

left the former village and moved to Ladha, and started there the construction of a permanent camp.

Owing to the severe losses that the Mahsuds had sustained during the heavy fighting in our advance, practically all resistance had now ceased and our troops were unmolested. Consequently it was possible to reduce the garrison at Ladha to one Infantry Brigade with a Battery of Artillery, a Field Company Sappers and Miners and a Pioneer Battalion. On the 7th May the Headquarters of the Derajat Column was dispersed.

#### *Conclusion.*

48. Before concluding this Despatch I desire to comment briefly on certain points of interest which have come to my notice during these operations.

The Waziristan Force was equipped with the most modern weapons, many of which had not previously been employed on the Frontier. Amongst these weapons the experiences gained by the use of aeroplanes and of the 3.7-inch Mountain Howitzer are of considerable interest.

It is impossible to over-estimate the value of aircraft in tactical co-operation with other arms. Their presence greatly raised the moral of our troops, whilst correspondingly decreasing that of the enemy. Aeroplanes, when thus employed, did considerable damage and helped, in no small measure, towards the success of many of the actions.

The information obtained from photography was of great tactical and topographical value. Further, they caused extensive damage to the enemy's flocks and herds, especially at the beginning of operations.

On the other hand, results obtained from bombing and tactical reconnaissance did not fulfil expectations. This was largely due to the nature of the country and the skill with which the tribesmen concealed themselves.

The 3.7 inch Mountain Howitzer proved of great value. It combines sufficient mobility with considerable shell power effective against both personnel and material. Owing to its high trajectory it can open fire from the neighbourhood of the line of march. The flat trajectory of a gun, on the other hand, necessitates its being placed so as to enable its shell to clear the crests of intervening ridges, which frequently entails taking up a position some distance from the line of march, and consequent delay. The fire of the Howitzer is accurate, searching and rapid. And, further, the improvement in the last few years in the detonation of H.E. shells has enhanced the value of Howitzers as compared to guns. For these reasons experience points to a preponderance of Howitzers to guns being required in the future for mountain warfare.

49. In addition to the facts mentioned above, other experiences have merely borne out the principles of mountain warfare, which are well known from many former campaigns. It is, however, necessary here to lay emphasis upon the supreme importance of adequate training of troops prior to their employment in a frontier campaign. Nothing can take the place of careful individual training. If possible, it is more essential in mountain warfare than in any other class of fighting that troops should have confidence in their weapons. This can only be obtained by systematic individual training, which must include instruction in making

the best tactical use of the ground, in the principles of fire and movement, and in the mental development of the soldier to such a degree of alertness, that no target escapes detection, and appropriate action is immediately taken. At the beginning of these operations a proportion of the troops were not fully masters of their weapons. This was due to their ignorance of how to use them to the best advantage, as, owing to the demands made by the Great War, men had been somewhat hastily trained, and it is probable that the severity of the fighting in December was due, to a certain degree, to this lack of training. However, as the campaign proceeded, the lessons learned in the field gradually transformed the troops into a highly efficient force, confident in themselves, in their weapons and in their leaders.

50. The well-known principle of war in relation to the efficacy of surprise was well exemplified during this campaign. Major-General Skeen, by means of numerous night advances, continually forestalled the enemy in occupation of important tactical points, and when thus surprised the latter rarely attempted to dispute their possession. Both the actual defiles of the Ahnai and Barari Tangis were seized by night advances. Subsequent knowledge of these localities proves without doubt that their capture by a daylight attack must have been a costly operation. Night advances not only enabled the column to make good any difficult ground with little loss, but the uncertainty and surprise engendered by these operations so unnerved the tribesmen that it was the chief cause of the dispersal, without any serious engagement, of the large tribal concentration between the Barari Tangi and Dwa Toi.

The success of these operations, conducted as they were over such a difficult country, is a high tribute to the competence of the staff and the discipline of the troops.

51. The system adopted of protecting the lines of communication by permanent piquets had the most gratifying results. This system has been explained in paragraph 18 of this report.

In the Valley of the Tochi no attempt was made against our communications, and on the Tank Zam only one raid occurred, and this was a very minor affair. Sniping convoys was practically unknown. Throughout the whole of these operations the losses in the convoys by enemy action did not exceed twenty-six animals. This result is remarkable, both in view of the length of these communications and of the difficult country through which they pass. From information received, there is no doubt that the tribesmen would have carried out raids if they could have found opportunity, and they kept a careful watch on the lines of communication for that purpose.

52. The close of these operations on the 7th May brought to an end a frontier campaign of unparalleled hard fighting and severity. The enemy fought with a determination and courage which has rarely, if ever, been met with by our troops in similar operations. The character of the terrain, combined with trying and arduous climatic conditions, alone presented difficulties before which the most hardened troops might well have hesitated. The resistance of the enemy has been broken and the difficulties successfully overcome by a force composed almost entirely of Indian troops. No British troops, except for the Royal Air Force and a British battery of Mountain