

REORGANIZATION OF THE COMMAND

2. Prior to the formation of the new Command, an administrative reorganization had been introduced by General Headquarters Middle East, with the object of freeing Commander Tenth Army from the administration of the bases and lines of communication in Persia and Iraq so that he could concentrate on his operational task. By this measure, which came into effect on 15th August, 1942, the control of the general administration of the ports, depots and communications behind the Tenth Army was vested in a senior Staff Officer of General Headquarters Mideast, designated the Inspector General of Communications (I.G.C.); while there was created an area Command, known as Pibase, to deal with the internal security and local administration of the Base and Lines of Communication area. At the same time the zone of responsibility of the Commander Tenth Army was to have been further reduced by transferring Northern Iraq from the Tenth to the Ninth Army.

The formation of a separate new Command under the War Office necessitated some modifications to this lay-out. With a General Headquarters on the spot, the decentralization of general administrative control was neither necessary nor desirable, and the Inspector General of Communications and his staff were therefore merged into General Headquarters. Owing however to the length of the divergent lines of communication leading from the Persian Gulf, and the extent of development still needed in the ports, base depots and means of communication, I considered that closer and more continuous supervision was required throughout the bases and lines of communication than could be exercised from General Headquarters. I decided, therefore, as a temporary measure, to include in my staff for this purpose a D.Q.M.G. Bases and Lines of Communication, with a small staff, located at Basra. This appointment was filled by Major General C. R. C. Lane, C.B., M.C., I.A., whose administrative experience and knowledge of the country and conditions well qualified him for this responsibility.

I decided, also, that the responsibility for local administration and internal security over the whole of the Base and Lines of Communication areas of Iraq and Persia was more than one Commander could deal with satisfactorily; I therefore divided the Pibase area into two area commands, covering respectively the Base and Lines of Communication areas of Iraq and Persia.

POSITION IN SEPTEMBER 1942.

3. The only troops immediately available in Persia and Iraq to meet a German invasion were two Indian Divisions and one Indian Armoured Division. Of these, the former had each only two infantry brigades and were below establishment and deficient in artillery, engineers and signals, and the latter had no medium tanks; both were short of transport.

Many other deficiencies remained to be filled before this small force could become a balanced fighting organization. Corps artillery units, Anti-Aircraft artillery, engineer units, signals and administrative units were either short of requirements or lacking altogether. The network of signals to ensure the control and maintenance of operations over so large

an area, although planned and started by Headquarters Tenth Army, was still not yet complete.

The Polish personnel, who, with the 3rd Carpathian Division already in the Middle East, were to form the Polish Army in the East, were in process of assembling at Khaniqin after their evacuation from Russia; they lacked organization, equipment and training, and many of them were still suffering in health from a long period of hardship.

Decisions had already been made by the War Office to strengthen and complete the forces in Persia and Iraq. Two British Divisions (5th and 56th) had already been diverted to the Command, and the former was commencing to arrive. These were to be followed by 7th British Armoured Brigade from India and the 5th Indian and 3rd Carpathian Polish Divisions from the Middle East. Additional units and resources of all kinds were being provided. Naturally these measures took time to complete.

One of my first tasks, therefore, was to complete the organization, equipment and training of the forces; in this every week's delay imposed by the Russian defence was of inestimable value.

4. In the administrative sphere much remained to be done before I could feel confident that operations in North Persia could be adequately maintained. I refer to this later.

One aspect of administration, however, limited all my operational planning. This was shortage of motor vehicles of all types, and in particular of Royal Army Service Corps transport in both 2nd and 3rd line; further, many of the vehicles were old and worn. In Egypt the demand was incessant for vehicles to maintain operations in progress, and for the time I had little prospect of aid from that direction; the flow of lease lend vehicles into Persia and Iraq had scarcely begun. Thus my capacity to maintain sufficient forces in North Persia was the limiting factor, rather than the availability of forces in the Command.

PLANS FOR DEFENCE OF NORTH PERSIA.

5. An advance by the Germans as far South into Persia as Teheran or Hamadan would enable them to sustain air attacks on our oil installations in Persia and Iraq, heavy enough at least to reduce the oil output, possibly to stop it altogether for a considerable time. My plans had therefore to aim at stopping any German advance from the North towards these areas; and with the limited fighting strength which I could deploy and maintain for this purpose it would be necessary to exploit fully any advantages of ground astride the various avenues of approach.

The Russian authorities in North Persia were averse from the concerted planning and comprehensive reconnaissance was impossible. From the information available, however, it was clear that good defensive facilities were to be found in the mountain passes of Chalus and Manjil (leading from the Caspian coast respectively to Teheran and Kasvin) and in the mountainous country about Mianeh astride the Tabriz-Teheran road. If the enemy avoided these routes, or extended his advance still further west, the mountains south of Senna, and the passes leading from Lake Urmia to Northern Iraq should also afford opportunities for a strong defence. Further to the South