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FRIDAY, 5 APRIL, 1918.

War Office,

5th April, 1918.

The Secretary of State for War has received the following Despatch from Lieutenant-General Sir J. L. van Deventer, K.C.B., Commanding-in-Chief British Forces in East Africa:—

Dar-es-Salaam,

21st January, 1918.

My Lord,

I have the honour to forward herewith my Despatch on the operations of the forces in East Africa from 30th May to 1st December, 1917.

In accordance with your Lordship's instructions I left Pretoria on 15th May, and took over the command in East Africa from General Hoskins in Dar-es-Salaam at noon on the 29th May.

At that time the enemy's forces were in two main bodies. The Western force, commanded by Tafel, was based on Mahenge. It consisted of between 2,000 and 3,000 men, and held the country to a radius of about 70 miles to the west, north and east of Mahenge, with a strong detachment at Likuju, fifty miles from Songea, on the Songea-Liwale road.

The Eastern (and main) German force was in the coastal area, facing our troops at Kilwa and Lindi. Its strength was between four and five thousand, and included the pick of Von Lettow Vorbeck's troops, under the direct command of the German Commander-in-Chief.

In addition to the above, there were two important detachments. One, of four or five companies under Von Stuemmer, had invaded Portuguese East Africa, and was exploiting the rich Mweimbe area lying between the Lujenda River and Lake Nyassa. The other, of 600 men under Naumann, which was more a raiding force than a detachment, had succeeded in evading our pursuing troops and crossing the Central Railway east of Tabora; it was now moving northwards.

Our own troops were disposed as follows:

At Lindi, one brigade under General O'Grady.

Between Kilwa and Mohoro, and holding the country for thirty-fourty miles inland, two columns under General Hannington.

On the Rufiji at Kibambawe, the Nigerian Brigade (less one battalion) under General Cunliffe.