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RAY COLLISHAW TELLS OF LIFE AMONG BOLSHIS.

Officers' Wives and Families
Murdered Made Cowards of
the Men

Col. Raymond Collishaw, Canadian ace, concerning whose safety anxiety has been felt, has been busy in a two thousand mile retreat before the Bolshevik hordes in South Russia, an experience which he graphically describes in a letter to Captain J. W. G. Clark of Toronto. The letter is dated January 25 from the British military mission, 47th Squadron, R.A.F.

After Fever Attack

Col. Collishaw said: "I wrote and told you something of my evil days in hospital with typhus fever contracted on the Tzaritsan front. I soon rejoined my squadron and very soon the Bolshevik hordes began to advance against the volunteer army, but the main line of attack was on the left flank of the army, so we moved from Tzaritsa to Kursk to protect the Kharkov area.

The enemy came on in flocks, and as we went up quite close to the line with our trains they advanced quite close and we had great difficulty in finding a locomotive to pull our show further to the rear during the evacuation. During this time we erected twenty D.H.G.A.'s in forty degrees below zero. Some game, as you can imagine. But our men were "full out," and we accomplished the task. In addition we maintained a constant reconnaissance for the army headquarters. At this time priceless targets for the Camels and Snipes presented themselves and our scout pilots enjoyed a most interesting session every day, with flocks of Red cavalry parading openly upon prairie plains. This, in addition to the terrific bombing from the D.H.G.A. and D.H.G. flights, upset the enemy advance mostly and allowed our army to retire in a somewhat orderly fashion.

Officers' Families Murdered

The Bolsheviks now began to torture and murder the family of every officer they found, which could only result in many officers deliberately deserting their regiments to return and bring their families to the rear by trains. These officers were desperate, and in their anxiety to safeguard their families they became uncontrollable, and everyone was in a panic to get to the rear, thereby blocking all railway transportation. The enemy began to move ahead then very rapidly, averaging about ten miles each day.

"My flight went through ten evacuations, and on one occasion the whole country in our rear turned Bolshevik for a distance of some forty miles, and we had to fight our way to the rear and out of the affair.

"In this country one never knows who is a Bolshevik and who is not. When such a thing occurs I simply take command of the situation and ignore all Russian generals and orders and extricate our show into a more favorable position.

"In the rear of the main attack, you will see if you look on the map of South Russia, that between Kharkov and Rostov a great many railways connect, and all ran to Taganrog, near Rostov on a double line. The whole rolling stock from everywhere soon made a traffic jam, assisted by Bolsheviks within the Volunteer army. At the last main junction before Taganrog the enemy were quite close, so 10,000 wagons were burned within the station by our own troops to ensure that they would not fall into enemy hands. Unfortunately our trains got on the wrong side of the junction and so we were cut off from our base."

To the Crimea

Col. Collishaw said after the Bolshevik advance he decided to try and make for the Crimea country.

He continues: "I had about 200 Russian officers join us. They were only too glad to act as guards, just as ordinary British soldiers en route, and so we proceeded. The local enemy moved a wrong switch deliberately, and we went mostly off the track. As we had almost one thousand miles to go with hardly any coal left, and the enemy were about to cut the line any time, you can imagine we worked some! We got going again minus several

wagons and with all stores salvaged and proceeded on our way.

Telescoping Cars

"Next, a large American light engine came along about fifty miles an hour, with no driver or fireman on board and ran into us from the rear while we were stationary. You can imagine it was some shock, telescoping many of our trucks and coaches, and one officers' first class coach was lost by fire with all the officers' personal gear.

"After feverish work we finally managed to get away with nearly all our equipment. One of my flights was cut off altogether a little later, and I was forced to fight and walk some 200 miles to safety. Just as our third train crossed the last bridge into the Crimea the enemy arrived and destroyed the bridge. However, we arrived safely and here we are.

Struggle to Retain Crimea.

"The attack upon the Crimea has begun, and we are now flying to make reconnaissance for the for the staff, which is making some effort to prevent the enemy from occupying the Crimea. But the fighting spirit of the volunteer army seems to be broken, and I do not think they will hold out, as the enemy are now over-strong, indeed, having received much assistance from German sources.

"When you know that we moved over 2,000 miles of railway in this great retreat you will begin to have some conception of our experiences. I shot down two Bolshevik German Fokkers within our lines.

"I wish some of the Russians had some pep. They desire only to leave all to the English to do. All this does not tend to make one full of pep for the Russian volunteer army, but we came out for one year and we are going to be 'full out' to clean up on somebody so long as we are out on active service. I will let you know how we get along with the new turn of events. I am coming to Canada in April I hope."

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