

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE 2/10TH ROYAL SCOTS IN NORTHERN RUSSIA

August 1918 to May 1919

Reasons for Expedition to Northern Russia. History of the 2/10th Royal Scots. Importance of the Dwina. Operations between the Dwina and the Vaga. Adventures of Major Skeil's Company. Limit of Royal Scots' advance, September. Operations from October 1918 to May 1919. Winter conditions. Return of 2/10th Royal Scots.

THE armistice, which came into force at 11 A.M. on the 11th November, was an act of mercy on the part of the Allies, for had hostilities been allowed to run their course, the world would have had the spectacle of the greatest military disaster in the annals of history. "The strategic plan of the Allies had been realised with a completeness rarely seen in war. When the armistice was signed by the enemy his defensive powers had already been definitely destroyed."¹ No small part in the consummation of this happy ending had been played by the British forces, which had been responsible for attacking the Germans on the most vital parts of their front.

Our success in arms was as complete as could be desired except in Northern Russia, where our hopes of a popular rising against the Bolshevik regime were destined to be disappointed. The peoples of Western Europe were reluctant to believe that the rule of the Tsar had utterly forfeited the confidence of the Russian nation, and they hoped that a diversion by troops of the

¹ Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches, p. 298.

Allies on the Murmansk coast would enable Admiral Koltchak, who was operating from Siberia, to overthrow the Bolshevik Government, which was considered to be nothing more than the docile instrument of Germany. Accordingly a British expedition was sent to Northern Russia in 1918 and included in it were the 2/10th Royal Scots.¹

The previous history of the battalion may be briefly indicated. After the sanction of the War Office for the raising of second-line units was received, Lieut.-Colonel E. Peterkin, V.D., who had formerly been Major in the 8th V.B.R.S., raised the 2/10th Royal Scots by the 24th September 1914, after a recruiting campaign of less than a week. The battalion was accordingly mobilised at Bathgate on the 13th October, but it was not till the 11th January 1915 that uniforms and the necessary military equipment began to arrive. With Berwick as their centre, the 2/10th Royal Scots, a cyclist battalion, became responsible for a share in the defence of the East coast, and from May 1916 furnished drafts for overseas service. The battalion went into camp at Coldingham in June 1916, and its chief thrills were caused by air raids and by reports of hostile landings. Throughout its sojourn on the East coast a high standard of discipline and training was maintained, and more than once the battalion received a well-earned compliment from inspecting Generals, including Lord French.

On the 18th January 1918 Lieut.-Colonel Peterkin, having reached the age limit, was obliged to resign his command and was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel H. H. Sutherland, D.S.O., of the Black Watch. The battalion's

¹ An excellent account of the work of the 2/10th Royal Scots in Russia is contained in *John Buchan's Annual*, "The Long Road to Victory," Chap. XII.

tour of duty in Scotland terminated in June, when it was transferred to Ireland, where it continued to function as a cyclist unit. By this time the battalion was composed of men most of whom had already seen considerable service abroad, and it was officered chiefly by war-worn officers who had been sent home from France for a six months' rest. But while rich in war experience it contained many who were no longer fit for active service. Man-power, however, now constituted such a serious problem that when the unit was prepared for the Russian expedition "B1"¹ men were retained for service, and the necessary strength of 1000 was reached by bringing in troops from all battalions quartered in Ireland at that time.

On the 31st July the recognised 2/10th Royal Scots left Ireland for Aldershot, and on the 8th August they embarked at Newcastle on the *City of Cairo*. After a few hours at sea the ship had to return to port owing to engine trouble and did not resume its voyage till the 17th. The men were equipped with everything except rifles, but Russian rifles were discovered on the boat and these were issued to the troops. Without any untoward incident, Murmansk, a village of wooden houses on a splendid harbour, was reached on the 23rd August, and two days later the vessel arrived at Archangel, where the Royal Scots landed, and, headed by a band of American marines, marched through the town, passing *en route* the G.O.C., Major-General T. C. Poole, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. Afterwards they returned to the *City of Cairo*.

From Archangel to the south there were two possible routes of advance, the railway between the port and Vologda, and the River Dwina. The operations of the Royal Scots were concerned almost entirely with the

¹ Men certified as fit for garrison duty only.

River Dwina from Bereznik, near the junction of the Dwina and the Vaga, to about 50 miles south of that village.

The date of their arrival allowed the Royal Scots little more than two months of summer conditions. From May to October the Dwina is navigable for at least 500 miles, and during this season it furnishes the only comfortable means of progress inland. The width of this fast-flowing river astonished troops familiar only with the tiny streams and burns of Scotland; at no place was it less than a mile wide, and where the banks were low it spread out to two or three miles. The greater part of the riverine area was marshy, and observation was blocked by extensive forests on both banks. Land-routes in summer were consequently almost non-existent, and no large force could venture to wander far from the river. It was, in short, a country which severely circumscribed the possibilities of manœuvre, for troops were chained to the Dwina, which formed the only reliable means of communication with Archangel. At frequent intervals hamlets and villages of log-huts bordered the river and its tributaries, and the people who dwelt in them roused admiration by the magnificence of their physique, and despair by their abysmal ignorance. The attitude of the Russian peasants was a terrible disappointment to the Allies; they were utterly indifferent to the war. "They showed no enthusiasm for, nor did they display any antagonism against, our forces."¹ Hospitality, supplies, and a certain amount of manual assistance in felling trees were the most that could be expected from them.

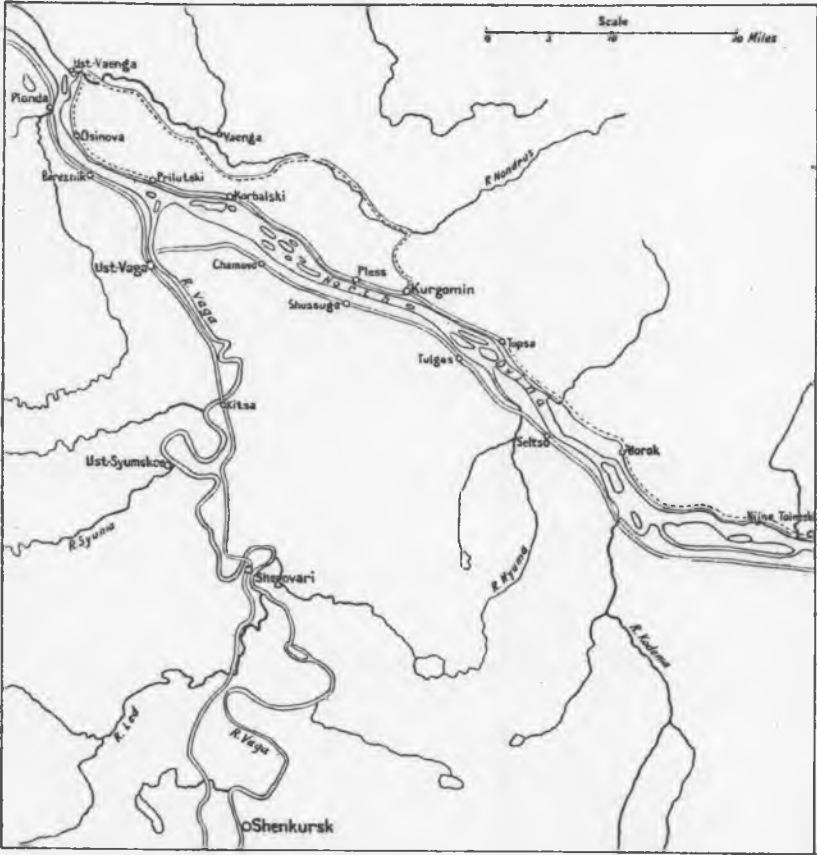
Three companies of the Royal Scots, "A," "B," and "C," under Major C. W. Whitaker, the Second-in-Command, embarked on barges on the 26th August,

¹ "The Long Road to Victory," p. 289.

and five days later reached the village of Bereznik. "D" Company was stationed at Archangel. On the 4th September it sent a platoon under Lieut. Anderson to join a small force of marines and Russians, afterwards known as "D" Force, which was put under the command of Captain F. M. Scott of the Royal Scots.

The three companies at Bereznik formed two-thirds of "C" Force, the remainder consisting of small detachments of Russian scouts, Poles, marines, and a British monitor (M25), with a few launches. A party of 100 Royal Scots under Captain A. R. Rowland-Thomas went by boat up the Vaga on a propagandistic expedition, but though it was favourably received by the inhabitants of Shenkursk the Russians committed themselves to nothing more than polite assurances. Meantime reconnaissance revealed that there were Bolshevik troops in the triangle formed by the Dwina and the Vaga, and the first task of "C" Force was to clear all this territory of the enemy. A column of 500 Bolsheviks was reported to be advancing along the right bank of the Dwina, and 200 of the Royal Scots, supported by a detachment of Poles and two 18-pounder guns, advanced to engage it, while on the left bank of the river a company of Royal Scots assisted by a Russian gunboat was entrusted with the task of clearing the triangle.

These preliminary operations were entirely successful, and the result of the first brushes with the Bolshevik troops inspired our men with the utmost confidence. "A" Company, commanded by Major A. P. Skeil, was the most hotly engaged, and, after breaking an attack delivered by the Bolsheviks in vastly superior numbers on the night of the 11th September, it pushed on and occupied Prilutski the following day. The discomfited enemy began to fall back, and on the



MAP XXX.—The Dwina and Vaga.

14th the Royal Scots pressed on in pursuit. "A" Company, most effectively assisted by the guns of the monitor, harried the Bolshevik rear-guard, and in carrying the village of Korbalski acquired a damaged 3-inch gun; other captures of the company included a staff-officer, who supplied useful information about the strength and dispositions of the enemy. Meantime "B" Company, under Captain J. A. Edwards, starting from Ust-Vaga at 2 A.M. on the 14th, marched to Maly-Bereznik, about 16 versts¹ away. At 10 A.M. the company, less a small group under 2nd Lieut. H. Braham, crossed over to the right bank of the Vaga and advanced against Chamovo. The route took the Royal Scots through an immense tract of forested marsh. So unstable was the ground that in many places trees had to be felled by a Russian detachment, which acted with the company, to form a track or bridge, and it was 6.30 P.M. before the eastern edge of the forest belt was reached. A platoon under 2nd Lieut. Orr, assisted by the Russian detachment, then advanced on Chamovo, and in the first assault cleared half the village. An attempt of the enemy to remove a 3-inch gun was frustrated by rifle and Lewis-gun fire, and only the descent of darkness prevented the work from being finished that night. Three platoons formed a cordon round the village, and early on the 15th Chamovo was entirely cleared, several prisoners being taken, while the material booty, in addition to the 3-inch gun, consisted of three and a half limbers of ammunition, twelve gun-team horses with harness complete, a motor-car, two field telephones, rifles, S.A.A., and valuable papers. With the object of driving Bolshevik stragglers into the hands of an American company that was advancing along the left

¹ A verst is equivalent to 3500 feet.

bank of the Dwina, Captain Edwards with two platoons marched to Navolok unmolested, while on the other side of the river "A" Company continued its victorious progress to Rostovskoe.

One of the difficulties of the Royal Scots was that the general flatness of the country and the widespread network of forest precluded observation over a wide area, but it was definitely known that the enemy was as much tied to the river as we were. He was reported to have at Pless a strongly entrenched position, supported by artillery and gunboats. An attack on Pless bristled with difficulties, for by taking the precaution to mine the river the enemy deprived us of any possible assistance from our own boats until the mines had been cleared, and, since a frontal attack seemed a forlorn hope, it was resolved to attempt to turn the hostile position by a flanking movement through the forests. Accordingly, while Lieut. L. W. Shute with one platoon advanced along the river road, Major Skeil with the remainder of "A" Company, at 8.30 A.M. on the 15th September, began the flank march.

The forest-march was a feat of amazing endurance and fortitude, and would certainly have resulted in the utter destruction of the force but for the resolution of the men and the quality of their leader. The path which for the first few hours the troops followed, necessarily in single file, was no better than a quagmire, and when after noon rain descended in torrents the conditions became appalling. The troops started at a rate of three versts an hour, but progress soon slowed down, and long before the march came to an end one verst per hour was a satisfactory speed. Water, usually knee-deep, and never less than ankle-deep, covered the floor of the forest, and deep pools and ditches had to be crossed by means of felled trees.

Hungry and cold the troops plodded on, till at 2 P.M., on the 15th, Major Skeil judged that his men were well beyond the hostile position. The column then veered towards the river, but all progress was suddenly barred by an impassable marsh. "Attempts were made by daring individuals to find a path across, but there was none. Our guide had failed us. He had never been farther, he said, except in winter, and no one had crossed the marsh in summer. The blow to the already exhausted troops was a heavy one. Although September, the night was bitterly cold, and as we stood knee-deep in water to consider things, occasional plops would be heard of tired men slipping from trees against which they had been leaning into the icy water. Some hillocks, drier than the surrounding woods, had been passed a short time before, and orders were given to kindle fires on these somehow, and rest round them for two hours."¹

The rest and a mouthful of tea stirred the troops to new vigour, and they set off at 7 A.M. on the 16th for a mill about 15 versts off in the forest. It was absolutely essential for the column to reach some place where food could be procured. Berries plucked from bushes afforded meagre relief to starving men, and some, from sheer weariness, began to fall out. Major Skeil, realising that the only chance of saving his force was to push on without delay, issued a curt warning that any who fell out would be left behind. This stern but necessary command had the desired effect, and at 3 P.M. the whole force reached the mill, where some food was obtained, but not nearly enough to satisfy the needs of the party. The people, however, said that there was a village about 8 versts away, and while the majority lay down to rest, the hardest

¹ "The Long Road to Victory," p. 305.

proceeded to the hamlet, from which they brought back a sheep and some Russian bread. At 8 o'clock in the evening the men had their first meal that day.

The night was spent in bivouacs in the woods, and early in the morning Major Skeil and his men set out for Kurgomin, nearly 12 versts up the river from Pless. The enemy, it was learned from the mill-keeper, had been greatly alarmed on hearing that a British army was advancing through the woods, so Major Skeil, in the hope that the Bolsheviks would credit him with a greater force than he actually had, determined on presenting a bold front. The situation indeed was such that audacity formed the only prudent course of action, and his stratagem succeeded. The Royal Scots in the afternoon of the 17th entered Kurgomin, which had been hurriedly evacuated by the foe, who believed that 8000 British troops were advancing against the village. Thus triumphantly terminated one of the most remarkable adventures in the war, in which marvellous endurance had been displayed and almost incredible hardships overcome by men, most of whom were classified as "B.I."

Major Skeil's flanking march fulfilled its purpose, for the enemy had withdrawn from Pless, leaving a free passage to Lieut. Shute who occupied the place on the 16th. On the same day an attempt by the Bolsheviks to land some men at Chamovo was defeated, and their boat was sunk by the M25, the crew being either killed or taken prisoner. "C" Company now arrived to swell the force on the right bank of the Dwina, and before the 17th September closed, Major Skeil's gallant band was joined by the rest of "A" and the whole of "C" Company. "B" Company was transferred from the left bank on the 18th, and with "B" and "C" leading, the advance of the Royal Scots

was continued to Topsa, while a parallel drive on the left bank was carried out by Americans. With orders to push on as far as possible, both columns advanced to the neighbourhood of Nijne-Toimski, where the enemy held a position of immense strength.

Our small force had not the weight to break through the strong entrenchments, and on the 27th the three companies of the Royal Scots were withdrawn to a cluster of villages at Borok, which was put into a state of defence. On the left bank of the Dwina, Seltso was fortified by the Americans, who, on the 28th, were reinforced by "A" Company of the Royal Scots. Next day all the troops operating on the Dwina became known as the North Dwina River Force, and were put under the command of Major Whitaker of the Royal Scots. Meantime another column of "C" Force, consisting of Americans and Russians, had been established at Shenkursk on the Vaga.

In such a country it was futile to attempt to dig trenches, so block-houses of log and sand were constructed. On the 2nd October the Borok-Seltso garrison was weakened by the transference of the American company to the Vaga, and while the preparations for stationary warfare were going on, the Royal Scots were daily shelled by hostile gunboats, which could use the river with impunity, since on the 4th October the M25 had returned to Archangel. Its withdrawal was necessitated by the fact that in winter the Dwina becomes ice-bound at Archangel a clear ten days before it freezes at its junction with the Vaga, while in spring the river is navigable at the junction for a similar period before Archangel is free from ice. Thus the Bolshevik gunboats could use the river ten days later than we could in autumn and ten days earlier in spring. The enemy endeavoured to make the most

of his advantage, and on the 5th October attacked the outpost line of the Royal Scots at Borok, but was driven off by rifle and machine-gun fire, a Vickers gun falling into the possession of "B" Company. On the 6th when a platoon of the same company advanced to locate the Bolshevik positions, it was heavily fired on and retired with the loss of one man killed.

The constant shelling, to which we could not make any effective reply, destroyed by fire several of our log-houses, but the Russian peasants fortunately were adepts in extinguishing fires and gave invaluable assistance. The arrival of a company of Americans from Shenkursk and a Russian 5.1-inch gun with a British crew encouraged us to teach the enemy a lesson, and on the 7th October we attacked the Bolsheviks on the left bank, routed them, and captured one pom-pom and two machine-guns. A hostile raid on our outpost line was decisively repulsed and a counter-thrust by the Royal Scots drove the foe from the village nearest our line. In these affrays the Bolsheviks, of whom three were taken prisoner, lost heavily, while the Royal Scots had only one man killed. The enemy, however, possessed the virtue of perseverance, and on the 9th the outpost line was engaged all day in repelling assaults. Similar hard fighting in which all the Royal Scots were involved followed on the 10th and our outpost line was accordingly slightly withdrawn.

The Bolsheviks had by now at least thirty gunboats on the river as well as two or three heavy land guns. Conflagrations were of almost hourly occurrence, and since the enemy, with his immeasurably greater numbers, was beginning to threaten the rear of both the left and the right bank forces, it was deemed expedient to bring back our line to Kurgomin-Tulgas. The hospital at Borok, which had been frequently hit, was evacuated on

the 13th, and the wounded of the Royal Scots, about one hundred in all, were safely removed. Determined attacks on Borok that day¹ and on Seltso on the 14th were smartly repulsed. These checks enabled us to carry out our retirement without serious molestation, and after a pause at Topsa-Troitsa the line at Kurgomin-Tulgus was reached on the 17th October.

The Bolsheviks were disconcerted by this withdrawal and followed up our men with great caution. Meanwhile defensive works were in course of preparation, and the Royal Scots had now the welcome assistance of a Canadian Field Artillery Battery. Major Skeil received well-earned promotion, and as Lieut.-Colonel was given command of the force on the Dwina, which was henceforth known as the River Column. The new position underwent its first serious test on the 23rd October, when an attack on the left flank of the right bank force was summarily defeated, while a counter-stroke by a platoon of "A" Company completed the discomfiture of the Bolsheviks, of whom two were killed, five taken prisoner, and many more wounded; on the other hand, the Royal Scots, without losing a man, captured three machine-guns. This triumph unfortunately was offset by the worst reverse which the Royal Scots experienced during their sojourn in Northern Russia. On the 27th October Captain J. A. W. Penman with two platoons of "B," three platoons of "C" Company, and thirty Poles made a flank attack on Topsa at dawn. The march to the assaulting position was performed in a blinding snowstorm, but the enemy was vigilant and the attack was shrivelled up by his rifle and machine-gun fire. The failure cost the Royal Scots about eighty² in

¹ During the fighting on the 13th October the Royal Scots lost three other ranks killed, and one officer and five other ranks wounded.

² One officer, Lieut. W. Bassett, was killed.

killed, wounded, and missing, the survivors returning with great difficulty through the marsh and forest.

Winter was longer in setting in than had been anticipated, and on the morning of the 11th November, the day which brought the war to an end in other theatres, the Bolsheviks delivered their most desperate assault on the River Column. Supported by gunboats, their infantry debouched from the woods and assailed our forward positions on both flanks. The attack on the right bank was easily dealt with, but the enemy on the left was pressing us with considerable dash and determination, when a force of 500 Bolsheviks, suddenly emerging from the screen of the woods, fell upon our rear, stormed the village where the hospital was established, and almost succeeded in rushing the Canadian field-guns. The gunners, assisted by two platoons of "A" Company, swung round to face this new and unexpected foe, and were soon engaged in a grim hand-to-hand struggle against fantastic odds. "Glorious work was done by category men that day, but nothing finer than the work of a Royal Scots sergeant (Sergeant Salmons), who, rushing into the midst of the enemy firing a Lewis gun from the hip, fought till he died."¹ This magnificent defence saved the situation, and the issue no longer remained in doubt when the Canadians switched round some of their guns and fired at point-blank range into the clusters of the enemy.

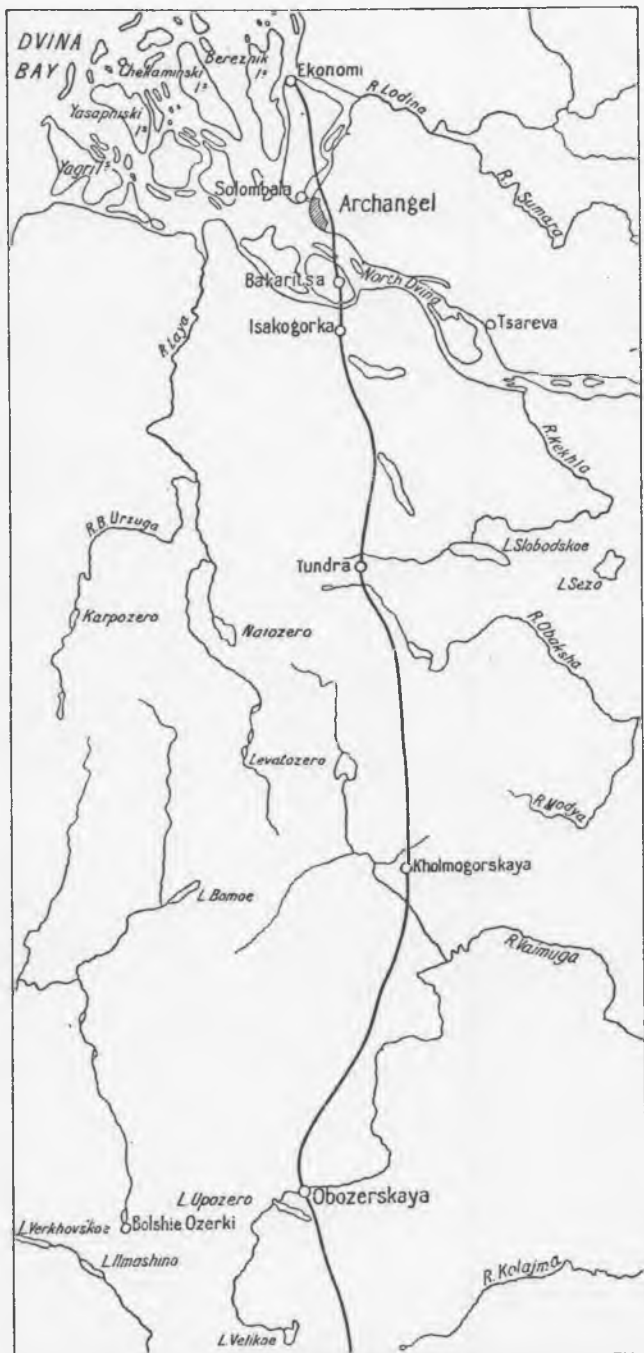
Meantime the frontal attack on the left bank had driven in our outposts, and the Bolsheviks held possession of the forward village. The force on the left bank was for a time utterly cut off, but despite their most frantic efforts the Bolsheviks could not overcome its resistance, and at nightfall the enemy began to steal

¹ "The Long Road to Victory," p. 317.

away from the battlefield. Following on the heels of the decamping foe, the Royal Scots reoccupied the rear villages. Having consumed all their rations before launching their attack, the rear party of Bolsheviks suffered ghastly agonies in its retreat through the woods; many died from exposure, while eighty woe-begone wretches who reached the Vaga surrendered to our force there; barely a hundred survivors remained of the original force that had embarked on the enterprise. Two days later the forward village was also taken by the Royal Scots.

Over 1000 Bolsheviks were engaged in this operation which, we discovered from captured documents, had been expressly ordered by Lenin. The losses of the Royal Scots were trivial compared with those of their opponents, nineteen being killed and thirty-four wounded. After this affair there followed a few more bickerings, in one of which Lieut. J. M. Dalziell was killed, but the Royal Scots had no difficulty in holding their own. In real earnest winter began to set in and the Bolshevik gunboats retired to hibernate, while near the end of November the Royal Scots were brought up to four companies by the arrival of "D" Company.

This last company had not been wholly without excitement. On the evening of the 14th October, Captain Bright with a detachment of "D" Company was despatched to Obozerskaya on the railway line, where he reported to Lieut.-Colonel Sutherland, who was in command of Force "A" operating on the railway. Captain Bright and his men were at once sent forward to Point 444, where they began to construct trenches against an expected attack by the enemy, who was in considerable strength at Point 443. There was no infantry assault, Point 444 being beset only



MAP XXXI.—Archangel-Vologda Railway.

by rifle and shell fire. An armoured train, steaming up from Point 447, shelled the enemy, but the Bolsheviks brought up more guns and bombarded the Royal Scots with great violence. When our armoured train was withdrawn owing to the exhaustion of the crew, a Bolshevik train appeared on the line, and supported by the fire of heavy guns, the enemy infantry attacked the flanks of the Royal Scots, but were kept at bay by accurate rifle and machine-gun fire. But our position on the railway was most uncomfortable, and a slight retirement was made which encouraged the Bolsheviks to launch another fruitless attack from the forest. Considering the intensity of the hostile shelling, the losses¹ of the Royal Scots were astonishingly light. There followed a spell of comparative quietness, and on the 20th October the Royal Scots were relieved by French colonial troops and returned to Obozerskaya. Shortly afterwards they went back to the vicinity of Archangel, where they remained till the 4th November, when the company left by river to join Lieut.-Colonel Skeil's force.

Winter brought new conditions and experiences. The marshes froze up, snow fell to a depth of from five to ten feet, and the forest could easily be traversed by sledges and men wearing snow-shoes or skis. The river ceased to be a highway, for its congealed surface was covered by huge hummocks formed by frozen floes. Tracks across the Dwina, however, were broken and kept in order during the period of operations. Normally the people of Northern Russia were wont to hibernate, but their example could not be followed by the Royal Scots. The troops were issued with suitable raiment, and when shod in Shackleton boots, and wearing lumberman stockings, sheepskin coats,

¹ 2nd Lieut. K. M. Croal killed, and two other ranks wounded.

fur caps with ear-pieces, and two pairs of gloves, they found the handling of their Russian rifles no easy matter. Block-houses had to be built for warmth as well as for strength, and the gun-pits for Stokes mortars and field-guns had to be heated. Against frost-bite all had to be on their guard, and the men were expected to assist each other in dealing with it.

Training was incessant, but presented many novelties that made it interesting. The management of snow-shoes was easy to learn, but the use of the swifter skis required more instruction and took some time to master. Ultimately special snow-shoeing and ski-ing platoons were formed, and these did much excellent work in keeping No-Man's-Land clear of hostile prowlers. The troops, it need hardly be said, thoroughly enjoyed as recreation the typical winter sports which in peace times are the monopoly of the wealthy. Journeys of any distance were performed by sleighs, each consisting of a small narrow carriage placed low on a couple of wooden runners and packed with hay to give warmth to the body and compensate for the absence of springs. All troops in the forward areas lived in block-houses, and the others were billeted in villages. In both block-houses and billets fires due to overheating were of frequent occurrence, and the Royal Scots were fortunate in securing the help of such expert firemen as the Russians in dealing with conflagrations.

There was always need for vigilance in the forward area, but the greater activity in patrol work was decidedly shown by the Royal Scots, the Bolsheviks during December contenting themselves with scattering propagandistic messages for our troops to pick up—indeed the Bolshevik newspaper, *The Call*, supplied our men with their most regular and accurate news. Christmas and New Year were celebrated with as

substantial dinners as could be provided. At the beginning of 1919, the enemy, who had the advantage in artillery,¹ became more energetic, and on the 25th January word was received to the effect that a hostile assault had led to the evacuation of Shenkursk on the Vaga. On the next day attacks developed against Tulgas, but though the enemy gained a footing in one of the forward positions, he was driven out on the following morning. The River Column was not sufficiently strong to hold all the villages in its area, and between 4 P.M. and 6 A.M. on the 30th/31st January, Forward Tulgas, after being cleared of its inhabitants, was set on fire, while an onrush by a strong party of Bolsheviks was sanguinarily repulsed.

The persistent pressure on the Vaga column was most disquieting, but reinforcements, comprising two platoons of "A" Company of the Royal Scots, helped to steady the situation in that quarter, and prevented the need of further retirement. Stationary warfare continued, with frequent patrol encounters, until signs of spring began to appear. At this time the Vaga column had the more precarious position, and in February the two platoons of "A" Company set out from Osinova in 40 to 60 degrees of frost for a place nearly 80 versts away. After a terrible journey of twenty-six hours, during which time the men alternately rode on and ran behind sleighs, they arrived to find to their relief that the place to which they had been sent had been vacated by the enemy. The Bolsheviks on both the Dwina and the Vaga were clearly gathering strength, and it was as much as we could do to maintain our position, especially on the latter river. Occasionally

¹ Two 4.5 howitzers, which arrived in January 1919, formed an important addition to the arsenal of the River Column, but did not put us on an equality with the Bolsheviks as regards artillery support.

returned prisoners of war (Russians held as prisoners in Germany and Austria till the armistice) were allowed a passage through our lines, but near the end of March these came in such numbers that orders were issued that no more were to be permitted to pass through; several of the so-called prisoners, there was little doubt, were Bolshevik spies and agents.

In April the left bank of the Dwina was taken over by "loyalist" Russians, but they were an unreliable force, and on the 25th the infantry mutinied, killed most of their own officers and attacked the British officers attached to them. Luckily the Russian gunners remained faithful, and with the British officers they fought their way back against tremendous odds. From the right bank our 18-pounders poured salvos into the fortified villages occupied by the insurgents, and enabled the Russian gunners to escape to Shussuga, while a platoon of "C" Company of the Royal Scots with the aid of a boat, which was dragged across the frozen parts and slipped into the spaces of open water, crossed the thawing river and assisted in the defence of Shussuga. This Bolshevik triumph was only transitory, for as soon as the Dwina became navigable, a counter-attack regained for us all our lost ground.

The men had borne without complaint the hardships of a difficult and harassing campaign, but they were puzzled to understand why fighting should continue in Russia, when the armistice had put an end to hostilities in all other theatres. That event had completely altered the situation. There was some purpose to be gained while the war with Germany lasted, for our expedition in Northern Russia might be expected to keep some German forces tied to the Eastern front, but with the defeat of Germany it was difficult to comprehend the object of the Russian campaign. It seemed uncommonly

like interference with the internal affairs of another nation. Such doubts had often invaded the minds of the men during the winter months. There was no longer, in fact, any purpose to be served by persisting in the campaign, and none knew better than the 2/10th Royal Scots that there was little prospect of stirring up in the minds of the Russian peasants an active hatred against the new Bolshevik Government. Our interference, as any knowledge of history should have warned us, was likely to produce the very opposite effect.

Such considerations led to the withdrawal of all the American troops in May, but it appeared as if Britain were determined to carry on the campaign to the bitter end, for at the beginning of June two battalions from England landed at Archangel. Their arrival, however, set free the Royal Scots, who assembled at Osinova and were taken in barges to Archangel, which was reached on the 10th June. The battalion, after being paraded to receive the thanks of Major-General E. Ironside, C.M.G., D.S.O., for the heroism and endurance that it had displayed, embarked on the *Czaritza* and arrived at Leith on the 18th June after an uneventful voyage. Redford Barracks formed the quarters of the battalion and an immediate start was made with demobilisation. A civic reception by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh in the Drill Hall, Forrest Road, showed the men that their gallant work and their hardships had been noted with keen appreciation and sympathy. More rousing still was the welcome given on the following day to the cadre of the battalion in Linlithgow, the home town of the 2/10th Royal Scots. There, among the many glowing tributes paid to the battalion, none gave greater satisfaction than the appreciative address of the founder of the 2/10th Royal Scots, Lieut.-Colonel Peterkin.