

About this time orders were received for the reduction of the infantry of the divisions from thirteen to ten battalions. As a result, one-quarter of the infantry of the Army was transferred to France.

It was during the month of June that the first indications of a lowering in moral of the Bulgarian Army became noticeable. The number of deserters largely increased, and from their statements it appeared that the Bulgarian Higher Command was meditating an attack on a large scale on the British front from the sea to Lake Doiran. Later information showed that certain enemy units were, however, in a state bordering on mutiny and refused to obey orders.

On June 8th I bade farewell to General Guillaumat, who vacated the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in order to take up an important appointment in France. During his short period of command he had gained, by his tact, courtesy and soldierly qualities, the respect and admiration of all those with whom he came into contact, and I am deeply grateful to him for his cordial and sympathetic assistance. A few days later his distinguished successor, General Franchet d'Esperey, who was so shortly to bring about a sudden change in the whole situation in the Balkans, assumed command of the Allied Forces.

Towards the end of July I received instructions from the Allied Commander-in-Chief to prepare for my share in a general offensive of the Allied Armies, which was timed to take place during the first fortnight of September. In this the British troops—provided the Allies on the front held by the Royal Serbian Army succeeded in piercing the enemy's centre—were to attack and take the heights to the west and north-east of Lake Doiran. To reinforce my three divisions in this sector General Franchet d'Esperey placed at my disposal two divisions of the Corps of National Defence of the Hellenic Army, a regiment of Hellenic cavalry, and a group of Hellenic heavy artillery. The infantry intended for the attack were gradually withdrawn from the line, and during the latter part of August they were carefully trained for the rôle they were to fill. Meanwhile an offensive spirit was maintained and the enemy harassed by constant raids, in which prisoners were secured for purposes of identification. In the air our machines were more active day by day, and our artillery fire steadily increased, especially on the right bank of the Vardar, cutting wire and drawing the enemy's batteries.

By now it was clear that the enemy suspected an impending attack, but did not know where the blow was to fall. His reserves were reported to be in the Vardar Valley. To prevent their withdrawal, and to deceive him as to the sector chosen for the main allied attack, operations were begun on the afternoon of the 1st September, after heavy artillery preparation, against the rocky and strongly fortified salient north of Alcak Mahale, on the right bank of the Vardar. The troops engaged were the 2nd Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment and the 10th Battalion Hampshire Regiment of the 27th Division. The undertaking proved an entire success. Not only were determined counter-attacks launched fruitlessly against our new trenches, but on the right the Division was able to occupy the enemy's outpost line, thus gaining suitable positions for a further advance. With this operation and with the

unhindered advance of the posts of the 1st Hellenic Corps in the Struma Valley about a week later, the preliminaries on the right section of the general offensive were completed.

On the morning of the 14th September the general attack began. All along the eighty-mile front from Lake Doiran to Monastir the artillery bombardment of the hostile positions became intense. Twenty-four hours later the Franco-Serbian troops, under the command of Voivode Mischitch, stormed the Bulgar trenches on the mountain heights from Sokol to Vetrenik. Before noon the enemy's first and second line were in the possession of Allied troops. This initial victory forced a withdrawal on the flanks. The gap of 12 kilometres was enlarged to one of 25 kilometres. The way was opened for advance to the heights of Kozyak.

The success on which an assault on the Doiran sector was conditional had been attained. Early on the 15th September I received orders from General Franchet d'Esperey that the troops under my command were to attack on the morning of the 18th.

In the general instructions which I had previously received it was indicated that the main operations should be directed against the "P" Ridge and the neighbouring heights west of Lake Doiran, the scene of the battles in the spring of 1917. I had decided to reinforce the British troops here by one of the Hellenic Divisions of the Corps of National Defence, which, as I have previously stated, had been placed at my disposal, and had selected the Serres Division for this purpose. In addition, between Doiran Lake and the Vardar were the 22nd and 26th British Divisions under Major-General J. Duncan, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., and Major-General A. W. Gay, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., respectively, and on the west of the Vardar the 27th Division under Major-General G. T. Forestier-Walker, C.B. This force was supported by the whole of the available heavy artillery, which included a brigade of Hellenic heavy guns.

The effective strength of the British troops at this most trying period of the year in Macedonia had, owing to climatic disease and a sudden and severe epidemic of influenza, fallen below one-half of the normal establishment. The Allied Commander-in-Chief therefore further reinforced my command by a regiment of French infantry. The whole of this composite force of British, Hellenic and French troops I entrusted to the command of Lieutenant-General Sir H. F. M. Wilson, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.

Simultaneously with the main attack, a secondary and surprise attack was to be made round the east and northern sides of the Lake against the Bulgar trenches on the slopes of the Beles range. If successful, the action would turn the Doiran-Vardar front on its left, and in any case would prevent reinforcements moving to the west. The operation was a difficult one, involving a large concentration by night and an advance without artillery preparation across the plain between the Krusha Balkans and the Beles. I therefore decided to support with troops of the 28th Division, commanded by Major-General H. L. Croker, C.B., C.M.G., the Cretan Division of the Corps of National Defence, to whom this movement had been assigned, and placed this sector under the