

2. No Czechs had arrived at Murman, as through German intrigue they had all been prevented by the Soviet Government. Thus there was no hope of obtaining any help from this source.

3. All Intelligence reports indicated probability of an attack against the railway line by the White Finns, estimated strength about 20,000, at points about Kandalaksha-Kem and Petrozavodsk.

4. The actual Allied forces at my disposal were:—

(1) Landing parties from Allied Warships, about 500 men.

(2) A detachment of French scattered down the line, mostly invalids, about 300 men.

(3) About 1,400 Serbs, of whom many were sick and about half had no rifles.

(4) The Russian Red (Railway) Guards, about 1,200 men, in posts down the line as far as Svanka. Their fighting value was very doubtful, and also their attitude towards the Allies.

(5) About 500 Finnish Red Guards, who were in doubt whether to enlist in our service. Of these some 200 were suffering from scurvy and starvation.

(6) Any Russians I might be able to enlist.

It was thus obvious that our best chance of defence lay in the fact that the difficulties of the country, which is very boggy and with practically no roads passable in summer, rendered an advance against us an exceedingly difficult operation. The only feasible routes of advance were either along the railway, which is a badly laid single track line with a considerable number of easily destroyed bridges, or else by utilising the waterways, lakes and rivers, of which there are several feasible routes. In either of these cases the transport of large bodies of troops or of guns would be an exceedingly difficult operation, and at the ports themselves of Murman and Pechenga any hostile force arriving would necessarily come under fire of the ships' guns. This fact gave us, at any rate, confidence and moral support.

Arrival of Reinforcements.

On 29th May a reinforcement of 400 Royal Marines arrived in s.s. "Porto." This number was considerably magnified in local opinion, and created a very good political effect.

Arrival of Special Commissioner from Moscow.

About this time the Soviet at Moscow were apparently undecided as to whether to yield to German pressure and submit themselves definitely to their influence, or whether to throw in their lot with the Allies and recommence hostilities. In any case they sent up to Murman a Special Commissioner—Natzaremus—with full powers to act for them and conclude any agreement with the Allies. I had several conversations with him, but as his great anxiety before entering into any agreement was to obtain official recognition of the Moscow Soviet by the Allied Governments, for which of course we had no powers, we were unable to come to any decision. He stated, however, unofficially that the Soviet were determined to fight to defend the ports, and were sending up to Murman the Czechs and two divisions of Red Guards. On the same day we definitely heard from Moscow that there was no hope of getting the Czechs, as they were fighting the Bolsheviks at Penza.

Occupation of Kem.

On June 7th reports from Kem showed that the Finnish White Guards were advancing upon the town, and their advanced patrols were only some 40 versts away. As there was considerable local excitement, I decided to reinforce Kandalaksha with 150 Marines. I sent down Lieut.-Colonel Thornhill, D.S.O., in charge, with instructions to take on from Kandalaksha the armoured train and a force of Serbs and Marines and drive the White Finns out of Kem. I was induced to take this step partly because I was assured that Kem was a good recruiting ground, and that I should be able to raise at least 1,000 men there, and partly because of the effect on public opinion to reassure the waverers and to show that the Allies were in earnest. This force occupied Kem without opposition.

Warning from Moscow to Leave the Country.

On June 8th I received the first intimation that the central Government had definitely decided to throw in its lot with Germany against us. I was requested to attend a meeting of the Sovdep, where they read out to me a telegram signed by Lenin and Chicherin, pointing out that the occupation of Murmansk by the Allies was a breach of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, and that we were to be warned to leave the country at once. The Sovdep said that they were pro-Ally, and that they were most anxious that we should not leave. They implied that the result of this order would mean that Murmansk would break away from the Central Government and join the Allies. A telegram from Trotsky intercepted by our secret service ordered the Murman Sovdep to eject us by force.

Start of Recruiting Russians.

Up to this time efforts to recruit Russians had met with little success. The attraction of the Red Guards, with no work, no discipline, good food, and good pay, were infinitely greater than anything I was able to offer. On the 18th of June, though, I was able to interfere in a local riot and save the life of the Commissar of the Red Guard—one Zankovitch, who was about to be murdered by his men. He promptly enlisted to ensure his own safety, and started to obtain other recruits for me. I then inaugurated the Slav-British Allied Legion for Russians—officers and men who enlist under British discipline to fight to free Russia from German domination. Recruiting has never been a great success, as the voluntary system is foreign to Russian ideas. The Russian is accustomed to wait till he is ordered to mobilise, and, although I have personally talked to some hundreds of men who all realise the necessity of fighting for their country, in the majority of cases they say "as soon as we are ordered to mobilise we will come willingly." With the officers the case was different. These men as a class suffered terribly during the last year. Their self-confidence is undermined, their spirit is broken, and those who have managed to escape and reach our lines have as a rule been only too glad to join us. They are enlisted in a special Officers' Company, and form a valuable cadre for supplying officers for the Russian Army after mobilisation has been started.