was hard to realise it at the time, but the moment when the Africa Corps began to retreat, slowly and stubbornly, from the sandy scrub of the Deir el Agram, marked the first westward ebb of the tide which had carried the Axis arms so far to the east, an ebb which was about to begin to the north as well in a few months from then on the Volga Steppe and in the Caucasus. To me at the time the great features of the battle were the immediate improvement in the morale of our own troops, and the confidence I felt in General Montgomery, who had handled his first battle in the desert with great ability. The valuable part played by the R.A.F. during the battle was a good omen for future air support. I now felt sure that we should be able to defeat the enemy when we were ready to take the offensive.

Preparations for the Offensive.

After the victory of Alam el Halfa the enemy went at once on to the defensive. Our own preparations for assuming the offensive were not yet, however, complete. My intention for the coming battle was to destroy the enemy in his present position where he was furthest from his bases and nearest to ours; this was the best opportunity we should have of developing our full strength and it was vital to ensure that we forced a decision there at El Alamein. Eighth Army proposed to use all three Corps Headquarters in the battle, 13 and 30 as Infantry Corps (with some armour) and 10 Corps as an armoured *Corps de Chasse*. It was to this that particular attention was given at the start of the training period; 10 Corps was intended to include 1, 8 and 10 Armoured Divisions and possibly the New Zealand Division to provide the necessary motorized infantry. This powerful force would need a good deal of training before it could be fit for the decisive test of battle. First of all the tank crews had to get used to their new equipment. Three hundred " Sherman " tanks arrived at Suez on 3rd September from the United States and I proposed to equip three of my six armoured brigades with them. I must express at this point my profound appreciation of the statesmanlike vision shown by President Roosevelt when, on his personal initiative, he ordered these new tanks to be taken from the American armoured division for which they were intended and shipped round the Cape to us in the Middle East. At last we had for the first time a tank which was equal in armour, armament and performance to the best tank in the Africa Corps.

Eighth Army assembled 10 Corps some fifty miles in rear of the line, where their training and re-equipment could proceed uninterruptedly. 1 and 8 Armoured Divisions were already there and on 14th September 10 Armoured Division was withdrawn from the forward area. The New Zealand Division was also withdrawn and reorganized into a " new model " division by the addition of 9 Armoured Brigade in place of a third infantry brigade. 44 Division relieved it in the line. It was not possible to carry out Eighth Army's original intention to include three Armoured Divisions in 10 Corps as there was a shortage of Infantry Brigades to make them up to strength. I was, therefore, obliged to obtain War Office approval to disband 8 Armoured Division, which had no Infantry Brigade on its establishment. I had enough tanks, however, to maintain the planned number of armoured brigades and I placed 24 Armoured Brigade under command of 10 Armoured Division.

The troops previously deployed in the Delta could now be brought forward to acclimatize them, such as were new to the desert, to the conditions in which they were to fight. On 8th September 51 Division moved from Cairo into reserve on Alam el Halfa ridge to continue its training. On the 10th I sent the Headquarters of 4 Indian Infantry Division with 7 Indian Infantry Brigade to Ruweisat ridge to relieve the Headquarters of 5 Indian Division and 9 Indian Brigade, which had been continuously engaged since the end of May. A few days later 50 Division with 69 Brigade left Alexandria to join 151 Brigade in Eighth Army reserve; it was brought up to strength by the addition of 1 Greek Brigade. After a short interval for further training 50 Division relieved 44 Division in 13 Corps sector at the beginning of October. 1 Fighting French Brigade came forward about the same time on the left of 13 Corps where it was placed under command of 7 Armoured Division. The latter had given up its 7 Motor Brigade to 1 Armoured Division but retained 4 Light Armoured and 22 Armoured Brigades.

My infantry strength was the greatest we had yet put in the field, but a high proportion had had no previous battle experience and would require a great deal of training. I could not make a start on this programme until 6th September but thereafter all formations, whether they were withdrawn into rear areas or kept in the line, underwent intensive training in which the features of terrain and the conditions of fighting they were likely to encounter were as far as possible reproduced. Groups of all arms who were to fight together were trained together. Special attention was given to physical fitness, the maintenance of direction by night, the control of movement, minelifting and the use of wireless. We had also been strongly reinforced in artillery, on which I intended to rely heavily for the positional battle which lay ahead. Apart from seven extra field regiments which constituted the divisional artillery of 8 Armoured and 44 and 51 Infantry Divisions, two medium regiments and six additional field regiments also arrived from the United Kingdom and were placed under command of the Eighth Army during September and early October. I also received replacements for losses which enabled me to bring existing units up to strength.

During this necessary interval while our training programme got into full swing I proposed to employ small detachments of the special raiding forces in attacks on the enemy's communications. The Royal Navy and the Allied Air Forces were already, as I have described, operating with success against his shipping bound for Tobruk and Benghazi (Tripoli was being used only to a very minor extent) but with the air forces at our disposal and the great distances to be covered it was impossible to close either of them completely. Ever since the withdrawal from Cyrenaica plans had been under discussion for raids by sea and land on Tobruk and Benghazi. If the oil installations could be destroyed and the port facilities damaged so as to interrupt working even for as