

Commanding the Waziristan Force were limited to the Takhi Zam line up to Ladha, on which the 9th, 10th and 21st Brigades were disposed as shown in Appendix 1. The Khassadars had in December taken over their duties between Sorarogha and Ladha, and they also held Wana and the posts on the Gomal line.

3. The general situation in Waziristan remained good from the beginning of 1922 up to the middle of October. During this period only a few incidents of minor importance occurred, and such hostility as was evidenced by these incidents was easily and quickly suppressed.

4. Thus—to take the Mahsuds first—as a reprisal for several minor attacks on our troops by Jalal Khel gangs during January and February, the encampments of this section near Saruna were bombed by aeroplanes on the 12th March; in retaliation for a raid on a convoy in the Takhi Zam on the 1st July, a settlement of the same section at Gurgura Punja was destroyed by Khassadars, and punitive fines were levied for complicity and territorial responsibility on the Nazari and Shaman Khel; and an attack on one of the Ladha piquets by the Abdur Rahman Khel on the 29th July was followed by bombing operations against their villages, in the Upper Baddar Toi, the result being full compliance with the punitive terms imposed by Government.

Apart from such occurrences as these, our relations with the Mahsuds, as a whole, showed considerable improvement during the spring and summer, and at a jirga held at Ladha in the middle of July, all the Mahsud sections, except the Jalal Khel, Abdur Rahman Khel, and Abdullai, accepted responsibility for their past offences and consented to the location of Khassadar posts in their territory; in return, Mr. S. E. Pears, C.I.E., I.C.S., who in January had succeeded Mr. J. A. O. Fitzpatrick, C.I.E., C.B.E., I.C.S., as Resident in Waziristan, announced the new allowances sanctioned by Government.

5. To turn to the Wazirs. On the 11th March the Zilli Khel attacked and captured a Khassadar convoy near Kajuri Kach. This success led to a recrudescence of activity on the part of the hostile elements among the Wana Wazirs, who assembled a lashkar and on the 4th April surrounded the Khassadars in Wana Fort. Bombing operations carried out by the Royal Air Force on the 7th, 8th, and 11th dispersed the lashkar, inflicted considerable damage on hostile villages near Wana and restored the situation; but, to minimize the possibility of future trouble in that area, it was decided to reinforce the Wana Khassadars with a detachment of South Waziristan Scouts. 500 Scouts were accordingly moved to Wana at the beginning of May, and soon proved their value by successfully rounding up, on the 12th May, four villages near Spin, the attitude of whose inhabitants had been markedly hostile.

6. On the Tochi side the Wazirs gave no trouble. At the end of April the Resident summoned a jirga at which he announced that regular troops would not evacuate the Ladha line before Razmak was occupied, and that if the Ladha line were then evacuated it would be held by Khassadars. The result was that

by the 12th May the Tochi Wazirs submitted a petition asking that the Idak-Razmak road might be built through their country, and that Government forces might permanently occupy the Razmak plateau.

7. In the meantime work continued satisfactorily on the Kotkai-Sorarogha road, and it was completed by the 1st August, though spates prevented its use by mechanical transport until the middle of September.

8. Early in September as already noted, the Government of India obtained sanction to the scheme for the permanent control of Waziristan. An outline of this scheme has been given in paragraph 1 above.

Shortly afterwards orders were issued that Razmak should be occupied by the 14th January, 1923, and that the evacuation of the Takhi Zam line should be completed by the 1st February.

9. Consequent on these orders, the work of backloading all surplus supplies and stores on the Ladha line, amounting to some 4,000 tons, commenced, the undertaking being rendered especially difficult by the length of the line of communications, the shortage of transport, and the liability of interruption by spates. The tactical problems involved in withdrawing the troops through forty miles of difficult country necessitated also the preparation of an intricate plan of operations, scheduled to extend over a fortnight.

10. As has already been mentioned, the Mahsud situation, which was distinctly promising in the early autumn, began rapidly to deteriorate in the second half of October. The reason for this change is mentioned elsewhere in this despatch; its effects were manifested in the increased frequency of attacks on our troops, in the opposition offered by the Abdullai to the establishment of a Khassadar post at Tauda China, and by the Michi and Salimi Khel to the establishment of posts at Sarwakai and Haidari Kach, and finally in the death of Lieutenant Dickson, R.E., near Tamre Oba, on the 12th December, at the hands of Abdullai irreconcilables, in circumstances which are still under investigation.

11. On the 23rd November, Government ordered the suspension of work on the Sorarogha-Razmak and Jandola-Sarwakai roads, and on the 1st December directed that the survey of the former should not be continued beyond Dwa Toi. These decisions undoubtedly increased the belief, already widespread among the Mahsuds, that the occupation of Razmak would not take place.

12. The use of aeroplanes at this period might have been of great assistance, but unfortunately they were not available, for various reasons, until the 17th December. In the meantime it had been found necessary to postpone the advance of the Razmak Force, from Asad Khel, from the 1st to the 15th December, and it was decided to bomb heavily all hostile sections of the Mahsuds for one month prior to the commencement of the advance.

13. On the 17th December, intensive bombing operations commenced against the hostile Mahsud sections, a squadron of Heavy Bombers and one of Bristol Fighters being placed at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding the Waziristan Force for the purpose, and were carried on almost continuously, in spite of bad flying weather, for the next six