

unofficial overtures begun on May 15th, for a cessation of hostilities, culminated on May 31st in a formal request from the Amir for the conclusion of an armistice. The Government of India were desirous of avoiding any action which might serve to prejudice the negotiations, and I therefore issued orders that, though preparations for an advance on Jalalabad were to continue without interruption, no further advance was to be made without previous reference to me. The period of inaction which followed was one of great hardship to the troops, for the success of their efforts had led them to expect an early termination of the war, and they were looking forward eagerly to their long-delayed leave or demobilisation. The situation was met, however, in that spirit of willing self-sacrifice which we have learnt to expect from the British and Indian Armies, and I desire to express here my appreciation of the high sense of duty they displayed during this period.

41. Turning now to the operations of the force in the Kohat-Kurram area (which, as explained above, formed part of General Sir A. A. Barrett's command), the situation had remained quiet during the first fortnight of May; there had been no unusual raiding from tribal territory and no information was received of any Afghan concentration in Khost. On May 5th, Major-General A. H. Eustace, C.B., D.S.O., Commanding the Kohat area, ordered a column of all arms to proceed from Thal to Parachinar in support of the Kurram Militia. On the 14th, information was received that two Afghan battalions had arrived at Peiwar Kotal, and that there were three battalions with guns at Ali Khel. A detachment of the Kurram Militia, with two guns, was accordingly moved to Peiwar, and four additional battalions and a mountain battery to Kohat. As units became available at Kohat, they were moved up to Thal and Parachinar, and on the 26th the force at the latter place consisted of two battalions, one squadron, and four mountain guns. Having regard to the requirements of the Khaibar line, it was impossible at this time to despatch aeroplanes to the Kohat and Waziristan areas; arrangements were, however, made to despatch a flight to Bannu, from which the bombing of Matun in Khost could be undertaken.

42. On the evening of the 24th May information was received at Thal that General Nadir Khan, the Afghan Commander in Khost and *ex-Commander-in-Chief* of the Afghan army, intended to advance either into the Tochi or the Kurram, and it was reported from Spinwam that Afghan troops were moving on that post. Major-General Eustace accordingly proceeded to Thal and ordered one more battalion and two more mountain guns to rail from Kohat to Thal. On the arrival of these units, the garrison of Thal comprised 4 battalions, 4 mountain guns, one squadron, and one company of sappers and miners. On the 27th a considerable force of Afghan troops with a large following of tribesmen advanced on Thal and occupied Thal city and the hills to the south-west of the posts. The enemy's guns and the majority of his regular troops were on the south bank of the Kurram river, which, at this season, is liable to sudden floods. The fort and camp were subjected to considerable shelling, two of the guns used being German howitzers of 3.8" calibre. On the

morning of the 28th, General Sir A. A. Barrett ordered the immediate despatch to Kohat by rail from Peshawar of a field battery of the 2nd Division, and a battalion of the 45th Infantry Brigade, to be followed by the remaining units of that brigade under the command of Brigadier-General R. E. H. Dyer, C.B. The headquarters of the 16th Division were also ordered to proceed to Kohat from Lahore, instead of to Peshawar as previously ordered. These troops began to arrive at Kohat on the morning of the 29th, and were followed in quick succession by two additional battalions and the 46th Brigade from Ambala which I had also ordered to Kohat.

By the afternoon of the 30th May, Brigadier-General Dyer had concentrated his force by rail and road at Togh, from which place he marched 18 miles towards Thal on the early morning of the 31st. On the 1st June he entered Thal with little opposition. The hills to the south-east were then cleared of the enemy. The following day the operations were continued to the west of Thal; but the enemy retreated hurriedly, leaving behind him his camp equipment and a large quantity of cordite ammunition. During the advance of General Dyer's column on Thal, the extreme heat had made the long marches exceedingly arduous and exhausting; but the march discipline and spirit of the men were excellent, and the commander and troops deserve great credit for the manner in which the operation was carried out. A flight of aeroplanes based on Thal co-operated throughout, and contributed largely to the enemy's hasty retreat.

43. General Nadir Khan's enterprise was a move which, had it met with a greater measure of success, might have compromised our plan of campaign. The salient of Afghan territory which reaches out between the Tochi and Kurram valleys enabled him to concentrate on the flank of two of our main communications through tribal country. An attack on the Kurram undoubtedly promised more important results, for had Nadir Khan succeeded in raising the Orakzai and Afridi tribes against us the effect would have been felt in our operations in the Khaibar.

44. On the 2nd June the regular troops and Kurram Militia from Parachinar, where Brigadier-General E. A. Fagan, C.M.G., D.S.O., was in command, attacked the Afghan force near Kharlachi, captured the Afghan post at that place and destroyed six villages. The Kurram Militia also carried out several minor operations, in which they were invariably successful. Throughout the whole period of the operations the behaviour of this corps has been deserving of the highest praise.

45. As already mentioned, cholera appeared at Hangu in the Kohat area on the 1st June and spread rapidly, appearing a few days later in the Khaibar also. As the transport drivers were chiefly affected, the movement of animal transport up the Khaibar was suspended; all camels from the stages up to Landi Kotal were withdrawn to Nowshera Thana, and did not return to the Khaibar until the end of June. Outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease and glanders also seriously affected the Bullock Corps on the Khaibar line, so that it became necessary for some time to rely almost exclusively on mechanical transport.

46. After the operations in the neighbourhood of Thal, the troops in the Kohat area were reorganised, the 46th, 60th and 65th In-