

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.