

the neighbourhood of Ifinga; seven more, under Wahle and Wintgens near Kitanda, and two, under Grawert, at Likuju. All these were in contact with General Northey's forces.

At Mahenge and holding the line of the Kilombero River to west and north of that place were considerable detachments; that on the north near Ifakara's being faced by the troops of the Iringa Column occupying the mountainous country east and south-east of Iringa.

In the Lindi area and westwards some seven hundred men were in widely separated detachments at Tunduru, Newala, in the valley of the Mbemkuru, and near Lindi itself; while a garrison of five hundred was reported near Liwale.

The approximate total strength of the efficient troops of the enemy in the field was computed at 1,100 whites and 7,300 Askaris, with four guns of 4in. or 4.1in. calibre, sixteen smaller ones and seventy-three machine guns.

It was clearly necessary to push the enemy off the Rufiji River and as far south as possible so as to be able to use the Rufiji River for transport purposes; and the operations of the Kilwa and Rufiji Columns had been conceived with this object. From native reports and such statistics as were available three more weeks of fine weather could be expected. But the supply and transport situation was not at all satisfactory. There was no reserve in the advanced depôts; the number of porters was insufficient; the animals in transport units were dying and the drivers of the mechanical transport were falling sick so rapidly that the numbers of troops in the front line could not be maintained there.

I therefore withdrew to the central railway the bulk of the 1st Brigade, and as much of the Force Reserve as could be spared, intending to push forward as far as possible with the remainder.

A force was sent from the 1st East African Brigade towards Nyakisiki, which was occupied by us after some fighting. This enabled the enemy to disembarrass himself of his hospital there, containing 50 Germans and 150 Askaris.

The 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division pushed on towards Utete, and the 3rd Brigade cleared the country immediately north of Ngarambi. General Cunliffe's Nigerian Brigade drove an enemy force of three companies from Kibongo, four miles south of Mkindu, and occupied their position. Colonel Burne's Column worked steadily southwards towards the Rufiji; and the Navy commenced a survey of the channels of the Rufiji delta.

On the 24th January General Cunliffe sent a battalion of Nigerians to oust the Germans from Nyandote, 15 miles south of Mkindu. They were unable to dislodge the enemy, who was found in considerably greater strength than had been anticipated; and after a gallant fight the battalion withdrew to Kibongo. On the same day Grawert, with 40 Germans, 200 Askaris, a field gun and 2 machine guns, surrendered at Likuju to a detachment of General Northey's force. The supply arrangements of this enemy force seem to have entirely failed.

Utete was occupied by the 2nd East African Brigade on the 21st January, and by the beginning of February the north bank of the Rufiji was practically clear of the enemy.

Commencement of Rainy Season.

2. All seemed to be going well when on January 25th heavy rain began to fall, ushering in the wettest season known in East Africa for many years. By the 27th the lines of communication from Mikessee to Kibambawe were interrupted by the washing away of bridges and the flooding of roads; and operations in all areas were henceforward seriously hampered by the untimely rain.

It is perhaps hard to realise the difficulties which the rainy season in East Africa entailed for a force acting from such widely separated bases, with several different lines of communication running through every variety of difficult country and necessitating in some cases as much as 130 miles of porter transport. In the Mgeta and Rufiji valleys roads constructed with much skill and labour, over which motor transport ran continuously in January, were traversed with difficulty and much hardship a month later by porters wading for miles in water above their waists. The Dodoma-Iringa line of communication crossed the Great Ruaha in the dry weather by an easy ford; when the rain had really set in, supplies had to be transported not only over a flooded river but also a swamp on each side of it 6 feet deep and as many miles wide. Considerable anxiety was caused by this extensive flooding across the Dodoma-Iringa communication, and every effort was made to cope with this. The Iringa Column was kept as small as possible, and special flat-bottomed boats were prepared, but eventually it became necessary to switch on to a new line along the road which runs south from the railway at Kilossa. The valley of the Rufiji and its various tributaries became a vast lake, in which the true courses of the streams were often only discernible with difficulty, if at all. Patrol work had to be carried out for some time in canoes, and the men found themselves making fast to the roofs of houses which had lately formed their quarters.

The conditions of the Kilwa area were equally trying, as roads became impassable for motor transport and animals died a few weeks after being landed. An even more serious factor perhaps was the sickness amongst the troops. The coastal belt and the valleys of the Mgeta and Rufiji even in dry weather are unhealthy for all but the indigenous African; and during the rains there is a great increase in malaria, while dysentery and pneumonia strike down even the African native.

In 1916 many of our troops in East Africa spent the rainy season in high and comparatively healthy localities. It was impossible to do this in 1917 without withdrawing from ground which had been hardly won and out of which the enemy would have to be driven again with equal difficulty should he be allowed to re-occupy it.

That the enemy had also to contend with sickness, and with sameness, if not with scarcity, of food, is certain; but in a minor degree, since his white men were more acclimatized to German East Africa, and his native soldiers indigenous to the country. He had the advantage of falling back on interior lines; of veteran troops from whose ranks nearly all waverers had by this time been eliminated; and of his power of living on the country as he retired. This last was accentuated by the fact that whereas we are accustomed to take and pay for only what the villagers can spare, the