

Pursuing Naumann, the equivalent of a brigade, with an equal number of our Belgian Allies.

Two battalions were at Iringa, and a small central reserve at Morogoro.

General Northey's force held a line from Ubena to Songea, while a detachment consisting of a battalion of the King's African Rifles was pressing northwards from Fort Johnston, in Nyasaland, against Von Stuemmer.

2. The health of our troops, after the wettest season known in German East Africa for very many years, was far from good. None but the indigenous African can stand the climate of the coastal belt in the rains, and the conditions on the banks of the Rufiji were but little better. Europeans, Indians, and Africans recruited from any but low-lying areas had alike suffered terribly from malaria; the "paper strengths" of the force bore no relation whatever to the numbers of men actually available in the field; and a brigade that could put 1,400 rifles into the firing line considered itself singularly fortunate. Iringa, and the Ubena-Songea area, were, however, comparatively healthy; and Northey's troops, though war-worn, were far fitter than those on the coast.

3. It was evident that the forthcoming operations would differ considerably in character from those of the earlier parts of the campaign. With the possible exception of Mahenge, and certain food areas, there were no strategical objectives such as had been offered by the Moshi area, the Tanga and Central Railways, Tabora, or Das-es-Salaam. The country now held by the enemy was, for the most part, wild and inhospitable; means of communication were practically non-existent; and even the better known places, such as Liwale and Massassi, were, from a military point of view, mere geographical expressions. It therefore became obvious to me, at a very early stage, that our true objectives in the coming campaign must be the enemy forces in the field, and that the completion of the conquest of German East Africa could only be brought about by hard hitting, and plenty of it.

The campaign promised to be one of considerable difficulty. The enemy still occupied a territory over 300 miles square, and had the immense advantage of interior lines. From Mahenge to Liwale was merely a seven-day march for his Western force, but the transfer of a British force from Mahenge to Kilwa or Lindi, whence alone Liwale could be reached, would have taken as many weeks. The country was admirably suited to defence and to rear-guard tactics. The enemy's askaris were now all veterans, and, fighting in their native bush, backed by the numerous and well-handled German machine guns, were worthy opponents for the best troops.

It was evident that the enemy's chief object was to play for time; to keep the net from closing on him, and to hold out in German East Africa, if possible, till the next wet season, hoping that the rains would then prevent our maintaining the long lines of communication that would be necessary before we brought him to bay. His hopes were doubtless raised by the abnormal rainy season that had just come to an end, for much of the country was still water-logged, and could not be fit for mechanical transport for some time, and thus the period

available for active operations was considerably reduced.

Moreover, the pursuit of Naumann was diverting valuable troops from the main operations, and, owing to shipping difficulties, both transport and reinforcements were arriving slowly.

4. There were five possible lines of advance from the north and east—

(a) Dodoma - Iringa - Mahenge. — The healthiest but also the longest. The country between the highlands of Iringa and Mahenge was difficult, and only a small portion of it could be made possible for motor transport.

(b) Kilossa-Kidatu-Mahenge.—A shorter line than the first, and more feasible for motor transport. Both (a) and (b) suffered, however, from the defect that the rainy season in this area is considerably earlier than on the coast, and the Ruaha and Kilombero rivers might become very formidable obstacles early in December.

(c) Mikesse-Kibambawe-Mahenge. — The most difficult as regards physical obstacles. The Mikesse-Kibambawe line had given much anxiety in the beginning of January, 1917, and the country south of Kibambawe was a wild tangle of bush, totally impracticable for wheels.

(d) Kilwa.—The unhealthiest of all. But a large proportion of the enemy's forces were within close striking distance of Kilwa, and it was possible that the health conditions here and at Lindi might improve with the advent of the dry weather. Kilwa also possessed a first-class harbour, accessible to ships of all but the largest tonnage.

(e) Lindi.—It was obvious that this line would, sooner or later, assume very great importance. For it was only by a thrust south-westwards towards Massassi that we could hope to cut off the main enemy force from Portuguese East Africa. Lindi Harbour had, however, considerable limitations, and could only be used by a proportion of the shipping at our disposal, while the country between Lindi and Massassi was extremely thick and difficult.

5. Taking all the above factors into consideration I decided to make my main advance from Kilwa and Lindi; to operate against the enemy in the Mahenge area from both Dodoma and Kilossa, and to use General Northey's forces to assist in the Mahenge operations to clear Von Stuemmer out of Portuguese East Africa, and finally to advance towards Liwale from Songea.

It was also very necessary to get rid of Naumann. It seemed that the quickest way to do this would be by the employment of mounted troops, and a request was sent to the Union Government that a regiment should be raised for this purpose, and for use thereafter against the enemy's main forces.

6. Much preparation was necessary before the main operations could commence, but certain subsidiary operations appeared immediately feasible.

It was very desirable to clear a larger area round Lindi in order to secure a better water supply and to prepare the main exits from the town and harbour. It was also desirable to eject the enemy from the upper part of the Ulanga (or Kilombero) Valley, and to advance towards Ifakaras, as such a move was calcu-