

over, there was every indication that Bolshevik attempts to organise an efficient fighting force were meeting with no small measure of success.

11. The change in my military situation resulting from the collapse of Germany necessitated corresponding alterations in my dispositions. These included a reduction of my Petchenga garrison and a redistribution along the railway of both departmental and fighting troops; and all these moves had to be carried out when the grip of an Arctic winter was already making itself felt. Simultaneously with the above transfer of troops and stores I had to take in hand the exceedingly important task of organising, equipping and assembling my winter mobile columns. This was a matter of no small difficulty, owing to the unavoidably late arrival of many essential stores, and to the time occupied in unloading, sorting out and despatching to the various organising centres the mass of special equipment required.

As there is no precedent for the formation of such mobile columns in the annals of the British Army I have placed on record in full detail the organisation which I adopted, and which practical experience has proved satisfactory. This is embodied in the pamphlet accompanying this despatch.\*

#### *Present Situation.*

12. As a result of continued pressure exercised by my troops on the White Finn and Bolshevik forces since the autumn of 1918 (details of which are given in paragraph 20) the whole of the Murmansk region to as far south as the 64th parallel has been cleared of enemy troops; the Bolsheviks have been driven south of Segeja (60 miles south of Soroka) with severe losses; and the Soroka-Onega route has been opened up and guarded, thus ensuring communication by land with Archangel.

Owing, however, to increased Bolshevik activity in the neighbourhood of Archangel, I have had to despatch thither considerable reinforcements. This has necessitated the withdrawal of further troops from Petchenga, and additional alterations in my dispositions on the Murmansk side. These changes, together with the transfer by land of the reinforcing units for Archangel, have had to be carried out in the face of many transport difficulties, and under the most severe Arctic conditions.

13. The state of disorganisation and unrest in this district, resulting from Bolshevik misrule and the sabotage which found open expression for some time after the expulsion of the Bolshevik armed forces, are at length commencing to disappear. There still exists, however, a strong undercurrent of Bolshevism, which is evidenced by agitations and strikes, and by persistent efforts to foment trouble between the Allies and the local population. At times this has culminated in demonstrations of active hostility, such as the destruction of railway bridges and attempts to derail trains, but the measures which I have been able to enforce have checked materially these open acts of violence. At the same time, the necessity remains for guarding against their recrudescence, whilst I have also to take strict precautions to prevent the frequent and bold attempts at looting made by Russian gangs, whose action is often connived at by the local railway and other authorities. I am thus compelled to furnish large guards over stores,

and strong escorts for supply trains which, in addition to being unpopular forms of duty, drain the strength of my fighting force.

14. I am also faced with the task of combating and counteracting a far-reaching scheme of propaganda, engineered by the Bolshevik leaders at Moscow. This scheme embraces the inclusion of highly trained propagandist agents in each batch of former Russian prisoners of war returning to their homes. It was my original intention to prohibit the return of any such prisoners, but the Governor-General did not consider himself justified in acquiescing in this step, in view of the demands for recruits for the new Russian Army. I have therefore instituted a very strict system of search, control and surveillance, with drastic penalties for non-compliance with instructions. This, I hope, will result in the detection of propagandists, or at least in rendering their efforts nugatory, whilst those in whom the Russian authorities can place reliance will be available as recruits.

The importance attributed by the Bolsheviks to the spreading of dissatisfaction amongst my British troops is evidenced by the virulent anti-Allied pamphlets, printed in English, which have been discovered recently within my lines. I am taking steps to put a stop to this method of Bolshevik propaganda.

In order to counteract Bolshevik influence in territory outside that occupied by my troops, I have constantly extended the activities of my own propaganda department, and have now inaugurated an Inter-Allied Bureau from which I trust to obtain good results.

15. One of my chief sources of anxiety has been the maintenance of railway communication with my southern garrisons. At the time of the Bolshevik withdrawal a large number of railway employees joined the Bolshevik forces, and many more fled to the south subsequently, owing to my inability to feed and pay them. Those who remained were for the most part discontented and sullen; strikes were frequent; the repair of locomotives ceased; and during the whole of last summer the upkeep of the permanent way was totally neglected—a neglect which is bound to have a most disadvantageous effect on traffic so soon as the thaw commences. With my small railway staff it has been impossible for me to take over the working of a line some 500 miles in length. But I have put into operation a satisfactory liaison system at the more important centres between my officers and the Russian officials; have taken in hand to a limited but useful extent the repair of locomotives by my own men; and have organised my few drivers and firemen as emergency crews on the various sections of the line.

16. In a Force such as that under my command, comprising units of many nationalities, all operating at a great distance from their home bases, administrative difficulties are necessarily accentuated, whilst possibilities of friction are increased correspondingly. It is therefore satisfactory to be able to state that my administrative machinery has run far more smoothly than I had reason to anticipate, and that, by the exercise of a little give-and-take on the part of all concerned, no serious cause for dissatisfaction or misunderstanding has arisen. For this I am indebted in no small measure to the tact and broad-mindedness of the respective commanders of Allied contingents.

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