



## FIFTH SUPPLEMENT

TO

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THURSDAY, 8 JULY, 1920

*Admiralty, April 29th, 1920.*

SIR,—

In accordance with Admiralty letter dated April 19th, 1920, I have the honour to enclose herewith for submission to Their Lordships a despatch dealing with Naval affairs in N. Russia during 1918.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

T. W. KEMP,

Rear-Admiral, Retired.

The Secretary of the Admiralty.

SIR,—

I beg you will lay before Their Lordships the following despatch dealing with Naval affairs in North Russia during the year 1918:—

In December, 1917, it was decided to withdraw from Archangel all Naval elements. I therefore embarked these in H.M.S. "Iphi-

genia" on December 19th, together with as many British subjects as could be induced to leave, arriving at Murmansk next day.

The position, whether regarded from a political or military point of view, was very simple. The complete breakdown of the Russian Military system had left Russia open to German invasion. This reacted on the naval position in Murmansk.

It was, nevertheless, decided to retain an allied footing in Murman Province, which afforded the only means of physical communication with European Russia. This decision in itself involved no ulterior motive with regard to the internal policy of Russia. Such elements of Russian life as were friendly to the above aims were to be welcomed, and such as were hostile were to be opposed. This, put in simple terms, was the gist of my instructions. At the same time I was given plainly to understand that the military situation elsewhere did not admit of the despatch of an expedition, and

that I must do my best with the naval forces at my disposal, together with the assistance of such units of Allied Military Commissions, etc., which *rendezvoused* at Murmansk from time to time for despatch home.

The same process applied to Pechenga, the nearest important Russian harbour to the Norwegian boundary. In order to hold Kola inlet it was necessary to hold Pechenga, since the occupation of the latter by a hostile force would have turned it into a German submarine base. Finland was then dominated by Germany, and the possession of Pechenga affording a northern outlet was a Finnish aspiration. All indications tended to show that a German Finnish movement against the place was in contemplation.

With these considerations in view I begged to be sent an armoured cruiser and 500 Royal Marines. Accordingly H.M.S. "Cochrane" was sent and reached me on March 9th. She was to be followed by French and American armoured cruisers, both of which were to come under the British command. Later on, both these ships took their full part in operations ashore and afloat, and I was indebted to their captains for much sound advice on various matters. The detachment of Royal Marines did not reach me until later, but the arrival of the "Cochrane" enabled me to make immediate dispositions for the defence of Kola and Pechenga. A small body of R.E. officers and men which she brought, trained in demolitions work, rendered good service, as the nature of the surrounding country made the Murman Railway the only avenue of hostile approach. In the meantime a force of 300 French Artillerymen had collected at Murmansk, and it was believed that a similar number of Serbians were available at Kandalaksha.

On arrival of "Cochrane" an armoured train manned by "Cochrane" and 150 French Troops was despatched to Kandalaksha under command of Chef de Bataillon Molier of the French Army. Their orders were to hold Kandalaksha, to collect and organise all friendly elements, to regulate the passage of armed men in the direction of Kola, and if unable to hold the position to retire to Murmansk, destroying the line behind them. Though their position was often critical, this force held the post until the arrival of reinforcements in June, and the opening of the White Sea relieved the situation, and their presence at Kandalaksha assured Murmansk against surprise.

At the same time a landing party from H.M.S. "Glory" and "Cochrane" was put ashore at Murmansk, and the necessary arrangements made for the guns of the ships to assist in the defence. The general arrangements were under the Rear-Admiral Commanding, while Colonel Mercier of the French Army was in immediate command ashore. On May 2nd information reached me that a German Finnish attack on Pechenga was threatened. The arrival of the French armoured cruiser "Amiral Aube" on March 19th enabled me to detach the "Cochrane" for its protection. The "Cochrane" arrived at Pechenga on May 3rd, blasting her way through the ice. A landing party was put ashore, and a defensive position prepared. Scouting parties of friendly Finns were organised and sent out to the Norwegian frontier. On May 12th the position was attacked by

some 400 Finns on skis, with two guns. The attack was repulsed with loss to the enemy. Later on the defence of Pechenga was taken over by a detachment of the force commanded by Major-General C. C. M. Maynard, C.M.G., under Colonel G. S. McD. Elliot. The "Cochrane," however, remained as a support until her return to England in November.

The above affords a general view of the situation until the arrival on May 24th of Major-General Sir F. C. Poole, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., who took over the command on shore. From that date onward the Navy remained in constant co-operation with the military forces under his command. At my request all Naval elements serving ashore came under the Army.

#### *Local Conditions at Murmansk.*

On my arrival I found the command invested in Rear-Admiral C. P. Ketlinsky of the Russian Navy. He was assassinated on February 10th, and thereafter things were in the hands of the Murmansk Soviet. The Soviet in its turn was dominated by the Bolshevik element of the seamen and Red Guard, numbering some 1,200 men. The landing of armed parties in March, as above related, stabilised the situation in this respect. The economic situation was very bad. Cut off from the usual sources of supply from the interior, White Sea, and Norway, the province was in danger of starvation.

Steps were taken to relieve the distress from Allied sources. The presence of many hundreds of Allied refugee subjects, who had escaped to Murmansk from the interior and were awaiting transport home, was a constant source of anxiety. The circumstances under which many of them had effected their escape was a very plain indication of the latent hostility of the Central Government.

My relations with the Central Soviet Government may be summarised as follows:—Early in March I received a message from them asking me to co-operate with the local authorities in preserving the integrity of the Northern Provinces. In June the same Government sent me a peremptory summons to withdraw all Allied warships from Russian waters.

On April 25th I was authorised to make the following official statement to the Murmansk Soviet:—

"Great Britain has no intention of annexing any part of Russian territory, and will continue to assist in defence of district against outside aggression with such forces as can be spared, and will maintain friendly relations on basis of mutual advantage to both sides. Great Britain will view with greatest concern any severance from Russia of the district lying to the north and east of Finland. The Allies have never entertained any annexational intentions either in Siberia or in any portion of the Russian dominion."

#### *Naval Position.*

In accordance with the practice of former years, the bulk of the Naval forces on the station had left for England on the closing of navigation. On January 1st, 1918, the following Naval forces were at Murmansk and Kola Inlet:—

#### *British.*

H.M.S. "Glory" (Flag), Captain Robert W. Glennie, R.N.  
8 Trawlers.

## Russian.

"Chesma," Battleship similar to "Glory";  
 "Askold," Cruiser;  
 4 Destroyers;  
 Several Trawlers, Yachts, etc.

"Chesma" and "Askold" were fully manned and in fighting condition. Their crews were strongly Bolshevik. The "Glory" and "Chesma" were lying at point-blank distance from each other, and the tension at times was so great that the possibility of a sudden attack from the latter could not be overlooked.

Subsequent Allied reinforcements were as follows:—

Trawler force augmented to 24 by the end of May;

H.M.S. "Cochrane," Armoured Cruiser, Captain James V. Farie, R.N., arrived March 9th;

"Amiral Aube," French Armoured Cruiser, Captain Louis J. Petit, arrived March 17th;

H.M.S. "Alexander," lightly-armed ice-breaker, Acting Captain Henry A. le F. Hurt, R.N., arrived April 1st;

"Tay" and "Tyne," special anti-submarine ship, May 20th;

H.M.S. "Salvator," armed yacht, May 21st;

"Olympia," United States Armoured Cruiser, Captain B. B. Bierer, May 24th;

H.M.S. "Attentive," Light Cruiser, Captain Edward Altham, R.N., June 11th;

"Nairana," Seaplane-carrier, Commander Charles F. R. Cowan, R.N., July 11th;

"M. 23" and "M. 25," Monitors, August 9th.

In addition to above, Russian Cruiser "Askold" was commissioned by Captain Charles G. Wills, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.N., on August 3rd with a British crew specially sent out, and re-named "Glory IV."

In addition to their ordinary duties, the above squadron was called upon to provide officers and men for the following services:—Landing parties at Murmansk, Pechenga, and subsequently at Archangel; armoured trains for Murman and Archangel railways; *personnel* for 4 Russian Destroyers; Russian armed yachts and trawlers, and improvised river gunboats for the Dwina River Expedition.

In addition to providing *personnel* for above, the Squadron was called upon to carry out with its own resources large machinery and other repairs to all Russian craft taken over before the latter could be ready for sea.

The excellent way in which these services were carried out reflects great credit on the officers and men concerned.

*Anti-Submarine Operations.*

In former years the White Sea and approaches had been a point of enemy submarine activity as regards both Fighting-submarines and minelayers. I had reason to believe that the Soviet Government had made a strong appeal to Berlin to intensify submarine activities in these waters. The protection of troopships throughout the summer of 1918 taxed to the full the energies of the naval forces on the station. Except for one ship which was mined in an outlying minefield to the north of Ribachi Peninsula, and afterwards salvaged by the Auxiliary Patrols, there were no

losses from submarines. Submarines had made their appearance in the beginning of May, sinking sealers and fishing craft as far east as Svatoi Nos. A small Russian passenger ship, plying between Vardo and Kola, was attacked close to Vaida Gouba, on the Ribachi Peninsula. The survivors, many of them women and children, were shelled in the boats and even after landing. Over 20 harmless civilians were killed and wounded. The effect of these outrages was to weld the people more closely to the Allied cause. I was later on informed by the Vice-President of the Archangel Soviet, who was in close touch with Moscow, that access to Russian waters was granted to German submarines provided that Russian ships flying the Red Soviet flag were not molested.

*Arrival of Major-General Poole.*

On May 24th Major-General Sir F. C. Poole, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., arrived in the "Olympia" and took over the command ashore. On May 29th the Royal Marines previously asked for arrived, and were turned over to the Army.

On June 19th I requested "Amiral Aube" to attempt the passage to Kandalaksha and Archangel Bar. She was forced to return, having sustained some damage from heavy ice, which, even at this late period of the year, was still thick in the approaches to the White Sea.

On July 1st I sent "Attentive," with a detachment of trawlers, to Kandalaksha and Kem, with orders to co-operate with the Army in the southern advance down the railway line.

Ice was encountered, but the passage was practicable. At Kem she found that the Red Army had retreated to the south of Soroka, partially destroying the railway behind them. "Nairana," which had arrived on July 11th, was sent to assist with seaplanes. Both ships did good work in harrying the enemy south of Soroka, enlisting the sympathies of the local authorities, and supplying the needy with food. They remained on this service until recalled to Murmansk late in July to prepare for the Archangel operations.

*Position of Archangel.*

The position at Archangel was obscure. Communication was difficult, and coded messages were prohibited by the local authority. In consultation with General Poole I decided to visit the place myself, and left in "Salvator" on July 2nd, taking with me Mr. Lindley, British Political Commissioner, and Sir William Clarke, Head of an Economic Commission, both of whom had arrived a few days before and were desirous of joining the Allied Ambassadors at Vologda. I arrived at Archangel on July 4th, after considerable difficulties had been raised as to the passage of the ship. Mr. Lindley and Sir William Clarke left next day for Vologda. I found here H.M.S. "Alexander" and two transports with food supplies. These had left Murmansk on April 17th, and had made their way with much difficulty through the ice. It had been intended that the cargoes of the foodships should be exchanged for Allied war material landed in Archangel during 1917, which, in spite of protest, had been despatched into the interior by orders of the Central Government.

These negotiations had broken down, and

the ships were undischarged when I arrived. In concert with Mr. Douglas Young, British Consul, it was arranged that these food stores should be turned over to the Russians, provided that a large number of Allied refugees, whose safety was a primary consideration, should be sent to Kandalaksha. There was a strong disposition on the part of the Archangel Soviet to hold these refugees as hostages, and send them back to Moscow.

I found the position very strained. Two days before my arrival an unprovoked hostile demonstration had been made against "Alexander." She had been surrounded by armed vessels and field batteries on the shore. The courage and address of Captain Henry A. le F. Hurt, R.N., saved the situation. To save further trouble of this nature I sent her to Murmansk, as her armament was too light to be of practicable use.

The Allied position in North Russia was explained to the local authorities, but all efforts to secure their co-operation failed, and I was given plainly to understand that any attack would be resisted. I was also convinced that active assistance on an organised scale was not to be hoped for from the pro-Ally element, who were very closely watched.

I returned to Murmansk on July 17th, calling at Kem on the way. On my return I was informed by General Poole that the Allied occupation of Archangel had been decided on. This decision entailed the following considerations from a naval point of view. Resistance was probable. The known fixed defences consisted of a battery of eight 6 in. guns on Modjuga Island, and a minefield operated from the shore. The battery covered at close range a narrow dredged channel up which the expedition must pass. The ascent of the river, about forty miles, could be undertaken by only medium-draft ships, and ample field artillery existed to dispute the passage at any point. Lack of pilots, removal of buoys and beacons, and the presence of mines or sunken obstructions in the channel might cause serious difficulty. The garrison was numerically ample, and included at least one Lett regiment, and could be reinforced to any extent from Petrograd at 36 hours' notice. The nature of the ground and the meagre forces at our disposal did not admit of an encircling attack by land.

In our favour were the idle and undisciplined state of the garrison, lack of competent leadership, the moral effect of aircraft—then a novelty in Archangel—and the hope that, though no direct assistance could be expected from the pro-Ally element, they were in a position to help materially by putting obstructions in the way of defence.

Such arrangements as were possible were made to cope with the above, and it was arranged for the expedition to start on August 3rd. An urgent message from the Allied Ambassadors, who had arrived at Kandalaksha on July 30th, made it necessary to modify these arrangements and start at once.

A body of 500, consisting of French Marines and French Colonial troops, with a detachment of British Royal Marines and a small party from "Olympia," in all 600, was distributed between "Amiral Aube," "Attentive," and "Nairana." Brigadier-General R. G. Finlayson, C.M.G., D.S.O., and myself embarked in latter. These three ships left at 9 p.m., July 30th, and proceeded for

Archangel at 16 knots. A trawler detachment with "Tay and Tyne," under Captain Henry A. le F. Hurt, R.N., left at 10 knots at 6 p.m. the same day. Another trawler detachment was left behind as an escort to the transports "Stephen," "Asturian," "Kassala," and "Westborough," which it was hoped would leave at noon next day with the main body of the troops in charge of Captain John L. Pearson, R.N., Chief of Staff. These arrived at Archangel on August 4th.

Major-General Poole and staff and Captain B. B. Bierer, U.S.N., of the "Olympia," left in "Salvator" at 10 p.m. at 11 knots.

A thick fog was encountered, in which "Amiral Aube" got separated from the "Attentive" and "Nairana." At 12.6 a.m., August 1st, I received a signal from "Amiral Aube" to say that she was aground at Intzi Point. After consulting with General Finlayson I decided to go on with "Attentive" and "Nairana," telling "Amiral Aube" to come on to a *rendezvous* on the coast 15 miles N.W. of Dwina lightship. "Nairana" and "Attentive" anchored at this *rendezvous* at 3 a.m. on August 1st.

The weather was then fairly clear and blowing strongly from the north-east. Final arrangements were made, and three seaplanes got out, one with orders to demonstrate over Archangel and the other two to work with the ships. "Attentive" was sent on to the lightship (which, contrary to our expectations, was in place), with orders to seize her and any pilots found, and to telephone an ultimatum to the Island. The Island was required to surrender within half-an-hour. "Nairana" followed as soon as the last seaplane was in the air. The Island agreed to surrender, and to hoist the white flag on the battery. "Nairana" and "Attentive" accordingly stood in, and prepared to land troops. A tug then arrived from the lightship with a message from the battery refusing to submit, and saying that landing parties would be fired on. Troops were therefore re-embarked, and "Attentive" and "Nairana" anchored close to the north point of the Island. "Attentive" was ordered to open fire and seaplanes to bomb. The fort, which was about 5,000 yards distance, replied, and made pretty good shooting. "Attentive" was hit through the base of the foremost funnel, putting one boiler-room out of action, but without casualty. "Attentive" made good shooting, and the seaplanes bombed effectively.

The fort gradually ceased fire, and the troops were landed in ships' boats with some difficulty owing to the necessity of finding a channel and the shelving nature of the beach. The troops were under the command of Captain Alliez, of the French Army, who had orders to work down South and occupy the battery and all mine-firing posts found. It was afterwards found that the battery and minefield arrangements were in good order.

The landing party encountered slight opposition from rifles and machine-guns, and the Island was in our possession by 8 p.m.

Some prisoners were made, but the majority of the garrison escaped in boats. Our casualties were slight. In the meantime the "Amiral Aube" got off and joined me at 3 p.m. on August 1st.

The result of the action at Modjuga was so discouraging to the Red garrison in Arch-

angel that they retreated by rail and river, leaving the town temporarily in the hands of the pro-Ally element. They were afforded no time to rally.

"Salvator," with Major-General Poole on board, arrived at 8 p.m. Next morning the squadron proceeded up the river, leaving the "Amiral Aube" to control the approaches. It was found that two large icebreakers, "Sviatogor" and "Mikula," had been sunk, with the intention of blocking the channel at a narrow point in the river, but fortunately leaving enough room for ships to pass. The two icebreakers were raised shortly afterwards and refitted. The squadron anchored off Archangel, which was occupied, troops having been landed at Solumbola and other places on the way up. The Russian tricolour and naval flag had everywhere replaced the red flag of the Soviet. At 7 p.m. the "Attentive" captured the armed yacht "Gorislava," which was firing on the town, and brought her down. Early on August 3rd I ordered "Attentive" to Bakaritzan to assist the Army in warding off an attack. She took up a good position in shoal and confined waters, and did excellent work both with guns and a landing party in helping to save this important terminus.

#### *Dwina River Expedition.*

The decision of the General Officer Commanding to despatch a considerable military force up the Dwina River with a view to co-operation with Admiral Kolchak, who, it was hoped, would take Kotlas, made naval co-operation necessary. This expedition had not formed part of the original intention, and no provision in the shape of river gunboats had been made. The Bolshevik element, in retreating from Archangel, had taken with them the best of the river craft. The river was intricate, with many shallow spots, while pilots, barges and tugs of suitable draft were few and in bad order.

Four river paddle-craft were manned and armed, and, together with "M.25," and two small seaplanes from "Nairana," were placed under the immediate command of Captain Edward Altham, R.N., of the "Attentive," with orders to co-operate with Army. "M.25" drew 9 feet of water, and it was not possible to reduce her draft materially. Only abnormally high water in the river during the summer permitted her employment. During the latter half of August, September and until the advent of ice-conditions in October caused the flotilla to be withdrawn to Archangel, it was in constant action with the enemy gunboats and shore batteries. Three enemy ships were sunk and twenty-four mines swept up. Much zeal and gallantry was shown by the flotilla,

and the value of their services in assisting the Army to establish themselves in their advanced positions some 200 miles up the river before winter was warmly appreciated by the General Officer Commanding.

#### *Work of Seaplane Carrier "Nairana."*

The "Nairana" did excellent work on all fronts. Her intrepid pilots made many flights where the lack of water surface meant disaster in case of a forced landing. They were constantly in action with the enemy, and generally had tangible marks to show of the latter's attention.

H.M. river gunboats "Glowworm," "Cockchafer," "Cicala," and "Cricket" arrived at Murmansk on October 30th. They wintered in Archangel, ready for work next season. The navigation of these frail craft to the far North in the stormy weather of late autumn was a noteworthy achievement.

On November 15th I handed over the command of the Station to Rear-Admiral John F. E. Green, C.B., and returned to England, having held the command of these waters since September, 1915.

I beg to attach herewith a list of officers specially mentioned for good service in 1918.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

T. W. KEMP,

Rear-Admiral, Retired.

The Secretary of the Admiralty.

#### LIST OF OFFICERS MENTIONED FOR GOOD SERVICES DURING NAVAL OPERATIONS IN N. RUSSIA, 1918.

Captain Louis Jules Petit, French Armoured Cruiser, "Amiral Aube."  
 Captain B. B. Bierer, United States Armed Cruiser, "Olympia."  
 Captain John L. Pearson, R.N., Chief of Staff.  
 Captain James U. Farie, R.N., H.M.S. "Cochrane."  
 Captain Edward Altham, R.N., H.M.S. "Attentive."  
 Acting Captain Henry A. le F. Hurt, R.N., H.M.S. "Alexander."  
 Commander Charles F. R. Cowan, H.M.S. "Nairana."  
 Engineer-Commander Francis H. Lyon, R.N., H.M.S. "Attentive."  
 Lieutenant-Commander Edward H. Richardson, A.M., R.N.R., H.M.S. "Glory."  
 Paymaster Lieutenant Norman H. Beall, R.N., Secretary to Rear-Admiral.  
 Mr. S. Harrison, Civilian (for special services rendered to Navy).

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