

17. It is also a source of great gratification to me to be able to report that the relations between the Allied Command and the local Russian Government are now on a highly satisfactory footing, and that the Governor-General of the Region is co-operating with me in the most cordial and whole-hearted manner. This co-operation, which it was impossible to secure during the first five months of my operations, is already bearing fruit in an increased feeling of content amongst the local population and the various Government officials, and I am confident that it will have far-reaching results in ensuring smooth working in the mobilisation of the local Russian forces now being taken in hand, and in the settlement of the many delicate political problems with which we are confronted.

18. Taking climatic conditions into consideration, the health of my troops has been good. During the winter months, with their lack of daylight, there has been a somewhat marked tendency towards inertia and depression, resulting in loss of nerve and will-power; but every effort has been made to combat this tendency by the provision of such forms of entertainment and recreation as my limited resources and opportunities allowed. With an increase in the hours of sunlight I hope for a still better record of health; but the advent of spring will prove an anxious time. This is owing mainly to an entire absence of any drainage system throughout the country, and to the apparent impossibility of convincing the Russian working classes of the necessity for ordinary sanitary precautions. My Sanitary Officers are, however, making all possible arrangements to cope with the situation.

19. I have gone somewhat more fully into the conditions ruling within the area occupied by my Force than is customary in a despatch of this nature. The circumstances, however, are very exceptional, and I should not be doing justice to the work of my troops if I failed to bring to notice the difficulties with which they have to contend.

Owing to the extreme shortage of civilian labour, I have been compelled to employ a great proportion of them on permanent working and building parties, and on similar tasks of an uncongential nature; their accommodation has not always been as suitable as I could have wished; the climate is severe, and trying even to the most healthy; leave to England is necessarily rare; local amusements are confined entirely to such as we are able to provide; any movement of troops by rail is attended by great discomfort, owing to the shortage of suitable rolling stock; and, during the winter, transport by sea and road entail unusual hardships. Moreover, my men have been surrounded for many months by an atmosphere of disorder, dissatisfaction and lawlessness, which cannot but affect adversely even the best disciplined troops.

Military Operations.

20. The military operations carried out since the date of my last despatch, and leading up to the existing situation, have been briefly as follows:—

On 28th September, 1918, Finnish troops, reported to be the advance guard of a large force, drove in my outposts near the Norwegian frontier to the west of Petchenga. As telephonic communication between the outposts and Petchenga had been cut, and as I had received

persistent reports of an advance in strength by German and Finnish troops, I ordered the immediate despatch to Petchenga of a portion of the reinforcements already detailed for that garrison. These were landed within thirty-six hours. In the meantime, however, my outposts had rallied, and succeeded in driving back the enemy without calling for support. The Finnish troops remained in contact with my covering force for some days, but withdrew finally without further offensive action. Since this occurrence there have been no signs of enemy activity in the Petchenga region.

By the end of September, 1918, my troops operating from Kandalaksha had cleared of White Finn forces the whole area lying between Kandalaksha and the Finnish frontier, and in October they commenced to push forward in a south-westerly direction towards Lake Pyavozero. They succeeded in driving the enemy from a number of posts occupied by him, and in a small but decisive action on the western shore of Pyavozero Lake finally compelled the only remaining formed body of enemy troops in Northern Karelia to retire across the Finnish frontier. This series of minor operations was carried out almost entirely by my Finn Legion, under the leadership of British officers and non-commissioned officers. As there were no tracks in this area suitable for wheel transport, the question of supply presented many difficulties. These, however, were overcome by the institution of a system of water transport, supplemented by carriers.

Meanwhile, a force based on Kem, and consisting chiefly of Karelians, was clearing the country between Kem and the western frontier of Karelia. This force met with strong opposition, the White Finns in this locality being in considerable strength and under German leadership. The successes gained by it, and mentioned in my previous despatch, were, however, continued, the enemy suffering heavy losses both in personnel and material, and only a small remnant contriving to make good its escape across the frontier. Transport difficulties proved even greater than those experienced by the Kandalaksha columns, since the force employed was not only larger, but was operating further from its base. That these difficulties were surmounted successfully speaks highly for the grit and determination of the Karelian troops engaged.

Thus, by the end of 1918, the whole of Karelia to as far south as an east and west line drawn through Soroka had been cleared of White Finn troops; frontier posts had been established; and my two forces, operating respectively from Kandalaksha and Kem, had gained touch.

Early in January reports were received that the Bolsheviks had established a headquarters and recruiting centre at Rugozerskaya, sixty-five miles south-west of Soroka. As this village was situated in an area from which I hoped to draw future recruits for the Russian Army, I decided to send a strong patrol to ascertain the truth of the report; to gain all intelligence possible; and, if the report were true, to drive out the Bolsheviks should this prove practicable. The enterprise was carried out on 16th January with rapidity and skill by a mixed contingent of Canadian and Karelian troops. Rugozerskaya was found to be held by the enemy, but was captured by a surprise attack, the whole garrison being