

Waziristan Force, acting directly under Army Headquarters, and comprising the troops in the Derajat and on the Takki Zam line, and Razmak Force, which was under the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, and included the 5th, 7th and 8th Indian Infantry Brigades, with attached troops, located at Bannu, in the Tochi and Khaisora, and at Razmak.

With the termination of active operations and the inauguration of more settled conditions, the retention of the two Forces as separate entities became unnecessary; it was therefore decided to amalgamate them, Waziristan Force being extended to include all the troops in Waziristan, and Razmak Force, as such, ceasing to exist. This change in organization took effect from the night of the 31st May/1st June.

No alteration was made, however, in the system of political control: the General Officer Commanding, Waziristan Force, continued to act as Chief Political Officer in South Waziristan, while in North Waziristan political authority was exercised by the Resident in Waziristan, under the orders of the Chief Commissioner, North-West Frontier Province.

4. At the commencement of the period now under review, the distribution of the troops in the Takki Zam was as shown in Appendix I. These dispositions were made with a view to affording adequate protection for the labour, both military and civil, employed on the construction of the Sorarogha-Razmak road, the early completion of which was the main objective during the summer.

5. The construction of this section, the last link in the "circular road" from the Tochi to the Derajat, involved the excavation of 26 miles of road on a very difficult hill alignment. An enormous quantity of rock-cutting was necessary, and in particular the two gorges of the Barari Tangi and Zawar Kalai presented many awkward problems to the engineers in charge.

In the Barari Tangi where, for a length of nearly half a mile, the rock formation consisted of vertical strata, interspaced with narrow but deep gullies, the whole mass of the hill side had to be blasted down to road level from a height of about 170 feet, and in one place it was necessary to drive a tunnel.

In Zawar Kalai gorge too the rock-cutting was very heavy, and a difficult stone causeway, involving a revetment forty feet in height, had to be built.

Again, near Aka Khel, the walling of a long stretch of fissured conglomerate cliff entailed great labour, and the sheer face of a cliff two hundred feet high was blasted out in order to make a roadway of sufficient width.

6. The construction of the road in the vicinity of the camps at Sorarogha, Piazza and Aka Khel—and this included all the more difficult portions—was undertaken by the sappers and pioneers who ordinarily worked from dawn at 5.30 a.m. till 3 or 4 p.m. six days a week, and, for a period, when it was found that progress in the Barari needed speeding up, worked in two daily shifts, the hours being correspondingly increased. In addition, during August, technical troops were employed below Sorarogha in repairing parts of the road which had been seriously damaged by floods.

Civilian labour under contractors was employed on such portions of the road as were distant from military camps, and as it was considered advisable, for political reasons, to give some of the contracts to Mahsuds, the sector from the Shuran Algad (two miles south of Razmak) to Zawar Kalai, a stretch of ten miles was given to the local sections of Mahsuds to construct, the two sections chiefly concerned being the Abdullai and Shabi Khel. They were warned that, should they fail to carry out the work according to the specification laid down, or within the specified time, their contracts would be closed down and the work would be taken over by the technical troops; in spite of this, much difficulty and delay was experienced in allotting the contracts and in inducing them actually to start work, and, as will be mentioned later, it eventually became necessary to substitute military for Mahsud labour on one portion of the sector.

7. Several attempts were made during the early part of the summer to shoot British Officers employed on the road, and on the 6th July Lieutenant Webster, R.E., of the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners, was murdered near Piazza while riding out to his work unescorted. The Mahsud badraggas who were responsible for road protection at the place where the murder was committed, were absent, the murderers escaped unseen, and all endeavours to establish their identity have failed, though the evidence points to the complicity, if not the actual guilt, of certain badraggas.

Following on this murder, there occurred a series of hostile acts in the Piazza-Marobi area. These were directly traceable to the Shabi Khel Mahsuds, whose inter-sectional jealousies over road contracts culminated in serious sniping of the coolie camp at Bibizai Raghza on August 20th when five coolies were killed or wounded. The camp was, therefore, closed, the coolies were withdrawn and work ceased on this portion of the road for over a fortnight. The Shabi Khel were called to account and threatened with aerial bombing if they did not comply with the terms which were handed to them in jirga. This they did, paying Rs. 3,000 in fines and depositing three rifles and Rs. 3,000 as security for future good behaviour. It was decided to continue the bulk of the work on this section of the road with military labour, and on the 3rd September a new camp was established at Marobi by troops from Piazza, Aka Khel camp being closed down to admit of this being done.

8. The Guri Khel and Garreraï had been giving a certain amount of trouble during the summer. The incidents for which they were responsible, although unimportant individually, had reached a total which could not be ignored collectively. Accordingly, on the 14th September, an ultimatum was sent to them stating that if they did not come in and comply with certain specified terms, they would have to stand the consequences which would include aerial bombing. The Garreraï headed by Maula Dad signified their acquiescence in the terms, but the Guri Khel refused to accept them. Aerial operations against them were therefore begun on the 23rd September and the villages of Maresai and Zazhe Oba were bombed. The targets formed by these villages were very inadequate as a large proportion of the inhabitants habitually live in caves.