

the Germans, for the recapture of Bagdad. It was therefore important to keep up the pressure on Turkey, and to anticipate the threatened attack on Bagdad by striking hard elsewhere.

The operations which commenced with the Gaza-Beersheba battle and led to the capture of Jerusalem and the freeing of all Southern Palestine, were therefore planned.

These operations had far-reaching results. The danger to Mesopotamia was removed; and it became possible to reduce the forces in that theatre. Instead of drawing fresh strength from the reserve of Turkish troops released by Russia's collapse, the Central Alliance found themselves compelled to send further support to their Eastern Ally; while a fresh impetus was given to the Arab struggle for freedom.

The moral results were even greater. Germany, hard put to it to hold her own in the close-locked struggle in the West, saw a great blow struck at her Eastern ambitions; while the capture of Jerusalem stirred the imagination of the Christian world.

15. The early months of 1918 were spent in consolidating the position in Palestine. The enemy was pushed back both in the hills and in the plain, until a strong line had been established, at a sufficient distance from Jerusalem and Jaffa, to allow of room for manœuvre in case of any attempt by the enemy to recover these places. The offensive rôle of the detachment was accomplished for the time being. The line secured could be held with the greatest possible economy of strength; and troops were thus freed for employment elsewhere, in accordance with the general strategical plan of the Allies.

Meanwhile the crisis of the war in the main theatre in the West was rapidly approaching. Under these circumstances it became essential to reduce detachments from the main theatre to a minimum; and, during April and May, two complete divisions, 24 other British battalions, 9 regiments of Yeomanry, 5 machine-gun companies and 5½ siege batteries were withdrawn for dispatch to France. They were gradually replaced by two Indian divisions from Mesopotamia, Indian Cavalry from France, and Indian battalions from India.

These were troops better suited by climatic conditions to this theatre than to the Western theatre. Further, the employment of Indian troops in theatres, where supplies from India did not have to pass through the submarine danger zone, simplified the shipping question.

Thus by the end of the summer the force was in a position to resume an offensive rôle and take part in the general series of Allied offensives which ended the war.

16. From the above short sketch it will be seen that the course of the campaigns in this theatre followed closely the course of events in the main Western theatre.

Thus the first period, the defence of the Canal, corresponded to the first check of the enemy's onrush in France and Belgium; the period of the advance through the Sinai desert, to the general development of the Allied strength and the building up of a secure battle line along the whole front; the 1917 advance, to the period of increased Allied pressure which exhausted the enemy's reserves; while the last advance coincided with the final Allied counter-offensive.

The operations in this theatre have thus been part of a studied whole, and not an isolated campaign.

17. Perhaps the most striking feature of the operations has been the variety of the terrain and of the nature of the fighting. There have been periods of desert warfare, of fighting in difficult hill country, and in open cultivated plain. There have been periods of trench warfare, alternating with periods of rapid movement with no fixed defences. Troops have been exposed to the sand and glare of the desert, to the tropical heat of the Jordan valley below the level of the sea, and to the bitter storms of the Judæan hills in winter.

Such conditions have called for great powers of endurance and cheerful adaptability on the part of the troops; of quick conception of the varying tactical circumstances on the part of all leaders; and of rapid organization and improvisation on the part of the staff. These qualities have never been lacking.

18. Though the percentage of casualties was lower than in the Western theatre, conditions of life were in many ways more onerous. To the majority of men, the weariness and discomforts of a prolonged war are worse than its dangers. Owing to shipping difficulties, the number of men who could be granted leave to their homes was very limited; and there were many who for 3 and 4 years had no opportunity of returning home. Owing to difficulties of communication, the provision of materials for the comfort and recreation of the troops could seldom be carried out on the same scale as in the theatres nearer home. The climate was trying and sometimes extremely unhealthy. That the health and morale of the men was maintained was due to their own inimitable spirit and willingness; to the constant care and foresight of the medical authorities; and to the organizations, official and private, which provided, in spite of all difficulties, for the comfort and recreation of the troops.

19. The experience gained in the varied forms of warfare which have fallen to the lot of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force has proved the soundness of the principles on which our army was trained before the war; and, above all, the value of the cavalry arm to confirm and exploit a success.

The new mechanical devices of war have played a less prominent part than in the Western theatre. The conditions of climate and ground were less favourable to the employment of tanks, or to the use of gas. The periods of trench warfare were comparatively brief, and the trench systems farther apart; consequently trench mortars and grenades had less value than in France. On the other hand, the increased importance, in modern warfare, of the machine gun was fully shown; and the superiority established by the air force over the enemy was one of the great factors of the successes of my troops.

Of the difficulties peculiar to this theatre, those of water and transport have been most prominent. The rivers and streams of Sinai, Palestine and Syria are, with few exceptions, dry in the summer; the roads fit for wheeled transport were, before the arrival of my army, very few. The developing of the underground supplies of water, the building of many miles of road, across hill, plain and desert, and the organization of the transport services has called for all the skill and resource of the Royal Engineers, constant foresight by the administrative services, and incessant hard work by every member of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

20. From Gaza to Aleppo the distance is some 500 miles, along the oldest highway in