

sisted largely of German and Austrian prisoners of war, from whom the Armistice had been successfully concealed. It was hoped that it would be found possible to acquaint them with the true situation in Europe, and to persuade them to cease fighting. My intention was to repatriate via Krasnovodsk and Trans-Caucasia all who surrendered on the Trans-Caspian front. These hopes, however, failed to mature. During February and March, 1919, only small parties surrendered.

On 16th January, 1919, the Bolshevik forces, aided by the German and Austrian prisoners, attacked the Allies at Ammankova, fifty miles north-east of Merv. The British garrison, which consisted of the 28th Light Cavalry and 19th Punjabis, though greatly outnumbered and almost deserted by the Russians and Turcomans, fought with the greatest gallantry and repulsed the enemy with heavy loss.

Towards the end of the month I visited Trans-Caspia, and, in accordance with my instructions, assumed command. As a result of my report on the whole situation I received orders to the effect that the British forces in Trans-Caspia, exclusive of those at Krasnovodsk, were to be withdrawn gradually. This operation commenced on 15th March, and by 1st April all British and Indian troops had been withdrawn via Askhabad, the former to Krasnovodsk, the latter to Meshed. At the same time General Malleon transferred his mission, which had moved up to Askhabad, back to Meshed and ceased to be under my orders. A Russian general, nominated by General Denikin, now assumed command of the Trans-Caspian front.

In the beginning of May the Turkestan Bolshevik Army assumed the offensive on this front and pushed the Russian Trans-Caspian Army back past Askhabad towards Kizil Arvat. On account of this advance the garrison of Krasnovodsk was increased to the strength of one battalion, at which it remained until withdrawn on 4th August as a preliminary to the British evacuation of the Caucasus.

(7) Occupation of Petrovsk.

Petrovsk was occupied by British troops on 13th January, 1919, in order to protect the Royal Air Force, working in conjunction with the Royal Navy on the Caspian, who subsequently used this harbour as a subsidiary base.

The presence of British troops also served the useful purpose of preventing hostilities between the troops of the Volunteer Army and those of the North Caucasian Republic.

(8) Control of Railways.

In January, 1919, when Brigadier-General A. Brough, C.M.G., D.S.O., reached Trans-Caucasia to enter upon his duties as D.D.G.T., the Trans-Caucasian railways were practically at a standstill. The main reasons for this state of affairs were the following:—

(a) During the withdrawal of the Russian-Caucasian front a large proportion of rolling stock had been worked round to the Rostov line and had not been returned. This resulted in a great shortage of rolling stock in Trans-Caucasia.

(b) Bolshevism and Turkish occupation had resulted in much wilful destruction of

the permanent way, the rolling stock and material of all kinds.

(c) Many labour unions and committees existed amongst the workmen and there were continual threats of strikes.

(d) The financial situation in the three Trans-Caucasian Republics was chaotic, and the railways were running at a financial loss.

(e) Mutual distrust among the Trans-Caucasian Republics rendered it practically impossible to maintain through traffic, each State refusing to allow its rolling stock to cross the frontiers into the territory of either of the other States. (The state of affairs then existing at the Georgian-Azerbaijan frontier station of Poili affords a fair example. Here rival customs tariffs had been established and all goods had to be transhipped from Georgian trains to Azerbaijan trains and vice versa.)

(f) Repair facilities for the existing rolling stock were totally insufficient.

(g) On their declaration of independence each of the Trans-Caucasian States had dismissed the Russian workmen and had replaced them with untrained men. Any attempt to re-instate Russian workmen was keenly resented.

In the interests of the three Trans-Caucasian States, some sort of central control was advisable.

Accordingly negotiations were opened in January, when the Trans-Caucasian Republics were invited to form a central committee under Brigadier-General Brough, who would be directly responsible for the work of the committee. Azerbaijan agreed to this suggestion, but Georgia offered opposition, owing to her desire to institute a similar form of control under Georgian direction. On 13th February the Georgian Government offered acceptance on condition that the regulations for the working of the committee were dictated by herself. In reply General Brough formulated regulations for the committee and notified his proposals to the three Trans-Caucasian Republics. No progress was made as far as Georgia was concerned, but Armenia accepted the proposals on 11th March.

Relief measures having by that time become one of the principal duties of rail transport, an inter-Allied control was suggested. This was accepted by Georgia on 31st March, and by Armenia on 10th April. Discussions were held with the Azerbaijan representative on 14th April, but, although certain modifications were agreed to, complete acceptance was not obtained. On 2nd June further modifications were offered to Azerbaijan, and she was on the point of accepting (which would have resulted in complete acceptance by all the Trans-Caucasian States) when the Volunteer Army advanced into Dagestan, and negotiations again broke down.

In spite of this failure British supervision and assistance effected a great improvement in the transportation situation. Lack of materials for repair of permanent way, engines and rolling stock, however, proved a serious handicap throughout.

The question of supply of oil fuel was a further cause of much difficulty and negotiation. In order to supply the railways with fuel, crude oil was pumped through the pipe line, but