

position was commenced running from Berovo on the east via Lahana, the high-ground to the east of Kurkut and the hills round Janes to the Vardar River at Vardino. This position, which was practically finished in September, 1918, formed a strong and shorter line of defence, at a distance varying from five to fifteen miles behind the front line, and covering all lines of advance from the north-east and north.

On the approach of autumn I decided that the troops which had been withdrawn from the valleys of the Rivers Struma and Butkova at the commencement of the summer should again be moved forward to the lower ground. During the month of October this movement, combined with minor operations against the villages in the valley, was successfully carried out by the troops of the 16th Corps. As a result, over 250 prisoners and several machine guns were captured and severe casualties inflicted on the enemy.

Meanwhile, among the broken hills of the 12th Corps front, between Doiran Lake and the Vardar, our raiding parties incessantly harassed the enemy and returned with prisoners. The most conspicuous of these raids, all of which were carried out with determination and skill, was against Boyau Hill, near Macukovo. Here the 12th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, broke through the strong hostile outpost position, 500 yards in front of their main objective, entered the enemy trenches, and, having destroyed three machine guns and inflicted heavy casualties, returned bringing all their wounded with them.

In the middle of October the Allied Commander-in-Chief decided to extend the French front to the left bank of the Vardar, thus permitting me to withdraw another infantry brigade into reserve—a matter of no small value to troops who had been for over one year continuously in the front line.

The winter season had now fully set in, and the heavy rains, followed by snow and frost, considerably hampered operations on all fronts. Local raids continued to be of almost daily occurrence, resulting in a steady loss to the enemy both in killed and prisoners, and at the same time maintaining the offensive spirit of the troops and training both infantry and artillery for the operations which they were called upon to carry out at a later date.

Towards the end of December General Sarrail was succeeded in the command of the Allied Armies by General Guillaumat, on whose initiative considerable attention was paid during the winter and spring to the amplification and improvement of the existing defences of the town and district of Salonika, which were constituted into a third line of defence.

In the beginning of March, 1918, the 1st Hellenic (Larissa) Division was placed under my command and was attached to the 16th Army Corps on the Struma River front, where it took over a sector of the line to the north of Lake Tahinos. With the unhealthy season approaching, this was a welcome reinforcement to my effectives. But almost immediately the gain in numbers was counter-balanced by an extension of front. The Russian troops under General Guillaumat's command had failed him, and he found it necessary to ask me again to take over the line as far as the River Vardar in order to relieve French troops for employment elsewhere.

In the early days of this month there came a blizzard of extraordinary severity and deep snow which hampered all movements both by land and in the air. But towards the end of the month fairer weather resulted in a marked increase in aerial activity. Almost every day the Royal Air Force raided the enemy's country, bombed his camps, dumps and railway stations, and attacked his troops with machine-gun fire from low altitudes. In the fighting that these raids entailed our airmen more than held their own.

During April it became necessary, owing to the likelihood of an offensive on the part of the enemy, to do everything possible to disturb his plans and obtain reliable information as to his intentions. Accordingly, on both the Struma and Doiran fronts local operations on our side were intensified.

On the night of the 14th-15th April strong detachments from the 1st Hellenic Division and the 27th and 28th Divisions, supported by artillery, were pushed forward to occupy the villages of Beglik-Mahale, Kakaraska, Salma-hale, Kiskepi, Homondos, Kalendra, Prosenik and Kjupri in the Struma Valley. On the following day violent counter-attacks developed against our advanced troops holding the villages of Prosenik and Kumli. Severe fighting took place at close quarters, during which heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. In the course of the next few days these advanced detachments gradually withdrew to their former positions, having obtained sufficient information to verify the position of all the enemy's units opposed to them.

On the Doiran front, where the enemy held strongly entrenched and continuous positions in mountainous and rocky country, operations were necessarily restricted to small raids and artillery bombardment. In all these, casualties were inflicted on the enemy at slight loss to ourselves. One raid, novel in its plan and bold in its execution, is worthy of special notice. Shortly after midnight on the 15th-16th April, in bright moonlight, a mixed naval and military party left the shore of the lake by Doiran Station in four boats, silently driven by electric motors, which had been brought up from Salonika and assembled under the eyes of the enemy. From Doiran Station to Doiran Town by water is two miles, but the party landed well within the enemy lines unchallenged. Sentries were left to guard the boats, the town was searched and the lakeside road patrolled. Not a Bulgar was seen, and so, as the main purpose of the raid, the capture of prisoners, could not be achieved, the party embarked, re-crossed the lake in safety and apparently unobserved, and landed again on our shore at four o'clock. This daring operation stands out as a striking testimony to the enterprise of the troops, and its skilful execution was undoubtedly due to the energy and care displayed by Captain R. S. Olivier, R.N., Senior Naval Officer at Salonika, and the officers and men of H.M.S. "St. George," who not only trained the detachment on this occasion, but have at all times cordially assisted the Army.

During May and June the two remaining divisions of the 1st Hellenic Corps were placed under my orders, and General Paraskevopoulos took over the command in the Struma Valley. With a portion of the British troops thus relieved, I was enabled to extend my front to the right bank of the Vardar River in relief of a French Division.