

It was a time of some anxiety to me, as she was going fifteen knots at the time of striking, and had slid up half her length, and was in two feet six inches to three feet less water there than her draught, and in a tideless sea.

"Delhi" and "Cleopatra" made several ineffectual attempts to tow her off before; after lightening her by 2,212 tons, and experiencing a rise of water of about four to six inches due to a Westerly wind, "Cleopatra" at last pulled her clear after eight days of effort and, as we discovered shortly afterwards, all the towing operations were carried out in the middle of a minefield.

38. Early in July strong attacks were made by the Bolsheviks on the Russian front on the Southern shore, necessitating frequent bombardments by Light Cruisers and Destroyers of the Bolshevik positions. Bolshevik aircraft were also active; Fort Krasnaya Gorka also occasionally firing at our patrols in Kaporja Bay.

39. Later in the month our Flying Operations started, consisting at first of reconnaissance and photographic flights, and then on the morning of the 30th July a bombing operation against the ships in Kronstadt, the main objective being a Destroyer Depot Ship with five or six Destroyers lying alongside her. The whole was under the command of Squadron Leader David G. Donald, A.F.C., R.A.F. Sixteen bombs in all were dropped, and one hit, at any rate, was registered on the Depot Ship, which disappeared from her accustomed position in the harbour, and was not seen again. All machines returned safely after passing through a heavy anti-aircraft fire from the ships and batteries defending Kronstadt.

40. Thereafter continued a close watch on Petrograd Bay, with frequent bombardments by us of Bolshevik positions on the Southern Shore, and occasional shelling by Fort Krasnaya Gorka and other guns, varied by attacks by enemy submarines on our vessels, and intermittent activity by Bolshevik Destroyers and Minesweepers, with occasional appearances outside the harbour by larger craft.

41. On the morning of 18th August, with the object of removing, as far as possible, the threat which existed to my ships and also to the Left Flank of the Russian advance to Petrograd by the presence of the Bolshevik Active Squadron, an attack on the ships in Kronstadt by Coastal Motor Boats and Aircraft was made.

42. The position of the ships in the harbour had been ascertained by aerial photographs. Frequent bombing raids on the harbour had also been made at varying times in the weeks beforehand.

43. The attack was planned so that all available aircraft co-operated under Squadron Leader D. G. Donald, A.F.C., R.A.F., and that they should arrive and bomb the harbour so as to drown the noise of the approach of the Coastal Motor Boats.

44. The time-table was most accurately carried out; with the result that the first three Coastal Motor Boats, under Commander Claude C. Dobson, D.S.O., passed the line of Forts and entered the harbour with scarcely a shot being fired.

45. Each boat had a definite objective—six in all. Of these six enterprises four were

achieved, the results being gained not only by dauntless disciplined bravery at the moment of attack, but by strict attention to, and rehearsal of, every detail beforehand by every member of the personnel, both of the boats and also of the Air Force.

46. Of the latter there is this to say, that though all their arrangements for bombing were makeshift, and the aerodrome, from which the land machines had to rise in the dark, was a month before a wilderness of trees and rocks, and in size is quite inadequate, not one of the machines (sea and land) failed to keep to its time-table, or to lend the utmost and most effective support during, and after, the attack to the Coastal Motor Boats.

47. After this nothing bigger than a Destroyer ever moved again, but a certain amount of mine-laying and sweeping was observed near the approaches to the harbour.

48. During September our ships constantly bombarded Bolshevik positions on the Southern Shore in Kaporja Bay, in support of the Esthonian Left Flank, whilst the aircraft were employed in bombing Kronstadt and attacking their small craft whenever seen.

49. Early in October the long talked of advance against Petrograd by General Yudenitch began—but as his left flank was not made secure by making the capture of Forts Krasnaya Gorka and Saraia Lochad his first objective—as was repeatedly urged—the attempt failed.

50. The Esthonians, so long as their advance was such that the guns of the light cruisers and destroyers of the Biorko Force could support them, went forward—but thereafter they met with strong and effective resistance and much barbed wire, and were held up within four miles of the land approaches to Fort Krasnaya Gorka and suffered very heavy losses—equal to nearly one-third of their forces, which did not at the beginning exceed two thousand men.

51. It was after this check that "Erebus" (Captain John A. Moreton, D.S.O.) arrived (24th October), which encouraged Admiral Pitka, who was in command of the Esthonian Forces, to try again; but by then the Russians had begun to fall back, thereby uncovering the Esthonian right flank and causing them further distress, and dispersion of their few remaining effectives.

The Russians and Esthonians then fell back with considerable rapidity as far west as the line Narva—Peipus Lake, and I devoted myself to endeavouring to ensure that, from the sea, no further attempt was made to further harass these very war-weary and dispirited troops.

52. Unfortunately the "Erebus" (Captain John A. Moreton, D.S.O.) arrived only after the attempt was doomed to failure, and by that time also the weather had broken, making it very unsuitable for flying in order to direct the firing of "Erebus"; also our machines and many of the pilots were, from hard service through the summer, rather past their best. The type of machine, too (Short Seaplane), was unable to get sufficient height to avoid the very severe and accurate anti-aircraft fire from these two forts.

53. All that could be done by our ships (light cruisers and destroyers) besides "Erebus," in the way of shelling positions and covering the advance, was done, and always within the range of Fort Krasnaya's Gorka's twelve-inch guns, and under the observation of its kite balloon;