

capture of this village threatened seriously the lines of communication of the enemy on the west of Lake Segozero, and they withdrew rapidly, making good their escape to the south. The left column, after overcoming considerable opposition, established itself 20 miles east of Meselskaya.

(B) *Meselskaya to Medvyejya Gora.*

A pause of some days now ensued in order to accumulate the supplies and ammunition required, and to repair the damage done by the enemy to the railway during his retreat.

On 15th May the advance was continued by the three columns, which were now operating on a front of 35 miles, and by the night of 18th/19th May the centre column was within five miles of Medvyejya Gora. Here, however, the resistance offered by the enemy increased, and it was not until 21st May that the town was captured by a combined attack of British, French, Italian, Serbian and Russian troops.

According to plan, the right column, marching round the west of the enemy's main position, reached the outskirts of Medvyejya Gora on the early morning of 21st May, and by its threat to the enemy's line of retreat materially assisted the advance of the centre column. The left column occupied Povyenets on 18th May after several days' desultory fighting.

*Comments on Foregoing Operations.*

6. The above advance of over 60 miles was made across a wild area of forest, marsh and lake, in which such tracks as existed were almost impassable for wheeled traffic at that time of the year.

The Murmansk-Petrograd railway, consisting of a single line, is the main channel of communication through the area. It is extremely vulnerable owing to the large number of wooden bridges which carry it over the waterways, and the wholesale destruction of these by the enemy during his retreat impeded the pursuit of the centre column and added greatly to the difficulties of supplying its advanced posts.

The maintenance of the flank columns presented even greater difficulties, however, since all supplies and ammunition had to be conveyed for over 100 miles by tracks wholly unsuited to wheeled transport, and along which every bridge and culvert had been destroyed.

Operations were necessarily confined almost entirely to the attack and defence of localities covering such roads and tracks as were in existence, the enemy usually occupying entrenched positions, the flanks of which rested on a lake or marsh. The difficulty of carrying positions of this nature without undue sacrifice was increased by the impossibility of employing any considerable force of artillery. With the centre column, however, field guns were employed on railway mountings constructed in the local workshops and proved of great assistance.

The absence of aircraft during this advance was felt severely.

*Situation after Capture of Medvyejya Gora-Povyenets Line.*

7. The success which had attended the Allied and Russian arms did much to stimulate the mobilisation of the Russian Forces, and many recruits were obtained from newly occupied territory. It was therefore decided to concentrate in the forward area such units of

the Russian Northern Army as had received sufficient training, whilst every effort was made by the provision of schools of instruction and by the attachment of Russian officers to my Staff and to various departments to build up a Russian force which should develop into an efficient fighting machine capable eventually of taking over from the Allies the entire conduct of operations.

In the meantime a seaplane base and aerodrome were established at Medvyejya Gora by the R.A.F. units recently arrived from England, and a lake flotilla was formed of such motor-boats as I had been able to collect, repair and man, pending the arrival from home of more suitable and efficient craft with trained personnel.

The situation at this time was complicated by the presence of Finnish Volunteers in the neighbourhood of my right flank. These had crossed the frontier of Finland at the end of April, and had attacked the Bolsheviks in the Olonets region. They met with considerable success in the first instance, and advanced to within striking distance of Petrozavodsk, their most northerly detachments being in touch with my troops early in June. Various political considerations, however, prevented me from taking full military advantage of their co-operation, and later on they were driven back by the Red Forces, and ceased to be a material factor in the local situation.

By the end of May my positions around Medvyejya Gora and Povyenets had been consolidated, and a very successful start made in the raising of partisan troops along the eastern shore of Lake Onega. Moreover, in response to an appeal from the inhabitants of the Shunga Peninsula, which lies to the west of the northern half of the Lake, a detachment of Russian troops had been sent across to the Peninsula by water from Povyenets with reserve supplies of rifles and ammunition for the arming of the population. This proved the commencement of a widespread anti-Bolshevik movement which played an important part in subsequent operations and yielded eventually a very large number of recruits for the Northern Russian Army. It is hardly too much to say that the eviction of the Reds from the Shunga Peninsula and its occupation by Allied troops were mainly responsible for raising the loyal Russian Forces to a strength sufficient to enable them to undertake single-handed with a reasonable prospect of success the defence of the territory already won by them with Allied assistance.

*Advance from Medvyejya Gora.*

8. In its initial stage our occupation of the Shunga Peninsula gave cause for no slight anxiety. For communication with it was open only by water and, owing to my lack of reliable motor craft, the Bolshevik flotilla was able to render this communication most precarious. In view, therefore, of the important results likely to be obtained by the exploitation of our success in the Peninsula, I decided to endeavour to open up communication with it by land, and entrusted the task to Russian troops. These troops, however, failed repeatedly in the attempt, and their "moral" fell so low that there was grave danger of a complete breakdown of the whole Russian military organisation. British troops were therefore brought up, and, by a series of small but