

33. *Period of Operations Unfavourable.*—The final sanction of the Government of India was received on February 25th: this late date was disadvantageous from a purely military point of view for several reasons.

By March 9th the best of the cold weather was over, and flying had to be done when the increasing heat and seasonal storms added considerably to the strain on the pilots and ground personnel. Delay also rendered the blockade less unpleasant to the enemy than would have been the case in the more rigorous climatic conditions obtaining earlier in the year. As the passes were open an opportunity was afforded to those tribes who owned land in AFGHANISTAN to slip away.

34. *Shortage of Aeroplanes and Pilots.*—At the time when the operations began the R.A.F. in India were approaching the end of an exceptionally busy training season which had made considerable demands on pilots and greater demands on the reserves of machines, engines, and technical stores. This, combined with an under-estimate of the financial requirements of the R.A.F. in India for the year 1924-25, resulted in a shortage in the necessary number of serviceable aeroplanes and engines: on the eve of the operations this amounted, for the R.A.F. as a whole, to 27 aeroplanes and 40 engines, the former being due to the latter. In spite of this, some 2,000 hours flying took place over the actual area of the operations during the 54 days they lasted, a result which reflects great credit on the officers and men of the squadrons engaged, and on those of the Aircraft Depot who worked overtime to maintain the squadrons in the Field. At the end of the operations the shortage had increased to 35 aeroplanes and 44 engines.

Another disadvantage lay in the fact that all the experienced pilots due for relief in the trooping season 1924-25 had left, and those who had replaced them were not available to take part as pilots in the operations, since they had not had time to complete their training under Indian conditions, which differ from those at Home on account of the low density of the air and the height of the landing grounds.

35. *Duration of the Operations.*—The operations themselves lasted for 54 days, and on 42 of the first 45 days, bombing was carried out on some part of the area proclaimed. This, I believe, to have been the longest continuous operations carried out by aircraft since the end of the Great War. Some 2,070 hours of war flying was done, and in addition some 650 hours flying was carried out by the squadrons in connection with the operations, a total of over 2,700 hours. There was only one fatal accident which was probably due to the machine being shot down. This was the only occasion where a machine or a man fell into the hands of the enemy, but I regret to say the accident caused the loss of the lives of two valuable pilots. However much the loss of two such good officers and gallant pilots as Flying Officers DASHWOOD and HAYTER-HAMES must be regretted, previous experience of frontier fighting shows that this is a small price to pay for enforcing our will on such hardy mountaineers as the tribes concerned, living in the difficult county of WAZIRISTAN. Nor do

I believe that the cost would have been less had any other method of coercion been employed, indeed I think it must have been much more.

36. *Respite to the enemy.*—On several occasions during the operations bombing was stopped to enable jirgas to be assembled or property to be collected as security. In some of these instances the sections did not comply with the conditions on which the respite was given within the time laid down. The disadvantages of such respites are obvious; they enable the enemy to recover from the strain which the bombing attacks inflict, they facilitate the removal of valuable property, they give the tribesmen the impression that our resolution is weakening and provide opportunities for those who wish to do so, to slip away out of reach of further attacks. On more than one occasion the tribes came to terms without any preliminary respite or after bombing had been resumed on the expiration of a respite; for instance, between April 15th and April 18th the FARIDAI and MARESAI come in without any cessation of operations against them, and the ABDUR RAHMAN KHEL surrendered the three rifles required as a guarantee of good faith on April 21st after bombing had begun again against them. This shows that a respite is not always necessary, and whenever possible the operations should continue without check, until the terms laid down at the beginning have been complied with, or adequate security for the fulfilment of the conditions given.

37. *Hostiles and Friendlies.*—It is unnecessary to deal at length with the difficulties which are created for the Air Force by the division of the MAHSUD tribes into hostile and so-called friendlies. All are agreed that such differentiation is undesirable, and that full tribal responsibility should be enforced. It is hoped that such a policy will prove practicable in future.

38. *Health.*—The health of the officers and men has been uniformly good, and the medical returns compare favourably with those for the corresponding period of last year in spite of an unusually hot April.

39. *General.*—This is the first occasion in INDIA that the R.A.F. has been used independently of the Army for dealing with a situation which has got beyond the resources of the political officers. It is at present too early to judge how lasting will be the effect or how permanent will be the impression of this display of air power on the stubborn tribesmen of the North-West Frontier, but it is claimed that the operations prove that in the R.A.F. the Government of INDIA have a weapon which is more economical in men and money and more merciful in its action than other forms of armed force for dealing with the majority of problems which arise beyond the administrative frontier. That they have not been without effect on sections of the MAHSUDS who were not included in the area of operations is shown by a number of settlements which have been effected during the progress of the operations, notably the case of the surrender of the rifles looted from the GOMAL Police Post.