

3rd South African Infantry Brigade, both under command of General Van Deventer, to leave Mbuyuni and Serengeti on the evening of the 7th March, and make a night march to the river Lumi east of Lake Chala. On the 8th to seize the high ground round Lake Chala and develop a turning movement by the west against Taveta. The object of this turning movement was partly to surprise the enemy and partly to avoid a frontal attack through the thick bush which lay between Salaita and Taveta.

(c) 2nd Division to advance against Salaita Hill on the morning of the 8th March, entrench a line facing the hill, and make preparations for an attack, supported by the Army Artillery.

(d) Force Reserve to follow General Van Deventer's column during the night of the 7th-8th March and take up a central position astride the Lumi, whence it could be used to reinforce either Van Deventer or the 2nd Division, as required.

It will be readily seen that these movements demanded the greatest energy and decision on the part of the commanders concerned. In order to be in close touch with the main operations round Taveta I decided to accompany the Force Reserve to the Lumi, leaving part of my General Staff at Mbuyuni to control operations elsewhere.

The initial movements were carried out successfully and with very slight opposition on the part of the enemy, who was undoubtedly taken by surprise. The 1st Division succeeded in crossing the waterless belt safely, and by the afternoon of the 6th March had its advanced troops established on the small hill Nagasseni just east of the river Engare Nanjuki. By 2 p.m. on the 7th the whole division was concentrated at this point, and on the 8th moved to Geraragua.

8. On the evening of the 7th March General Van Deventer's column started on its march across the Serengeti plains for Chala. The 1st South African Mounted Brigade from Mbuyuni and the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade from Serengeti Camp. The Force Reserve under General Beves followed in rear of the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade.

At 6 a.m. on the 8th March the 1st South African Mounted Brigade reached the Lumi River near the southern end of the Ziwani swamp, and the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade simultaneously arrived on the river east of Lake Chala. General Van Deventer at once proceeded to make good the high ground lying between Lake Chala and Rombo Mission. He then made a converging movement on the Chala position from the east and north-west, sending the brigade scouts to threaten the enemy's line of retreat to the south. Chala was only lightly held by the enemy, and these dispositions soon caused him to withdraw on Taveta. General Van Deventer occupied Chala and pursued towards Taveta, a portion of which position was occupied by the 2nd South African Horse. As, however, the enemy in Taveta were in considerable strength, General Van Deventer considered it wise to concentrate on the Chala position before dark.

Meanwhile the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade and the Force Reserve halted astride the Lumi to guard the crossing. During the afternoon an enemy force estimated at from 300 to 500, which had been cut off from the main body by our unexpected movement to

Chala, advanced from the north along the line of the river in thick bush, and made more than one attack on the outposts of the infantry in bivouacs. These attacks were easily repulsed with loss to the enemy, but also caused most of the losses we sustained that day.

While the bulk of my forces were engaged in making good the Chala position and the Lumi crossing, the 2nd Division, under Major-General Tighe, carried out, on the 8th March, an artillery bombardment of Salaita, and the infantry of the 1st East African Brigade advanced and dug themselves in, in readiness for an attack on the 9th.

9. At dawn on the 9th General Van Deventer sent his mounted troops to get astride the Moschi road west of Taveta, which place the enemy evacuated in the course of the day. He also sent the 12th South African Infantry to make good Ndui Ya Warombo Hill and the Lumi bridge east of Taveta. The 2nd Division continued to bombard Salaita, and at 2 p.m. the infantry advanced to the attack, only to find that the bombardment, coupled with the turning movement via Chala, had compelled the enemy to evacuate, just in time to avoid two squadrons of the 4th South African Horse sent to intercept their retreat.

10. Early on the 10th a regiment of South African Horse despatched from Chala to make good Taveta were able to seize the position before a large body of the enemy, who had obviously been sent back to reoccupy it. After a brief fight the enemy withdrew towards the Latema-Reata nek, hotly pursued by mounted troops and field artillery. The enemy fought a stubborn rearguard action, and eventually was left in position on the nek.

On the same date the 2nd Division advanced to Taveta, detaching garrisons at Serengeti and Salaita. The Lumi crossing was found impassable for motor lorries and heavy guns, and the bulk of the transport did not cross until the bridge had been improved about mid-day on the 11th.

11. On the morning of the 11th General Van Deventer on the right advanced via Spitz Hill and Kile on Mamba Mission and the line of the Himo. In the centre the 4th South African Horse, supported by the 12th South African Infantry, made good East Kitowo Hill after a brisk skirmish. On the left the mounted troops of the 2nd Division reconnoitred the Latema-Reata nek, which was found to be held in some strength. The Force Reserve was ordered to move from Chala to Taveta.

It was now clear that the enemy had withdrawn from Taveta in two directions, along the Taveta-Moschi road towards the west and along the Taveta-Kahe road between Reata and Latema Hills towards the south-west, but the exact line of retirement of his main forces was uncertain. The 4th S.A. Horse were in touch with what appeared to be merely a rearguard on the Moschi road, and an enemy force of unknown strength was in position on the Latema-Reata nek. It was essential to determine whether this was only a covering force, or whether the enemy was in such strength as to threaten a counter-attack towards Taveta. In either case it was necessary to drive him from the nek before I could advance beyond Taveta.

The 2nd Division had in Taveta only three weak battalions of the 1st East African Brigade, eight 12 pr. guns and a howitzer