



FOURTH SUPPLEMENT

TO

The London Gazette

Of TUESDAY, the 17th of APRIL, 1917.

Published by Authority.

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WEDNESDAY, 18 APRIL, 1917.

War Office,
18th April, 1917.

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

General Headquarters,
East Africa.
28th February, 1917.

Sir,—I have the honour to forward the following despatch describing the operations of the forces under my command from the 28th October, 1916, to the 20th January, 1917, when I relinquished control of the forces in the field in German East Africa:—

Reorganisation.

(1) In my last despatch I described the reorganisation effected in our transport and supply services consequent on the capture of Dar-es-Salam and the restoration of the Central Railway. It remains to add a few words in reference to the reorganisation of the fighting units under my command effected at the same time. Our advance to the areas of the Rufiji and Great Ruaha rivers through numerous tsetse-haunted belts had resulted in the loss of

most of the animals of the mounted troops, and the very rapid rise of the sick rate among all the troops. It was clear that white troops who had had repeated attacks of malaria or dysentery would in the further prosecution of the campaign in those extremely unhealthy areas be more of an encumbrance than a help. I therefore decided to abolish the Third Division, under Major-General C. J. Brits, including the Second Mounted Brigade, under Brigadier-General Enslin, and to return these officers with their staffs to South Africa; to incorporate into the First Mounted Brigade, under Brigadier-General Nussey, all fit men belonging to the Second Mounted Brigade, and finally to evacuate from East Africa all white troops declared to be medically unfit by special medical boards. My forces, therefore, again became organised into two divisions, under Major-Generals Hoskins and van Deventer respectively, while Brigadier-General Beves' infantry brigade again became a force reserve under my immediate control. As a result of these steps close on 12,000 white troops were evacuated from East Africa between the middle of October and the end of December, 1916, and their places were to some extent taken by the new King's African Rifles battalions, which I was forming and training with the sanction of the War Office, as well as by the Nigerian

Brigade under Brigadier-General F. H. B. Cunliffe, C.B., C.M.G., which reached Dar-es-Salam in the second and third weeks in December.

Position of enemy at end of October.

(2) The position of the enemy on the 27th October, the date of my last despatch, was shortly described in that document in the following words:—

“The net result of all these operations is that the Germans have been driven south over the Central Railway, and are now in the north-east, on the Rufiji river and about thirty miles to the north of it; in the west, along, or south and east of the Great Ruaha and Ulanga rivers; and that, with the exception of the Mahenge plateau, they have lost every healthy or valuable part of their Colony. In the east they are cut off from the coast, and in the south the Portuguese Army has appeared north of the Rowuma river.”

The retiring enemy from Tabora had reached the vicinity of Iringa and Malangali.

Distribution of our Forces at the end of October.

(3) My own forces were at the same time distributed as follows:—

In the east a force of some 2,000 rifles under Brigadier-General J. A. Hannington, C.M.G., D.S.O., had been conveyed by sea from Dar-es-Salam and concentrated at Kilwa, and formed the nucleus of the First Division, which, after some reorganisation and transfer of units, was assembled later at the same place, and was intended to take part in a great encircling move south of the Rufiji. General Hannington's force was in occupation of Kilwa Kiwindje and Kilwa Kisiwani, and, after some minor actions, had pushed out detachments which held Njinga, Mtumbei-Chini, Mitole, Matandu and Kibata. In view of a reported movement of the enemy towards Utete from the Mgeta front General Hannington had been warned to strengthen his Kibata detachment and to watch carefully towards the north. Preparations in connection with transport and supplies for the force which it was intended should eventually operate from Kilwa were in train, though progress was necessarily slow in consequence of the wide dispersion of the transport which was being collected, its conveyance by sea, and the heavy losses of animals, which had to be made good throughout the forces.

Mssanga, 45 miles south-west of Dar-es-Salam, was occupied by a small column under Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. Willans, D.S.O. The presence of the enemy at Kissangire, 12 miles further to the south-west, constituted a threat to our railway communications, and an attempt by a smaller column to dislodge the enemy force had failed on the 9th October.

In the centre opposite the enemy on the Mgeta river, occupying Tulo, Duthumi, Kwa-Hongo, Dakawa and Kissaki, was the First Division under Major-General A. R. Hoskins, C.M.G., D.S.O.

On this front operations were practically at a standstill, and the conditions closely resembled those of trench warfare. The situation here underwent no change until the resumption of the general offensive at the end of December. General Sheppard's Brigade was in front line, and in reserve was the brigade formerly commanded by General Hannington, whose place had been taken by Colonel (later Brigadier-

General) H. de C. O'Grady. I had already decided to move this last Brigade to Kilwa when the time appeared suitable for the step.

The 2nd South African Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier-General P. S. Beves, had been withdrawn to Morogoro, where it was held in reserve. As already explained the remainder of the 3rd Division to which General Beves' Brigade originally belonged, had been released from service, and the Division ceased to exist on the 24th October.

In the west the forward troops of the second Division under Major-General J. L. van Deventer were in occupation of Iringa, Njukwa's drift on the Ruaha, and Kidodi; the remaining troops of the Division were on the Central Railway and concentrating preparatory to moving southwards.

The Nyasaland-Rhodesia force under Brigadier-General E. Northey, A.D.C., was partly round Iringa, but the larger portion of the force was on the Ruhudje river, about Mkapira, where strong forces of the enemy were opposing us.

The situation about Iringa and to the south of that place, where detachments of the enemy force under General Wahle from Tabora were endeavouring to break through and join hands with their Mahenge troops, was at this time confused. Different encounters between patrols and detachments had occurred and communications were irregular and interrupted. General Northey at the time was often without means of communication with his troops in the Iringa area.

A battalion of South African Infantry had been sent to General Northey, and was on the way to Songea via Chinde, the Zambesi and Wiedhafen.

The Lake force recently commanded by Brigadier-General the Honourable Sir C. P. Crewe, K.C.M.G., C.B., had been abolished and such of its units as were not disbanded were sent to the Second Division, with the exception of one battalion, which remained in occupation of a portion of the Central Railway eastwards from Tabora. Tabora was occupied by the Belgian forces.

Transfer of 1st Division to Kilwa and re-arrangement of its troops.

(4) On the 28th October I left Morogoro for Dar-es-Salam, and thence proceeded by sea to Kilwa Kiwindje, where I saw General Hannington on the 31st and discussed the local situation, returning to Dar-es-Salam on the 1st November.

As a consequence of my investigations at Kilwa I decided on the early movement of General O'Grady's brigade to that place, and that General Hoskins, with his Divisional Staff, should proceed to assume command of the Kilwa force.

The troops at Kilwa at this date were formed into the 3rd East African Brigade, under General Hannington, and a reconstituted First Division, under General Hoskins, was brought into existence by the addition of General O'Grady's brigade.

General Sheppard's brigade, which was to remain on the Mgeta front, became an independent brigade under my own direction.

General Hoskins assumed command at Kilwa on the 15th November, and the transfer of General O'Grady's brigade by road, rail and sea to the Kilwa area occupied from the 7th to the 29th November.

Delay in Resuming the General Offensive.

(5) Throughout November and December no general offensive was possible, and operations were confined to those undertaken by the different forces to deal with the situation as it developed in their respective areas during those two months and to adjust their positions to the requirements of the plan for combined action against the enemy when the time arrived.

The operations during November and December will be dealt with later, but I think it may be well to state some of the circumstances which contributed to the delay in our general advance.

When it became necessary to call a halt after the operations which had produced the result which has been shortly described in the second paragraph of this despatch, disease had played havoc amongst the troops, of whom large numbers were totally unfit without medical attention, prolonged rest, change of climate and nourishment to make any sustained effort. The wastage due to the above cause was enormous, and the reduction in the number of effective rifles was alone enough to stop all further movement until reinforcements were available.

The Mechanical Transport was in a seriously damaged condition in consequence of the strain of continuous work over appalling roads, or trackless country, and extensive repairs, for which there had been no time, were essential. The personnel of this transport suffered, as did every other branch of the forces, from the same diseases as affected the fighting troops, and as men dropped out increasing strain was thrown on those able to keep going, until the loss of men threw scores of vehicles out of work.

Animal diseases had wiped out horses, mules and oxen by thousands, and it was necessary to replace this transport in some way or other before movement was possible.

The strain upon all ranks of all units and services due to the steadily increasing effect of disease had reached the limit which was endurable.

It is out of the question here to do more than thus barely to mention one or two of the more conspicuous of the numerous difficulties which hampered our activity during the time which elapsed between the arrival of our forces at Kissaki in the middle of September, and the resumption of our general advance on the 1st January, 1917. While these difficulties were being overcome Kilwa port was being prepared as a base, and a division of troops was transferred to that theatre. This division, well south of the Rufiji, was intended to play a conspicuous part in the coming operations in the Rufiji area.

Operations of Kilwa force.

(6) At first little happened in the area occupied by our forces based on Kilwa except patrol work, in which our troops maintained the upper hand, movements of detachments, and minor encounters with the enemy. From captured documents, however, and prisoners' statements, I obtained indications of an intended offensive movement by the enemy, and more definitely of a coming attack on our detachment at Kibata. The last information induced me temporarily to modify my plans and to refrain from a movement towards Liwale as I had at first intended. The enemy force in this

area was at the beginning of November estimated at ten companies.

On the 8th November it was reported that the enemy was attacking Kibata on the previous day. This eventually proved to be the case, but the attack was easily repulsed with slight loss to ourselves, and the enemy withdrew on the 9th. The attack was evidently in the nature of a reconnaissance, and, in view of the probability of a renewed attempt, the necessary precautions were taken, and at the same time the feasibility of occupying Ngarambi, about 30 miles west of Kibata, was investigated.

The remainder of the month was occupied as before in patrol work, each side watching the other closely.

Our troops were in occupation of Mpotora, on the road to Liwale, on the 7th November, and the 30th November saw a battalion on the way to occupy Ngarambi, of which we took possession on the 2nd December without opposition.

Rain began in the Kilwa area early in December, and continued with some violence—though intermittently—until late in the month, seriously interfering with our movements at times.

On the 5th December considerable patrol activity was noticeable in the vicinity of Kibata, and on the afternoon of the 6th the enemy began an attack on that place which developed on the following day, when he brought several naval as well as field guns into action. The attempt to invest Kibata by the enemy continued until the 15th December, heavy attacks being delivered and repulsed on the 7th and 8th, and various outlying positions changing hands several times. On the 10th, following a determined night attack on the night of the 9th/10th, an effort by the enemy to surround Kibata became apparent, and, to deal with this, I agreed to the temporary evacuation of Ngarambi for the purpose of the necessary concentration. On the 11th the infantry fighting was somewhat less severe, though heavy artillery fire was directed on one position. The heavy rain, and consequently bad state of the roads, prevented our artillery from coming up, and considerable casualties to our troops were thus inevitable. On the 12th December the enemy had worked further round the Kibata position to the east and south-east, but this represented the full extent of his effort to encircle the place, and on the 15th the first effects of a movement by General Hannington from the west against the enemy's right became perceptible, General O'Grady's brigade co-operating from Kibata.

The Gold Coast Regiment took a commanding hill west of Kibata and maintained its position in spite of heavy counter attacks and considerable casualties, especially from the enemy's larger guns.

Communication between Kibata and Kilwa was at this time subject to constant interruption.

On the morning of the 16th General O'Grady's brigade occupied a hill 3,500 yards north-east of Kibata; from this date the situation at Kibata became devoid of incident of any special importance. We held our positions and the enemy remained inactive, except for patrol work in our front, occupying an extended line along commanding ridges, but somewhat retired from the former positions. General Hoskins on the 21st December stated

his opinion that he would be able to frustrate any attempt by the enemy to move to the south by any direct route through the Matumbi mountains. At this stage I ordered General Hoskins to hold some battalions ready to move north-west when the execution of my general plan was undertaken, and advised him of my intention to proceed to the Mgeta front on the following day to direct operations.

Operations in the West.

(7) November and December were periods of considerable activity in the west, where Generals van Deventer and Northey were operating, though here, as elsewhere, the operations were mainly of a local character.

In order to deal with the enemy force which, under General Wahle, had come towards Mahenge from Tabora and was moving about the Iringa district somewhat aimlessly in various detachments, General van Deventer had pushed forward the 7th South African Infantry and a Cyclist Battalion, the latter under Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. Fairweather, D.S.O., who for the time being assumed command of the two battalions and a portion of General Northey's force under Lieutenant-Colonel T. A. Rodger, D.S.O. The two battalions from the Second Division were very weak, but the transport position had not recovered sufficiently at this time to make it possible to send greater numbers, though here, as elsewhere, the utmost effort was being made to prepare for the general advance.

If we had been able to feed a larger number of troops at this stage, south of the Central Railway, in the western area, there is little doubt that we should have handled the enemy force from Tabora far more severely than we were able to do in our difficult circumstances.

The 7th South African Infantry reached Iringa on the 23rd October, and Lieutenant-Colonel Fairweather, with the Cyclist Battalion, on the following day.

On the 25th October General van Deventer reported that the larger portion of the enemy's Tabora force had broken through southwards between Alt-Iringa and Ngominji on the night of the 22nd/23rd and had cut all communication with General Northey, who for some time remained without any means of issuing orders to his troops at Iringa. In these circumstances I placed General van Deventer in charge of the situation at Iringa, and he temporarily assumed control of Lieutenant-Colonel Rodger's portion of General Northey's force. In addition to the concentrated portion of the enemy forces above referred to, many small parties broke through in the darkness, which of course they were able to do without any fear of detection over a large front.

General Northey's forces on the Ruhudje were at the same time being attacked by superior forces.

The passage of the enemy through our lines occupied some three weeks, and this period was marked by much fighting of detachments and patrols.

The main incidents of these operations were as follows—fuller details in many instances will no doubt be available from the despatches of General Northey in due course:—

On the 23rd October a patrol of Rhodesian askaris, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Baxendale, was ambushed and lost 33 in killed, wounded and missing, with one machine gun.

It is to be regretted that Lieutenant-Colonel Baxendale was among those who lost their lives.

On the 25th a small detachment of the 4th South African Horse encountered a strong force at Malangamagara wells, 12 miles north of Iringa, and inflicted a heavy defeat on the enemy, of whom many were killed and captured. The enemy abandoned all their sick and wounded after this action, and the Commanding Officer wrote asking for their protection by us.

On the 29th October a small post at Ngominji was compelled to surrender to a very superior strength of the enemy after a resolute and gallant defence. Two naval 12 pounder guns lost here were retaken by us in the course of operations almost immediately afterwards. Captain Clerk, commanding the post, was killed.

A detachment of some 12 Rhodesian askaris at Madibira was also surrounded and captured.

At dawn on the 30th October Lieutenant-Colonel Hawthorn attacked the enemy on the west bank of the Ruhudje and obtained a signal success, capturing 6 Europeans and 75 askaris unwounded, together with a 6 c.m. gun, 3 machine guns, and large quantities of ammunition and telephone and other material. Five European and 37 askari dead of the enemy were buried on the scene of the engagement.

On the 30th and 31st October our positions at Altiringa were attacked, but the attacks failed, and the enemy sustained appreciable casualties.

On the 7th November the enemy was still south of Iringa, but had attempted no offensive since his defeats at the end of October. He had left behind many sick and wounded at different camps and released considerable numbers of our prisoners of war, and the state and morale of his troops were reported as indifferent.

In the meantime arrangements had made some headway, and a column, under Colonel A. J. Taylor, was being concentrated to move at an early date from Dodoma to Iringa, while the mounted brigade of the Second Division—which since its withdrawal from the Uluguru operations in August had been resting, reorganising and refitting at Morogoro—was on its way, reduced to approximately 1,000 rifles, to Iringa.

These movements were preparatory to a concentration of General Northey's forces about Lupembe and southwards, while General van Deventer was to assume command in the neighbourhood of Iringa and link up with General Northey to the south.

On the 8th November General Northey reported an enemy concentration against Malangali, where we had a small detachment, and that he had detached 400 rifles under Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Murray to assist the post.

The force under Lieutenant-Colonel Hawthorn had been ordered to withdraw to Lupembe.

From the 8th to the 12th the post at Malangali was defended most gallantly against considerable odds. Three assaults were repulsed at close quarters, and heavy loss was sustained by the attacking enemy. On the 12th Lieutenant-Colonel Murray's relieving force arrived and attacked from the south, taking

full advantage of the surprise which it had been able to effect, and inflicting heavy damage on the enemy, of whom nine Europeans in one company alone were captured. The captures included one machine gun and much ammunition.

Abortive attacks were delivered by the enemy at Ssongea on the night of the 14th/15th, and at Lupembe on the 17th.

These last rebuffs apparently caused the enemy to abandon any idea of further immediate offensive action, and for some little time the operations reverted to a minor degree of importance.

On the 16th November the leading regiment of the Mounted Brigade reached Iringa.

By the 19th all information pointed to the withdrawal of the whole of the enemy forces eastwards to take up a chain of positions covering Mahenge and extending from Kidatu by Lofia, Mfua, Lukegeta, Makua's, Mfirika to north-east of Ssongea.

The presence of an enemy force about Madibira had been for some time persistently reported, and it was known that early in the operations, which resulted in the eastward movement of General Wahle's force, a detachment had either become separated from the main Tabora force or from some cause or other had been delayed.

The retirement of the enemy and the arrival of fresh units of the Second Division at Iringa having made the position secure, the occasion seemed suitable for an attempt to round up the enemy detachment which was assumed to be following the Tabora force. A big gun was reported to be with the detachment.

General Northey accordingly arranged to send a force under Lieutenant-Colonel Murray by motors to attack the enemy detachment from the south, while General van Deventer was instructed to co-operate from Iringa.

On the 21st it was definitely ascertained that the enemy detachment had occupied Ilembule mission (N.W. of Ubena) on the previous day and was moving to the east.

At noon on the following day the enemy was still at Ilembule, half Lieutenant-Colonel Murray's column being near Emmaberg and the remainder at Ubena.

On the 22nd the second half of the South African Infantry Battalion which had been sent to General Northey arrived at Wiedhafen.

At noon on the 24th the enemy at Ilembule had been surrounded by Murray, and on the 26th, after resistance, the entire force was captured by him. The enemy force was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Huebener, and consisted of 7 officers, 47 other Europeans and 249 askaris, and one howitzer and three machine guns were also taken. This highly creditable enterprise was carried out with trifling casualties to our forces engaged.

The losses incurred by the enemy in the operations round Iringa and Lupembe in dead which we had buried and prisoners we had taken, amounted to 125 Europeans and 619 askaris.

On the 25th November I left Morogoro to visit the western front, and investigated the country to the Ruaha River and beyond, and on the 29th I instructed General van Deventer to retake Muhanga, which the enemy had occupied, and from there to move a strong force to Ifakara and further east to Luwegu,

while General Northey was to deal with the enemy at Mfirika and Ssongea by moving to the Ruhudje River and Mponda respectively.

As a preliminary feature of my general plan I intended the enemy to be driven over the Ruhudje and Ulanga Rivers.

It was plain that the feeding of any considerable force south of the Ruaha River during the wet season was a problem of almost insurmountable difficulty, as it was apparently impossible to avoid vast inundated swampy areas of which the passage appeared impossible. I therefore determined to drive the enemy over the two rivers named above, and by creating a dump of supplies south of the Ruaha, to collect sufficient food to sustain a force which could watch the enemy until the rainy season was over and our advance became once more practicable.

I had investigated the possibility of feeding more troops by way of Lake Nyasa, but was compelled to abandon the idea.

On the 1st December I went to Dar-es-Salam chiefly to make arrangements for the institution of a river transport service in connection with my coming operations on the Rufiji, and returned to Morogoro on the 5th. While at Dar-es-Salam I took the opportunity of visiting the Force at Mssanga.

On the 4th General Northey moved his headquarters from Neu Langenburg to Ubena.

About this time constant patrol skirmishes took place between the enemy about Lukegeta and Mfirika and General van Deventer's troops and those of General Northey respectively.

Continuous heavy rain in the west produced conditions under which every movement became a matter of extraordinary difficulty, and the supply situation was at times seriously insecure; and on the 19th December General van Deventer, whose headquarters were now at Iringa, reported that he had been unable to build up the reserve of supplies which we had hoped we should have been able to collect at Iringa, and that he could not feed his whole division during the forward move which was then imminent. He further advised moving a considerable portion of his command back to the railway, and that a reduced force of three infantry battalions and a squadron of mounted troops should be kept at Iringa for the advance. To this I agreed.

It is of interest, as indicating in some measure the difficulties which are attendant upon military movements on a large scale in tropical Africa, here to observe that of 1,000 mounted men who had marched from Morogoro early in November, rather more than 90 per cent. had lost their horses by death from disease by this date, viz., in six weeks.

The combined forward movements by Generals van Deventer and Northey, in conjunction with the movements of the general advance elsewhere, were arranged to begin on the 24th December.

Operations in the Area between the Rufiji and Central Railway from Dar-es-Salam to Ruwru.

(8) Before describing the operations which took place on our resumption of the offensive on all fronts at the end of the year, it is necessary briefly to touch upon the events which occurred during November and December in the Mssanga-Kissangire area.

As already stated, an attempt by a small column on the 9th October to drive away an

enemy force in occupation of Kissangire had failed.

This column, after its unsuccessful effort, retired to Maneromango and there entrenched.

The force was strengthened at first by the addition of some South African Infantry, and later by sending to it the 57th Rifles and a section of mountain artillery from the first division at Tulo. These last reinforcements joined the column on the 21st October at Mssanga, which was occupied.

Information at this time clearly indicated that the enemy, no doubt misled by native information of the movements of different detachments, very largely overestimated our strength at Mssanga.

On the 3rd November the enemy held Mkamba and Kissangire, and was patrolling actively to the north in the direction of the Central Railway.

On the 5th November Lieutenant-Colonel Willans was advised of the enemy's exaggerated estimate of our strength, and ordered by actively patrolling and in any other way possible to encourage the impression. In point of fact, the opposing forces at this point were practically equal in respect of numbers.

On the 6th a detachment was sent to Kongo, about 16 miles west of Mssanga. The strength of this detachment was 300 rifles and two machine guns, while remaining at Mssanga were 450 rifles, two guns, and four machine guns.

On the 18th Colonel N. H. M. Burne, D.S.O., took over command of the forces in this area from Lieutenant-Colonel Willans.

By the end of the month the enemy had occupied a third position at Kibesa, some 12 miles south of Mssanga, but though patrolling was active on both sides, and several attempts by the enemy to reach the Central Railway were frustrated, little more had occurred.

In the early part of December the heavy rains, which had fallen elsewhere, were prevalent in this area also.

On the 12th the Inspector-General of Communications, under whose orders the Mssanga force was acting, was warned of the coming general advance and instructed to arrange the advance of the columns from Mssanga and Kongo, and to consider the preparation of a third small column to co-operate from the coast in the north Rufiji Delta.

On the 16th December considerable activity by the enemy before Mssanga was reported, and all patrols were engaged on being sent out. The enemy advanced and drove in our picquet on the southern end of a ridge dominating the Mssanga camp and water and seized a considerable portion of the ridge. An engagement ensued, the enemy being reinforced, but on the morning of the 17th the attack had been repulsed, and he retired leaving some dead on the field.

Nothing else of importance occurred till the general advance, and the activities of our forces in this area were confined to watching the enemy closely with a view to obtaining early information of any retirement on his part.

The General Advance Resumed.

(9) By the 22nd December the preparations for an advance on all fronts were complete.

The period of preparation had been one of constant activity and continuous strain. It is not possible here to attempt any description of the varied work of the different services and

sections concerned. The records of the departments are available and furnish full information. I may, however, state that an intimate knowledge of all the circumstances of our position is absolutely essential to a correct and fair estimate of what was accomplished.

Operations in the West.

I shall deal first with the operations in the west under Generals van Deventer and Northey. In spite of heavy rains which had just fallen both were ready to advance on the 24th December in a combined offensive to drive the enemy over the Ulanga and Rufiji rivers.

Colonel Byron from Ssongea had attacked and dispersed the enemy on the 20th at Njamebenjo, and captured some stock and arms and a considerable quantity of native foodstuffs.

On the 25th December the troops of the Second Division encountered the enemy strongly entrenched east of Lukegeta Nek, and, while the attack was in progress at that place, the Mounted Brigade was sent from Makungwas to cut off the retreat of the enemy to the south and a force under Colonel Taylor moved from Boma Likininda's to the east of Muhanga to get astride the road at Boma Dwangire and join hands with the Mounted Brigade. The detachment at Njukwas was at this time held up by the flooded condition of the Lukosse river and was building rafts by which to try to effect a crossing.

The country generally was reported as very mountainous and covered with dense bush.

At the same time General Northey reported that the investment of the enemy's position at Mfrika was proceeding satisfactorily.

On the 26th he reported his forces as closing in on all sides of Mfrika, and that a portion of Murray's column was astride the Mfrika-Mahenge road.

On the same day General van Deventer reported that the enemy was in position at Magoma (Lukegeta Nek), but had lost his advanced position, and that his own troops were in occupation of a ridge in front of the main position held by the force opposing him. Colonel Taylor, on the previous day, had arrived within a few miles of Muhanga and the Mounted Brigade was in the vicinity of Makungwas.

On the 27th General Northey reported that he had occupied Mfrika on the previous day, the enemy having evacuated his position during the night of the 24th/25th and retired along the Mahenge road, having left a rear-guard in position six miles east of Mfrika.

The report from the Second Division on this date was to the effect that the enemy had strongly resisted our advance on the previous day, 26th, fighting having been continuous. During the night of the 26th/27th our troops were pushed up to within 300 yards of the enemy's main position, but dawn on the following day found the position empty, the enemy having slipped away through dense bush during the night. General van Deventer expressed the hope that his troops near Muhanga might prevent the escape of the enemy, who, he reported, had suffered heavy casualties.

On the 27th the enemy tried to break through near Muhanga, but was driven back by the Mounted Brigade and engaged between the Lukosse and Lungwe rivers, and Taylor's column and the force at Magoma were pushed on to co-operate. The enemy again attempted

to effect his retirement on the 28th, and was once more driven back, but eventually escaped through the dense bush and forest under cover of darkness and eluded pursuit.

The operations of Generals van Deventer and Northey at this time are interesting as showing the practical impossibility of cornering an enemy in country of a nature such as that in which these operations were conducted.

For the remainder of the period with which this despatch deals, the operations in the west, though they resulted in gradually pressing the enemy back, were not marked by any incident of special interest.

On the 1st January the Second Division drove back an enemy force which had advanced from Mgeta Pesten, and the Njukwas detachment occupied Kissada, while the situation before General Northey remained practically unchanged.

On the 2nd General van Deventer reported that torrential rains had stopped his movements and that he was confining himself to active patrol work.

On the 3rd General Northey reported that Murray's column had assaulted and captured the southern end of the enemy's position east of Mfrika, and on the following day the enemy force at Msalala (east of Mfrika) had retired and was being pursued.

On the 5th January General Northey reported that the enemy retiring eastward before him had taken up another position and that our attack upon this position was still in progress.

On the 6th Byron's column dispersed an enemy force at Gumbiro.

On the 9th General Northey's advanced troops were in touch with the enemy six miles east of Sylvester Falls, and on the next day the enemy were retiring partly eastward towards Mahenge and partly to the south towards Ifinga. Our advanced troops were about Smani and ten miles east of Sylvester Falls.

On the 11th General Northey reported that Lieutenant-Colonel Hawthorn was still pressing the enemy eastwards, and that Lieutenant-Colonel Murray was leaving Mfrika for Ifinga.

Three days later (on the 14th) the enemy were forced back from Smani and north-east of Ssongea between Likuju and Mpondas, and a quantity of stores fell into our hands.

On the 16th Murray's column of General Northey's force secured the bridge over the Ruhudje at Malawis, six miles north-west of Ifinga.

During the next few days the enemy continued to withdraw, followed by our troops, and a gradual retirement by the enemy towards the east and the south was still in progress in this theatre when I left the country.

Rufiji Operations.

(10) I now return to the main operations in the Rufiji area.

On the 22nd December I left Morogoro and proceeded to Duthumi, where advanced general headquarters were established on that date.

The distribution of our forces on this front was as follows:—

On the Mgeta front under my immediate command were:—General Sheppard's brigade (the 1st East African Brigade, hereafter referred to as the 1st Brigade), in occupation of our line as already described. The 2nd South African Infantry Brigade, under General

Beves, was at the summit of Sheppard's pass, on the road between Ruwu and Tulo, and was under orders to reach Dakawa on the 25th. The Nigerian Brigade, under Brigadier-General F. H. B. Cunliffe, C.B., C.M.G., of which the first units had reached Dar-es-Salam on the 9th December, was in process of concentration at Ruwu and was to assemble at Tulo for the initial phases of the coming operations.

The First Division (Hoskins') was still in its positions to the south of the Rufiji, about Kibata and in the Kilwa area, warned to be ready to advance. Headquarters of this division moved to Mitole on the 25th.

The columns at Mssanga and Kongo were in readiness to move forward on receiving my instructions to that effect, which were to be sent when my own operations had reached a stage where co-operation could be effected with the best result.

The opening movements in connection with the main advance on the Mgeta front under my own direction were timed to begin on the 26th December, but continuous heavy rain compelled me to postpone all movement until the 31st, when the weather improved. This delay, though forced upon me, was not without advantage, as it enabled the Nigerian Brigade, which was somewhat behindhand, to complete its equipment and come up.

Two main considerations governed my dispositions, viz., the seizure of a crossing over the Rufiji and the capture, if possible, of the enemy force immediately opposing me. To the former of these two objects I attached the highest importance, and the chief problem which confronted me was how to seize a crossing over the river without allowing the enemy to become aware of my intention, for I was particularly anxious that the enemy should not evade a heavy blow by an early retirement from my front. Once over the Rufiji my intention was to move south-east and effect a junction with Hoskins' division moving north-west from the Matumbi mountains and by these combined movements to cut all connection between the two enemy forces on Rufiji and at Mahenge respectively, and either to envelop the enemy on the Rufiji or deal him a heavy blow as he escaped south.

To secure a crossing over the Rufiji I decided to detach a considerable force to make a wide detour and capture and maintain a bridgehead in the neighbourhood of Mkalinso, twenty miles south-west of Kibambawe, while with the remainder of my forces I attacked and held the enemy north of the Rufiji.

My arrangements to the above end were as follows:—

The march to Mkalinso was entrusted to Beves' brigade, which was to reach Kirengwe, ten miles west of Kissaki, on the 31st December. From Kirengwe General Beves was ordered to send forward a picked body of scouts towards the Rufiji and, on the 1st January, to push forward his engineers and pioneers to Kwa Hobola, accompanied by half a battalion. On the following day this advance party—the half battalion increased to one battalion—was to reach Kidete and to arrive in the neighbourhood of the junction of the Ruaha and Rufiji rivers on the 3rd January. The remainder of the brigade was to follow one march in rear of its advanced troops. Before daybreak on the 4th January a crossing was to be effected in Berthon boats over the Rufiji below its

junction with the Ruaha, and a bridge-head was to be prepared and held on the right bank while a light raft was being constructed.

With the object of keeping the enemy in his positions while this flank march was in process of execution, I decided to deliver a holding attack from our forward entrenched positions on the Duthumi front while two forces worked their way round the enemy's flank by the east and west.

The holding attack was to be set in motion at daybreak on the 1st January by the Nigerian Brigade under Brigadier-General Cunliffe, and to the Army Artillery under Brigadier-General Crowe was allotted the task of supporting this attack. Stress was laid on the fact that the enemy should not be turned out of his positions till instructions were received that the attack was to be pressed.

For the purpose of the local flank movement to the east a column was formed of the 2nd Kashmirs, detached from the 1st Brigade, and a battalion from the Nigerian Brigade, the force being placed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Lyall, of the 2nd Kashmirs. Colonel Lyall was instructed to reach Kiruru, twelve miles east of Duthumi, on the evening of the 31st December, and thence on the following day to move to south and occupy Tshimbe, on the Kiderengwa to Beho-Beho road. On arrival at the road the force was to entrench and send forward patrols to establish contact with the 1st Brigade coming from the west. Colonel Lyall was told to do his best to prevent the retreat of the enemy. If the enemy was enclosed, Colonel Lyall's force was to be merged in the command of General Sheppard.

The movement round the enemy's western flank was necessarily more complicated, and its execution was allotted to the first Brigade under General Sheppard. It was of importance to prevent information of the departure of Beves' brigade from Kirengwe reaching the enemy, and a double company of the 130th Baluchis was detached on the afternoon of the 31st December to move to Wiransi, which was to be occupied or masked from the north on the following day. The rest of this battalion was to march well in rear of the enemy position at Dakawa to the Dakawa to Wiransi road and, leaving a post on that road, to move on the 1st January towards Kidegede-Kiderengwa. To this battalion was entrusted the responsibility of establishing contact with Colonel Lyall's force.

The movement of the first Brigade in connection with the general plan was to begin at daybreak on the 1st January, and was to be directed to the envelopment of the enemy position at Dakawa and a continuous advance eastwards.

On the 1st January the operations on the Mgeta front began, the preliminary movements on the day before having been carried out without any hitch.

At about 10 a.m. General Sheppard reported that the 130th Baluchis under Lieutenant-Colonel Dyke, who were astride the Wiransi road north of Wiransi and south of the German Porter Camp, were being attacked by three Companies, and he was pushing on towards the scene of the action. A demonstration on the Duthumi front was ordered to prevent any detachment by the enemy from that quarter. Two hours later General Sheppard

reported the Dakawa position clear of the enemy, and that he had joined hands with Lieutenant-Colonel Dyke. The 130th Baluchis, after a long and fatiguing march the previous afternoon and night, had come on to the road behind the enemy, who, while retreating south on this road before Sheppard's advance, unexpectedly found the road occupied. The enemy then delivered four determined charges against the Baluchis, and, after severe fighting in which the bayonet was several times used at close quarters, retired to the east of the Wiransi road. The casualties on both sides were comparatively heavy, and the action, though short in duration, was of a severe character. Sheppard arrived on the scene after this action was over.

In the meantime General Cunliffe had been engaged on the Duthumi front, but, owing to the nature of his task, had not pressed an advance.

At 2.30 p.m. Lieutenant-Colonel Lyall reported that he was near the Kiderengwa to Beho-Beho road, half a mile to the north of Tshimbe, and an hour later was engaged with the enemy, from whom a 4.1 howitzer had been captured, and who apparently had not observed his approach, but, on realising that the road of their retreat was blocked, at once turned back from before the Nigerian Brigade to endeavour to regain their line of retirement. Between 6 and 7 o'clock in the evening the enemy delivered a heavy attack on the Nigerian battalion of Lyall's column, the attack dying down at 7 o'clock. It seemed clear that the enemy north of Lyall would make a determined effort to get past him to the south during the night, and orders were issued to Lyall to keep a sharp look out for any movement on the part of the enemy, in order that the First Brigade might be directed to move to the best advantage.

At 11 a.m. the double company of the 130th Baluchis had occupied Wiransi, taking some prisoners and stores there.

Beves' brigade reached Kwa Hobola in the evening, and the First Brigade pushed on in the night to Wiransi. Lyall's force remained in position at Tshimbe.

The night of the 1st/2nd passed without incident.

In the course of the morning of the 2nd it became clear that the whole enemy force on the Mgeta front had retired to the south of our forces.

Upon this information I ordered the Nigerian Brigade to push down the Duthumi to Kiderengwa road and establish touch with Lyall, which was done during the day, Kiderengwa being occupied by the Brigade at 11 a.m. After its troops had established touch with Lyall the Nigerian Brigade was withdrawn again to Duthumi.

The existence of an enemy position on the Tshogowali river near Beho-Beho had long been known, and it might be assumed that the retiring enemy force would concentrate there.

I decided once more to make an attempt to encircle the enemy, and with this object the First Brigade was moved from the Wiransi to Beho-Beho road westward between Fuga and the Tshogowali river, with orders to reach a ridge south of the river early the following morning. The 130th Baluchis were sent direct towards Beho-Beho-Kwa Mahinda, Lyall's

column being ordered to move to the same place at daybreak on the 3rd.

General Beves was warned of the enemy retirement, and that he had no time to lose if the Rufiji crossing was to be seized without opposition. He reported his arrival at 8.30 p.m. at Mhumbi, and that he would push on two and a half hours later and endeavour to effect a crossing early on the 3rd. His troops had been marching and road making for 14 hours, and had just completed a march of 20 miles. So far no sign of the enemy had been observed. They were still 10 miles from the Rufiji.

On the 3rd January, at 6.30 a.m., and, therefore, a day ahead of their programme, the advance troops of Beves' Brigade, after a 30 miles' continuous march, crossed the Rufiji a few miles south of Mkalinso, and secured and entrenched a bridge-head. The march of the 2nd South African Infantry Brigade on this occasion was a noteworthy achievement, even in a campaign which affords repeated instances of splendid endurance by every unit of the forces under most trying and exhausting conditions.

The main object of my operations had thus been achieved in a shorter time than I had thought possible.

On the same day, the 3rd, the First Brigade was marching through most difficult country towards its objective south of the Tshogowali River.

At 4.35 Lyall's column just north of Beho-Beho encountered opposition, which increased until a sharp action developed, which terminated after dusk. Touch was established between this column and our force on the Wiransi road at Beho-Beho-Kwa Mahinda at 5 p.m.

General Sheppard was ordered to move on to the Beho-Beho to Kibambawe road south of the enemy early the next morning, and Lyall's column and the 130th Baluchis, the combined force now under Lieutenant-Colonel Dyke, of the latter regiment, were instructed simultaneously to press an attack from the north. If the enemy again evaded our forces, he was to be followed rapidly to prevent him from concentrating against Beves' Brigade.

The last-named detachment was held at Mkalinso, and spent the day in strengthening its position, crossing troops and stores, and patrolling well out from the right bank of the river.

The First Division was warned of the desirability of not committing too strong a force at Kibata, and to the east of it. In the reports of this division the first indications of a withdrawal of the enemy westwards were to be observed.

On the 4th, at 10.30 a.m., the First Brigade arrived on the road, and had a sharp engagement with the enemy retiring from Beho-Beho, but, though severely handled, the enemy again slipped past. The brunt of this action was borne by the 25th Royal Fusiliers, and their casualties included Captain F. C. Selous, D.S.O., who fell at the head of his company.

The air reconnaissances this day showed that the repair of the Rufiji bridge at Kibambawe had been nearly completed by the enemy, who had for some days been working to make good the damage caused by flood. The bridge had been constantly bombed by the aeroplanes,

which did consistently excellent work throughout the operations.

The First Division reported further portions of the Kibata area clear of the enemy, and that reconnaissances were proceeding.

The situation north of the Rufiji and Utete was unchanged, except that some measure of success was achieved by an ambush laid by enemy patrols, as a result of which two officers and nine other ranks of the Arab Rifles were killed.

Early on this date a force from the Force Reserve surprised an enemy party at Mkalinso and accounted for three Europeans, twelve askaris, and a number of porters.

On the 5th January the First Brigade, which had been rejoined by the 130th Baluchis and 2nd Kashmirs, reached Kibambawe, and found the enemy had crossed the Rufiji during the night, and was holding the right bank. The whole roadway of the bridge had been removed.

General Sheppard was ordered to cross the Rufiji during the night of the 5th/6th.

From information which was obtained at Mkalinso, it appeared that the enemy force, which crossed the river at Kibambawe, had been ordered to retire east along the north bank, but had found it impossible to do so in consequence of the hurried nature of its retreat, and the danger of being cut off by our advance.

By the morning of the 6th January one double company and two machine guns had crossed the Rufiji at Kibambawe, and lay throughout the day concealed in the reeds on the river bank, the enemy having failed to detect the crossing.

I proceeded on this date to Kibambawe, and reconnoitred the position from the left bank, which commands the right bank at this place, and ordered the crossing of troops to be continued during the following night, and that reconnaissances should be pushed out early on the 7th, provided an adequate number of troops had been passed over the river.

On my way back to Duthumi I received information that an enemy force was two miles east of Mkalinso entrenched, having apparently arrived during the night of the 5th/6th. Upon this I ordered General Beves to take steps to deal with this force.

Reports of the weakening of the enemy strength in the Matumbi mountains opposite the First Division continued.

On the 7th the enemy offered stiff resistance to the 30th Punjabis of the First Brigade, who were on the right bank of the Rufiji opposite Kibambawe, and the latter sustained severe casualties, but maintained their position. Owing to accurate enemy gun fire the idea of crossing more troops by daylight had to be abandoned.

General Beves reported that, after an engagement, the enemy force near Mkalinso had retired, and that a considerable strength of his brigade was occupying Mkalinso camp.

The troops of this brigade had by this time become very exhausted, and further advance from Mkalinso was accordingly suspended.

On the 8th January I proceeded to the Rufiji at General Beves' crossing and saw General Beves and investigated the situation. Before returning I instructed General Beves to withdraw his forces from Mkalinso and remain concentrated on the right bank of the river at his original place of crossing.

Orders were sent to the First Division, in view of the strong evidence that the enemy was moving to the west from Kibata, to send a battalion towards Mohoro, and to the west of it, to clear up the situation.

General Sheppard reported the situation unchanged at Kibambawe, beyond that he had crossed more troops.

Though able to maintain his position, he was not in a position to undertake offensive action. He was instructed to hold his positions.

The Nigerian Brigade left Duthumi en route for Beves' crossing on the Rufiji, it being intended that the offensive south of the Rufiji should be resumed when the fresh brigade arrived at the river.

The enemy resistance in the Kibata area had much diminished, and the movement of part of the First Division north towards the Rufiji delta was beginning.

The enemy north of the Rufiji was found to have evacuated his position at Mkamba on the night of the 8th/9th, and was reported to be retiring towards Kissegesse, and our forces were moving in pursuit. On the 10th January Colonel Burne occupied Kibesa.

The enemy opposite the First Brigade at Kibambawe was less aggressive, but watching the river most carefully.

In the Kibata area troops of the First Division advanced both north and west to keep in touch with the retreating enemy, and occupied Mwengei and Ngarambi respectively.

The situation was now clearing up. The enemy detachments north of the Rufiji at Kissangire and Mkamba were falling back south, followed by our patrols, and several companies were stated already to have crossed the river about 15 miles west of Utete. Kissegesse was occupied on the 17th by Colonel Burne, who immediately marched on to Koge. The withdrawal of the enemy from the Kitschi and Matumbi mountains north of Kibata continued. Our troops reached Mohoro on the south Rufiji delta on 16th January, and found a 4.1-inch naval gun abandoned by the enemy some distance south of it. While the situation north of the Rufiji and eastwards towards the delta was thus rapidly clearing up, it still remained uncertain whether the enemy would attempt to make a stand at Utete and elsewhere south of the Rufiji, and so afford us an opportunity to cut off his retreat, or whether he would move south without loss of time. This uncertainty still remained when I relinquished the command on the 20th January. The gap between the most westerly troops of the First Division at and north of Ngarambi and Beves' Brigade at Mkalinso was still too wide to prevent such a retreat to the south, and in order to close or contract it, General Cunliffe's Nigerian Brigade was ordered to move forward from Mkalinso to Luhembero on 17th January, at the same time that the forces of Sheppard and Beves were to clear the enemy from the south of the Rufiji at Kibambawe. These orders were successfully carried out, the south bank of the river, as well as Mkindu and Luhembero, being occupied on the 18th January, and thereafter Cunliffe's Brigade followed the retreating enemy towards the south-east. Such was the situation on the 20th January when I handed over the command to General Hoskins and sailed from Dar-es-Salam.

On concluding this, my final despatch, I

desire again to record my deep obligation to my Staff, all Divisional, Brigade, and Regimental Commanders, and all heads of Services and Departments.

Especially do I wish finally to emphasise the fact that the success hitherto achieved in this most trying and exacting campaign is mainly due to the unremitting efforts and resolute endurance of all ranks throughout the whole force.

To the Navy my obligations for the success of the campaign are too numerous to be expressed.

I must also express my gratitude to the various Governments which have come so readily and effectively to our assistance throughout the period of my command.

The Government of India has kept up a flow of reinforcements and remount mules for mountain batteries, and has provided large quantities of tentage, clothing, and miscellaneous articles, besides the entire food supply for the Indian troops, and of flour and canteen stores for the British troops. The Indian ration has been of exceptionally good quality, particularly the "atta" and "ghi," regarding which the Indian soldier is most critical.

Besides these, we have received 96 box motor cars, with a liberal proportion of spare parts.

The Government of the Union of South Africa has maintained a steady flow of reinforcements, collected enormous numbers of coloured labourers and conductors for transport, remount and railway services, and provided 23,444 horses, 24,198 mules, and 7,546 donkeys for the Force, besides 565 touring and box motor cars, and 766 ox and mule wagons over and above those originally sent with the South African contingents.

In addition to the above, we have been kept supplied with fodder and many articles of food-stuffs, besides ordnance and engineer stores.

All demands have been completed with the utmost care and promptitude.

British East Africa and Uganda Governments.—Since the commencement of the campaign, these Governments have unreservedly placed their resources at the disposal of the Army, both in the matter of allowing a large proportion of the European civil officials to take up military service, and also by employing many of those who remained behind, on meeting our large demands for porters, local foodstuffs, &c.

The authorities of Zanzibar have raised and equipped two corps of porters, besides rendering many acts of assistance, such as placing the Government steamers at our disposal, establishing a convalescent home for officers and other charitable organisations.

Such aid as is possible and necessary will, without doubt, continue to be afforded to my successor in the command, and I trust that when, as I confidently hope will soon be the case, the campaign is brought to a successful issue, the various Governments will be approached and asked to indicate the names of those individuals whose services, in connection with the East African Expeditionary Force, should be specially recognised.

My grateful acknowledgments are due to the several Red Cross Societies, British, South African and Indian, for the very generous way in which they have not only given large quantities of comforts for the troops but have also provided motor ambulance cars, motor launches, &c.

I also wish to thank the South African Gifts Committees, representing a vast number of individual donors, for their large contributions of gifts, and my only regret is that the exigencies of the campaign prevented the majority of them being issued till the troops were on the eve of departure from East Africa.

His Highness the Maharajah Scindia of Gwalior came forward in a most patriotic manner at the commencement of the campaign, and equipped, with a complete medical staff and every comfort, a convalescent home of fifty beds for Indian officers and men, which has been constantly in use and of the greatest benefit. "Scott's Sanatorium" was also taken over by him for the use of convalescent British officers, and has proved of great value.

Major McMillan very generously provided two convalescent homes entirely at his own expense, which were splendidly staffed and equipped and were of the utmost benefit to the troops.

Several other ladies and gentlemen most kindly placed their houses at our disposal as convalescent homes, and the constant use made of them testifies to the manner in which they were appreciated.

The East African Field Force Fund and the Women's War Work League have rendered most active and loyal assistance since the commencement of the campaign, and the troops owe these bodies a deep debt of gratitude.

I am particularly indebted to the representatives of the Young Men's Christian Association in India and South Africa, who have not only been untiring in their efforts for the welfare of the troops, but have also worked the field force canteens which have proved of so much value to them.

The Garrison Institute has also done excellent work.

I have already brought to notice the names of all those under my command whose services I wish specially to commend to your favourable notice.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. C. Smuts,

Lieutenant-General,

Commanding East African Expeditionary Force.

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