



# *Sheetlines*

The journal of  
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY  
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps

“The Armistice was not the end of the war”

*John L Cruickshank*

*Sheetlines*, 114 (April 2019), pp24-29

Stable URL: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/sheetlines-articles/Issue114page24.pdf>

*This article is provided for personal, non-commercial use only.  
Please contact the Society regarding any other use of this work.*

Published by  
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY  
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps  
[www.CharlesCloseSociety.org](http://www.CharlesCloseSociety.org)

The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

## ***The Armistice was not the end of the war***

***John L Cruickshank***

Contrary to the impression that is given every November, the First World War did not end on 11 November 1918. And even the peace treaties signed in Paris in 1919 did not stop conflict and outright warfare in many places. For example, the settlement imposed on Turkey, as the successor state to the Ottoman Empire, was simply not accepted, and only reignited fighting across the Balkans, Asia Minor and the Trans-Caucasus for several more years until the borders of modern Turkey (and likewise its ethnic and religious composition) had been established by force. Indeed one could argue that the present conflicts across the former Ottoman territories of the Middle East should all simply be considered as a continuation of the First World War that has not only not been resolved, but substantially fuelled, by successive externally-imposed settlements.<sup>1</sup>

Such questions apart, it is unarguable that the armed forces of Britain and the Empire remained in action on several fronts in 1919. A pocket-size intelligence map-booklet *Russia Route Zone A, Murman Railway and Kola Peninsula*, provides a reminder of one of these campaigns.<sup>2</sup> That this booklet was produced by the Americans is only one of the disconcerting aspects of this campaign.

For centuries Russia has felt trapped by its own geography, in that despite its vast size it has never had good shipping access to the open oceans. The rise of the Atlantic powers to world political and economic domination was based on oceanic shipping and trade, and until the invention of the railway Russia could only look on with envy.<sup>3</sup> The issue was (and is) not merely economic. Militarily, the size of Russia and the difficulties of supply and communication without easy access to the sea have been a perpetual problem to all armies and their commanders there.<sup>4</sup>

The port of Arhangelsk (Archangel) in the White Sea was developed in the sixteenth century as a trading port for the Muscovy Company of London.<sup>5</sup> It retained its importance thereafter, and was thus linked to Russia's railway network before the outbreak of war, however due to its position on the estuary of the (Northern) River Dvina its waters are shallow and prone to silting, and moreover

---

<sup>1</sup> The literature is vast, and often polemical, but Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires; The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918*, (Cambridge, 2011) offers thought-provoking insights.

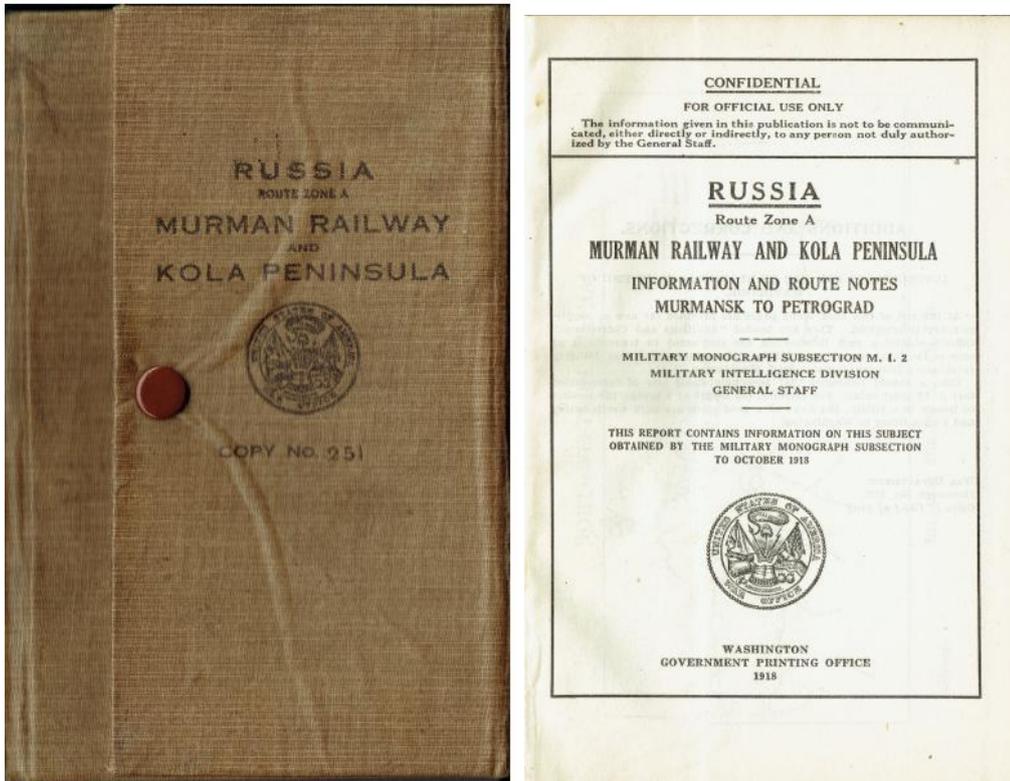
<sup>2</sup> *Russia Route Zone A, Murman Railway and Kola Peninsula*, (Military Monograph Subsection M.I.2, Military Intelligence Division, General Staff: Washington, 1918). There were stated to be 3,000 copies of this publication. The example studied is copy no. 251, held in a private collection

<sup>3</sup> The classic exposition of the rise of the Atlantic sea-powers is Carlo M. Cipolla, *Guns and Sails in the Early Phase of the European Expansion 1400-1700*, (London, 1965), but many authors have expanded the topic.

<sup>4</sup> The issue is discussed, usually at length, in every economic, military and strategic study of Russia produced from the time of Peter the Great to the present.

<sup>5</sup> For a recent account of London's role in this development see Stephen Alford, *London's Triumph; Merchant Adventurers and the Tudor City*, (2017).

freeze for half of the year. Although much further north, and almost uninhabited until the twentieth century, the Murman (northern) coast of the Kola peninsula is closer to the Atlantic and therefore warmed by the Gulf Stream. It thus remains ice-free in winter.



*The cover and title page*

During the First World War the main Russian port of St. Petersburg (then renamed Petrograd) was effectively closed to international traffic by German control of the Baltic Sea. The Russian imperial authorities therefore decided to develop an entirely new military port on a deep-water inlet in the north side of the Kola peninsula, to be called Murmansk. To do this rail access was required, and so (with remarkable speed) during 1916 a new single-track railway line 819 miles (1,278 versts) long was constructed linking the new port with the St. Petersburg to Vologda rail line, at its crossing of the River Volkhov south of Lake Ladoga. The terrain crossed by the route was largely un-surveyed, the northern part in particular being (according to the map-booklet) 'a vast wilderness almost devoid of roads and settlements and until recently but little known'.<sup>6</sup> Construction of the line was directed by Canadian engineers, lent to Russia for the purpose. The work was done by Chinese and Korean labourers and by the forced labour of German and Austrian prisoners of war, of whom 40,000 died during the

<sup>6</sup> At the onset of the First World War the largest scale military maps of the area were compilations made at 1:420,000 from various sources in the 1870s. VV Glushkov, EI Dolgov, AA Sharavin, *Korpus Voennykh Topografov Russkoi Armii v Gody Pervoi Mirovoi Boiny*, (Moscow, 1999), plate 1. FA Chernyayeva (trans. James R. Gibson), 'IA Strelbitsky – the Foremost Russian Cartographer of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century', *Canadian Cartographer*, 11 (1974), 99–106. This map series, with railway revision, remained in use by the RKKA (Red Army) until the Second World War.

project.<sup>7</sup>

As the line was completed Britain and the other western allies were acutely aware that Russia was struggling to continue the war against Germany, but were desperate to support her in doing so. As soon as the railway was operational, Britain began delivering arms and coal to the new port at Murmansk. The coal was essential, because although the Russian locomotives had been designed to burn either wood or coal, local fuel resources had been exhausted by the construction of the new line, and coal from the mines of the Donets Basin in the eastern Ukraine was too far away to be readily available.

However in February 1917 the first of Russia's revolutions took place, deposing the Tsar and establishing a civilian government in Petrograd. Under pressure from the western allies, the new government agreed to continue the war, and agreed to prepare a further offensive against the central powers that summer. This offensive collapsed, and led to further political collapse, mutiny amongst the troops, and in November 1917, the October revolution in which Lenin and his Bolshevik party seized power. The Bolsheviks then unilaterally withdrew from the war with Germany and Austria-Hungary to concentrate on consolidating their own (initially fragile) grip on power. On 3 March 1918 however further German advances forced the Bolsheviks to accept a formal peace treaty, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, by which vast territories, including all Poland and the entire Ukraine with all their resources, were ceded to the central powers.

As a result of these events, in the Spring of 1918 Britain and the western allies were facing newly reinforced German forces on the Western Front while their own reinforcements from the USA were only just beginning to arrive and were not yet battle-ready. The stock-piles of munitions that had recently been built up at Murmansk (and at Arhangelsk) were also a concern, because of the possibility that they might be captured by the Finnish 'White' forces, who with active German support were in the process of creating an independent Finland, and who were within striking distance of Murmansk and its railway. Something had to be done to protect this *materièl* from German-sponsored capture.

Three days after the signing of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, on 6 March 1918, at the request and with the written permission of the chairman of the local Soviet, 130 Royal Marines from HMS *Glory* landed at Murmansk. That permission had even (initially) been endorsed by Leon Trotsky himself. Further Royal Marines and some French soldiers landed from HMS *Cochrane* the following day. During April and May, despite objections by Vladimir Lenin, these forces engaged in joint operations with local Soviet Red Guards to secure the northern part of the railway and the mouth of the Kola Inlet against the Finnish Whites.<sup>8</sup>

The political and military climate was however shifting, and attitudes were hardening, both in London and in Moscow, to where the Soviet capital had been moved in March 1918 because of the German advance towards Petrograd. In

---

<sup>7</sup> Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia, 1918-1920*, (2006), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan D Smele, *The 'Russian' Civil Wars 1916-1926; Ten Years that Shook the World*, (2015), 46. Clifford Kinvig, *op.cit.*, 17-20.

London Winston Churchill, then Minister of Munitions, but later Secretary of State for War, was preaching a crusade against the Bolsheviks and pushing for international military intervention to overthrow them. Military and political support for the Russian (anti-Bolshevik) Whites was to be an integral part of this intervention.<sup>9</sup> When a small and very mixed international force (including American Marines) was landed at Arhangelsk at the end of July 1918 it was synchronised with a *coup d'état* against the local Bolshevik soviet, replacing it with a puppet White Russian administration. Thereafter a succession of costly but inconclusive battles took place between intervention forces and the newly established Red Army up and down the Murmansk railway and along the rivers and railway south of Arhangelsk, until the futility of the enterprise eventually became clear to all in the Summer of 1919. The last allied troops were evacuated from Arhangelsk on 27 September 1919, and from Murmansk on 12 October.

That it was the Americans who produced the geographical intelligence document for the Murmansk operation is perhaps explicable by two factors. Firstly, the basis of the map-booklet was clearly the engineering details of the railway, including many photographs, that were probably those of the Canadian engineers who had been in charge of its construction. By 1918 this material was perhaps in Canada. Secondly the desire of the United States to play a full military role in the war that it had only just joined, combined with the fact that the USA had agreed to contribute a large part of the forces involved, probably led to their being tasked to prepare material for what was no doubt seen by GSGS (and OS) as an unnecessary distraction while they were quite busy enough in France and Belgium.<sup>10</sup>

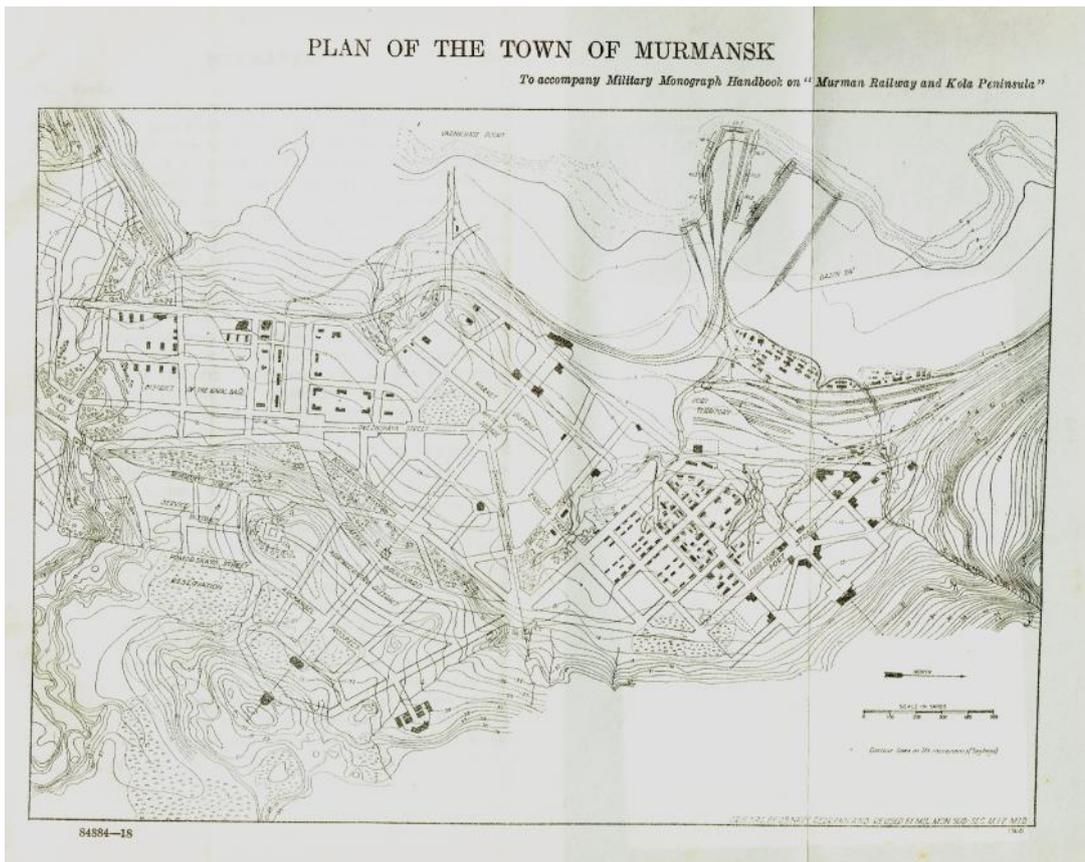
The booklet is quite small (12 x 17 cm.), and is bound in buff buckram boards incorporating an overlapping flap closed with a press-stud. There are 118 letterpress pages with 54 pages of photographs on India paper, plus four fold-out maps and a single-page map. The first fold-out is an (unscaled) sketch map of 'Northwestern Russia' (showing Murmansk, Arhangelsk, Vologda and Petrograd). The next shows the 'Southern Portion of the Kola Inlet' (centred on Murmansk), with hachures to represent the surrounding hills. Surprisingly, the course of the new railway is not marked. There is a scale of miles, but no representative fraction is given. However the scale appears to be 1:84,000, which was the standard Russian 2-verst topographic scale. The third fold-out is a poorly-legible and over-reduced reproduction of a sketched 'Map of Ekaterina Harbour' (at the entrance to the Kola inlet). Although astronomical survey points are indicated, no scale is given. The fourth is a 'Plan of the Town of Murmansk' with contour lines

---

<sup>9</sup> Kinvig, *op. cit.*, dissects the convoluted (and contradictory) British political and military factors sustaining the various British interventions in Russia at this time. For the wider background see Jonathan D Smele, *op. cit.*, Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), and Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory; A History of the Russian Civil War*, (1989), especially 163-193. Beware *Wikipedia*: when accessed on 5 Dec 2018 the article 'North Russia Intervention' had been subjected to re-editing that had left it without a coherent overall narrative.

<sup>10</sup> See *Report on Survey on the Western Front 1914-1918*, (HMSO, 1936).

at 1 sazhen (7 foot) intervals. The horizontal scale is given in yards and seems to be about 1:19,000, although the original scale may have been larger. It is a map of an intended town, and shows a grandiose street plan on the slopes above the inlet, but with only a scatter of buildings marked in quite limited areas of the town, and an incomplete state of the railway. Kinvig gives descriptions of Murmansk in 1918 as ‘a handful of log huts’ and ‘unmade roads which became a morass of mud in the short summer months’, and ‘movement on foot ... by duck-board pavements with a few roads corduroyed with laid logs’. Comparison of the 1918 plan with the publicly available tourist street plan from 1989, and with Google Maps, suggests that the eventual pattern of city-centre streets was only very tenuously related to that imagined in 1916-18.<sup>11</sup> The final fold-out is a map of the ‘Murmansk-Petrograd Railway and Adjoining Region’ at a scale of 50 versts to the inch (1:2,100,000), probably reduced from the Russian 25 verst Military-Strategic Map. Despite its small scale, this might have been the most useful map in the book for the rail-based campaign that was developing. The single page map is a very basic sketch diagram showing the 60 intermediate stations between Murmansk and Petrograd.



*Plan of the town of Murmansk*

<sup>11</sup> Kinvig, *op. cit.*, (2006), 19. *Turistskaia Skhema Murmansk* (Moscow: GUGK USSR, 1989). The planimetry of the 1989 map may not be accurate, but it corresponds recognisably with Google Maps images (accessed 12 Dec 2018). Frustratingly, the Soviet 1:50,000 sea chart 15004 *Kol'skii Zaliv* (Moscow: GUNO MO USSR, 1987) shows almost no land detail above the high-water mark. Note that Murmansk and its railway were not only expanded and extended during and after the Second World War, but also extensively affected by enemy action. No inter-war street plan of Murmansk was available for comparison.

How much the booklets were actually used is unclear. The copy examined is clean and unused. Its compilation date of October 1918 was well after the start of the operation, but it may have been helpful to officers and troops arriving in Murmansk as reinforcements in 1919. It was probably however little day to day use once they were there.

The significance of this map-booklet is however not only as a reminder of a campaign that was undermined from the start by unclear and unrealistic aims and objectives, and which in the long run probably did Britain more harm than good. It also appears to be an early, and perhaps the very earliest, example of the United States producing geo-intelligence for use by British military forces in joint operations. During the Second World War such intelligence provision became routine,<sup>12</sup> and has further increased as satellites and remote sensing data have become central to NATO geo-intelligence provision. While both GSGS and OS seem to have avoided direct involvement in the North Russian Intervention, the precedent established for the use of American geo-data by British forces was to have an increasing impact on both British organisations. Thus, in marking the centenary of Britain's unsuccessful North Russian Intervention, we are also marking one hundred years of British use of US geo-intelligence.



*A brief history of OS and its maps, with some interesting historic photographs, appeared (for no particular topical reason) on the BBC News website on 14 October 2108.*

*<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-45007577>*

<sup>12</sup> AB Clough, *Maps and Survey*, (War Office: London, 1952), 43-48.