

Meanwhile the western forces were to press on vigorously and keep all enemy troops in the Mahenge area fully contained.

19. I proceeded to my Advanced Headquarters in the Kilwa area on 10th September, and the move forward of the Kilwa force began on the 19th, when No. 1 Column from Narungombe drove the enemy out of Mihambia after sharp fighting. No. 2 Column moved from near Mssindy against Ndesa, from which the enemy withdrew after slight resistance, and the Nigerian Brigade on the right moved from Mssindy by a circuitous route against Mawarenye, to try and cut off the enemy's retirement.

The 25th Cavalry were despatched on a special mission to destroy the enemy food depôts at Nangano, and on the Mbemkuru between there and Nahungu.

The advance continued steadily on the 20th and 21st, the enemy's Ndesa force falling back before Nos. 1 and 2 Columns. It had not, however, located the movement of the Nigerians, and, on the 22nd, it attempted to retire south-west from Mawarenye by a road which two battalions of the Nigerian Brigade under General Cunliffe had already gained possession of. The enemy made desperate efforts to break through, which were all repulsed with heavy loss, and finally he was compelled to retire hastily in small parties southwards through the bush, leaving over 100 dead on the ground.

The three columns continued their movement southwards, meeting with constant opposition. No. 2 Column occupied Mawarenye on the 23rd, sent the 2/3rd K.A.R. to reinforce the Nigerian Brigade for the advance on Nahungu, and then marched on Nakiu, which was occupied on the 25th without opposition.

No. 1 Column moved from Bweho Chini, drove back a strong enemy rearguard at Ndandawala, and on the 26th was closely engaged all day with the enemy in position covering Nahungu. The chief share of the fighting was borne by the 2/2nd K.A.R., supported by the 27th Mountain Battery, which succeeded in knocking out one of the enemy guns in action on Nahungu Hill.

Meanwhile two Nigerian battalions were advancing on Nahungu by a parallel road, and on the 27th they co-operated in the attack, engaging the enemy in position about 1½ miles north-west of Nahungu Hill.

The enemy finally gave way before the combined pressure of these attacks, and evacuated his positions during the night of the 27th/28th.

The cavalry joined the main body at Nahungu on the 30th, having successfully raided many enemy food depôts on the upper part of the river.

The general line of retirement of the enemy was to the south-west; and it was now clear that he had no intention of withdrawing towards Liwale, but that his main force would ultimately centre in the Massassi area. I decided therefore to continue the pursuit from the Mbemkuru River with General Hannington's two columns and the cavalry, and to send the Nigerian Brigade south across country to assist the Lindi force by cutting off the enemy's line of retirement. This brigade accordingly left Nahungu on 4th October, and, after a trying march through most difficult country, gained touch with the right of the Lindi force north of Mtama on the 11th. The delay and deviation entailed by the difficult nature of

the country caused the brigade to reach its objective (Mahiwa) three days late.

20. The Lindi force had been held back during the first day or two of the Kilwa operations, but I then decided that the time was opportune for a combined movement and directed an attack on Narunyu and Mtua to begin on the 24th. This was carried out by a wide turning movement south of the Lukuledi River assisted by a frontal attack on the Nurunyu position.

The enemy did not attempt serious resistance at Nurunyu, and, after a short fight with the outflanking column, on the 27th he withdrew during the night towards Mtama, leaving strong rearguards to oppose our advance. The whole country was exceedingly difficult and progress slow. On the 1st October there was sharp fighting halfway between Mtua and Mtama, the enemy counter-attacking heavily, but failing to regain any ground. After this engagement the Lindi force checked the speed of its advance in order to give time for the Nigerian Brigade to come up.

Meanwhile the Kilwa force continued its movement west and south-west, meeting with constant opposition from strong rearguards, which were steadily driven from position to position. The enemy main line of retirement lay through Ruangwa to Ruponda, the destruction of his depôts on the Mbemkuru having prevented him using that route. I directed General Hannington to move the bulk of his force by the Mbemkuru route and endeavour to anticipate the enemy at Ruponda, leaving a detachment to press the enemy's rearguard on the direct line of retirement. This detachment I reinforced from my reserve.

General Hannington's advanced troops occupied Mnero Mission on the 9th and Ruponda on the 10th, thus completely severing the main enemy communication between Liwale and Massassi, and isolating the enemy forces in the northern Mahenge area. The movement did not, however, greatly affect the enemy retirement from Ruangwa, as it became quickly evident that he had prepared an alternative line east of Ruponda, running south from Ruangwa through Mnacho to the Lindi-Massassi road. The German commander was thus in a position to maintain his central reserve in the vicinity of Namgumburu, and this he continued to do even after the occupation of Ruponda. The situation at this moment demanded careful watching, as a strong enemy movement northwards against our long-drawn-out line of communication to Kilwa was always possible.

The best solution lay in strong pressure by the Lindi force, which made steady progress towards Mtama during the 10th, and on the following days began flanking movements against that place, which was reported to be held by nine companies. The enemy did not, however, stand to fight at Mtama, but retired slowly westwards on the 15th towards Nyangao, being doubtless considerably influenced by the advent of the Nigerian Brigade, which had been ordered to make a wide turning movement north of the Massassi road with the object of getting astride the enemy's communications at Mahiwa.

The German Commander was evidently well aware of the danger of the continued advance of the Lindi force, and decided to use a large portion of his reserve to check it. On the 13th he fell back from Namgumburu towards