



SECOND SUPPLEMENT

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WEDNESDAY, 19 MAY, 1920.

*Admiralty,  
1st January, 1920.*

Sir,—With the cessation of hostilities against the Bolsheviks in North Russia, consequent upon the final withdrawal of all British and Allied forces from Archangel and Murmansk on 27th September and 12th October, 1919, respectively, I have the honour to submit the following despatch relating to the Naval side of the operations during the period of my command as Senior Naval Officer, White Sea, from November, 1918, to October, 1919.

2. A short *résumé* of the Naval events in North Russia during the months preceding my arrival is, however, necessary in order to explain the situation as it developed during the time I was in command:—All British men-of-war, except the icebreaker "Alexander," were withdrawn from Archangel before the winter of 1917/18. In April of 1918 H.M.S. "Attentive" (Captain (actg.) E. Altham, R.N.) was selected, on account of suitability of size and draught, to go to Archangel as the ship of the Senior British Naval Officer at that port, when ice conditions should permit.

On leaving England Captain Altham had been given instructions that he was not to take warlike action to prevent munitions and stores being railed away from the port, but was in-

vested with wide discretionary powers. At the beginning of June, 1918, when the "Attentive" arrived at Murmansk, the political situation was already beginning to change. Whereas the local Government had hitherto been in agreement with both that at Archangel and the Central Government at Moscow as regards their attitude to the Allies, with the declaration of peace between Russia and Germany, the Central Government under pressure from Germany became hostile to the continued Allied occupation of Murmansk, and resented any proposal to send Allied forces to Archangel.

It was essential that we should remain in occupation of Murmansk and the Kola Inlet to prevent their use as a probable hostile submarine base. The same remark applied to the Pechenga Gulf, and to Archangel when the White Sea opened. Further, it was to the interest of the local population of these places that we should remain, as they were largely dependent on the Allies for food supplies. The Murmansk Government therefore decided to throw in their lot with the Allies and reject the authority of the Central Moscow Government.

In order to secure the port of Murmansk, it was necessary to hold the railway to the southward, and as soon as ice permitted the

"Attentive" passed into the White Sea, and co-operated with the Russian-Allied forces on its western shores during the month of July until they were firmly established as far down the line as Soroka. The damage done to the railway line to the south of Soroka by the retreating Red troops had already caused much distress, and prevented refugees returning to their homes and fishermen from travelling North for the season's fishing. Under the direction of the Captain of "Attentive," shipping in the White Sea was commandeered and diverted as necessary to assist in reaching their destinations the large number of people who would otherwise have been homeless and destitute. Soroka, which was in the hands of the Bolsheviks until the arrival of "Attentive," was secured by a Naval detachment from that ship on 7th July. A junction was subsequently effected with the Military forces at Kem.

It will also be recalled that in view of the attitude of the local Government at Archangel it was decided to postpone sending a ship until additional troops were available to occupy the town. By the end of July these troops had arrived, and "Attentive" and H.M. Seaplane Carrier "Nairana" (Commander C. F. R. Cowan, R.N.) were recalled to Murmansk from the White Sea to prepare for the expedition to Archangel. The "Nairana" had joined "Attentive" soon after the latter ship's arrival at Soroka, and the seaplanes had already performed most useful service in that vicinity.

The situation in Archangel developed unexpectedly, and necessitated the early despatch of the "Attentive" and "Nairana," together with the French cruiser "Amiral Aube," to secure the approaches to the port and support an anti-Bolshevik rising. The "Amiral Aube" having been delayed on passage, the attack on the fort of Modyuski Island and reduction of the defences there was accomplished by the guns of "Attentive" and bombs from "Nairana's" seaplanes. French troops embarked in these two ships were subsequently landed for the occupation of the island, and on the 2nd August, 1918, the ships entered Archangel without further resistance. The following day the troopships arrived and the Allied occupation was secured.

It was this which initiated our obligations on the Archangel front, and in order to secure further the approaches to the port, operations, details of which are described in the report of the Senior Naval Officer (Captain E. Altham, R.N.) had to be undertaken up the Dwina River. H.M. ships "Attentive," "Glory IV." (ex-Russian cruiser "Askold") and the French cruiser "Amiral Aube," were at Archangel. H.M. Monitor "M.23" (Lieutenant-Commander St. A. O. St. John, R.N.) was detached for service in the White Sea to assist in the occupation of Onega, and with "Nairana" co-operated with the forces on the west coast of the White Sea in the vicinities of Kem and Soroka.

Before the closing of the White Sea for the winter of 1918/19 the "Attentive" and "Nairana" were withdrawn and sent home. Monitors "M.23" and "M.25" (Lieutenant-Commander S. W. B. Green, D.S.O., R.N.) were laid up at Archangel for the winter. My predecessor (Rear-Admiral T. W. Kemp,

C.B., C.M.G., C.I.E.), having represented the necessity for a stronger river flotilla in the spring of the following year, the large river gunboats "Glowworm," "Cockchafer," "Cicala," and "Cricket," which were then in home waters, were despatched in time to arrive at Archangel before that port closed. They were laid up for the winter, and their crews, together with those of the two monitors, were accommodated in barracks ashore.

During the winter months a small Russian-Allied force was raised at Archangel, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander H. E. Rendall, D.S.O., R.N., and subsequently provided a useful personnel for manning flotilla auxiliaries.

H.M.S. "Cochrane" had arrived at Murmansk on 7th March, 1918. Whilst at Murmansk 50 Royal Marines were landed to assist in defending the place. On 2nd May she proceeded to Pechenga, and there landed a Naval Brigade of 100 seamen and 50 Royal Marines, to prevent its occupation by White Finns, who were being supported by Germany.

On 11th and 12th May actions took place between "Cochrane's" Brigade and a force of "White" Finns, which latter were finally beaten off and retired across the frontier. More seamen were subsequently landed, together with Royal Marine reinforcements from "Glory," altogether a total force of about 350 men being maintained.

This force was finally relieved by the Military on 29th September.

"Cochrane" left Pechenga for Murmansk to turn over to "Glory IV." on 1st November, and left Murmansk for England on 3rd November.

3. My instructions were to assist the Military with all available resources at my disposal.

On my arrival at Murmansk on 13th November, 1918, the following were the Naval forces under my orders:—

#### At Archangel.

Monitors:—"M.23," "M.25."

River Gunboats:—"Cricket," "Cicala," "Glowworm," and "Cockchafer."

(Laid up and frozen in for the winter.)

French Cruiser "Gueydon" (Capitaine de Vaisseau J. E. Hallier, C.M.G.), which was relieved in July by French Cruiser "Condé" (Capitaine de Vaisseau J. R. Lequerré), the latter remaining till final evacuation.

#### At Murmansk.

H.M.S. "Glory" (Captain G. Hopwood, C.B.E., R.N., who was invalided and relieved by Captain J. F. Warton, C.M.G., C.B.E., R.N., in April, 1919).

"Glory IV.," late Russian Cruiser "Askold" (Captain (actg.) A. W. Lewis, R.N.), returned to England in April, 1919.

"Sviatogor" and "Alexander," Ice-breakers; and various Drifters and Trawlers.

These vessels were reinforced during summer of 1919 by H.M.S. "Cyclops," Repair Ship (Captain A. C. Bruce, D.S.O., R.N.); H.M.S. "Fox," (Captain E. Altham, R.N.) (S.N.O., River Expeditionary Force); Hospital Ship "Garth Castle"; H.M.S. "Nairana," Seaplane Carrier (Commander H. R. G. Moore,

O.B.E., R.N.); H.M.S. "Pegasus," Seaplane Carrier (Commander O. M. F. Stokes, D.S.O., R.N.); River Gunboats "Moth" and "Mantis"; Monitors, "Humber," "M.24," "M.26," "M.27," "M.31," "M.33"; "Erebus" (Captain J. A. Moreton, D.S.O., R.N.); and in addition numerous and miscellaneous Auxiliaries and Hospital Carriers.

4. During the winter months no Naval operations were possible except the arduous and difficult work of keeping up communications between Murmansk and Archangel by passing various troops and Storeships under escort of the Ice-breakers through the ice, and also in preparing the Monitors and Gunboats for the summer campaign.

5. The U.S. Navy was represented by Rear-Admiral Newton A. McCully, U.S.N., who lived ashore at Murmansk till March, 1919, when he transferred his flag and was accommodated on board U.S. Yacht "Yankton."

In June, 1919, U.S. Cruiser "Des Moines" (Captain Zachariah H. Maddison, U.S.N.), U.S. Cruiser "Sacramento," and 3 Eagle boats arrived, Rear-Admiral McCully returned to England in "Sacramento" in July.

U.S. Cruiser "Des Moines" remained at Archangel until all the U.S. troops had left in September.

6. With the clearing of the ice at the end of April, 1919, Naval operations on the River Dwina were commenced. Captain Altham, who had been appointed by the Admiralty as S.N.O., River Expedition, narrates their exploits in the attached report.

7. During the summer months of 1919 the water in the River Dwina ran very low. Water transport, which was the only means of carrying troops and stores, &c., for the expedition, therefore became most difficult, and strained to the utmost the capabilities and resources of the Naval Transport Service, which was working under Commodore R. Hyde, C.B.E., M.V.O., R.N. Every sort of local craft that was of light draught was commandeered for use either as a troop, store, or hospital carrier. The transport difficulties inseparable from such operations were most successfully undertaken by Commodore Hyde and his staff.

8. The medical arrangements for the transport afloat of the sick and wounded, both naval and military, British or otherwise, were carried out entirely by the Navy under the very able organisation of Surgeon Commander D. W. Hewitt, C.M.G., M.B., F.R.C.S., R.N., with much success and the greatest credit to all under his orders.

9. In July it was decided to withdraw all Allied troops from North Russia before the arrival of the winter.

During the summer monitors and gunboats were operating in the White Sea in conjunction with the military, for which purpose the "Nairana" was based on Kem and the "Pegasus" at Archangel.

On 25th July "M.26" (Lieutenant-Commander A. C. Fawcett, R.N.) rescued the small British garrison at Onega, which was in the hands of Russian troops who had mutinied and joined the Bolsheviks.

On 1st August "M.26," "M.24," H.M. Auxiliary "Walton Belle" and a small Russian steamer carrying a mixed force of Russians, supported by British Gunners, en-

tered the Onega River to retake Onega, but after a hot engagement failed to do so.

Onega was shelled by "Erebus" (Captain J. A. Moreton, D.S.O., R.N.), assisted by "Nairana" with her seaplanes on 28th August, and the town was re-occupied by the Russians.

10. The final evacuation of Archangel took place on 27th September, when some 8,000 British troops were embarked without a hitch.

"Erebus," "Nairana" and "M.23" operated from Kem and in the Gulf of Kandalaska during the time troops were being evacuated from the Murmansk front.

The final evacuation of troops from North Russia took place from Murmansk on 12th October, when I left for England in the "Glory."

11. The Naval transport arrangements generally, under the abnormal conditions obtaining in North Russian Waters and on the Dwina River, and the organisation for evacuation reflect the greatest credit on Commodore Hyde and all concerned under him.

12. H.M.S. "Glory" was the depôt ship at Murmansk during 1917-'18-'19, and her presence there was essential both as an armed support for the military and for the safety of the town. The repair work, administration, &c., of all the many small craft, both those permanently attached to her and those visiting the port, was undertaken by "Glory," and her officers and men deserve high commendation for their valuable work, which was carried out continuously throughout the hardships and discomforts of a rigorous Arctic winter.

H.M.S. "Cyclops," acting as repair ship at Archangel during the summer of 1919, rendered invaluable service by the efficiency with which her staff performed the repairs, &c., required by the vessels employed on the expedition.

13. I wish to place on record the very cordial relations which always existed between the Naval and Military Services, without which good feeling all these varied operations could not have been successfully undertaken.

14. I wish to make mention of the following Officers:—

Commodore R. Hyde, C.B.E., M.V.O., P.N.T.O. at Archangel.

Captain A. C. Bruce, D.S.O., R.N., H.M.S. "Cyclops," repair ship, who acted as S.N.O. at Archangel during my absence from that port.

Capt. J. F. Warton, C.M.G., H.M.S. "Glory," my Chief of Staff.

Captain E. Altham, R.N., S.N.O., River Expedition.

Engineer Captain R. W. Skelton, D.S.O., R.N., on my staff. Acting at Archangel.

Surgeon Commander D. W. Hewitt, C.M.G., M.B., F.R.C.S., R.N., S.M.O., in charge of medical arrangements on Dwina River.

Tempy. Hon. T. Major W. C. T. Hammond, R.M. In charge of Naval stores.

A list of the Officers and men whose services were considered specially deserving of recognition has already been submitted to Their Lordships.

I also desire to endorse Captain Altham's commendations of the work of the various officers and personnel mentioned by him in the accompanying report, with which I concur.

15. My thanks are due to the following Officers of our Naval Allies:—

Read-Admiral N. A. McCully, U.S.N.;  
 Captain Z. H. Maddison, U.S.N., U.S.  
 Cruiser "Des Moines";  
 Capitaine de Vaisseau J. E. Hallier,  
 C.M.G., French Cruiser "Gueydon";  
 Capitaine de Vaisseau Lequerré, French  
 Cruiser "Condé,"

whose cordial co-operation and assistance were at all times of much value.

I have the honour to be,  
 Sir,  
 Your obedient Servant,  
*John F. E. Green,*  
 Rear-Admiral.  
 Late Senior Naval Officer,  
 White Sea.

*Admiralty, S.W. 1,*  
 1st January, 1920.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations of the Naval flotilla employed in the Archangel River Expedition:—

It will be recalled that on 1st August, 1919, H.M.S. "Attentive," then under my command, assisted by the seaplanes of H.M.S. "Nairana," attacked the forts on Modyuski Island which formed the chief defences of Archangel.

These were silenced by bombardment and bombing after a short but hot engagement, in which the "Attentive" sustained damage by shell-fire.

Archangel was subsequently occupied without opposition.

2. In the subsequent pursuit of the enemy up the Dwina River it at once became evident that armed ships would be essential to co-operate with the Russian-Allied forces ashore and counteract the fire of the enemy's ships. A river flotilla was evolved mainly out of local paddle steamers, which were armed and equipped with an expedition and ingenuity which reflected much credit on the technical Officers of the "Attentive."

3. Later in the month the flotilla was strengthened by the addition of the small monitor "M.25" (Lieutenant-Commander S. W. B. Green, D.S.O., R.N.). The fighting developed, and by desire of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Allied Forces, I went up-river and took command of the force which originated our naval obligations on this front.

4. The flotilla successfully countered the attacks of the enemy ships, sinking two of them. With our support the shore forces were established some 200 miles up river. The lateness of the year then necessitated the withdrawal of the ships before the ice set in.

5. In October, 1918, the "Attentive" returned to England, H.M. Gunboats "Glowworm," "Cockchafer," "Cicala" and "Cricket" were sent out, and together with H.M. Monitors "M.23" and "M.25" wintered at Archangel in readiness for the opening up of the river in spring.

6. In February, 1919, it was decided that the situation on the Archangel front necessitated the provision of a strong Naval flotilla, more particularly in view of the part the Navy

might be called upon to play in an evacuation.

7. The ships composing this force were:—

(a) *Up-River Force.*

Monitors "Humber," "M.24," "M.26,"  
 "M.27," "M.31" and "M.33."  
 Gunboats "Moth" and "Mantis."  
 4 Tunnel Minesweepers.  
 6 Coastal Motor-boats.  
 River Depot Ship—H.M.S. "Hyderabad."

(b) *Flying force attached to above.*

8 Seaplanes (number subsequently increased).  
 1 Kite balloon.

(c) *Ships at base. (Archangel.)*

H.M.S. "Fox" as flotilla depot ship.  
 H.M.S. "Pegasus"—Seaplane Carrier.  
 H.M.S. "Cyclops"—Repair Ship.

The flotilla was organised solely for active operations, the whole of the transport work being undertaken by the Naval Transport Service.

8. Having been appointed in command of the flotilla, I reached Archangel in H.M.S. "Fox" on 16th May.

The majority of the ships of the up-river force arrived during the month of June.

The monitors and gunboats which had wintered at Archangel had already proceeded up-river, and were under command of Commander (Act.) S. W. B. Green, D.S.O., R.N., until my arrival.

*I.—Commencement of Operations.*

"M.23" (Lieut.-Commander St. A. O. St. John, R.N.) left Archangel on the 3rd May, and, forcing her way through thick ice in the lower reaches of the river, reached Pless on 5th May.

2. The first Naval offensive of the year was opened on 6th May by "M.23" in co-operation with a scouting party, when Tulgas was bombarded.

"Cricket" (Lieut.-Comdr. F. A. Worsley, D.S.O., R.D., R.N.R.) and "Cockchafer" (Lieut.-Comdr. C. Hester, R.D., R.N.R.) arrived off Pless on the afternoon of 6th May, and the following day the "Glowworm" (Commander (act.) C. Ackland, R.N., Retd.) and "Cicala" (Lieut. E. T. Grayston, R.N.R.) entered the Vaga River and bombarded Nijni Kitsa.

3. The prompt arrival of our ships at the front when the ice broke, and the good seamanship displayed in getting them up-river, prevented what might have proved a critical period when the enemy's ships could have come down and bombarded our positions without having their fire returned by heavy long-range guns which only the ships could bring to bear.

4. The Allied forces at this time held Kourgamen and Shushuga, the enemy Topsa and Tulgas, on the right and left banks of the river respectively.

5. On 18th May the flotilla co-operated in an attack on the enemy's positions at Tulgas. The attack was completely successful, and resulted in the enemy being driven out with the loss of 30 prisoners and 12 machine-guns. Our forces sustained no casualties.

Heavy fire from the enemy gunboats was countered by our ships.

One of the enemy ships was observed to be hit, but was not sunk.

From now onwards the enemy flotilla frequently employed "tip-and-run" tactics, coming down river, firing a few shots and retreating directly fire was returned.

On 27th May a lowest depth of 12 feet of water was found on Chamova Bar. On 31st May it was reported to have fallen to 10 feet.

6. I arrived up-river on 3rd June in the local paddle steamer "Borodino," which henceforth became Naval Headquarters and accommodated the flotilla staff.

7. The relief of the troops who had been out during the winter was in progress at this time.

8. *Intention to Advance.*—The success of Koltchak, and our obligations to leave the North Russian troops in a sound position when we withdrew before the winter, decided the policy of an endeavour to enable the Russians to reach Kotlas and join hands with Koltchak, who was at that time reported to be at, or near, Perm.

9. *Effect on Naval Plans.*—This decision materially affected the Naval considerations, as the flotilla had not been intended for an advance far up-river; some of the ships were of too deep draught and the river was already low and falling. Further, the gunboats had suffered from contact with the ice and constantly firing their guns at extreme elevation, and required refitting.

10. Guns mounted on shallow-draught barges would have been invaluable, but the base was unable to undertake the work. The heavy-draught monitors had therefore to be retained, at much risk, to ease the strain on the gunboats, which alone might be able to operate later.

11. By the middle of June the flotilla was complete with the exception of "Moth" and "Mantis," which had not then arrived from England, and "M.24" and "M.26," which were detached for service in the White Sea.

## II.—*Capture of Topsa and Troitsa.*

On 19th June a more extensive operation was undertaken with the object of capturing the high ground between Topsa and Troitsa, and the flotilla co-operated with Graham's Brigade, bombarding heavily prior to the attack and countering the fire of the enemy ships.

2. H.M.S. "Cockchafer" (Lieut.-Comdr. Q. B. Preston-Thomas, R.N.) did particularly good work in getting up the narrow Kourgamen channel to within a mile of Topsa when that place was taken, and materially assisted in repulsing a counter-attack which threatened the success of our undertakings.

3. H.M.S. "Glowworm" (Commander (actg.) S. W. B. Green, D.S.O., R.N.) was actively engaged with the enemy flotilla in the main channel.

4. H.M. Monitors "Humber" (Lieut.-Comdr. A. Johnstone, R.N.), "M.27" (Lieut.-Comdr. G. H. I. Parker, R.N.), and "M.33" (Lieut.-Comdr. K. Michell, D.S.C., R.N.) also assisted in this operation, which marked the first stage of the advance, and materially improved our positions.

In the course of this fighting a barge on which the enemy had mounted two heavy long-range guns was holed by our fire and abandoned.

5. *Mine-sweeping.*—This brought the ships to the edge of the enemy minefield, and for the next week mine-sweeping had to be carried out under most difficult conditions. The river water was so thick that it was impossible to

see to any appreciable depth, even from a sea-plane. Instead of being able to sweep in comparative safety on the rise of the tide, as at sea, the river was of course tideless and falling.

6. It was necessary to explore channels with small steamboats, clear mines where discovered, buoy a passage, and then send up the heavier-draught tunnel mine-sweepers to sweep up the heavier and deeper-moored mines. The whole of the work had to be carried out within range of the enemy flotilla, and the mine-sweeping craft were daily exposed to heavy fire from his guns, and at times even came under direct machine-gun and rifle fire.

7. The exploratory sweeping in steamboats was most gallantly performed by parties of British seamen and the Russian boats' crews under the orders of Lieutenant R. H. Fitzherbert-Brockholes, R.N., and Lieutenant C. E. McLaughlin, R.N. The tunnel mine-sweepers were under the command of Lieutenant A. K. McC. Halliley, R.N.

8. I cannot speak too highly of the gallantry and devotion to duty displayed by the mine-sweeping party in their tireless endeavours to clear the river for the safe navigation of the flotilla and water transport.

Their efforts were crowned with success after a week's most arduous work, and over 40 mines had been cleared from the river. This had not been achieved, however, without the loss of the mine-sweeper "Sword Dance," which was mined and sunk on 24th June. Subsequently a second mine-sweeper, the "Fandango," also struck a mine and was lost.

9. *Flotilla passed through mine-field to Troitsa.*—On 27th June I went on board H.M.S. "Cricket" (Lieutenant I. W. G. White, R.N.), and that ship passed safely through the swept channel, and running the gauntlet of a heavy barrage of enemy fire arrived off Troitsa. Here the high cliffs gave some measure of protection, and a gunboat, once established, could drive the enemy's ships back and secure the anchorage for the flotilla.

10. The remainder of the ships and transport moved up the following day, and from then onwards this became our advanced base and Brigade headquarters.

### 11. *Situation on 7th July.*

On the right bank we held Topsa, Troitsa and advanced positions north-west of Selmenga River, the enemy having strong blockhouses on the opposite bank, with artillery in support.

On the left bank we occupied Yakolevskoe and advanced positions on the Nyuma River, the enemy holding Seltso.

The enemy flotilla was based on Puchega, with advanced gunboats between that place and Lipovets.

*Enemy mines.*—Three new lines of deep-sea mines were reported off Seltso.

12. *Mutiny of Russian Troops.*—On 7th July a mutiny broke out amongst the Russian troops of Dyer's Battalion, and the 4th North Russian Rifles also became affected. Fifty seamen under Commander F. G. Bramble, R.N., and a small Royal Marine Detachment under Lieutenant C. M. Sergeant, R.M., were landed at the request of the General Officer Commanding to assist in securing our position until the arrival of more British troops.

The enemy, who was evidently fully conversant with the situation, seized the opportunity to attack.

On the night of 7th/8th July the situation was critical, as British reinforcements had not arrived, and the enemy's gunboats were pres-

ing hard in support of an advance along the right bank.

13. *The Seaplanes' good work.*—Very valuable assistance was rendered by the seaplanes bombing and machine-gunning, but by the forenoon of the 8th July they had "run out," and had to be given a brief rest and overhaul.

14. *The Flotilla.*—The situation about this time was that the enemy ashore was reported within 1,200 yards of the flotilla anchorage, with the Russians slowly retiring. The auxiliary craft were therefore moved back, and H.M. Monitor "Humber," which had been covering Topsis during the mutiny, came up-river and I embarked in that ship.

A telephone cable was run to the shore to keep in close touch with the General Officer Commanding (Brigadier-General L. W. de V. Sadleir-Jackson, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.), who had by now taken over the command.

"M.33" was hit by a heavy shell, fortunately without casualties, and continued in action. "M.27" did useful service with her triple 4-inch mounting.

The "Cicala," which had been heavily engaged as advanced gunboat, developed defects due to the continual firing at high elevation, and was relieved by "Cricket." The latter ship came under heavy machine-gun fire from the woods in the vicinity of Selmenga, but replied to it with her own machine-guns, and continued to engage the enemy ships until hit on the water-line with a heavy shell and obliged to come down-river and secure alongside the repair barges, as there appeared to be risk of the ship sinking.

The gap had to be filled promptly to prevent the enemy profiting by his success. The "Humber" slipped her cable and telephone and proceeded up-river at full speed. The fire of her twin 6-inch turret was so effective that, with the further assistance of seaplane bombing, the enemy flotilla's fire was silenced and it withdrew.

That evening a counter-attack was organised to be carried out by our Russian troops, and four heavy bombardments were carried out by the monitors; but very little progress was made.

As there were still no signs of the British reinforcements the naval paddle steamers and "Borodino" were despatched to assist in bringing them up, and on the morning of the 9th July they arrived and the position was stabilised.

15. *Floating mines and net defences.*—The enemy now endeavoured to damage the flotilla by floating mines down on to it.

One of these mines was sighted very early on the morning of the 2nd July approaching the hospital barge. Lieutenant R. H. Fitzherbert-Brockholes, R.N., jumped out of his bunk and into a skiff which happened to be alongside and reached the mine before it could do any damage. He was in the act of securing it, when it exploded, instantly killing him and the three men forming the crew of the boat.

The death of this very gallant young officer was a great loss to the flotilla.

All ships promptly set to work, and in a few days a complete net defence had been laid out above the flotilla anchorage.

16. *Fall of the river.*—The movements of the ships, and the water transport in particular, were seriously handicapped for the ensuing seven weeks by the abnormally low state of the river. Bars at several places limited the load draught to 3 feet 6 inches for some

time, and this greatly increased the difficulties of supply.

### III.—*Change in the Situation.*

On the 18th July a mutiny of the 5th North Russian Rifles at Chinova spread on to Onega, and by the 22nd July that place had been lost. This caused considerable anxiety to the Military Command on account of the threat to our line of communications on the railway front, and orders were received to prepare for immediate withdrawal on the Dwina front and to mine the river.

However, the position was stabilised, and such premature withdrawal avoided.

2. *A marked change had now taken place in the whole situation.*—Koltchak, who had completely failed, was retiring.

Our advance on Kotlas would therefore be purposeless.

3. The evacuation of our forces was governed by various factors, including the provision of shipping to enable persons whose lives might be endangered by our withdrawal to be given the opportunity of leaving the country first, and the collection up-river of the necessary water transport. This latter undertaking was affected to a great extent by the state of the river, as was also the withdrawal of the flotilla. A number of the ships of the flotilla were of such deep draught that at one time they could not have crossed the bars, and would have had to be destroyed.

4. *The main considerations preparatory to withdrawal* became therefore:—

(a) To strike a blow at the enemy to obtain freedom of movement.

(b) To mine the river to obstruct his advance after our withdrawal.

(c) To pass as many ships of the flotilla as possible down the river when the depth of water permitted.

### IV.—*Battle of 10th August, and Subsequent Events.*

An extensive plan of attack was prepared and carried into effect on 10th August.

2. The troops detailed having completed their enveloping movements and arrived in position for assault, the flotilla, in conjunction with the shore artillery, opened a heavy bombardment on Terekovskaya, Leushinskaya, Gorodok and Seltso.

3. H.M. Monitors "Humber," "M.31" (Lieut.-Comdr. F. L. Back, R.N.) and "M.33" were engaged. Seaplanes assisted in bombing and spotting. The kite balloon, working from its barge, was moved up close to the ships to assist in spotting and reconnaissance.

4. After a forty minutes' bombardment fire ceased, and the shore attacks were launched.

5. On the right bank the attack on Gorodok succeeded at once. A further bombardment on Borok was called for and carried out by "Cicala" (Lieut.-Comdr. J. H. L. Yorke, R.N.) and "Humber," when that place fell.

6. On the left bank the attack on Seltso failed at first, and a new attack had to be organised. "Humber," "M.27" and "M.33" bombarded in conjunction with the shore artillery, and Seltso was taken that evening.

7. During these operations the Navy also assisted the Army ashore.

Thirty-five seamen under Lieutenant M.S. Spalding, R.N., and thirty-nine Royal Marines

under Lieutenant C. M. Sergeant, R.N., were landed to reinforce at the base.

Twenty seamen under Lieutenant R. P. Martin, R.N., manned two 60-pounders, one of which had been rescued from the bottom of the river by a naval salvage and diving party. The 60-pounders were actively engaged during the bombardments; the Royal Marines subsequently assisted to garrison Seltso, and the seamen detachments were at Takolevskoe.

8. The successful operations on 10th August, and during the next few days, secured the banks of the river up to Borok on the right bank and Puchega on the left bank. In addition to the large number of prisoners taken, the enemy's flotilla sustained severe damage, including one gunboat sunk.

9. *Further minesweeping operations.*—An extensive enemy minefield was discovered off Seltso and a passage cleared for the transport of Army supplies up to Nijni Seltso.

While sweeping this passage one of the steamboats was mined and Lieutenant (actg.) C. E. McLaughlin, R.N., was killed. This officer had been employed in the advanced minesweeping steamboats on every occasion, and had rendered very gallant service.

In view of the fact that no further advance was intended, minesweeping was stopped, as the risk outweighed the convenience of water transport.

10. *Advanced minelaying.*—The enemy's mines precluded sending mine-laying craft above Seltso, but fifteen small "whisker" mines, which the enemy had floated down river, were caught, prepared for service, taken up by road on country carts, and laid in the river off Lipovets. Subsequently eight small horned mines were pulled out of the enemy mine-field and similarly transported and laid at night above Puchega.

These lines of mines effectively prevented the enemy ships coming down and attacking our bases at Troitsa during the evacuation and after our own ships withdrew.

This work was carried out with much enterprise and ability under Lieutenant-Commander A. J. Li. Murray, O.B.E.; R.N.

11. *Accident to H.M.S. "Glowworm."*—On the evening of 24th August a serious accident occurred off Beresnik, resulting in the death of Commander S. W. B. Green, D.S.O., R.N., and four other British officers and seventeen men, and two Russian officers, and injuries to two other officers and thirteen men.

A barge filled with ammunition caught fire. The Captain of H.M.S. "Glowworm," being unaware of its contents, was placing that ship close to it to play the ship's fire hoses on to the fire when it exploded, and put out of action practically everyone on deck. The ship's upper works were riddled with splinters.

#### V.—Preparations for Evacuation.

*Mining the Dwina and Vaga Rivers.*—As the enemy flotilla retired up-river whenever we advanced, and could lay mines faster than we could sweep them up, it was impossible to bring about a decisive engagement. It only remained, therefore, to bottle him up.

2. Between 28th August and 2nd September sixty large sea mines were laid in the river above the flotilla anchorage, and subsequently the Vaga River was also effectually mined.

3. Owing to the shallow water the ships fitted for mine-laying could not be used, and the work involved much ingenuity in fitting up barges locally for the purpose.

Credit is due to Lieutenant H. Babington, R.N., and Lieutenant G. E. Coker, R.N., for the very satisfactory way in which it was performed.

4. *Withdrawal of advanced flotilla.*—The rapid rise of the water brought about by the August rains stopped at the end of that month, and as soon as this was seen as many ships as possible were sent down-river.

This called for exceptional efforts, as it entailed removing heavy guns, mountings, ammunition and stores, and in some cases even the main engines, to lighten them sufficiently.

By the 30th August all the ships had passed down except "M.25," "M.27" and the yacht "Kathleen," which were of too deep draught.

5. Subsequently efforts were made to clear the bars, which prevented the three remaining heavy-draught ships from passing down-river, by dredging and exploding a large number of depth charges. The latter were successful in getting "M.25" across two bars and "M.27" across one, and the yacht "Kathleen" got right through.

The river continued to fall, however, time cut short further work on the bars, and "M.25" and "M.27" had to be destroyed in accordance with my orders from S.N.O., White Sea. This was done very thoroughly on the 16th September after the last convoy had passed them.

6. *A reserve flotilla* was organised on 8th August and placed under the command of Commander H. Boyes, C.M.G., R.N., in H.M.S. "Fox," for the local defence of Archangel until the Naval Command up-river returned.

#### VI.—Miscellaneous Services and Events.

*The naval 12-pounders* under Lieutenant R. P. Martin, D.S.C., R.N., of "M.27," with crews which had previously manned the 60-pounders, were hotly engaged in an advanced position at Chudinova, where they were responsible for supporting the line and countering the fire of the enemy's gunboats and their efforts to sweep out advanced mines.

2. *The coastal motor-boats* under the command of Lieutenant C. C. Dickinson, D.S.O., R.N., were of great value in support during the fighting of 10th August and subsequent evacuation.

3. *Seaplanes.*—The admirable work of the seaplane squadron under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel L. Tomkinson, D.S.O., R.A.F., was a factor of very great importance in the success of the operation. Although working as a unit of the naval flotilla, both Navy and Army benefited by the close co-operation they maintained at all times.

4. *The Kite-Balloon* was useful in giving early information of enemy movements.

#### VII.—The Evacuation.

The date for commencing the evacuation was postponed until the refugees had been shipped away and the troop transports were ready at Archangel and water transport collected up-river. Also, it was hoped that the river would continue to rise and facilitate the passage of the last of the heavy-draught ships, but this hope, as has been seen, was not fulfilled.

2. The whole force moved back from the Troitsa base to Pless on 10th September, the embarkation being carried out in perfect order without enemy interference. The final start down-river commenced on 17th September, when the convoy left Pless.

3. *Attack off the Vaga.*—Owing to the Russian forces failing to hold the Vaga front, part of the convoy came under machine-gun fire off the mouth of that river.

An armed naval launch and coastal motor-boats were at once despatched to counter this, and a Royal Marine detachment under Lieutenant C. M. Sergeant, R.M., was landed. A spirited attack dispersed the enemy machine-gunners, killing three of them, and the safety of the remainder of the convoy was thus secured.

4. *Remainder of the passage down-river.*—This was uneventful save for a delay due to the grounding of several barges in the shallow and intricate channel off Khorobritskoe.

The convoy was covered by C.M.B.'s and an armed launch until reaching H.M.S. "Mantis" (Lieutenant H. T. C. Walker, R.N.), off Siskoe. That ship acted as escort to Ust Pinega, where H.M.S. "Moth" (Lieutenant H. A. Simpson, D.S.C., R.N.) was stationed.

Lyavlya was reached on the 22nd September, and here the line was established until the day of the final evacuation of Archangel.

5. *The final withdrawal.*—On the morning of 27th September the British troops left the Lyavlya front and, escorted by "M.31" and "M.33," arrived at Archangel to embark in the sea transports.

With the exception of these two ships, "M.26" and H.M.S. "Fox," the whole of the River Flotilla had already sailed for England.

The final stages of the evacuation were completed in perfect order.

#### VIII.—Conclusion.

The flotilla underwent many vicissitudes and was called upon to perform as many and varied services as perhaps have ever fallen to the lot of a Naval force of its size.

2. I owed the success it achieved to the unflinching loyalty and support I received from the Captains, officers and men of the ships I had the honour to command and no less to my excellent Staff, whose work in overcoming all difficulties I cannot praise too highly.

3. Lastly, I beg to record the exceptionally cordial relations which existed between the flotilla and our comrades-in-arms of the Sister Service, especially the Volunteer Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General L. W. de V. Sadleir-Jackson, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., with which we were most closely associated.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

E. ALTHAM,  
Captain, R.N.,

Late Senior Naval Officer,  
Archangel River Expedition.

Rear-Admiral

Sir John F. E. Green,  
K.C.M.G., C.B.

#### APPENDIX I.

##### APPRECIATIONS.

1. Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., expressed his appreciation of the work of the Flotilla in the following message to the Senior Naval Officer, River:—

"Will you accept on behalf of myself and the Army our thanks for the co-operation of the Royal Navy? The Army feels that you have never failed to respond, even in our troubles on land, and that a great deal of our success has been due to the efforts of you and your men.

"Will you please be so good as to give my thanks to all ranks of the Royal Navy?"

2. On the return of H.M.S. "Fox" to England, their Lordships caused the following message to be sent to Captain Edward Altham, R.N.:—

"Their Lordships wish to express to you and the officers and men of the Archangel River Expeditionary Forces their satisfaction at the successful conclusion of the operations and the manner in which they were carried out."

3. The Army Council signified their appreciation of the work of the Navy in North Russia in War Office Letter 0149/8281 (C.I) of 31st October, 1919:—

"I am commanded by the Army Council to request that you will convey to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the Council's appreciation of the valuable services rendered by the Royal Navy in connection with the operations in and the withdrawal from North Russia. I am to refer particularly to the work of the river expedition on the Dwina, which rendered the greatest possible assistance, not only by the provision of landing parties and heavy artillery support, for which, owing to the nature of the country, the military forces were almost entirely dependent on the monitors and gunboats of the Royal Navy, but also by constant and effective minesweeping, and subsequently by the laying of a minefield, which effectively prevented the enemy's pursuit. The Council recall that the Naval Transport Service was responsible for carrying stores and supplies from Archangel to the front, a distance of 200 miles, for the movement of troops up and down the river, for the transport of the special stores required during the preparations for the Dwina offensive, and for the conveyance of troops down the river. The Council also desire especially to express their appreciation of the highly efficient arrangements made for the embarkation of the troops at Archangel and Murmansk.

"Throughout the campaign and during the evacuation the assistance and co-operation of the Royal Navy has been indispensable, and the Army Council desire to take this opportunity of recording their sense of its efficiency and value. Without it, in the Council's opinion, the success of the operations, and especially of the withdrawal, would have been impossible."

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