

*The Wana situation and the withdrawal of the scouts.*

35. It had long been apparent that the retention of the detachment of Scouts at Wana was inadvisable, in view of the impossibility of affording it immediate support in case of trouble. The comparative advantages of the Gomal route and the Jandola—Sarwakai line, as localities from which the Scouts could exercise a stabilizing influence and support the Khassadars, had been considered; at the end of January the Government of India had decided in favour of the latter. Orders were therefore issued for the eventual withdrawal of the Scouts from Wana and the establishment of posts on the Jandola-Sarwakai line.

36. During the latter half of February the situation in the Wana area was adversely affected by the activities of anti-British elements; a hostile lashkar assembled and the Scouts were twice attacked, on the second occasion suffering 11 casualties. In retaliation, three bombing raids were carried out over the area west of Wana and two over the settlements of the Shakai Wazirs, and on the 9th March the Scouts moved out of Wana and destroyed the village of Payo Khan Kot.

37. In spite of the effect produced by these reprisals, it was recognised that the withdrawal of the Scouts from Wana might prove unduly hazardous, unless supported by regular troops. Consequently, at the conclusion of the Makin operations, the 9th Brigade and attached troops moved back to Jandola, where a column consisting of 6 Infantry battalions, 2 pack batteries and a proportion of other services was formed, under the command of Colonel Commandant F. P. C. Keily, C.M.G., D.S.O., for the purpose of supporting the withdrawal in case of need and of establishing Scout posts from Jandola to Sarwakai.

38. The column, accompanied by 700 South Waziristan Scouts, left Jandola on the 2nd April, and, after halting at Sarwaki for four days to build up a reserve of supplies, moved forward again and on the 12th reached Rogha Kot. On the 13th the Scouts evacuated Wana, without opposition, and by the 17th the column was back at Jandola, leaving Scout posts established at Sarwakai, Haidari Kach, and Chagmalai.

*Conclusion.*

39. During the period under review there are certain features in the sequence of events that are of the first importance as guides to our future policy in Waziristan. The most striking feature is the difference in the effect of the actual withdrawal of regular troops from Wana compared with that of the rumour of withdrawal of our forces from Mahsud country proper. The former led to no fighting, while the mere suggestion of the latter led to hostilities which indicate, in no uncertain manner, how the evacuation of Mahsud country would once again combine the Mahsud sections of the tribes against us. After the cessation of the strenuous fighting in 1919-20 there had always been hostile elements in Waziristan. By degrees the influence and power of these elements had diminished, and the comparative peace of the country during the earlier months of 1922 is evidence of the extent to which the hostile elements had become discredited. Even the rumour of the reversal of policy was, however, at once seized upon by the hostiles, and

the speed at which their influence for evil increased leaves no reasonable doubt that they would rapidly regain supreme control should we not be in a position to dominate the heart of their country. Our withdrawal from the more distant Wana area gave the hostiles no such opening, and had little, if any, effect on their influence or prestige. This bears out the views that have rightly been held regarding the larger Waziristan problem, namely, that control of Waziristan rests on control of the Mahsuds, and that as long as we dominate the Mahsuds by holding Razmak the Tochi Wazirs and the Wana Wazirs are of minor importance and do not necessarily require the permanent location of troops within their territory. Other important deductions may be drawn from this phase of the Waziristan situation. According to the rumours that were current in Mahsul country, our reversal of policy involved the cessation of road making up the Takhi Zam and the withdrawal of regular troops, leaving the safety of our interests in the hands of Scouts and Khassadars. From the sequence of events that subsequently occurred it is clear that the Mahsuds will not at present accept control by Scouts and Khassadars, unless they are closely supported by regulars which are therefore essential to the preservation of peace. A force of regular troops must for the present therefore be retained at Razmak. Another noticeable feature is that the gradual and judicious substitution of irregulars for regulars on the line of communication has worked satisfactorily. Already the irregulars carry out a considerable portion of the normal protective duties with reasonable safety to our communications, and this proportion may well be increased by degrees, without undue risk, as long as an adequate backing of regular troops is close at hand. The operations under review show clearly that there are two conditions essential to the maintenance of peace in Waziristan: the first is the location of a strong force dominating the heart of the Mahsud country, and the second is the mobility of a sufficient regular force to guarantee the immediate support of the irregulars distributed in isolated posts throughout the country. The first essential is satisfactorily met by the location of a force at Razmak which is situated within striking distance of the most populated and influential centres of the Mahsuds; whilst the second demands the roads for mechanical transport (now under construction) to give this force its necessary freedom of action.

The period under review has afforded opportunities of gaining further experience in the employment of aeroplanes on the frontier. In addition to their value when working in co-operation with ground troops, aeroplanes have been used for independent action on several occasions, notably in dispersing the hostile Wazir lashkars surrounding Wana Fort, and in operating against certain small but troublesome sub-sections of the Mahsud tribes in connection with minor outrages in the spring and summer of 1922. It should be observed, however, that results accruing from the threats against Wana Fort were more moral than material, and that the sub-sections of the Mahsuds were not backed by the support of their own main tribal sections. On the other hand, in spite of the Khassadar garrison of Wana Fort having been reinforced by 500 Scouts, it was found necessary to withdraw the