

Castle Barracks on fire, 21 July 1922. Photo by Robert Mitchell.

(Limerick Museum)

the Staters, relaxed and enjoyed themselves. They had started the rumours. Some people fished the Abbey River from Mathew Bridge to Baals Bridge. Their weighty catches of trout, eel and peal helped to vary their diet. In 1922, the last known shoal of mackerel came up the Shannon with the tide.

During the conflict there was a tacit agreement that no shooting should occur between ten at night and ten next morning, but this agreement was not rigidly adhered to. Both parties fired on the romantic principle, better to have fired and missed than never to have fired at all.

The result of this joyous carefree shooting was that bullets were flying in all directions. Because of this erratic shooting, every window facing a line of fire was covered by a loosely hung blanket, which deflected random bullets. These blankets were now removed. The streets and squares were thronged with spectators watching games of Gaelic soccer and Gaelic rugby played by true Gaels who, so far, with courage and humour had endured three weeks of target practice against them. The game then called Shillelagh was not played in the ancient city on this day of non-aggression.

Towards dusk all those fishermen and spectators were warned to keep away from the Abbey River. They were told that a fleet of angling cots loaded with armed men might come sweeping down the river from the Island like the spear-armed Vikings of long ago. Some people demurred, pointing out that as the Staters held the railway bridge crossing the Shannon and controlled the Abbey River from that point to where it joined the Shannon again at Mathew Bridge, it was impossible for the Diehards to escape from the Castle Barrack by the Abbey River. Those who protested were informed that all precautions must be taken. As the British had almost spoon-fed the Diehards with guns and ammunition, it was possible that the British had also given them an armoured

boat capable of navigating the Abbey River at high tide. In that non-technical age, there were many people who accepted that simple explanation.

As the day wore on there was an exchange of views between the three barracks. Drove of men got through the enemy lines and reached the Castle, the Ordnance and the New Barracks. Those intrepid men carried despatches. The carrying of despatches was an important function before and during the Civil War. Many thousands of men received pensions and medals for carrying despatches during that period.

The summary of those despatches was – Limerick must be excluded from the joys of the Republic. The Ancient City studied in the Arts of War must be abandoned to its fate. To this end every form of transport was used to remove all military stores from the three barracks. It was agreed that, by transport or by trot, the Diehards would advance into the towns and villages of County Limerick; there in the open fields and under the open sky they would stand and defend the Republic. Should the Staters dare follow them, they would have to advance in the open like men and not like tricksters breaking through walls of cellars and making flank attacks without giving due notice of their intentions. When these plans became known to the citizens, they applauded the noble sentiments and laughed at the brave conceit.

On the night of Thursday, 20 July, the Staters had their usual number of men manning the barricade. All other men were bedded down in moderate comfort, resting before the morrow's big push. With chronometric exactitude the sentries on the barricades noted a strange red glow or false dawn in the sky at 1.30 am. The officers and men were roused from their sleep and scouting parties were sent beyond the barricade. They returned with the news that all three barracks were in flames and that the Diehards were

advancing into County Limerick. As it was a dark cloudy night, it was assumed that the Diehards would need the light of the burning barracks to light them on their way.

It was and is the custom to celebrate the first day of May by lighting bonfires on the previous night in honour of the pagan deity, Beltane. As those fires had not been lighted on the appointed day, some people assumed that the burning of the barracks was a belated act of homage to Beltane and thus was this night called Bonfire night. Men in uniform cannot run away from combat and conceal themselves without earning the scorn and contempt of those of whom they seek sanctuary; armed civilians can happily do so with impunity and, because of doubts as to their status, receive humane consideration. Later they may volubly defend and prove the heroism of their actions.

The armed forces of the Republic had left the city. Should the Staters exercise imprudent haste in pursuit, they would be splendid targets against the background of leaping flames from the burning barracks. They exercised prudent caution and sent out patrols to prevent the unauthorised removal of property from unoccupied buildings and rested for the night. The Staters had no ambition to pursue a night time will-o-the-wisp or vanishing army.

The thunderous noise of unsilenced lorries moving from the New Barracks, the shouts of command of the sentries patrolling the streets, as well as the smoke and crackling noise of the flames from the burning barracks, aroused the citizens, who flocked onto the streets.

All of these events occurred on the night of Thursday, 20 July 1922.

On the morning of Friday, 21 July, while the three barracks were still smouldering, a man armed with a two gallon tin of petrol entered the New Barrack by the gate in the iron railings above Edward Street and set on fire the military hospital, which had escaped the flames of the night



New Barracks on fire, 21 July 1922. Photo by Robert Mitchell.

(Limerick Museum)

before. On coming out of the gate, he was set upon by some angry citizens and would have been kicked to death but for the arrival of a patrol of Staters, who saved him from mob violence.

Wounded military prisoners are usually confined in military hospitals to protect them from themselves or from the violence of their associates. Because of the burning of the military hospital, the Staters took over a wing of the city workhouse in which to treat their own wounded and their wounded prisoners. Because of this use of the workhouse hospital, some of the Staters guarding the hospital were shot dead in preventing the rescue of some prisoners, who were likewise shot dead. From this incident, it is clear that patriots can create a lot of misfortune for themselves and others.

In their retreat from the New Barracks, the Diehards passed over Ballinacurra Bridge on the west of the city, where a demolition party awaited the passing of the last of the companies before blasting the bridge. The blasting party was asked by the Captain of one of the companies: "Where are the Prisoners?" On being informed that the prisoners were still in the detention barracks, he hurried back to the city and had the prisoners released from the burning buildings. This man then returned to his home in the city and was arrested later in Dublin city. His errand of mercy was known and saved his life.

Without the knowledge of this man, the prisoners were marched to Victoria Barracks in Cork city. On the three day journey to Cork, the prisoners were kicked, cuffed and beaten with the butts of rifles by their captors. The memory of the insolence which they endured remained

with them until fifty years later when the last of them died, aged seventy years.

On the unresisted take-over of Cork city by the Staters, those prisoners, and others to the number of three hundred, were released and were foremost in the pursuit of their former captors. From this time on, an increasing degree of animosity and viciousness became apparent between the contending parties. The history of the Civil War changes from the nature of a protest march in retreat to a hard core of resistance to the advancing Staters. The Christian doctrine was inverted to read: Do unto others as they have done to you, which is the most natural response in any pagan society.

This predictable mood of vengeance may cause dismay and horror to all good Christians, but it must not cause surprise, as those Irishmen had been urged to wade through their brothers' blood in defence of the Republic.

Now that the city was deprived of the pleasant company of the Diehards, a general cleanup of the city began. Land mines were removed from the Diehard-held barriers across the streets. A trap mine buried at the castle gate was exploded, but despite precautions, two men were injured. All barriers across the streets were removed and trenches filled in. Shops and stores were cleaned up and any guns found were given up at William Street Barrack. Roofs were examined for dead bodies and some wounded men hiding in their homes were removed to hospital.

The Corporation maintenance staff was doubled and repairs to the sewers and public utilities were affected, so that within a week the city was somewhat present-

able. It was estimated that the total cost of the destruction in the city amounted to almost a quarter of a million pounds.

All old men and women who had lost their rheumatic pains and aches during the fighting now had their rheumatic pains and aches miraculously restored to them. Bedridden invalids who had left their beds and became spry and active during the shooting now had a relapse and, under doctors' orders, returned to bed and stayed there. The tall-hatted medical profession resumed their picturesque and profitable rounds of visits to the chronically ill.

All units of the Staters in and around the city were organised for leisurely pursuit of the vanished army. It was felt that a delay in pursuit would lessen the numerical strength of the warriors, many of whom might head for home rather than shorten their lives by indulging in any more foolhardiness. Placards were posted around the city asking for volunteers to join the army. Wireless operators were particularly requested to join up because, due to the cutting down of poles and wires, the telegraph and telephone services were not operating outside the city.

When the Army was organised, an advance was made on Patrickswell, which was taken in a few hours. When so many of the Diehards were running behind each other and behind walls to positions of attack, it was inevitable that some of them would get shot. The total casualties in Patrickswell were a balanced three a side, with over a dozen wounded. The take-home or pay packet for the Staters was over sixty prisoners, who objected to the five-mile walk to the city jail, but their objections were overruled.



Looting at the Ordnance Barracks, Mulgrave Street, 21 July 1922.

Photo by Robert Mitchell.

(Limerick Museum)

The attack on Adare was a flank attack across country, and not by the bridge into the village. This bridge, like many others, was destroyed, but the Diehards had a guard posted to prevent the Staters repairing it and crossing over the River Maigue. While the Diehards were banging away at the Staters, a train of wagons with a company of men entered the railway station in their rear. Some of the new arrivals moved up the riverbank to the road bridge and found the post deserted. A lorry with the necessary planks moved up from the background and the bridge was repaired.

A moving target is a provocative invitation to be shot at; the results are often fatal. With so many men running hither and thither and falling here and there behind any available cover, it was inevitable that some casualties should occur. The round up at Adare produced over seventy prisoners, who were sent to the locomotive works in closed wagons. From the "Loco" to the jail is a mere two hundred yards walk, so that the prisoners did not suffer undue hardship and were not fatigued by their fifteen-mile train journey. They were given an excellent supper, after which they rested. Their next train journey would be over a year later, when they were released from internment. Many more prisoners could have been taken, but the Staters were too tired to go in pursuit. The opinion was expressed that those who had fled from sweet Adare had a long hungry road in front of them before they sat down to their next meal.

In the post-siege handicap or race to the south, Bruff was a walk-over; there was no opposition. On approaching Kilmallock in extended order, several volleys were fired by the advancing Staters and the garrison in the town retreated to Ashill Towers. The garrison in Ashill, fearful that the Staters might enter the fortress with their retreating comrades, closed the doors against them. With the continued advance of the Staters against Ashill, those inside the fortress sought to get out, while those outside sought to get in. Utter confusion prevailed until the Staters shelled some of the walls and relieved the situation. With several holes in the walls, the congestion around the

exits was eased and the doors were opened. There was a general exodus from the fortress, some taking to the Cork road, while others, who were strangers to that locality, walked into the approaching Staters and were crowded into lorries and taken to Limerick jail.

Bruree is a little village in the wilds of beyond. It is located ten miles north of Charleville, Co. Cork, and can be described as a scenic hole in the ground. Unlike Kingwilliamstown in the barony of Duhallow, Co. Cork, which was founded in a barren roadless wilderness in 1832, Bruree has an ancient history, being the burial place of kings in ages long ago.

The modern ill-fame of Bruree lies in that it was the homestead of the Gubbins. John Russell Gubbins of Bruree, Co. Limerick, with an address in London and in Manaus, Peru, South America, was a director of the Peruvian Amazon Company, registered in London. The object of the company was the obtaining of rubber from trees and to this end whole tribes were exterminated in a brutal bestial manner. Blackmail, forgery and death by torture were some of the devices used by the servants of this British-registered company against all who sought to expose their dreadful crimes. The fairest and comliest of prostitutes from Europe were attracted to Manaus by the fabulous rewards of service.

The atrocities committed by the servants of the company in the jungles of Peru were the subject of an enquiry by the British government with the co-operation of the Peruvian government. The chairman of the commission of enquiry sent out by the British government was the Irishman, Sir Roger Casement, who had exposed somewhat similar atrocities in the Belgian Congo some years earlier. Within six years of Casement's exposure of the Peruvian atrocities, he was executed by the British for attempting to land arms in Ireland. During Casement's trial, readings from forged documents were freely circulated in order to blacken Casement's character and make his execution acceptable to the public. At that time in 1916, few people associated the forged diaries with the Peruvian Amazon Company and Bruree, Co. Limerick.

As the Staters advanced into Co. Limerick, a small force was left in Bruree, as it was an ideal hideout for lawless elements to combine their forces. Several hundred Diehards, who had fled from Limerick city and places in the county, converged on Bruree and attacked the place. Even as the Diehards attacked, a force of Staters who had been in pursuit of the Diehards arrived in Bruree ahead of them and reinforced the garrison.

The Battle of Bruree was a balanced affair of equal numbers in opposition. The Staters had the armoured car, Danny Boy, and the Diehards, who were well dug in in the village, had the cumbersome, double-turreted, lumbering battleship on wheels, the Hooded Terror. The battle started with both cars opening fire on their own positions and then chasing each other around the village. While the Hooded Terror was splendid in reverse, Danny Boy had the advantage of superior mobility in forward gears. The first burst of fire from Danny broke the timber on many of the Staters' Lee Enfields and put the holders flat on their backs out of the line of fire. The crew of the Hooded Terror, firing on their own men, caused panic, flight and shouts of treachery. The Hooded Terror retired from Bruree and many miles away, running out of petrol, was run off the road and abandoned. Because of the lack of petrol, the car could not be set alight.

In one of the forward bursts of speed, Danny Boy was well beyond Bruree and heading towards Limerick. The driver, feeling that a good run was better than a bad stand, reached the New Barrack in record time. The crew explained the position of affairs in Bruree, and urging the need for reinforcements, returned to Bruree.

Every man in the New Barracks, including two fat cooks but not the two lone sentries on the gates, were crowding into a lorry and two cars and heading towards Bruree. The total force of fifty men, which included two commandeered horses, reached the outskirts of Bruree and left the cars deployed in extended order. Each man had three bandoliers of ammunition totalling one hundred and fifty rounds and, firing continuously from the hip, reached the village and within half an hour a total of ninety-five prisoners were taken into lawful custody. Because of their slower speed, the two dragoons on horseback arrived at Bruree later but were in time to assist in escorting the prisoners to Limerick jail, which they reached at nine that evening. The prisoners were tired after their long walk from Bruree and were welcomed to the hospitality and rest from their warlike cares and patriotic endeavours.

A few more towns and villages in County Limerick were occupied without resistance and garrisoned with local volunteers. Because of the planned and leisurely advance on those Diehard strongholds, the time was now 10th August in the fourth siege of Limerick.

With the continued advance of the



Looters on Mulgrave Street outside the Ordnance Barracks, 21 July 1922. Photo by Robert Mitchell. (Limerick Museum)

Staters across Co. Limerick, many hundreds of volunteers joined the army. Some of those volunteers were animated by a sense of grievance because of some injury suffered from the Diehards. Others were moved by a feeling of relief from four years of gun terror and were determined to safeguard their new-found liberty to move and speak without the threat of a gun in their ribs. Some of these volunteers remained in the town in which they had enlisted, while others were sent to Limerick and billeted and uniformed in the Strand Barracks.

When over three hundred men were collected in the Strand, they were sent to the Curragh camp in Kildare for a three days course of training and firing practice. From the Curragh they went to Dublin and boarded a boat for the sea-borne invasion of Cork and Kerry.

Within a week, another two hundred men were uniformed and drilled in the Strand. Those men were then marched to the docks and boarded the paddle-steamer, *Mermaid*, and sailed for Fenit near Tralee in the Kingdom of Kerry. This sea-borne invasion of Kerry was called Operation Puck.

In history, in legend, in hearsay and in tradition, it is known that the Milesian race led by Queen Scotia landed near Tralee and that in the first battle for possession of the country, Queen Scotia was slain and was buried in Scotia's Glen near Tralee. The Milesian armada must have landed near Fenit in an unopposed naval operation.

In Operation Puck, the landing of the Staters from the paddle-steamer, *Mermaid*, was a repeat of an historic event of four thousand years earlier. Like the invasion of Queen Scotia, the landing of the Staters

was unopposed. This landing at Fenit, Operation Puck, was the first naval operation of the newly-founded state.

As the army advanced into the south, recruits were continuously taken on in the line of advance. Most of those recruits remained in the area in which they joined, and the Staters were thus well informed of the political fervour in any area. All those recruits were uniformed with supplies from Limerick. Some of them were armed with rifles and ammunition captured from the Diehards in the various engagements. No man was acceptable as a prisoner without his gun and ammunition. Men surrendering without those two items were easily encouraged to find them if they wished to be accepted as prisoners and enjoy the hospitality of Limerick jail.

An unsolved mystery surrounds the origin of those thousands of British Lee Enfield rifles captured from the Diehards. Unlike the Wizard of Oz, who romped with joyous benevolence because of the wonderful things he did, the Wizard of Wales, David Lloyd George, had murder by the throat. The Tans and Auxiliaries were the joyous creations of that superior statesman's mind. During the Civil War, the Welsh Wizard was credited with having connived in the arming of the dissident Diehards on the acceptance of the Treaty by the Dail.

Another story of the origin of those Lee Enfield rifles was that all the military hardware came from a British naval vessel which was evacuating military stores to England. It is stated that this British naval craft, *Radnor*, was pursued, halted and boarded at sea by a handful of men armed with revolvers and forced to unload her

cargo of Lewis guns, rifles, explosives and ammunition at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from where they were distributed around the south of Ireland.

An armoured train, consisting of two carriages with steel plates fitted on the outside as well as around the engine, made a daily patrol to and from the blasted railway viaduct at Mallow. A guard of thirty men travelled on that train. A box-like armoured car fitted with railroad wheels patrolled the Dublin line to Nenagh. Despite these patrols, the lines were often cut, or another bridge was blasted, so that travel by rail was uncertain and dangerous. It was not unusual for trains to be set alight and sent into Limerick flaming.

A railway transport officer had an office at the railway where intending travellers gave their names and addresses and the purpose of their journey. They were then given a permit to travel by rail. By this means, dead or injured were easily identified in the event of a derailment or blasting by land-mine, which was part of the policy pursued by the Diehards – "destruction and terror to make government impossible."

A wireless station was set up in the New Barracks and in many of the towns in the south, so that in the event of an attack on any post, help could be summoned from another post.

It was not permitted that the army should hold the various posts in slumbering, slothful ease. Foot patrols were sent out and occasionally a combined operation of patrols from many towns converged in one area to search for dumps of arms and explosives. Many columns of thirty men walked many times for three months on a hundred mile circuit. The expected time of

arrival of these patrols at their destination in the evening was notified in advance so that, should they fail to arrive on time, it could be assumed that they were under attack. When they arrived on time their dinner awaited them in the local hotel. Next morning after a hearty breakfast they walked another thirty miles or so before they again sat down with their legs under the table.

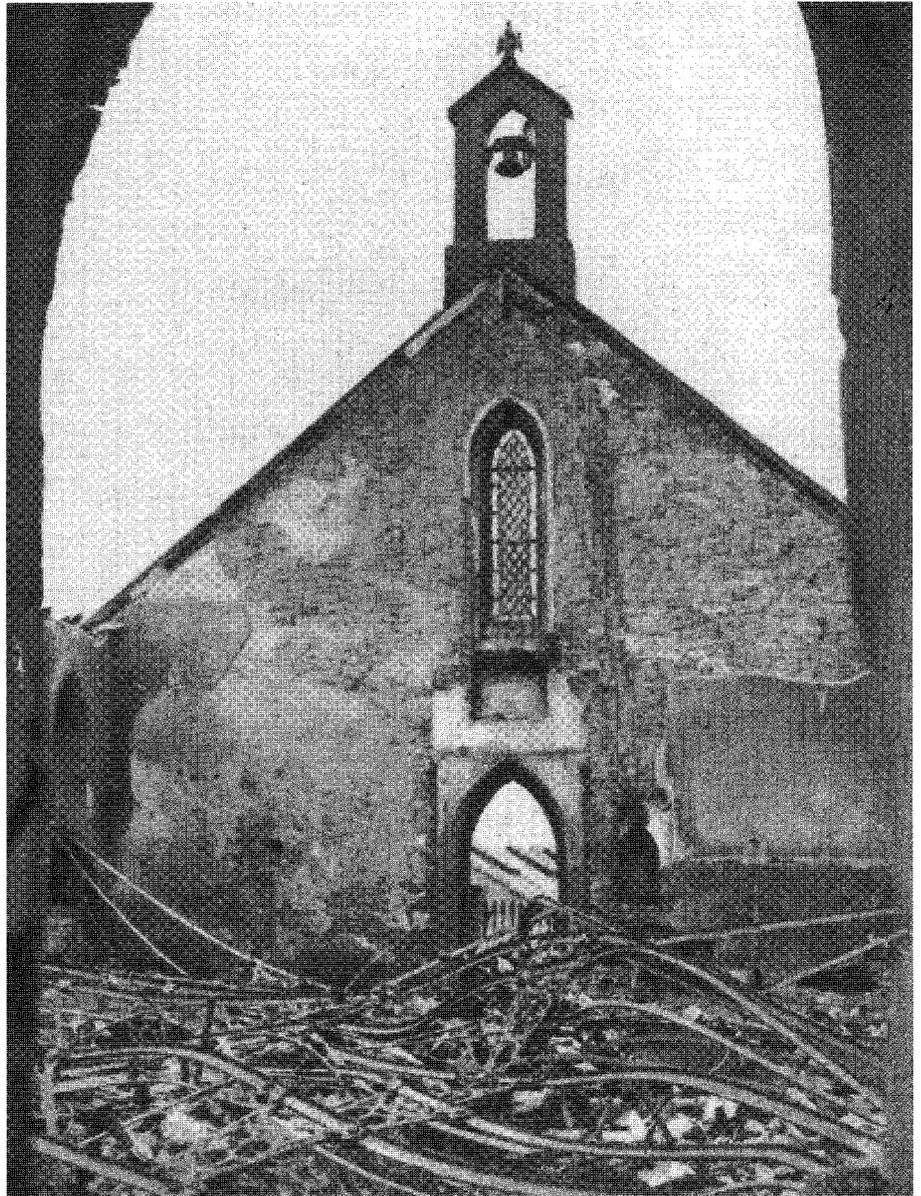
Following the success of the first naval operation of the State in the sea-borne invasion of Kerry – Operation Puck – a special company was formed in the New Barracks. The company was billeted in H-block, which, with G- and the Wireless block, had escaped burning. Two Lancia tenders and an armoured car were always standing by in the barrack for their use. The company of about one hundred men was created as a kind of praetorian guard and was held in readiness in case any post within fifty miles of the city should defect, or be attacked, or for any other emergency. The company maintained a guard in the Post Office in Henry Street, directly opposite Field General Headquarters, Southern Command (FGHQ).

The ostensible reason for their presence was to guard the GPO, but the real reason was to cover FGHQ in the event of an attack on that post and to take suitable action should any of that garrison defect and try to burn the place down. Verbal instructions to the Post Office guard were: not to fraternise with the men of FGHQ, even if met on the streets when off duty, and at night anything seen on the roofs, whether cat or Christian – shoot it.

On August 11th, a dozen men left the New Barrack at noon en route to Ennis, Co. Clare. Near Clarecastle they were blasted off the road with a land mine. Three men were killed and the rest were injured. This was the first land mine attack on the Staters. Over a hundred more land mines had yet to be exploded against the Staters before land mines became unpopular as weapons of war and their use ceased abruptly.

A lorry with several tons of food and ammunition left the New Barrack at seven am and, because of detours and broken bridges, arrived in Mallow, Co. Cork, at 1 pm, taking six hours for the forty mile journey. On arrival in Mallow, the three-man escort was given a reinforcement of thirty men in three tenders, the armoured car, Slievenamon, and a pilot car, a Model-T, leading, three hundred yards in front of the lorry. At 2 pm, the convoy left Mallow for Millstreet in West Cork, twenty miles distant.

Because of detours and trees cut down across the road, which had to be examined for trap mines, the journey took over four hours. When the pilot car saw an obstruction on the road ahead of them, the pilot and the convoy halted. The escort in the tenders took to the fields on both sides of the road in extended order and advanced towards the danger point, looking for ambushers or a pair of wires leading to a two hundred yards vantage point. On the road being cleared, the cars



Burnt out church at New Barracks, 21 July 1922, from the Illustrated London News, 29 July 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

moved on and picked up the escort. On arrival in Millstreet, there were then three hundred men in the village. They bedded down for the night in lofts, in cabins, hay barns and outhouses.

At seven am next morning, the whole column of over three hundred men left Millstreet to walk the twenty miles journey to take Killarney, scenic capital of the Kingdom of Kerry. Their route would pass through Kingwilliamstown, built in 1832 in a trackless desolate waste, where there was neither house nor habitation nor track of a mountain goat, hare or rabbit.

The column was followed by lorries of food, tenders with cooking facilities and Sean McKeon's blessing – the Hail Glorious Eighteen Pounder. The convoy was followed by a Red Cross lorry rigged up as a field hospital with twenty Red Cross orderlies walking behind. The lorry was a moving plea for prudence and a reminder that, before nightfall, some of these men might have their heads shot off. A rearguard of twenty men strolled along two hundred yards behind the convoy. Beal na Blagh and the death of Michael

Collins was twenty miles and ten days distant.

This advance on Killarney, with the sea-borne landing at Fenit and Cork city, was part of a three pronged attack on the Kingdom of Kerry. In all, a total of one thousand men took the Kingdom, but it took another two thousand to hold it. This, then, was the background in Limerick city and West Cork when Michael Collins arrived in Limerick to review the troops.

An attempt was made to form a Pals battalion from the wealthier sons of the city. They were offered the standard rate of three shillings and sixpence per day. [Page of P.J. Ryan's typescript missing here]

By the end of August the Guest Master or Governor of the county jail found himself with a full house and almost with standing room only for new arrivals. His guests chafed at their inaction and at the restrictions on their liberty. They pined for the great open spaces and longed for the simple pleasures of home-cooked food and home-made cake, such as mother makes. As many more guests were expected, it was decided to remove the present

incumbents and to give other and more deserving arrivals a rest from their patriotic labours.

Five hundred of the prisoners were marched to the docks and embarked on the passenger ship, SS *Arvonía*, which left on the tide. The exclusive upper deck of this passenger ship was reserved for the escort of sixty men. The lower deck and steerage were given over to the non-fare paying passengers, who were expected to rough it.

This odyssey of the *Arvonía* must not be confused with the voyage of the SS *Lady Wicklow* or with the SS *Slievenamon*, which also carried prisoners on the Gulf Stream cruise. The *Arvonía*, old in age when a ship was not considered old unless creaking at the rivets and her bilge pumps working overtime, sailed slowly down the Shannon. Because of her decrepit engines and extreme old age, she kept close inshore so that, in an emergency, she could be run ashore and grounded on some convenient beach. She moved at the slow speed of seven knots, so that the journey to Dublin, which should have taken a snappy two days, was extended to over a week's sunshine cruise around the southern Irish coast. All day and every day, the green Isle of Erin with its fair hills and beaches was in sight to provoke a pride in patriotic endeavour. Any prisoner on board the *Arvonía* blessed with good sight and permitted to climb the mainmast, where the national flag floated in the sunlight, could see, ten miles out to sea, units of the British Navy on patrol, guarding the Irish coast. Looking inland, he could see 'Valleys of green and towering crag.' Those on board, not being blessed with visionary foresight, could not know that those 'valleys green and towering crag', as well as those sandy beaches, would one day become the exclusive property of aliens, with the benign approval of their Republican masters. Providence concealed from them the future national shame, when the peasants would huxter and peddle the bloodstained land to the highest bidder, with the sale confirmed by the super-patriots. The *Arvonía*, sailing south on the Gulf Stream with the sunshine all day and starry skies at night, moved slowly on with the stately grace of a dowager taking a last fond look at her domain, before heading for the scrap yard.

The ozone-rich air of the Atlantic enlivened the limbs and excited the minds of the guests on cruise. Old men of thirty smiled at the antics of juveniles of twenty and less, who frolicked and dashed around like children at play. This exuberance of spirit was tolerated by the escort on the upper deck, who liked to see their captives enjoying themselves.

Some prisoners, skilled in art, were blessed with enquiring minds and, desiring to test the buoyancy of the many lifebuoys on deck, threw some of them overboard. Satisfied with the proven buoyancy and seeing them being carried towards the coast, other prisoners joined in the fun, writing "With love to all" on the



Burnt out buildings at New Barracks, 21 July 1922. Photo by Robert Mitchell.

(Limerick Museum)

white canvas surface stencilled with S.S. *Arvonía*. The captain and crew protested against the loss of buoyancy, the escort threatened to start shooting and the use of lifebuoys as a postal service stopped.

The *Arvonía* also stopped and the crew, in boats, spent almost four hours collecting the wandering lifebuoys, which were making a lively race towards the shore, with the wind and tide in their favour. It is well known that the captain and crew of a ship are always happy to risk their lives and ship pandering to the whims and caprices of carefree passengers; such diversions make life at sea so interesting. Had these lifebuoys reached the shore, their discovery would have caused alarm and fears for the safety of the *Arvonía*. Many ships would have been diverted from their course in a widespread search for survivors from a ship presumed to have been lost at sea. The longest journey must end somewhere, sometime. Columbus, following the sun and sailing west, bumped into a land mass and discovered the continent of America. The *Arvonía*, sailing a planned course, reached Dublin Bay and anchored there. The engines were at rest, but the bilge pumps were still working. Most of the prisoners were bronzed fit after their enforced cruise. About one hundred of them were seasick, sick of the sea and sick of patriotic fervour. These were taken ashore in launches and sent home to Mother. This was better than sending messages written on lifebuoys. All other prisoners remained on board for a fortnight while industrious tradesmen, working overtime, prepared simple accommodation for them at Gormanston Camp in County Meath, far from their homes in the sunny south.

All the prisons in Ireland and Britain are built more or less to a standard plan and are administered in the same routine manner. To get from a cell out into the prison grounds requires six keys, three of them held by a warder and three master keys held by a principal warder for the three locks from the cell to the prison yard. A minimum of four warders is watching the whole routine by day and by night. There are no side doors or wicket gates in

the prison walls. The main gate and the door to the Governor's house are the only exits from any British-built prison. Anyone claiming to have escaped from prison with the use of one key and one warder is a humbug. This statement can be confirmed by any ex-prisoner.

The thousands of prisoners held in the internment camps and in the county jails could obtain instant release by signing on the dotted line to cease all hostile acts against the State. This simple provision required no keys and enabled the State to keep down household expenses. The fewer the prisoners, the less it cost to guard and feed them. Prisoners received parcels of food with homemade cake made by mother. No attempt was made to smuggle in a key in a cake, as all cakes are sliced before being given to a prisoner so that any messages or keys would be detected.

By the end of September, the Staters had a light hold on most of the larger towns in the country, while some villages endured the rigours of military rule capriciously enforced by the Diehards. A shopkeeper might be invited to a Staff dinner by the local Brigadier and his ten-man brigade, and find himself eating the food taken from his own premises at gunpoint. He might have further hospitality pressed upon him and his ruffled feelings soothed with - "Do have some more of this best Limerick bacon. I can recommend it, the flavour is excellent."

Recruits were being accepted into the army in increasing numbers. Many of those recruits felt that, while their sympathy with the ideals of the army was a splendid thing, their presence in the uniform of the army was better. Recruits could join at the nearest army post, where their credentials would be examined and, if accepted, they would remain in that post for the duration of the Civil War. Those recruits would, in turn, assist in the examination of other recruits, whose pretensions of loyalty to the State was suspect. Despite these precautions, treacherous infiltration into the army

resulted in some posts being attacked and surrendering without a shot being fired. When later captured, such infiltrators were tried and executed.

To sustain the interest of readers, the modern historian must unfold a tale of love. Any Stater lured by love and venturing outside the town in which he was stationed was found shot the next day. One such man survived six revolver bullet wounds, and related the details as an amusing comedy. 'Better to have loved and lost.'

Although the army grew in strength and popular esteem, the burnings, looting, ambushing and loss of life continued. Mitchelstown Castle and its contents, valued at two million pounds, went up in smoke. That beautiful piece of railway architecture, the railway viaduct at Mallow town, was blasted into rubble. On the third of October 1922, the Government issued a proclamation offering an amnesty and pardon to the enemies of the State if they would cease their hostile acts against the State. It was an all-embracing document and, though written in legal jargon, it was almost tearful in its offer of mercy.

This offer of clemency by the Government was interpreted as an admission of weakness. The words 'Military Court' and 'punishments' were assumed to be mere idle threats by a weakling government unable to inflict punishments.

A devil's orchestra of violence followed the publication of the offer of amnesty. Anyone with a gun and a grievance felt free to indulge his hate, greed or malice. The Government waited a month and then, by the authority of the Dail, military courts were set up. The only practical punishments which the courts could inflict was the death penalty, as a sentence of a term in prison was meaningless to a man already in prison or internment.

In one town, a sentry of the National Army was shot dead by a man dressed in the uniform of a Roman Catholic priest. The culprit was later captured and executed. In an attempted escape bid from prison, six Staters were shot dead with revolvers smuggled into the prison. Those involved in the affair were tried by court martial and executed.

The execution of anyone found in possession of arms commenced in November 1922 and continued until April 1923. A man could shoot several people in the presence of witnesses, but was not charged with murder. Such a person was charged before a court martial with unlawful possession of arms, and if found guilty, was executed. In this way, questions of motive or intent did not arise. It was claimed that those persons before the courts had acted and were inspired by the purest and most patriotic of motives. This plea of patriotism may have been a consolation to the relatives of the hundreds of victims of their patriotic endeavours. Those patriots were given the opportunity of discussing the matter with the victims of their patriotic zeal. The firing squads implemented the verdicts of the courts martial and Dail Eireann.



Free State soldier pointing to a Republican mine at New Barracks, 21 July 1922, from the Illustrated London News, 29 July 1922. (Limerick Museum)

SAORSTAT EIREANN

To all whom it may concern

1. Certain persons arrayed in arms against the State in an attempt to defeat by force the will of the people have created a state of armed rebellion and insurrection, in the course of which the lives of citizens and soldiers of the State have been taken, their liberty violated and vast quantities of public and private property plundered and destroyed.
2. The Government, with the sanction of Dail Eireann, has charged the National Forces with the task of suppressing the rebellion, of restoring peace and order and the rule of law, and of securing to the citizens full protection of life, liberty and property, and for the better carrying out of this task, the Government and Dail Eireann have sanctioned and approved the exercise by or under the authority of the Army Council of certain powers, including the power to set up Military Courts, for enquiring into charges against persons alleged to have participated in the said rebellion and the acts aforesaid, and to inflict punishment in respect of such charges where proved.
3. The Government, however, knows that many such persons have been forced to participate in such actions against their will and better judgement, while others have come to realise that they have put their hands to the ruin of their motherland, and the Government, moved by the hope of restoring peace without further bloodshed and loss, has, therefore, decided that an opportunity be offered, even now, to those who are willing to throw in their lot with the majority of their countrymen to withdraw from this rebellion with immunity to themselves.

KNOW THEN AND IT IS HEREBY ANNOUNCED AND PROCLAIMED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Every person who is engaged in such insurrection and rebellion against the State as aforesaid, or in such armed opposition to the National Forces as aforesaid, or who has been guilty of any offence against the State, directly arising out of such insurrection, rebellion, and armed opposition as aforesaid, and who on or before the 15th day of October, 1922, voluntarily delivers into the possession of the National Forces all firearms, arms, weapons, bombs, ammunition and explosives, and all public and private property now unlawfully in his possession, and quits all lands or buildings unlawfully occupied by him, and who on or before the 15th day of October, 1922, voluntarily ceases to take part in, or aid or abet such insurrection, rebellion, or armed opposition, shall be permitted to return unmolested to his home, and to every such person we hereby offer, assure and proclaim a FULL AMNESTY AND PARDON for all such insurrection, riot, rebellion, armed opposition and offences as aforesaid.
2. Every such person may deliver any such firearms, arms, weapons, ammunition, explosives and bombs, and any such private and public property as aforesaid, to the Officer Commanding the nearest military position, or station, or to any such person as shall be nominated by him.

Published at Dublin this 3rd day of October 1922.

Signed on behalf of the Government of
Saorstát Eireann
Liam T. Mac Cosgair
President of Dail Eireann.

POST OFFICE

Prior to the departure of the British, six men had been appointed to the staff of the Post Office as "established" officers. They had been appointed over the heads of the existing staff, to whom they were unknown. Their presence was endured with resentment until the second week of September, 1922. By that time the Staters held a precarious hold over most of the country, but little was needed to upset or destroy the balance of power. In this event, the British would have been welcomed back as Angels of Mercy. On the 11th September, the Post Office workers in Limerick went on strike. They demanded the removal of the six men and, while they were on strike, it was thought expedient to seek also a rise in pay.

The six men continued in office and maintained a limited postal service. They paid out the old age and British Army pensions. They sorted the mail and sent it out of the city. For this work two small Post Office pick-up trucks were used. They were painted the distinctive Post Office red with the royal crest, G.R., painted out. There was no telegraph service, neither was there local delivery of letters. Firms and individuals could call to Cecil Street for their mail. As a safety measure, no parcels were accepted. Because of the strike, the wildest rumours could circulate around the country without contradiction or confirmation.

Officers and men in the army might be tempted from their allegiance by the most slanderous stories and tales of Staters loss and Diehards gain. The stated motives of the strike were different from the real purpose. The strike was a political act to embarrass the Government. It was, in effect, an act of sabotage against the State. In this context it is reasonable to ask: Were the men animated by hate of the newly created State, or by servile obedience to their Union leaders? Were they moved to act by a sense of allegiance to the British Crown?

All of these men had been lately servants of the Crown, subject to the rules and regulations of the British Postmaster General. They were paid an adjustable and rising scale of pay and could look forward to a pension on retirement. They were subject to a discipline which, through the years, might have imbued them with a sense of allegiance to the British interest.

Though resident in Limerick, not all of them were from the city. Some were from other parts of the country. They might deride the country and its ways and yet feel no sense of pride or concern for the city in which they made their living.

With the signing of the Treaty, there was established a Provisional Government of Ireland. One of the first acts of the Provisional Government was to overprint some stocks of British stamps with "Rialtas Sealadach na hEireann" (Provisional Government of Ireland). Later again, other stocks of stamps were overprinted "Saorstát Eireann" (Irish Free State). The Minister of Posts was J.J. Walshe, a Corkman.

IRISH POSTAL STRIKE

Statement issued for the information of our Fellow-Citizens by the Joint Committee of the Limerick Post Office Staffs.

The strike of Irish Postal Officials is justified on the ground of a reasonable grievance which other means have failed to remove.

REASONS why we are compelled to strike:—As the result of our fight in last March we won from the Post Office Commission of Inquiry the "cut" then threatened, and the award of the Commission was to be retained until an Irish cost of living figure was **agreed upon** (vide par. 10 to Post Office Commission Interim Report). The Government cost of living figure is **not an agreed one**. It is the production of the Government, and it is nothing more than a perversion of economic facts.

In justification of its index cost of living figure the Government quotes prices of commodities that no Irish wage earner can obtain from shop-keepers. Here are a few quotations:—

FOOD.		Prices in June, 1922.	CLOTHING	
		s d	£ s d	
Beef, per lb	-	1 1½	Women's Clothing	3 16 4
Mutton "	-	1 3½	Men's Tailor-made	
Bacon "	-	1 7	Suits	- 5 12 7
Milk (fresh, per quart)		4 ½	Men's Boots	- 1 2 9
Eggs (1st quality, per doz.)	-	1 5 ¾	" Shirts	- 6 4

RENT, per week, 5s. 2d

Upon figure like these an index figure of 85.2 has been arrived at, and reductions varying from 10s. to 20s. have taken place.

Six months ago the first serious cut was put into operation and only withdrawn on the recommendations of the Postal Commission set up to deal with the case in view of a threatened strike at that time. Now the Government has in effect repudiated this Commission and enforced a cut in our wages which reduces the majority of our members below a bare subsistence level.

This is the THIRD wages cut since Sept., 1921.

The cost of living has not fallen to such an extent as to justify **any of the reductions.**

If this is not **labour sweating**, what is it? Is it the wage earner's share of Irish freedom? Is it an advance sample of a reactionary **capitalistic policy** to drive wages down to a bare subsistence level?

Issued by Publicity Dept.

Limerick Joint Postal Strike Committee.

Sept., 12th, 1922.

Leaflet issued by the Postal Workers Strike Committee, 12 September 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

Did the overprint of George V provoke loyalist animosity?

The fact of the strike for higher wages was an admission of the authority of the newly created State. It was an admission that the State could increase their pay, or sack them in the old Imperial tradition. Because of the nature of their work, they were sufficiently educated to understand the moral and political implications of their acts. Yet they allowed themselves to be used as pawns or stooges in the interest of political adventurers. They formed a provocative picket walking up and down past the Post Office yard gate in Henry Street. They arrived in the morning at 8 o'clock and remained until six in the evening. There were never less than twenty men in the picket. They carried no banner or sign of their purpose. They could have paraded on picket at the public entrance in Cecil Street, but there the public would have become aware of their

presence and set upon them.

They set themselves on picket in Henry Street under the protection of the Staters whom they derided. There was a guard of fifteen Staters in the Post Office and about seventy in Field General Headquarters, Southern Command, directly opposite, in the former palace of the Protestant Bishop of Limerick. The two posts could protect each other by covering fire.

Four sentries were on post, all of them visible to each other. The orders to the sentries were: in the event of an attack on any post or sentry, shoot the attackers or anyone in the line of fire. The strikers were aware of this order. As they passed the sentry on the Post Office gate, the strikers came into the line of fire many times during each hour of the day. Had an attack on the posts occurred, some dead strikers would have become political martyrs, with bronze plaques commemorating their heroism. Their names would

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NO. XXVI

The Irish Commander-in-Chief

The Man who broke the
Black and Tan Terror.



General Michael Collins, C. in C., Irish Army



IRELAND'S HERO

General Collins is Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Army.

He is the man who fought the Black and Tan Terror.

He is now fighting the native terrorist.

The Black and tans were beaten.

The mutineers are also being crushed.

If they were not, the expulsion of the alien forces who held the country in slavery for centuries, would have been in vain.

General Collins realises this. He has set himself to the task.

He shall not fail to accomplish it.

Answer His Call.



Free State news sheet, 11 August 1922.

(Limerick Museum)

have been rendered in Celtic. A sports field, a street or public building would have been named in their honour. Thanks to the vigilance of the Intelligence Service of the Staters and the comic intervention of the women of Limerick, no such attack occurred.

The limited service of the six appointees and others was unable to cope with the pile of mail and pension claims. The female relatives, friends and sympathisers of the many kinds of pensioners lined up every day in Cecil Street. They at length discovered the strength of their numbers and

the cause of their misfortune. With unanimity of thought and purpose they moved in a mass around to Henry Street and, attacking the strikers, put them to flight.

This was the Women's Hour in the fourth siege of Limerick. The strikers returned to work on the first of October.

The six appointees were sent to other civil service posts.

There were no martyrs!

By the end of October 1922, there were over seven hundred more Diehard prisoners in Limerick jail. Some of these had been captured in the various engagements during the course of the Civil War. Some had been found in possession of documents, explosives, guns etc. They were being held for the duration of hostilities. They had the free run of the jail and grounds. They were from Limerick city and surrounding counties.

Due to the cramped conditions in the jail, the prisoners had but little exercise. This came harder on prisoners from the country, who were accustomed to a more vigorous life. Order amongst the prisoners was maintained by their own elected officers. These officers maintained liaison between their men and the prison governor, who was a Captain in the Staters.

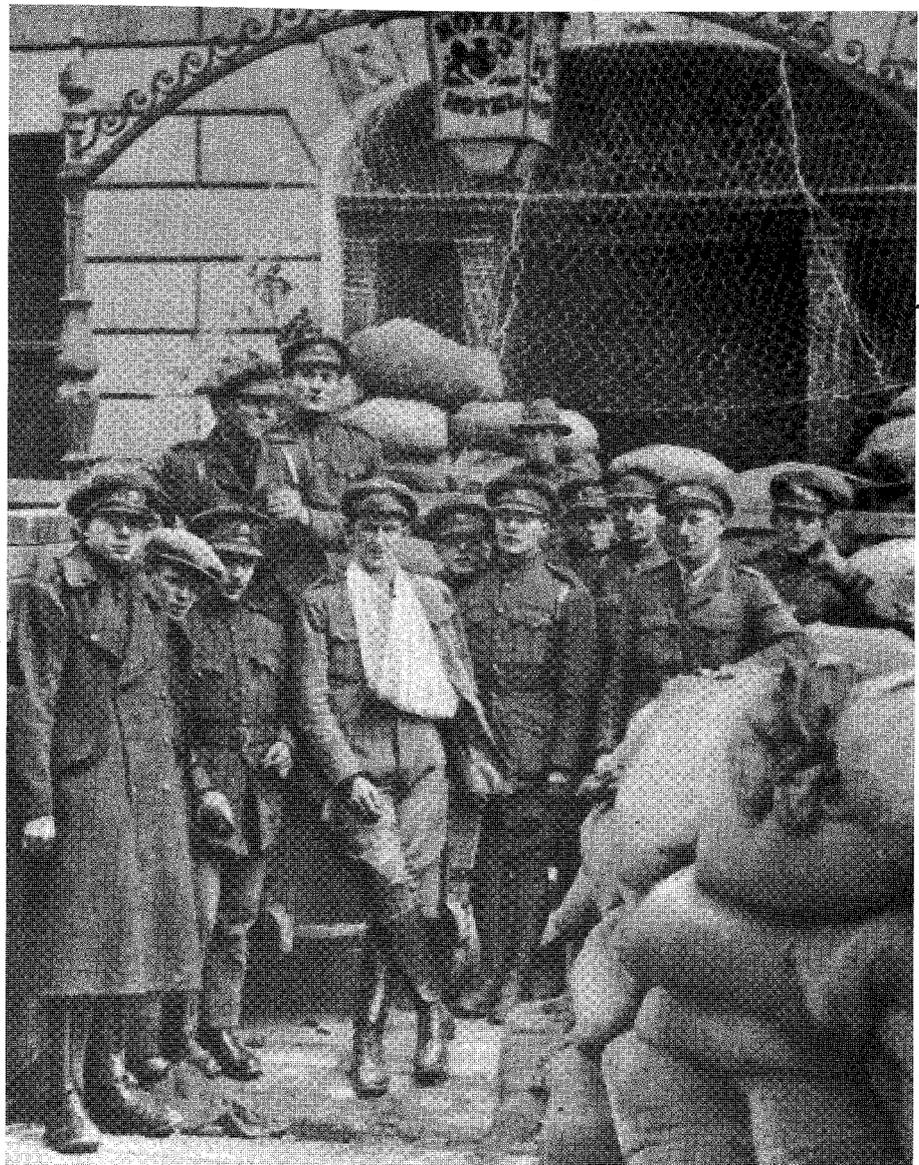
The prisoners were of many social and intellectual classes, and gradually divided into groups of similar tastes. In time, petty animosities developed between these various groups, some of which ignored their elected leaders. There was no oath of allegiance between men and officers, but many held mental reservations as to the competence of their officers. In time, these mental reservations became vocal. Queries and statements alike were freely uttered, such as: "Were you there in 1916?" "Why didn't you fight?" "You were under the bed when the Staters got you," etc.

All this acrimony tended to make life unpleasant for the prisoners, for the officers and for the Staters guarding them. These petty recriminations often led to scuffles and fist fights between the prisoners. The only punishment which the officers could inflict on culprits in these squabbles was ostracisation for a day or two. In such cases, no other prisoners spoke to the culprit for that period of time.

The vanquished in those squabbles often lost the keen fervour of their political faith. They received insight and revelation. They saw themselves as the unwitting agents of Britain. The jail Governor considered it prudent to release such men. This evident hostility to their comrades suggested their genuine repentance for their hostile acts against the State. Some were released and, returning to their homes, discouraged the ardour of those who still opposed the Will of the People.

Amongst the prisoners were many who were arrested in a round-up. They were not involved in any way with politics and were totally indifferent to the result or consequences of the Civil War. They were gradually discovered and released. Prior to their release they were questioned and their replies kept the Staters informed of any escape plans by tunnelling or by other means.

The inactive boredom and frustration of what looked likely to be unending confinement behind stone walls was



Captain Hannon (wounded) and Free State troops at the doorway of Cruise's Hotel, from the Illustrated London News, 29 July 1922. (Limerick Museum)

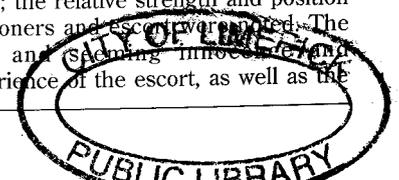
leading to an explosive situation in which some prisoners might become berserk, a situation in which they might become uncontrollable and only the death of some would restrain them. It was decided to move them from Limerick to an internment camp in the Curragh. Because of the destruction of road and rail bridges and the burning and derailment of rolling stock, it was decided to send the prisoners by boat to Dublin and from there to the Curragh Camp. The transfer of the prisoners by boat was a humane and comparatively safe means of transport.

As there were not enough Staters in the city to close off the route from the jail to the docks, the prisoners could not be marched to the boat, but were taken in relays of lorries with an escort front and rear. The Armoured car, *Danny Boy*, led the convoy and returned to the jail with the empty cars. The operation started around eight in the morning and the boat was ready to sail at eleven am. The route to the dock was Mulgrave Street, William Street, Sarsfield Street, Henry Street and Shannon Street, straight onto the boat moored at the quayside. The boat was the

Slievenamon. She sailed on Monday, 15 November 1922.

A guard of one hundred men from the Castle and Strand Barracks held back the crowds of friends and relations who were there to see the prisoners off down the Shannon. As the tide was running out, the Captain became impatient, fearing that his ship might be grounded on the mud.

An escort of fifty men from the New Barracks was rushed on board and the boat sailed late on the tide. As the boat left the dock there was much cheering and waving. The prisoners and escort mingled together on the deck. To most of the prisoners, this boat trip was a first experience and emotional. The solid earth of Mother Ireland was preferable to the steel decks of *Slievenamon*. There was total harmony between both parties. As the boat went down the river the novelty of sailing wore off. The beauty of Foynes, Glin and Tarbert failed to charm. The prisoners began to form discussion groups; the relative strength and position of prisoners and escort were noted. The youth and (sailing) inexperience of the escort, as well as the



wary tough appearance of others, was observed. As the boat rounded Kerry Head, the discussion groups had surrounded some of the escort, indulging in acrimonious debate. That this could occur was anticipated and allowed for.

A Vickers machine gun was uncovered on the bridge and ere a signal whistle blew the prisoners were ordered below deck. There was much shouting of threats and waving of fists, but the prisoners went below. Many of the prisoners and escort were known to each other. There was no animosity, but friendship, between some of them.

From some of these friends it was learned that, on an agreed whistle signal, the escort was to be overpowered and thrown overboard. The ship's crew was to be forced at gunpoint to sail into Fenit, where the prisoners would land and occupy the village. They did not know that Fenit had been taken by the Staters three months earlier and was strongly held. Had the prisoners on deck attacked the escort, both of them would have been rubbed out by the Vickers gun.

Towards evening it began to rain. Some of the escort had the humane thought of covering the open hatches to keep the rain off the prisoners. The ship's officers pointed out, however, that this kindly thought, if carried out, would result in the death of the prisoners by suffocation. To feed the prisoners, some four gallon dixies of tea, as well as bread and butter, were lowered into the hold. They had little appetite, however, and the escort fared no better.

The prisoners slept on mattresses and blankets, which covered the wooden floor of the hold. In the warm darkness they could hear the escort moving around on the deck in the cold and rain. They were happy in the thought that the Staters were getting wet. No provision was made for the escort to get some sleep. They could sleep standing or sitting on their hunkers in any sheltered nook. When it rained, they could take shelter in the small galley or on the iron-barred grating above the engine room. They had a most unpleasant time, but were relieved from any anxiety about the prisoners. They knew that none of the prisoners could tunnel their way out of the steamship, *Slievenamon*. This thought made them happy, so that, in a modest way, both the prisoners and escort were happy.

The second day was bright and sunny. The prisoners were given the option of an hour on deck for each hundred men if they would give their word not to make trouble by attacking the escort. Their leaders, stern, ruthless, dedicated men, refused to give any undertaking. The prisoners, therefore, were kept below decks for the second day. The sanitary arrangements were by buckets, which elected prisoners emptied overboard. At about eleven at night the boat anchored in Dublin Bay. The escort was taken off in two harbour tenders and taken by lorry to Wellington Barracks, where they bedded down on some mattresses on the floor of

some wooden huts. Their place on the boat was taken by Dublin Guards. Two hours later they were roused from sleep and in lorries careered at speed to the docks to take over the boat from the escort of Dublin Guards, who had been maltreating the prisoners. The offending men of the Guards were removed and the Limerick escort returned to Wellington Barracks.

At ten next morning the Limerick escort was taken in lorries to the quays, where the prisoners had disembarked from the boat. They were marched three deep along the quays to the nearest railway station. The escort was between the prisoners and the river, on the right of the road. An armoured car followed in the rear of the convoy, which stretched for over two hundred yards. The convoy moved at a very rapid "quick march." The footpath on the left of the road was lined by Dublin Guards. As the convoy moved on, those men on the footpath were ferried up to the front to take up positions forward of the convoy.

As the convoy passed Richmond Barracks, which was across the river, some British soldiers at the gateway started jeering at the escort or prisoners. The armoured car and some of the escort raised their guns and the British rushed indoors, closing the big gate after them. They were not to become involved.

Eventually the prisoners were entrained and, passing the loop line bridge, reached Newbridge, where they had a decent meal. The escort likewise had the first meal in three days. It was a change from the tea and bread.

At about four in the afternoon the train arrived at the railway station siding at the Curragh Camp.

In their drive to the south, the Staters made for all railway towns; they ignored villages and hamlets. Groups of Diehards in some towns and villages were unaware that they had been bypassed and exercised the functions of government. They collected money for their maintenance in a manner that was vexatious and insolent.

As the Staters consolidated their positions in the towns by taking on recruits and protecting supply lines for fairs and markets, they found leisure to send patrols into the nearest villages. The coming of the Staters to the villages was seen by the occupying Diehards, who took evasive action or retired to the hillsides. The evasive action consisted in remaining in the villages as 'locals', pretending no interest in the cares of combat. The presence of those 'locals' constituted a continuing threat to the lives of any villagers who showed unseemly pleasure in the presence of the Staters. Should the patrol remain in the village for several hours or search for arms, the presence of those subversive men was quickly discovered. They were taken into protective custody to save them from the violence of the villagers and forwarded for internment. Those who had fled to the hills formed roving bands or flying

columns of from ten to thirty men. They built dug-out holes in the earth in which they stored gelignite and other explosives, which they had removed from evacuated British barracks. They billeted themselves in turn in the houses in the surrounding countryside. When food supplies became scarce, they made a raid or sortie on some town or village and secured such supplies as they needed. They removed the booty in commandeered cars if they had come on foot, and in their own cars if they had come by car. When retiring after a raid, they cut down a tree or blasted a culvert or bridge to delay pursuit. When feasible they ambushed any patrol of Staters who might foolishly follow in pursuit.

Those men who had fled to the hills and continued their resistance against the State must be credited with sincerity in their belief that their actions could lead to the establishment of a United Irish Republic. Those men of the hills were deceived and misled by alien imposters. They risked, and some of them lost their lives in their innocent belief in falsehood and deceit, while their deceivers lived in luxury.

Such is the tragedy of the westernmost island of Europe. Any alien adventurer can enter this little country and, posing and mouthing as a patriot, feed on the meat which braver hearts had earned. The activities of those roving bands of Irregulars, Republicans or Diehards, could only be countered by sending out patrols as decoys to be shot at like sitting ducks.

Once or twice each week in September and October, a patrol of twenty men left the New Barracks in two Lancia tenders. The patrol usually reported at Tipperary town and from there they ranged far and wide from the Galtees to the Knockmealdown Mountains. They were sent out as bait to be shot at and, by driving slowly, to invite an attack. An armoured car always went with the patrol, remaining about two miles in the rear and racing forward into action should the patrol be attacked.

Occasionally the patrol set up an ambush, arriving at some place at night and remaining concealed until ten next morning. Those ambuscades were set up in the knowledge that an opposing column of Diehards was operating in the area, either on foot or in cars.

On one such ambush, fifteen men lay enclosed behind an earthen bank bounding a mountain car track which, at an angle, covered a mountain road below them. The road below emerged from between a cut in the mountain and was bounded by swampy ground. Where the car track and the road joined, the armoured car was concealed behind a blacksmith's forge. The car was covered with furze bushes and could not be seen. From the ambusher's point of view the set-up was ideal, but anyone unfortunate enough to be caught in the trap would consider it to be most unpleasant.

The fifteen men lying in ambush were thirty feet apart. As they waited, a tall

young curate came slowly up the car track, reading his breviary in the early morning light. His slow pace and unconcern was an unwitting asset to the ambush, as none would believe that he would wittingly assist the ambushers. This thought may have occurred to the curate as, having passed the last and highest man, he turned around in fury, calling out – “Murderers, you are out to kill,” and then went quickly on his way.

One fiery young Stater lower down the line, on being informed of the curate's message, made to race after the curate with the stated intention of shooting him dead. He was restrained from his rash intent; he then pleaded that he would only shoot the curate in the legs. It was pointed out to the men that forbearance and prudence were required, as to shoot the curate, even in the legs, would spoil the ambush. The noise of the shot would alarm the countryside. It was stressed to the men that it was better to wait until the ambush was over and then, if still alive, he could shoot the curate anywhere he liked. Only curates are up at dawn to hear the lark in the clear greeting the rising sun. Parish Priest and Canons Minor are irregular and rise much later.

Having completed a three days tour of the Galtees or the Knockmealdown range of mountains, the patrol reported back to Tipperary town and rested for a few hours before returning to Limerick.

A party of Diehards learned that the patrol would be returning to Limerick around eight am and decided to give them a hearty send off. They prepared a hole in the ground opposite the nun's convent in Tipperary town. Into this hole they were placing a landmine, with the patriotic intention of blasting the armoured car or the Staters into celestial orbit.

While they were engaged in this happy task, the local parish priest came upon the scene. Calling them murderers, he ordered them to take themselves and their mine elsewhere, as the explosion would terrify the nuns and possibly injure some of them. He was ordered at gunpoint to take himself off and keep himself and his religion out of practical politics. He was further informed that religion and politics do not mix except at diplomatic level. His Reverence moved off, possibly musing on the strange ways of patriots and had gone a hundred yards and rounded a corner when he was lifted off his feet and thrown to the ground by the blast of the exploding landmine. The patriots had blasted themselves into pieces with their own landmine. The local garrison cordoned off the area and within an hour had made the place presentable again.

The noise of the explosion woke the Limerick patrol from their rest. They viewed the scene and getting into their two tenders, they, with the armoured car, returned to Limerick. One man expressed the opinion of all, saying – “there's too much patriotism going on here, let's head for home.” From those two incidents and many other somewhat similar ones, it can be seen that Staters and Diehards alike

cared not a damn about religious beliefs. Religious beliefs could not sway either party from their divinely appointed mission of mutual slaughter; their outlook was totally pagan.

This happy and blessed state of paganism was repugnant to the Roman Catholic hierarchy. When the issue of the Civil War seemed to be no longer in doubt, out of nowhere a chaplain to the Forces appeared in the New Barracks. He was dressed in the uniform of an officer with a white collar showing at the neck. He held the rank and pay of a Captain. His pay was twelve shillings and sixpence per day, or four pounds, seven shillings and sixpence per week.

As the unhappy man never had more than seven shillings to rattle in his pocket, it was learned that the balance of his pay was surrendered to his ecclesiastical superiors.

The Cardinal Primate of Ireland now had his red-slipped foot on the necks of the army. Religion and politics had united at the diplomatic level. The church had staked a claim to a bonanza richer than the gold mines of Avoca.

With the appointment of a chaplain to the Forces, compulsory attendance at religious ceremonial parades soon followed. The thousands of citizens who had lapsed from formal religious practices soon got the message and were brought to their knees again. They would pay their ‘dues’ and give servile obedience to the dictates of their clergy.

The Emancipation Act of 1829 granted a measure of freedom and tolerance to the Catholic, the Presbyterian and to other proscribed religions. Under this Act, the British Government held the power of veto to the appointment of catholic bishops, abbots and parish priests. The Act operated in this manner: When a curate was selected for appointment as parish priest, he was vetted by the local RIC for his political beliefs. All information was passed on to Dublin Castle and to Whitehall, London. The views of the British Government were then passed on to the British ambassador at the Vatican in Rome. The Roman Catholic Pontiff then permitted or rejected the appointment on the advice of the ambassador. On this account, only law-abiding servile men could secure ecclesiastical preferment.

With the establishment of the Irish Free State, this power of veto was lost to the British Government. For over a thousand years the monks had promised the faithful heavenly bliss in a world to come, while they enjoyed heaven on earth in this world with the possibility of even better things to come. With the removal of the veto, the monks were in their element. They could now give free rein to their ambitions. The many orders of monks and other religious orders infesting the city and country could now acquire the many mansions and broad acres of departed British gentry and indulge their avarice in commercial activities in the sacred name of religion. The country was now back to square one, before all the trouble started,

a nation enslaved by religion. Home Rule meant Rome Rule.

In January 1923, the first detachment of an unarmed police force, the Civic Guards, arrived in the city. The courthouse was opened by the appointment of a District Justice who, with the assistance of the Civic Guards, administered civil law. About one hundred Civil War prisoners in the county jail were transferred to the Curragh internment camp by rail. The railways were again in working order, with trains running to a timetable. Most of the road bridges west and south of the city and in the county had temporary repairs made to them and were usable for some time. The four symbols of Law and Order, the police barracks, the courthouse, the jail and the custom house, were functioning peacefully.

In March 1923, after ten months of destruction, death and terror, all resistance to the State ceased abruptly. Most of the leaders of the Diehards had been captured in the Last Round Up and had ordered their followers to cease all further resistance to the State.

After the ten months orgy of destruction, death and terror, the country was destitute. The goodwill of the European nations and the United States was lost. Much of the foreign trade of the country was also lost. Unemployment was widespread. The destruction of property amounted to so many hundreds of millions of pounds that the financial credit of the country was destroyed and a foreign loan of a few millions of pounds could not be obtained from any source. There was peace and law and order in the country. The Sinn Fein policy of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins had prevailed. The Treaty was accepted as a stepping-stone to freedom.

For eight centuries of turmoil, blood and tears, the Irish had followed a rainbow which ‘Shining through sorrow's tears’ had led them on; now they had reached rainbow's end. Here then should lie a crock of gold. From now on, all rains, snows and storms should cease. A golden sunburst should shine all day and a harvest moon all night. The gates were open to the Land of Youth and the dreams that lie beyond. Tir na nÓg was theirs to hold now and evermore.

The crock of gold was there but the fairy gold was dross.

After eight centuries of occupation the British Army was gone.

Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Féin, was dead and gone.

Michael Collins, founder of the Irish Republican Army and leader of the nation, was dead and gone.

As the country now is, so it must remain, for the epitaph of those who died, written by Moore:

*‘Till like the rainbow's light
Thy various tints unite
And form in Heaven's sight one arch of
peace.’*