captured, as well as 18 rifles, some revolvers and all ammunition in the building, which was burned to the ground.

The Republican troops now moved towards Longford Pass with their prisoners. A halt was made at Mary Willie's publichouse, where the column fell out, some going for drink. The transport, led by Mick O'Keeffe, turned towards Templetuohy, the leading driver, not sure of the way, asking a passer-by.

Suddenly a withering fire was opened by Free State forces concealed on high ground behind turf stacks in the bog. Some Republican vehicles had gone up the Templetuohy road before fire was opened. Those in these cars jumped out, seeking cover in the roadside cuttings; the wonder is that the entire column was not wiped out.

The Volunteers outside the publichouse were taken completely by surprise, but getting under cover they returned fire. Some men were in a small corrugated iron shed; bullets came whistling through this.

Brigadier Lacy showed great courage that day. Climbing over the wall, he came out on the road in view full, walking up and down with hands in pockets and laughing as bullets whistled around him. One prisoner shouted in admiration: "By God, Dinny, you are a man. I will do anything you tell me". Some of them even asked for guns to fight for the Republicans.

One of those in Regan's column afterwards described the scene. "The machine-gun was mounted on the bank behind us over our heads, and Lacy then ordered the gunner . . . 'Range your gun for 400 yards and fire nice and even . . . not to waste the stuff'. The machine-gun was firing over our heads . . . we had to keep down to avoid getting hit. If the Staters missed us there was always the danger that our own machine-gunner might get us.

"Two other things I remember well . . . One was Dorney Regan, our O/C, standing at the door of the pub firing away with his rifle. The other was Dinny Lacy strolling up and down the road with his hands in his pockets . . . while the road was swept by bullets . . ."

Lacy then called for Volunteers to drive away the cars, a dangerous task as they were on the bog road and the driver had to move up under intense fire with little cover. Each car had to be cranked, backed down the road to the cross and there turned under fire before it could be driven off. Not one man refused to go up under fire to get his car back; many were still in their teens.

Bill Quirke (later a Senator), wearing a steel helmet, started every vehicle. Lacy then called on the men to come out; all rose and went down the road. At this moment Paddy English of Rehill (K Co., 6th Battalion) was hit and died in a few minutes. Another man was wounded. When the vehicles were got out on the main road again, the whole column moved towards Ballingarry.

While these events were taking place in Tipperary and Kilkenny early in July 1922, Republican Field GHQ had been set up in the New Barracks in Limerick City. Negotiations began with the Free State commander Michael Brennan for a truce, and fighting ceased for a time. However, when the Provisional Government heard that its Limerick commander had agreed to a truce, they drafted fresh troops into the city and fresh fighting began that lasted about a week.

Fierce street fighting took place towards the end, but with the arrival of heavy guns from Dublin the barracks and other buildings held by Republicans could no longer be defended. The men then began to withdraw; all barracks held by them were burned and the city evacuated after dark, to the sound of exploding mines.

The Republicans' Field GHQ were now moved to Clonmel military barracks. The fight against the advancing Free State Army was directed from there and the Chief of Staff joined by Eamonn de Valera, who had been appointed Adjutant to the Director of Operations, Comdt. General Sean Moylan. When reports were received that Free State troops were concentrating in Thurles to advance on Tipperary or Clonmel, it was decided to occupy Thurles.

Tipperary, Cork and Kerry columns took part in the move on Thurles, Lacy's column, which had moved from Ballingarry to Killenaule, remaining there some days. Receiving orders to move on



Thurles, they proceeded by night; it was raining heavily as they marched.

The Corkmen also got orders to move on Thurles. From Killenaule they made for Horse and Jockey. They had some friction with the people of Ballingarry before leaving. On the morning of their departure some of them had indulged in looting, forcing shopkeepers to supply them with goods. When Lacy, a deeply religious man, heard of this, he was furious. Calling the Corkmen together, he compelled them at gunpoint to disgorge the looted goods and return them to their owners.

Leaving Killenaule on Sunday evening 9 July, the Cork column marched to Laffansbridge, where they halted briefly. They then continued to Ballytrasna, coming out on the main Cashel-Littleton road at Ashill, and there dispersing to billets. A relief party arriving from Fermoy about this time, some of the men left for Cork. From Ballytrasna the column marched to Littleton, and continued to within about three miles of Thurles. As they left Littleton a Kerry column arrived.

Thurles was now partly invested, and the combined columns attempted to occupy the town. The attempt failed dismally, partly owing to confusion which caused a Kerry column to allow itself to be surrounded and captured by a Free State column which it thought to be a Republican one. Many on both sides wore no uniform; those who did wore the same grey-green uniform, and were unable to distinguish friend from foe.

There was, however, another reason. The Republican columns, which had been trained to guerilla warfare, were unable to adapt to line fighting, and at this early stage of the civil war had no heart for the fight. Not until much later, when bitterness entered the struggle on both sides after the death of Michael Collins and the adoption of the Free State policy of executions, did the war really become bitter on the Republican side.

After the Thurles debacle Field GHQ were moved suddenly from Clonmel to Fermoy. This was due to panic, the Republican leaders apparently thinking that Free State forces would advance on Clonmel. De Valera, who had also moved to Fermoy, felt that the 2nd Southern Division commander, Seamus Robinson, was unfairly treated in being left in Clonmel to face the coming attack; he asked and received permission to return to Clonmel.

When de Valera returned to county Tipperary, he found that the barracks in Cashel had been burned and the town evacuated by Republican forces. This he felt to be a mistake and bad for morale. He decided he would hold Cashel and try to prevent further advance by Free State troops.

These were now advancing through Limerick towards Tipperary, and some from Kilkenny advancing through the Walsh Mountains had reached Waterford. They had not yet succeeded in occupying that city, as Republican forces had raised the bridge across the Suir. But on 26 July the portion of the city on the north side of the river was captured.

It was now decided to attack the Free State forces in the rear, with Tipperary, Kilkenny and Cork columns combining. Comdt. Lacy was given general command, with Comdts. Kennedy and Sheehan (Tipperary) and Comdt. Jim Hurley (Cork) holding sub-commands.

As these columns advanced through Carrick-on-Suir, Piltown and Mooncoin, they left small parties behind in each place to check any possible advance from the rear. A reserve of about 100 men under Comdt. Dan Breen in the Mullinahone-Windgap area was to move to Hugginstown. Hurley's men were to cut the Kilkenny-Waterford road to prevent Free State reinforcements from Kilkenny reaching Waterford, and so leave the Republican troops from Clonmel free to get in on the right flank.

Sheehan's column was posted in Mullinavat, while the Kilkenny columns contacted the Tipperary men at Dunkitt. Success depended on taking their opponents by surprise; it was essential that no large bodies of Republican troops should be known to be in the Waterford city vicinity, so the men were to move under cover of darkness and lie low by day.

However, Sheehan's column could not resist the temptation to attack a Free State convoy passing north through Mullinavat. Concealment was now no longer possible. Realising the danger of an



attack from his rear, the Free State commander moved some forces down-river and they crossed in boats at Faithlegg, two miles below Waterford. This move sealed the city's fate, and the Republicans had to withdraw.

They now retired to Carrick-on-Suir, destroying rail and river bridges on the way. The Cork columns retreated to Fermoy and Mallow, and in view of the worsening situation Comdt. Lacy was appointed to the Carrick Command. His objectives were stated by Field GHQ as hemming in the enemy in Waterford from the north and co-operating with the 1st Southern Division moving in on the south; interrupting communications between New Ross and Waterford and between Kilkenny and Waterford, both in the Mullinavat area and south of it towards Waterford city; and maintaining Carrick-on-Suir as a reserve base, preventing it from falling into Free State hands.

At his disposal Lacy had three flying columns under Comdts. Sheehan, Kennedy and Jack Killeen. He also had the Carrick Company and any other local company in his zone. As a general reserve he had the Nine-Mile-House Command under Comdt. Breen, the Cashel Command under Vice-Brigadier Regan and the Tipperary Command under Comdt. Dalton, with HQ in Tipperary military barracks.

By the time Lacy received his new appointment the Cork contingents were already evacuating co. Waterford. On 24 July the Waterford city and county forces had vacated their posts, leaving the city in Free State hands. In these circumstances Lacy could do little more than delay the Free State advance a little longer.

While in Waterford alone the Free State had 600 men, those under Lacy hardly exceeded 200. He was not even in a position to draw on all the nominal reserves, because by then Free State forces were advancing from Templemore and Thurles towards Cashel and Tipperary.

By 27 July 200 Free State troops were operating between Clonoulty and Goold's Cross in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade area. With such a serious threat on the Tipperary-Cashel front, both Breen and Lacy were directed to be ready to rush to Clonmel to support any part of their front that might be attacked. Lacy's reaction to this instruction is not known; but Breen noted on the copy of the letter received from Divisional HQ that he had no reserves left.

The Republican situation on the Tipperary-Cashel front was now becoming desperate. Killenaule and Ballinure barracks had been evacuated, the men retiring to Cashel, now held by a composite Cork and Tipperary force. Cashel was threatened by forces advancing from Thurles, which now occupied Golden village.

On Friday 28 July the O/C Cashel decided to attack Golden and surprise the Free State garrison. Three columns were to take part. One, of about 30 men under MacDonagh, was to enter by the Rockwell road. Killeen was to lead his column from the Tipperary direction and Regan to move in from Cashel.

However, the timing of the whole operation was bad. Killeen and Regan arrived late, so that MacDonagh had to attack alone. The attack was led by Ned Dalton of Powerstown, driving a Lancia armoured car manned by Jack Aylward with a Hotchkiss gun and by Larry Delaney, both of Clonmel. When being turned on the bridge the Lancia stalled, and the car ran against the parapet wall. With the car door jammed against the bridge, the crew had to evacuate over the sides - and into the Suir!

Suddenly a hail of machine-gun fire spattered the column; instead of being the attackers, the Republicans found themselves attacked. Free State troops had taken up positions to ambush them, and in a house dominating the road had concealed a machine-gun. This opened fire on the Lancia as it reached the bridge.

The Republicans now got under cover, and MacDonagh and his men opened fire to enable most of the column to get away. But several got into a field and could not leave without coming directly under fire; Jim Quirke of the 3rd Battalion and Tommy Kennedy of the 8th were killed.

When Regan's column arrived, it marched right into the position occupied by the Free State



troops, thinking they were the IRA. Nearly the whole column was captured, 26 being made prisoners. Regan himself escaped; when an officer called on him to surrender, he threw his gun into the officer's face, and jumping a fence got away. By the time Killeen's column arrived the fight was over.

With the capture of Golden, the Republican position in Cashel became hopeless, and the following Sunday (6 August) it was evacuated. The Corkmen retired to New Inn, where after some days they were sent back to Fermoy.

On Saturday afternoon 29 July Free State troops advanced from Golden towards Tipperary town. Bruree in East Limerick had fallen to troops advancing from Limerick city, and Kilmallock was said to be about to fall. The attack on Tipperary was led by Comdt. Jerry Ryan, styling himself Brigadier of the 2nd Tipperary Brigade, IRA. The fight raged all night, the Republican garrison retiring towards the Glen of Aherlow about dawn.

The garrison was commanded by Comdt. Paddy Dalton, Vice-Brigadier, former O/C, 5th Battalion; he had been sent from Clonmel to Pallas as Acting O/C, East Limerick, and transferred from there to the Tipperary command. After evacuating Tipperary town the Republicans formed a flying column and went first to Aherlow, then to Cahir and then to Fethard. Later they moved to Tullamaine and Clerihan, where the column was dispersed, the men returning to their own areas.

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Free State troops were now advancing on every front and gaining strength. People everywhere welcomed them, and volunteers poured into each town or village falling into their hands. Too late Republican commanders realised that their troops' attitude towards the people had defeated their own ends.

An attempt was made to remedy matters in an instruction issued by 2nd Southern Division HQ in Clonmel on 15 July. "Officers must constantly keep in mind the fact that we do want the people with us, and that they deserve to be treated properly by us. Our behaviour towards them should and will be guided if we remember that we are real soldiers - *not* of the Black and Tan type". But this came six months too late.

On 29 July Free State forces began to advance from Waterford towards Piltown. A great concentration of troops took place in Mullinavat, arriving by road and rail from Waterford and Kilkenny. Bridges in the area had been demolished by IRA columns; but no provision had been made to prevent them from being restored.

The Republicans were now fighting a losing battle; many of their leaders knew this. In a letter to this writer, Comdt. General Tom Barry stated that, when he took over from de Valera as Director of Operations, he knew he was taking over a defeated army. As far as line fighting was concerned, the IRA was defeated from the start; it never took the initiative, the leaders always thinking in terms of defence, but never of offence.

Lacy and Breen were now warned by the Adjutant General of Operations that Mullinavat would be used as a base against South Tipperary, and were asked to dispatch a section close to Mullinavat, so that their opponents would be hit hard if they tried to move out. The suggestion was made that mines on road and ambushes would, perhaps, delay the Free State advance.

However, by the time the two commandants had received these two latest orders it was too late for them to do anything. The order to Lacy was sent at 12.30 p.m. on 1 August. Another dispatch sent to Breen at 5 p.m. that day, and signed by Sean Fitzpatrick (Divisional Adjutant), has a footnote in his handwriting: "Free State troops (10 lorries) at Three Bridges about two miles outside Carrick". This explains why no troops were sent to Mullinavat by Lacy or Breen; Free State troops had left there at 8 a.m.

All Lacy could now do was to order his men at Piltown to retire to new positions between there and Carrick-on-Suir. This new line stretched from Three Bridges, on the main Carrick-Waterford



road (near where the Lingaun joins the Suir) through Tinvane to Cregg on the Carrick-Kilkenny road.

Lacy's force at Three Bridges totalled about 100. Two other Tipperary columns under Breen held the Mullinahone-Windgap-Nine Mile House sector. These columns, under Comdts. Tom Kearns and Tom Bellew, numbered 72. A Kilkenny column under Breen also operated here under Comdt. L. Condon, bringing the total force under Breen to 96. In case of a Free State break-through, the Kilkenny men would retire into Co. Tipperary or Kilkenny; the Tipperary columns were to retire towards Clonmel.

The Free State forces, numbering about 600 men and equipped with field pieces, trench mortars and machine-guns, advanced on Carrick-on-Suir through the hilly country of South Kilkenny. They returned to the main road at Piltown, already evacuated by the Republicans. Besides Prout's force advancing from Waterford, another 200 advanced from Kilkenny under Comdt. McCarthy.

On Wednesday 2 August fighting commenced at Three Bridges; it continued during the day along a front roughly semi-circular in shape, following the bend of the Lingaun river. During the night there was a good deal of sniping, and next day fighting raged with great intensity until the afternoon, when the IRA retired and Free State troops entered Carrick-on-Suir.

During the fight for the town an IRA party holding Tinvane House gave great trouble. Finally, a raking fire was directed at the house by troops reinforced by an 18lb. field gun. The wood near Gregg House, also occupied by the IRA, came in for attention from this gun too. A determined effort by Lacy to turn the right flank of the Free State forces failed. The men engaged in this were heard by Free State soldiers shouting "Up Cork" and "Up Tipp"!

Against such a formidable force, superior in numbers and equipment, the IRA wisely decided to retreat. Free State forces from Kilkenny moving through Nine-Mile-House and Windgap were delayed long enough to allow the main Republican body to withdraw in safety from Carrick-on-Suir. When the columns holding the Nine-Mile-House sector withdrew, the way was then open for the Free State Army to enter Carrick-on-Suir.

Early on Tuesday morning 8 August Free State troops advanced in two columns towards Clonmel. They had received many recruits in the Carrick area; during this march there were almost as many men in civilian dress as in uniform. Free State commanders were always able to put fresh men into the field, while the same small group of exhausted men had taken part in nearly every fight on the Republican side.

Moreover, on the IRA side it was not possible to provide regular reliefs for men becoming exhausted. Sheehan's column, which left Clonmel for Dublin back on 29 July, was still fighting before Clonmel on 8 August, and had been in action continuously since the outbreak of the Civil War.

In many IRA commands there were insufficient men even for the number of rifles available, and in some areas desertion became frequent. Moreover, as Free State troops advanced many arrests were made of known or suspected Republicans, reducing the potential reserve on which the IRA could draw.

From Carrick-on-Suir the Free State troops advanced, not by the main road, but by Ballyneale and Ballypatrick. This (Prout later stated) was because they knew the road was guarded, and partly mined with bridges blocked. IRA forces had taken positions at Kilcash and Ballypatrick to fight delaying actions.

It had already been decided to evacuate Clonmel, as its defence would involve heavy street-fighting, with damage to property and loss of life. The 2nd Southern Division HQ had moved to Cahir. Breen had his Kilkenny columns on the eastern slopes of Slievenamon, between Kilcash and Toor. A Tipperary Brigade detachment occupied the historic old castle at Kilcash, to use as an observation post because of the extensive view it gave of the Suir Valley.

When their opponents came within range men on top of the castle opened fire. Lewis and



Thompson guns, as well as rifles, were used on both sides; soon the hills echoed to the sound of heavy firing, mingled with the booming of the field gun bombarding the castle. A direct hit was obtained, and the Republicans withdrew.

The main bodies of opposing forces made contact at Ballypatrick. There was heavy fighting for half-an-hour, two prisoners being taken by the Free State. Confusion was caused as most of the Free State troops on the right flank were in civilian dress, and some Republicans mistook them for Tom Bellew's column.

An encircling movement attempted on a Republican column at Ballypatrick failed, the column retiring in the direction of Lord Ormonde's Lodge, where there was good wooded cover. Fighting raged till nightfall. Then the Free State troops billeted for the night at Ballyglasheen, while the IRA withdrew under cover of darkness to Kilmore and Powerstown, to make a last stand before evacuating Clonmel.

The following morning (9 August) Free State troops advanced by Templetenny, moving round the base of Slievenamon towards Thorney Bridge. Here an IRA outpost at Stokes's house was surprised; but the seven Volunteers fought their way out. Early on Wednesday morning Clonmel police and military barracks were set on fire, the columns of smoke being seen by advancing Free State troops.

The last delaying action of the IRA took place near the railway line at Redmondstown. Troops advancing from Kilmore came under heavy IRA fire from a hill to the south. Here Corporal Jack Kelly of Clonmel, of the Free State advance guard, was killed. Forced to retreat, Free State troops tried a flanking movement, but had to fall back a second time.

No further advance was made until the Free State field gun subjected the Republican positions to continuous shelling for some hours; even then there was no frontal attack. However, a column under Comdt. Tommy Ryan set out under cover parallel to the railway, and succeeded in reaching the outskirts of the town.

The main body of Republican forces had withdrawn into the town, columns that had been fighting since the start of the war being sent back to their own areas by Lacy. The only column now left was the 5th Battalion, which fired the last shots at the advancing forces, who entered Clonmel between 9 and 10 p.m. on Wednesday 9 August 1922.

The Free State troops divided into three columns and entered by three routes. One under Ryan, advancing along the railway, had almost reached the bridge over the line (east of King St.) when a Lancia car of the IRA opened fire. The second column entered by Horse Pasture Road, and the third by the racecourse.

Advancing along Kilsheelan St., the third column contacted the IRA rearguard; a brisk exchange of shots followed. A Free State machine-gun party got into the workman's plots near Davis Row and opened fire on the Lancia, now covering the IRA retreat. The car capsized and had to be abandoned; the crew got away with a machine-gun.

While this was going on the last men of the Republican garrison were marching out of the town over the Gashouse Bridge. As the Free State forces advanced along the Mall, Jim Nugent, the IRA machine-gunner, lay for some time on the bridge firing back towards the Mall. The retreating Republican forces numbered 70 men all told.

