

Operations were discontinued on the 5th October and an opportunity was given to the Guri Khel to come in. After considerable delay this small tribe eventually complied with the terms on the 29th October, but only after a very distinct threat of a renewal of aerial operations.

9. Towards the end of October the Sorarogha-Razmak section was reported to be passable, and on the 27th, 28th and 29th I myself motored through Waziristan from Dera Ismail Khan, via Jandola, Razmak and Idak, to Bannu. Though the road was then fit to take occasional heavy mechanical transport, more work was, and is, still needed in the way of finishing; for example, only a small proportion is metalled, and in many places the drainage requires improvement; again, at certain crossings, where only causeways now exist, bridges should eventually be substituted, if the road is to be rendered passable under all conditions of climate. Such improvements, as financial considerations permit are being undertaken during the current year, and it is hoped that, as funds become available, it will gradually be possible to complete the road to at least a 3rd class standard throughout.

10. As I have already mentioned, it was the policy of the Government of India that, when the circular road was completed, the Takki Zam from Jandola (inclusive) upwards should be evacuated by regular troops, and the line from Jandola to Sorarogha be held by Scouts and Khassadars only, while between Sorarogha and Razmak the road would be kept open by Khassadars for inspection by the engineers or for the passage of officers, when necessary. The time had now arrived to put this policy into effect.

11. On the 4th November Marobi camp, which had been occupied since the beginning of September, was evacuated, the 7th Brigade column moving down from Razmak to Tauda China to co-operate in the evacuation in case of trouble.

All the technical troops were now moved down from the Takki Zam and, with the exception of a few units which were still needed in connection with the withdrawal operations, or for the construction of the Jandola-Sarwekai road through the Shahur Tangi (to which I shall refer shortly) were returned to India.

Appendix II shows the disposition of the troops in Waziristan before the commencement of the withdrawal.

12. On the 7th November, Piazza camp was evacuated, the detachment moving back without opposition to Sorarogha. The Royal Air Force co-operated during the withdrawal, and the 7th Brigade column demonstrated from Tauda China towards Piazza suffering one casualty killed.

13. It had been the intention that the withdrawal from the Takki Zam should be carried out in one continuous operation, but as the political authorities were at this time holding a jirgah of all the Mahsud sections, and as it was represented by the General Officer Commanding, Waziristan Force, that the departure of regular troops while the jirgah was actually in session might have an adverse effect on the political situation, it was decided to postpone further withdrawal until the 1st December.

14. Good progress had already been made in the construction of the Scout posts at Sorarogha and Kotkai, and work on all essential details, such as water supply and defensive arrangements, was now pushed on as rapidly as possible in order to ensure that the Scout garrisons should be left reasonably secure at those places. It was clear that a considerable number of Punjabi workmen would in any case have to be left behind under Scout protection to complete the posts, and it was feared that when the regulars withdrew they would not remain at their work. In the event, numbers of them did run away, but they were caught and sent back, and subsequently worked contentedly until the construction of the posts was finished.

15. The second stage of the withdrawal, from Sorarogha to Jandola, was begun on the 1st December and completed by the 5th December without opposition of any kind, the Royal Air Force again co-operating most efficiently. The Resident was still interviewing a big jirgah at Sorarogha and to this may perhaps be attributed the fact that the Mahsuds did not follow up the troops. The distribution of the troops in the Takki Zam immediately prior to the evacuation of Sorarogha is shown in Appendix III.

16. In the meantime work had been in progress on the construction of the Jandola-Sarwekai road which it had been decided for political reasons, should be built, if possible, by civil labour under Mahsud contractors, protection to the labour being provided by Scouts and Khassadars. Considerable difficulty was experienced in allotting the contracts among the host of petty contractors who presented themselves, and, when the contracts had been allotted, in inducing the Mahsuds to start work, as the Mahsud has a strong aversion to working in the summer except at a comparatively high altitude; but by the end of October the first section, from Jandola to Chagmalai (five and a half miles), was finished and metalled.

On the next section, however, from Chagmalai to Splitoi, which included the difficult Shahur Tangi, very little progress had been made, and it was apparent that, if the work were left in the hands of the contractors, the completion of this section would be indefinitely postponed. Consequently it was decided to move up technical troops under the protection of regulars to construct the road through the Shahur Tangi, while two additional pioneer battalions were to be kept at Khirgi and Manzai to act as a reserve to these troops or to provide additional labour in case of need.

On the 9th December, in accordance with this decision, the troops for the Shahur began to move to Chagmalai under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel M. A. Hamer, D.S.O., M.C., Commanding, the 9th Indian Infantry Brigade.

Appendix IV shows the dispositions of troops in South Waziristan for the Shahur project.

17. The first two miles of the road from Chagmalai have been constructed by Indian coolies working under Mahsud contractors; this is easy ground and good progress has been made. On the next two miles, up to the junction of the Splitoi and Shahur nullahs, the technical troops have been employed. From the Splitoi nullah up to Sarwekai post, a dis-