

1919 two weeks only elapsed between the receipt of information of the impending Afghan attack and the dispersal of the main Afghan army on the Jalalabad plain, and within four weeks Amir Amanullah had sued for an armistice. The promptitude of this advance through the Khaibar and the consequent menace to Jalalabad prevented an Afghan-tribal combination against us, and saved India the long and costly war which would have resulted from the loss of the Khaibar.

29. Two other features of the campaign may be mentioned as exercising an appreciable influence on the course of the operations. The first is the failure of the system of tribal militias. With certain notable exceptions (which are referred to in their place) the outbreak of war was followed almost immediately by wholesale desertions from militia units, necessitating the complete disbandment of one and the reduction of others to a small fraction of their proper establishment. The defection of these units at a time when the Field Army was concentrating in rear of them constituted a grave danger, and this danger is one which, in my opinion, we cannot afford to accept in the future.

The other feature to which I refer is the great disadvantage from which the troops suffered as the result of the political situation. From the granting of the armistice at the beginning of June to the signing of peace on August 8th the Amir failed to exercise complete control over his own tribesmen and the agents whom he had deputed to raise the tribes within the British border. Consequently throughout this period the whole length of the frontier was threatened and constant raiding occurred.

30. The formations at my disposal at the outbreak of war (excluding units allotted to area defence) comprised two divisions and two cavalry brigades on the Khaibar line, one brigade in the Kohat-Kurram area, two brigades in Waziristan, and one division and one cavalry brigade on the Baluchistan front, with one division, one cavalry brigade and two mixed brigades in central reserve. During the course of the operations seven additional brigades and one cavalry brigade were formed, increasing the total force employed at the signing of peace to the equivalent of about seven divisions and four cavalry brigades, with one cavalry and five infantry brigades in reserve.

#### OPERATIONS OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER FORCE.

31. News of the proclamation of *Jehad* by the Amir of Afghanistan, together with the move of Afghan troops towards the Khaibar and Kurram, reached Peshawar on the 3rd May. I immediately ordered General Sir A. A. Barrett, who was at that time on inspection duty in Delhi, to proceed at once to Peshawar to control the military measures necessary in the North-West Frontier Province. He was directed to assume command of the North-West Frontier Force, the troops at his disposal comprising the 1st and 10th Cavalry Brigades, the 1st and 2nd Divisions, the Internal Security Troops of the Peshawar area, and the Kohat, Bannu and Derajat Brigades, together with Corps Troops and Frontier Militia. In view of the paramount importance of safeguarding the Peshawar district, which was already threatened by Afghan forces and

which is surrounded by powerful independent tribes, General Sir A. A. Barrett directed the 2nd Division into the Peshawar area in support of the 1st Division.

32. Prior to his arrival in Peshawar the situation on the Khaibar line had developed rapidly. On the morning of the 4th May Afghan troops, supported by large bodies of tribesmen, were reported to have taken possession of the Bagh and Tangi springs, near Landi Khana, and to be on the Spinatsuka and Tor Sappar ridges to the north of Landi Kotal. On the following day a small column, which had been ordered to hold itself in readiness at Peshawar, was despatched by the General Officer Commanding, 1st Division, in motor lorries to Landi Kotal to support the Khaibar Rifles. It was essential that the Afghans should be driven from the springs as quickly as possible, as on one of them depended the principal water supply of Landi Kotal, and until the springs were in our possession no large force could be concentrated at that place. Troops were therefore pushed up the Khaibar as rapidly as possible, and on the 8th the 1st Infantry Brigade, with one battalion of the 2nd Infantry Brigade and 14 field and mountain guns, under the command of Brigadier-General G. D. Crocker, were concentrated at Landi Kotal, other troops of the 1st Division moving up the Khaibar in support. Troops of the 2nd Division were meanwhile arriving continuously in the Peshawar area.

33. On the morning of the 9th, General Crocker, reinforced by another battalion of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, attacked the enemy and secured the Tangi springs and water works; but he encountered stubborn opposition, and the force at his disposal was insufficient to drive the Afghans from their strong position, in difficult mountainous country, covering the Bagh springs. Next day the remainder of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, together with a mountain battery and a machine-gun company, reinforced the troops at Landi Kotal, where Major-General C. A. Fowler, C.B., D.S.O., commanding the 1st Division, had assumed command.

34. On the 11th May the headquarters and one and a half battalions of the 3rd Infantry Brigade reached Landi Kotal, and an entirely successful attack was made on the Afghans on the Khargali heights dominating the Bagh springs. Infantry, guns, machine guns, and aeroplanes worked in close co-operation, and the enemy, who again resisted stubbornly, fled in disorder, leaving behind him six guns, which fell into our hands. Our casualties were happily slight. The Royal Air Force not only co-operated in the action, but also systematically bombed Dakka, where the Afghan transport had been collected. The material and moral effect of this bombing was very great. Major-General Fowler brings to notice the excellent work of the 2nd Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment, the 1st Gurkha Rifles, and No. 8 Mountain Battery, R.G.A., on this occasion. On the following day a reconnaissance disclosed the Afghans still holding Spinatsuka and a hill near Tor Sappar, but these localities were found evacuated on May 13th.

35. On May 10th I authorised General Sir A. A. Barrett to advance to the vicinity of Dakka in order the more effectively to deter the tribes from hostilities by threatening their rear and preventing their maintenance