

decisive victories succeeded in establishing secure communication by road from Medvyejya Gora to the Peninsula.

This period proved exceedingly critical for the newly-formed Russian Army, for Bolshevik propaganda was very active in its ranks, and it appeared doubtful whether it would be possible to cope successfully with the state of dissatisfaction that existed. I determined, therefore, to follow up the successes recently gained, in hopes of thus restoring the confidence of the Russian soldiers, and by a further advance, bringing them into more direct touch with the strongly anti-Bolshevik peasantry of the south. Orders were issued accordingly for a forward move of some 15 miles by Allied troops to the line Svartnavolotski—Tivdiya—Kyapeselga—Shunga, which was occupied on 5th July after a number of sharp engagements in which the enemy lost heavily.

This further success, coupled with unremitting efforts to raise their "moral," had a most salutary effect on the Russian forces, which from now onwards showed a steady improvement in discipline and fighting capacity.

*Position at the end of July.*

9. On 23rd July news was received of a serious mutiny amongst Russian troops of the Archangel force, one of the results of which was the occupation by the Bolsheviks of the town of Onega. This constituted a threat to my communications about Soroka which could not be ignored, and I was forced to detail a mixed force to watch the approaches along the southern shore of the White Sea. This force had several successful skirmishes with the enemy, who finally evacuated Onega under combined naval and military pressure.

Meanwhile the position on my southern front was as follows:—

(a) The Bolsheviks had received strong reinforcements and, having driven back the Finnish Volunteers towards the frontier of Finland, were threatening to assume the offensive against my Force.

(b) My lake flotilla, now reinforced by personnel and material from home, had already won several victories over the far more powerful Bolshevik fleet, and in conjunction with the R.A.F., rendered the command of the northern portion of the Lake secure.

(c) In the Shunga Peninsula the anti-Bolshevik movement was spreading rapidly.

(d) East of Lake Onega Russian troops had advanced 30 miles, driving enemy detachments before them.

Having regard to the position outlined above, and in view of the approaching withdrawal of all Allied troops, it became necessary to decide the policy which it would be in the best interests of the Russian forces to adopt.

The Russian Authorities were rightly opposed to any retrograde movement, and I did not consider that a further general advance was practicable, without the employment of Allied troops, and these I was prepared to use only for a final blow immediately prior to our departure. It was therefore determined that the existing line should be firmly held, and that raids on a bold and extensive scale should be carried out by sea, air and land, in order to mislead the enemy and prevent him assuming the offensive.

This policy met with complete success, many of the raids—especially those combining flotilla and seaplane action—securing most satisfactory results.

*Assumption of Chief Command by General Lord Rawlinson.*

10. General Lord Rawlinson arrived at Murmansk as Commander-in-Chief, North Russia, on 9th August. At a conference held by him the policy I had adopted was approved generally, and it was decided that a portion of the reinforcements due shortly from England should be placed at my disposal to enable me to strike a blow at the Bolsheviks just previous to our withdrawal. Meanwhile, however, conditions in the Shunga Peninsula appeared so favourable as the result of our raiding policy, that sanction was given for Russian troops to endeavour to clear the whole Peninsula, and this was accomplished successfully by 19th August. This was followed by further successful action in the islands south of the Peninsula and also on the eastern shores of Lake Onega, whilst the enemy's communications were more than once cut by the destruction of important railway bridges both by raiding parties and by aircraft bombs.

*Offensive Prior to Withdrawal.*

11. The orders for the offensive prior to withdrawal, though drawn up by me with the concurrence of the Commander-in-Chief, were issued in the name of the G.O.C. Russian Forces under whose orders all Allied troops detailed for the operations were placed nominally. This was done in order that credit for the success which was anticipated should go to the Russian Commander, and thus increase his prestige and raise the "moral" of his men, whilst the eventual handing over of the whole front to the Russians would also be facilitated.

The final objective to be aimed at by the Russian Army was the line of the Suna River, which involved an advance of some 40 miles; but in order to conform with plans already drawn up for our withdrawal no Allied troops were to operate south of the Nurmis River.

The main advance was to be made down the railway by British troops, with Russians in support, coupled with flanking movements against objectives further south timed so as to prevent the destruction of railway bridges and the escape of the enemy's more northern garrisons. The troops employed on one of these flanking movements were conveyed by water from the Shunga Peninsula and achieved a very striking success. In addition to the main advance it was intended to move a considerable Russian force from Svartnavolotski by a more westerly route, but owing to the unexpected strength of the enemy's resistance in this theatre the attempt to push home the attack along this route was abandoned.

On the railway front, however, the operations met with complete success, and the line of the Nurmis was occupied on 16th September, after 60 hours' continuous fighting. During this phase the Bolshevik losses were very heavy, and, in addition to nearly 1,000 prisoners, we captured a large quantity of supplies, rolling stock and war material. After consolidating our position the Allied troops were withdrawn gradually, and by 20th September the whole conduct of operations was handed over to the Russian authorities.