



SUPPLEMENT

TO

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TUESDAY, 20 JUNE, 1916.

War Office,
20th June, 1916.

The following despatch has been received by the Secretary of State for War from Lieutenant-General The Hon. J. C. Smuts, Commander-in-Chief, East African Force:—

General Headquarters,
East Africa,
30th April, 1916.

MY LORD,—

In accordance with your instructions, I assumed command of His Majesty's Forces in East Africa on the 12th February, and sailed from South Africa on that day.

I arrived at Mombasa on the 19th of February, and was met there by Major-General Tighe, who explained to me fully the situation in East Africa and the steps he had taken to push forward all preparations for an operation in the Kilimanjaro area before the rains. I decided to visit immediately the two proposed lines of advance by Mbuyuni and Longido, and to make a personal reconnaissance in company with General Tighe.

As a result of this reconnaissance I cabled your Lordship on arrival at my General Headquarters in Nairobi on 23rd February that I was prepared to carry out the occupation of

the Kilimanjaro area before the rainy season, and received your sanction on 25th February.

2. It will, I think, assist a clear understanding of this despatch if I here briefly recapitulate the outstanding features of the military situation in East Africa, and also the steps recently taken by General Tighe towards the development of the advance into German territory which was made possible by the arrival of the reinforcements from South Africa.

At the commencement of 1916 the German forces in German East Africa were estimated at some 16,000 men, of whom 2,000 were white, with 60 guns and 80 machine guns. They were organised in companies varying from 150 to 200 strong, with 10 per cent. of whites and an average of two machine guns per company.

The enemy occupied a considerable tract of British territory. At Taveta they had established a large entrenched camp, with an advanced position at Salaita (El Oldorobo), an entrenched camp at Serengeti, and an outpost at Mbuyuni, the latter places thirteen and seventeen miles respectively east of Taveta. At Kasigau they maintained a garrison of 500-600 rifles with the object of delaying our concentration by blowing up the Uganda railway and the Voi-Maktau railway. Their numerous attempts to accomplish this end were uniformly futile. In the coastal area they maintained a

considerable garrison on the Uмба River, and actively patrolled thence to the vicinity of the Uganda railway, Mwele Mdogo and Gazi. At numerous points throughout the 600 miles of land frontier the opposing troops were in touch, and the result was that General Tighe had to disseminate widely his small force, and was unable to keep any large reserve in hand to meet a sudden call. In spite of the fact that he had to be constantly on the watch for the next move of his active and enterprising foe, General Tighe kept steadily before him the necessity of doing all in his power to prepare the way for the eventual offensive movement. With this end in view he organised such of his infantry as could be spared for active operations into the 1st and 2nd East African Brigades, acting on the Taveta and Longido lines respectively, and proceeded to develop the organisation of the whole force into two divisions and line of communication troops.

3. On the 15th January the 1st Division, under Major-General Stewart, was ordered to occupy Longido and to develop the lines of communication between that place and Kajiado, on the Magadi railway. On the 22nd January the 2nd Division, under Brigadier-General Malleon, advanced from Maktau to Mbuyuni, meeting with slight opposition, and on the 24th occupied Serengeti camp. This advance had the immediate effect of making the enemy evacuate Kasigau. The railway was advanced from Maktau to Njoro drift, three miles east of Salaita, and arrangements made for the concentration of a large force at and near Mbuyuni. The greatest difficulty in the way of this concentration was the lack of water, the Serengeti plains being by nature a waterless desert. A 2½-inch pipe was laid from Bura, but this did not suffice, over 100,000 gallons being required daily, and the pipe yielding only 40,000. The balance had to be made good by railway and storage tanks. The whole of the watering arrangements were so carefully worked out that not a single hitch occurred when the main concentration eventually took place, in spite of the fact that an enemy raiding party succeeded in damaging the Bura headworks. For this great credit is due to Lieutenant-Colonel C. B. Collins, R.E., who was General Tighe's C.R.E.

I cannot speak too highly of all the preliminary work done by General Tighe in the direction of organisation and preparation for offensive measures. This left me free on arrival to devote my whole energies to active operations, and I take this opportunity of placing on record my appreciation of the fact that the success of those operations is in a large measure due to General Tighe's foresight and energy in paving the way for the expected reinforcements.

4. Early in February the 2nd South African Infantry Brigade arrived, and on the 12th of that month General Tighe directed the 2nd Division to make a reconnaissance in force of Salaita, and if possible to occupy that position. General Malleon carried out this operation with three battalions 2nd South African Brigade and three battalions 1st East African Brigade, supported by 18 guns and howitzers. The Salaita position is one of considerable natural strength, and had been carefully entrenched. The enemy was found to be in force and counter-attacked vigorously. General Malleon was compelled to withdraw to Serengeti, but much useful information had

been gained, and the South African Infantry had learned some invaluable lessons in bush fighting, and also had opportunity to estimate the fighting qualities of their enemy.

5. This brings the operations up to the date on which I arrived in East Africa, and decided, as mentioned above, that the occupation of the Kilimanjaro area before the rainy season was a feasible operation.

The original plan devised by General Tighe had been to occupy the Kilimanjaro area by making a converging advance from Longido and Mbuyuni with the 1st and 2nd Divisions respectively, with Kahe as the point towards which movement was to be directed. To this main plan I adhered, but I decided that some alteration of dispositions was necessary in order to avoid frontal attacks against entrenched positions of the enemy in the dense bush and to secure the rapidity of advance which appeared to me essential to the success of the operation in the short time at our disposal before the commencement of the rains, which might be expected towards the end of March.

Accordingly I issued orders that the 1st South African Mounted Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General Van Deventer should be transferred from the 1st Division to Mbuyuni and act from there directly under my orders in a turning movement to the north of Taveta and Salaita. This transfer was carried out by rail most expeditiously, and by March 4th all minor concentrations were complete, the 3rd S.A. Brigade had arrived in the country, and my force was disposed as follows:—

1st Division (less 1st South African Mounted Brigade), Longido.

2nd Division (less detachments), Mbuyuni and Serengeti.

1st South African Mounted Brigade, Mbuyuni.

Army Artillery, Mbuyuni and Serengeti.

The 2nd South African Infantry Brigade, one field and one howitzer battery, were retained by me as Force Reserve.

6. The general outline of my plan has been explained to your Lordship in various telegrams, but I will recapitulate the main points here.

The task of the 1st Division was to cross the 35 miles of waterless bush which lay between Longido and the Engare Nanjuki River, occupy the latter, and then advance between Meru and Kilimanjaro to Boma Jangombe. My intention was thereafter to direct this division on Kahe, and cut the enemy's line of communication by the Usambara Railway.

The task of the 1st South African Mounted Brigade and of the 2nd Division was to advance through the gap between Kilimanjaro and the Pare Hills against the enemy's main force, which was reported to be concentrated in the neighbourhood of Taveta, with strong detachments at the head of Lake Jipe, in the bush east of the river Lumi and at Salaita. The total force with which the enemy could oppose our advance into the Kilimanjaro area was estimated at 6,000 rifles, with 37 machine guns and 16 guns.

7. The manner in which I proposed to initiate the operation was as follows:—

(a) 1st Division to commence its forward movement on the 5th March and be allowed two clear days' start before the advance against Taveta should begin.

(b) 1st South African Mounted Brigade and

3rd South African Infantry Brigade, both under command of General Van Deventer, to leave Mbuyuni and Serengeti on the evening of the 7th March, and make a night march to the river Lumi east of Lake Chala. On the 8th to seize the high ground round Lake Chala and develop a turning movement by the west against Taveta. The object of this turning movement was partly to surprise the enemy and partly to avoid a frontal attack through the thick bush which lay between Salaita and Taveta.

(c) 2nd Division to advance against Salaita Hill on the morning of the 8th March, entrench a line facing the hill, and make preparations for an attack, supported by the Army Artillery.

(d) Force Reserve to follow General Van Deventer's column during the night of the 7th-8th March and take up a central position astride the Lumi, whence it could be used to reinforce either Van Deventer or the 2nd Division, as required.

It will be readily seen that these movements demanded the greatest energy and decision on the part of the commanders concerned. In order to be in close touch with the main operations round Taveta I decided to accompany the Force Reserve to the Lumi, leaving part of my General Staff at Mbuyuni to control operations elsewhere.

The initial movements were carried out successfully and with very slight opposition on the part of the enemy, who was undoubtedly taken by surprise. The 1st Division succeeded in crossing the waterless belt safely, and by the afternoon of the 6th March had its advanced troops established on the small hill Nagasseni just east of the river Engare Nanjuki. By 2 p.m. on the 7th the whole division was concentrated at this point, and on the 8th moved to Geraragua.

8. On the evening of the 7th March General Van Deventer's column started on its march across the Serengeti plains for Chala. The 1st South African Mounted Brigade from Mbuyuni and the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade from Serengeti Camp. The Force Reserve under General Beves followed in rear of the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade.

At 6 a.m. on the 8th March the 1st South African Mounted Brigade reached the Lumi River near the southern end of the Ziواني swamp, and the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade simultaneously arrived on the river east of Lake Chala. General Van Deventer at once proceeded to make good the high ground lying between Lake Chala and Rombo Mission. He then made a converging movement on the Chala position from the east and north-west, sending the brigade scouts to threaten the enemy's line of retreat to the south. Chala was only lightly held by the enemy, and these dispositions soon caused him to withdraw on Taveta. General Van Deventer occupied Chala and pursued towards Taveta, a portion of which position was occupied by the 2nd South African Horse. As, however, the enemy in Taveta were in considerable strength, General Van Deventer considered it wise to concentrate on the Chala position before dark.

Meanwhile the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade and the Force Reserve halted astride the Lumi to guard the crossing. During the afternoon an enemy force estimated at from 300 to 500, which had been cut off from the main body by our unexpected movement to

Chala, advanced from the north along the line of the river in thick bush, and made more than one attack on the outposts of the infantry in bivouacs. These attacks were easily repulsed with loss to the enemy, but also caused most of the losses we sustained that day.

While the bulk of my forces were engaged in making good the Chala position and the Lumi crossing, the 2nd Division, under Major-General Tighe, carried out, on the 8th March, an artillery bombardment of Salaita, and the infantry of the 1st East African Brigade advanced and dug themselves in, in readiness for an attack on the 9th.

9. At dawn on the 9th General Van Deventer sent his mounted troops to get astride the Moschi road west of Taveta, which place the enemy evacuated in the course of the day. He also sent the 12th South African Infantry to make good Ndui Ya Warombo Hill and the Lumi bridge east of Taveta. The 2nd Division continued to bombard Salaita, and at 2 p.m. the infantry advanced to the attack, only to find that the bombardment, coupled with the turning movement via Chala, had compelled the enemy to evacuate, just in time to avoid two squadrons of the 4th South African Horse sent to intercept their retreat.

10. Early on the 10th a regiment of South African Horse despatched from Chala to make good Taveta were able to seize the position before a large body of the enemy, who had obviously been sent back to reoccupy it. After a brief fight the enemy withdrew towards the Latema-Reata nek, hotly pursued by mounted troops and field artillery. The enemy fought a stubborn rearguard action, and eventually was left in position on the nek.

On the same date the 2nd Division advanced to Taveta, detaching garrisons at Serengeti and Salaita. The Lumi crossing was found impassable for motor lorries and heavy guns, and the bulk of the transport did not cross until the bridge had been improved about mid-day on the 11th.

11. On the morning of the 11th General Van Deventer on the right advanced via Spitz Hill and Kile on Mamba Mission and the line of the Himo. In the centre the 4th South African Horse, supported by the 12th South African Infantry, made good East Kitowo Hill after a brisk skirmish. On the left the mounted troops of the 2nd Division reconnoitred the Latema-Reata nek, which was found to be held in some strength. The Force Reserve was ordered to move from Chala to Taveta.

It was now clear that the enemy had withdrawn from Taveta in two directions, along the Taveta-Moschi road towards the west and along the Taveta-Kahe road between Reata and Latema Hills towards the south-west, but the exact line of retirement of his main forces was uncertain. The 4th S.A. Horse were in touch with what appeared to be merely a rearguard on the Moschi road, and an enemy force of unknown strength was in position on the Latema-Reata nek. It was essential to determine whether this was only a covering force, or whether the enemy was in such strength as to threaten a counter-attack towards Taveta. In either case it was necessary to drive him from the nek before I could advance beyond Taveta.

The 2nd Division had in Taveta only three weak battalions of the 1st East African Brigade, eight 12 pr. guns and a howitzer

battery. With these I determined to clear up the situation and, if possible, make good the nek.

12. This operation was entrusted to Brigadier-General Malleson, commanding the 1st East African Brigade, who had at his disposal Belfield's Scouts.

Mounted Infantry Company.

Nos. 6 and 8 Field Batteries.

No. 134 Howitzer Battery.

2nd Rhodesian Regiment.

130th Baluchis.

3rd King's African Rifles.

Machine Gun Battery, Loyal North Lancs.

Volunteer Machine Gun Company.

General Malleson selected as his objective the spur of Latema, which commands the nek from the north, and at 11.45 a.m. advanced to the attack. The 130th Baluchis on the right and 3rd K.A.R. on the left formed the firing line, 2nd Rhodesian Regiment the general reserve. The mounted troops watched both flanks, and the artillery supported the attack at a range of about 3,500 yards.

As they approached the bush-clad slopes of Latema the firing line came under a heavy rifle and machine gun fire. The enemy also had at least two guns and several pom-poms in action, and our infantry could make little headway.

13. At 4 p.m. the Force Reserve began to arrive in Taveta, and I reinforced the 2nd Division with the 5th South African Battalion. At the same time General Malleson, who was seriously indisposed, asked to be relieved of his command, and I directed General Tighe to assume command of the operation personally.

On the arrival of the 5th South African Infantry, General Tighe ordered the Rhodesians to advance, and to carry the King's African Rifles forward with them in an assault on the Latema ridge, the 130th Baluchis co-operating vigorously on the right. All ground gained was to be at once made good. The 9th Field Battery and 5th South African Field Battery, as they arrived in Taveta, were brought into action in support of the attack. This assault was gallantly pressed home, especially by the Rhodesians, but failed to make good the ridge. The 3rd K.A.R., who had been hotly engaged since the outset, had the misfortune to lose their gallant leader, Lieutenant-Colonel B. R. Graham, and several other officers. General Tighe found it necessary to support the Baluchis with half the 5th South African Infantry, and I further reinforced the 2nd Division with the 7th South African Infantry.

14. This latter battalion reached General Tighe about 8 p.m., and shortly afterwards he decided that the best chance of quickly dislodging the enemy from their position on the nek was to send in the two South African Battalions with the bayonet by night. This operation was no doubt fraught with considerable risk as there was no opportunity of adequately reconnoitring the ground over which the attack must be made, nor was it by any means certain that the enemy was not present in large numbers. On the other hand the moon was in the first quarter, and so facilitated movement up to midnight; the bush along the line of the road to the nek did not appear to be very dense; and, moreover, the volume of fire developed by the enemy did not seem to indicate that he had a large force actually in his first line, though he

had, as usual, a large proportion of machine guns in action.

15. The night advance of the two South African Battalions was ably organised and gallantly led by Lieutenant-Colonel Byron, Commanding 5th South African Infantry. The 7th South African Infantry formed the 1st line, with the 5th in support. They advanced with great dash through the bush, which proved to be much thicker than was anticipated, driving the enemy before them till the latter was on the crest, where he checked our advance. A certain amount of disintegration was inevitable in a night advance through the dense thorn bush in the face of stubborn opposition. Groups of men and individuals who got separated from their leaders had no course but to fall back to the position where the 1st East African Brigade was formed up in general reserve, about 1,500 yards east of the nek. Colonel Byron had issued instructions that, on reaching the crest, Lieutenant-Colonel Freeth, commanding the 7th South African Infantry, and Major Thompson of the same battalion, should wheel outwards and make good the heights north and south of the nek respectively, while Colonel Byron himself secured the actual nek. These two gallant officers most ably carried out their task. Colonel Freeth fought his way up the steep spurs of Latema till he found that the party with him had dwindled to 18 men. He was joined by a few of the Rhodesians and King's African Rifles, who had clung on to the crest of the ridge after the assault in the evening, and the small party held on till daylight. Major Thompson wheeled towards Reata with 170 men and dug himself in in an advantageous position. About midnight Colonel Byron reached the nek within 30 yards of the enemy's main position. The opposition here was very stubborn. At one point Major Mainprise, R.E., Brigade Major, and 22 men were killed by the concentrated fire of three machine guns, and Colonel Byron, who was himself slightly wounded, reached the nek with only 20 men. The enemy was still in a position which commanded the ground he had won, and, finding it impossible either to advance or to hold his ground, he was reluctantly compelled to withdraw.

16. Meanwhile General Tighe found it extremely difficult to keep touch with the progress of the fight, of which he could only judge by the firing and the reports of officers and others sent back from the ridge, who naturally were only cognisant of events in their own immediate vicinity. About 1 a.m. several requests for reinforcements reached him, and he ordered forward the 130th Baluchis. These advanced at 1.20 a.m., and shortly met Colonel Byron, who reported that he had ordered his small party to retire. General Tighe accordingly re-formed his force and dug in astride the road to await daylight. Attempts to gain touch with Colonel Freeth and Major Thompson failed.

Judging by General Tighe's reports, I considered that it was inadvisable to press the direct attack on the Latema-Reata nek further, and preferred to await the effect of the turning movement of the mounted troops, which was ordered for the next morning, and calculated to cause a speedy withdrawal of the enemy from this position. I accordingly, at 4.20 a.m., directed General Tighe to withdraw his

whole force before daybreak to a line further back from the nek. This withdrawal was in progress when patrols sent to gain touch with the flank detachments on Reata and Latema found the latter in occupation of both hills and the enemy in full retreat from the nek. I at once despatched the 8th South African Infantry to make good the ridge, and some artillery to shell the retiring enemy, who was now estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,000 in number. Effective pursuit through the dense tropical forest which stretched from Kitowo to Kahe was out of the question.

17. Our casualties in the engagement were about 270, which cannot be considered excessive in view of the important results gained. We captured, besides rifles and ammunition, a 6 cm. gun and three machine-guns. Some 40 to 50 enemy dead were found on the position, and, as they are always most careful to remove their dead and wounded, there can be no doubt that their casualties were severe. While this action was in progress on the Taveta-Kahe road, the 4th South African Horse and 12th South African Infantry kept up a brisk engagement with the enemy on the Taveta-Moschi road, where the enemy was found to be in strong force on the northern slopes of Latema and on North Kitovo Hill. At one point 20 of the enemy dead were found after the engagement.

18. With the end of this action the first phase of the battle for Kilimanjaro came to a conclusion. On the 12th March General Van Deventer continued his advance up to Mamba Mission and the Himo Bridge on the Taveta-Moschi road, in the face of slight opposition. The enemy in his retirement during the night and the early morning had destroyed all bridges on the road, and great difficulty was experienced in rationing Van Deventer's force. On the 13th he advanced and occupied Moschi unopposed, the enemy having withdrawn the previous night towards Kahe. The 2nd and 3rd South African Brigades were thereupon concentrated at the Himo Bridge, the remainder of the 2nd Division at Taveta.

19. It is necessary now to refer to the movements of the 1st Division, which had arrived at Geraragua on the 8th, having encountered only slight opposition. On the 9th General Stewart halted to reconnoitre and let his supplies catch up. The direct road from Geraragua to Boma-Ja-Ngombe was reported impassable for wheels, all bridges having been destroyed by the enemy. As a result of this and of the exhausted state of his ox transport, General Stewart considered it necessary to halt on the morning of the 10th, and reconnoitre for a road further to the west. A difficult but passable track was found, and the march was resumed at mid-day. The mounted troops left Geraragua at 16 hours on the 10th, on which date they encountered some opposition, sustaining 13 casualties. The Division and the mounted troops eventually joined hands on the Sanja River on the night of the 12th/13th, and on the 13th advanced to Boma-Ja-Ngombe. On the 14th, when the main force of the enemy had already retired to the Ruwu and Kahe positions, the 1st Division joined hands with General Van Deventer in New Moschi, through which place the six companies of the enemy who had been opposing General Stewart had already passed on the night of the 12th March, as previously stated.

20. The next few days, from the 13th to the

18th March, were spent in improving the road from Taveta to Moschi, reorganising transport, bringing up supplies, etc., and in reconnoitring towards Kahe and the Ruwu River. The whole of the country bordering that river on the north is dense tropical forest, and the enemy took advantage of this to display some boldness in firing into our camps by night.

On the night of the 17th/18th Belfield's Scouts were sent from Himo bridge to occupy Unterer Himo, and at dawn were driven off by a superior force of the enemy. A position on the Ruwu river appeared to me from patrols, intelligence reports and somewhat incomplete air reconnaissance, to be the next which the enemy might hold, and it was of vital importance for purposes of railway extension and future advance that the enemy should be driven south of this river before the rains commenced.

I therefore, on the 18th, issued orders for a general advance towards the Ruwu. On the extreme right the East African Mounted Rifles and a squadron of the 17th Cavalry advanced from Mue via Masai Kraal. The 3rd South African Brigade moved from Himo bridge on Euphorbien Hill, and the 2nd South African Brigade from the same point on Unterer Himo, to which place the 1st East African Brigade of the 2nd Division sent forward two battalions from Latema. The advance was supported by field and mountain artillery. The infantry occupied the line Euphorbien Hill-Unterer Himo without difficulty, while the East African Mounted Rifles encountered three enemy companies at Masai Kraal. During the day I ordered the 2nd East African Brigade of the 1st Division from New Moschi to Mue, to support the mounted troops on the Kahe road.

21. On the 19th the general advance continued, but the 1st East African, 2nd and 3rd South African Brigades could make little progress through the well-nigh impenetrable bush which surrounded the enemy's position on the Himo about Rasthaus. The 3rd Brigade, ably supported by the 28th Mountain Battery, had a sharp engagement with the enemy at dusk while occupying its line for the night, and sustained 30-40 casualties. The fresh graves of twenty-seven of the enemy's askaris were afterwards found in the vicinity of the action. The 2nd East African Brigade and the mounted troops of the 1st Division under General Sheppard pushed the enemy back to Store, four miles south of Masai Kraal, and bivouacked there for the night. On the 20th I withdrew the 2nd South African Brigade from Unterer Himo, and sent three battalions to reinforce General Sheppard on the Mue-Kahe Road, where I anticipated the strongest opposition. At 2 p.m. on the 20th General Van Deventer, with the 1st South African Mounted Brigade, the 4th South African Horse, and two field batteries, left Moschi with instructions to cross the Pangani, and get in rear of the enemy's position at Kahe Station. That night General Sheppard's camp at Store was heavily attacked from 9.30 p.m. to midnight. These attacks were repulsed with loss to the enemy. The enemy force actually engaged was estimated by prisoners at 500 men, with another 500 in reserve. Their casualties were estimated at 70-100, ours were 20.

22. At daylight on the 21st Van Deventer was approaching the Pangani from the west at a point south-west of Kahe Hill. He experi-

enced some difficulty in crossing the river, but by midday had occupied in succession Kahe Hill, Bauman Hill and Kahe Station with slight opposition. The enemy had already earlier in the day blown up the main railway bridge over the Ruwu (or Pangani).

After the loss of Kahe Hill the enemy realised its importance as the key to the Ruwu position, and made several determined attempts to recover it, which were, however, beaten back with loss. A mounted party which moved forward from Kahe Hill to cut off the retreat of the enemy by the wagon road south of the Ruwu found the enemy in force, and had to retire. Van Deventer therefore waited for the following day to develop the turning movement, after his whole brigade should have been brought across the Pangani. During the whole day the enemy had two 4.1-inch naval guns in action, one on a railway truck and the other from a concealed fixed position south of the Ruwu.

23. On the 21st General Sheppard had the following troops under his command:—

2nd East African Brigade.

25th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers.
29th Punjabis.
129th Baluchis.

2nd South African Brigade.

5th South African Battalion.
6th South African Battalion.
8th South African Battalion.

Divisional Troops.

East African Mounted Rifles.
1 Squadron 17th Cavalry.
1st and 3rd South African Field Artillery Batteries.
27th Mountain Battery.
No. 12 Howitzer Battery.
1st King's African Rifles.
2 Royal Naval Armoured Cars.

As soon as I heard that General Van Deventer was nearing Kahe I ordered General Sheppard to advance. This he did at 11.30 a.m., with the 2nd South African Brigade on his right, and the 2nd East African Brigade on his left, the dividing line being the Masai Kraal-Kahe road. By 12.30 p.m. the enemy had been driven back on to his main position on the south edge of a clearing in the dense bush, with his east and west flanks protected respectively by the Soko Nassai and the Defu Rivers, both of which were considerable obstacles to the movements of infantry. General Sheppard's intention was to attack the enemy frontally, and, with or without the aid of the 3rd South African Brigade, to envelop his right (eastern) flank. Unfortunately the advance of the 3rd Brigade from Euphorbien Hill was so impeded by the dense bush that it was unable to exercise any influence on the fight, and without its aid the task proved to be beyond the powers of the force at General Sheppard's disposal. His infantry tried to cross the clearing, which varied in width from 600 to 1,200 yards, but the enemy's dispositions were so skilfully made that these attempts were met and repulsed by rifle and machine-gun fire, both from front and flank. Two double companies of the 129th Baluchis crossed the Soko Nassai, and endeavoured to turn the enemy's right, but here, too, they were held up. Our guns were well handled, the 27th Mountain Battery being in action in the actual firing line, but definite targets were difficult to obtain owing to the density of the bush. The whole

force, in fact, was ably handled by General Sheppard, and the men fought like heroes, but they were unable to turn the enemy from his strong position. General Sheppard did not know that Van Deventer was already at Kahe Station, some miles in advance of his right flank, and no contact could be established through the intervening thick bush. He accordingly gave orders to dig in on the ground won, with a view to renewing the attack on the 22nd. At dawn on the 22nd patrols found the enemy gone. He had waited only for the cover of night to retire across the Ruwu River and proceed down the main road towards Lembeni, abandoning his stationary 4.1-inch gun, which had been blown up.

Our casualties at the Soko Nassai were 288. It is not easy to estimate those of the enemy, but a large pile of used field-dressings found south of the Ruwu told a significant tale. As far as can be ascertained, the enemy forces employed on the 22nd were 14 or 15 companies, distributed along the Himo and Ruwu from Rasthaus to Kahe.

Besides the two 4.1-in. naval guns, the enemy employed several field guns and pom-poms.

24. The result of these operations from the 18th to 21st March was to drive the enemy out of the country north of and along the Ruwu River. Aruscha had meanwhile been occupied by our mounted scouts, who drove off an enemy company in a southerly direction, and thus the conquest of the Kilimanjaro-Meru Area, probably the richest and most desirable district of German East Africa, was satisfactorily completed. I accordingly established my Headquarters at Moschi, placed a chain of outposts along the line of the Ruwu, and set to work to reorganise my force for the next move, meanwhile concentrating the troops as far as possible in healthy localities to give the men a rest after the hardships they had endured.

25. I am particularly indebted to the following officers for their services during the operations:—

Major-General M. J. Tighe, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., commanding the 2nd Division, loyally co-operated by carrying out my wishes in the spirit and the letter. He also commanded at the successful action at Latema nek. I have already mentioned his great services in paving the way for the offensive campaign.

Brigadier-General J. L. Van Deventer, commanding 1st South African Mounted Brigade, commanded throughout the operations an independent column, and executed the turning movements to which the rapidity of our success was undoubtedly due. He displayed soldierly qualities of a high order in controlling the mounted troops in their long night marches and manœuvres through unknown and extremely difficult country.

The Air Services performed valuable reconnaissance work throughout the operations, and on several occasions considerably demoralised the enemy by the use of bombs.

The Royal Artillery were ably handled by Brigadier-General J. H. V. Crowe, and on all occasions when they had an opportunity of preparing the way for and covering the infantry advance their support was most effective.

The Supply and Transport Services worked with great zeal, and the fact that no hitch occurred in the supply of units scattered over

such a large area is evidence of the efficiency displayed by all executive ranks. Such roads as do exist are merely clearings through the bush and swamp, and these rapidly become well-nigh impassable for heavy lorries. The existing track had constantly to be improved, and deviations cut, causing endless delays, and the result was that transport drivers were frequently at work continuously night and day.

The rapidity of the advance, and the distance to which it was carried, must almost inevitably have caused a breakdown in the transport had it not been for the unremitting exertions of the railway engineers, who carried forward the railway from the Njoro drift, east of Salaita, to Taveta and the Latema nek at an average rate of a mile a day, including surveying, heavy bush cutting and the bridging of the Lumi river. This fine performance is largely due to the ripe experience and organising power of Colonel Sir W. Johns, Kt., C.I.E.

Exceptionally heavy work, too, has been thrown upon the medical officers and personnel. All wounded have been treated and evacuated expeditiously, and the number of sick who passed daily through the hands of the medical authorities, more especially since the cessation of active operations, has been very great. Great credit is due to Surgeon-General G. D. Hunter, C.M.G., D.S.O., and his assistants.

The excellent manner in which communication has been maintained throughout reflects great credit on my Signal Service, the officers and men of which, under the able control of Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. Hawtrey, R.E., have spared no efforts in overcoming the many difficulties attendant on operating in such country and on such a large front.

The Officers of my Staff have throughout rendered me every possible assistance. I would especially mention Colonel (now Brigadier-General) J. J. Collyer, my chief of the General Staff, whose sound judgment, ability and tact made possible the harmonious

working of a curiously heterogeneous force, and Brigadier-General R. H. Ewart, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., A.D.C., Administrative Staff, who has done everything possible to perfect and co-ordinate the working of the various administrative services on which an army operating in equatorial Africa is peculiarly dependent.

Brigadier-General W. F. S. Edwards, D.S.O., my Inspector-General of Communications, rendered invaluable services, and the rapidity and smoothness with which the concentration of troops was carried out were very largely due to his energy and powers of organisation, while the manner in which he extended the lines of communication during the actual operations left nothing to be desired.

It is not easy for me to express my appreciation of the conduct of the troops during these operations. General and Staff Officers, Commanding, Regimental and Departmental Officers, rank and file and followers, British, South African, Indian and African, all have worked with a zeal and single-minded devotion to duty that is beyond praise. Shortage of transport necessitated the force moving on light scale, and the majority of the troops had no more than a waterproof sheet and a blanket for three weeks on end. Rations at times unavoidably ran short. Long marches in the hot sun and occasional drenching rains were calculated to try the most hardened campaigner. Yet all these hardships were endured with unflinching cheerfulness, and a chance of dealing a blow at the enemy seemed to be the only recompense required.

A list of those officers, N.C.O.'s and men whom I desire to bring to your Lordship's special notice in connection with these operations will be forwarded at an early date.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

J. C. SMUTS,

Lieutenant-General.

Commander-in-Chief, East African Force.

