

the amount of support to be counted on from the Egyptian Army was problematical.

5. Since Italy did not enter the war with her ally Germany, the Middle East was not immediately engaged in operations. During the first months of the war I was concerned largely with establishing relations with the neighbouring French Commanders in Syria, in North Africa and in French Somaliland, and later with the military authorities in Turkey after that country signed the Treaty of Alliance on 19th October, 1939. I also visited Aden, Iraq, the Sudan and British Somaliland.

The winter of 1939/1940 was mainly occupied with three-cornered discussions between the French in Syria, the Turks and ourselves on the means of implementing the military clauses of the Treaty with Turkey. Conferences took place at Ankara in October, 1939, in Cairo in February, 1940, at Aleppo in March, and at Beirut and Haifa in May. A plan was drawn up for assistance to the Turks in Thrace if attacked by Germany. This plan was, however, conditional on Italy remaining neutral.

6. In December I paid a short visit to England to discuss the problems of the Middle East with the C.I.G.S. General Weygand from Syria was in Paris at the same time and an inter-allied conference on Middle East problems was held in Paris.

7. A conference was also held in March with the Chief of the General Staff India and other representatives on a plan for the landing of a force at Basra in case of necessity.

8. Preparations against the eventuality of Italy's joining in the war were impeded by the desire of His Majesty's Government to do nothing which might impair the existing relations with that country. I was not even permitted to set up a proper Intelligence service in Italian territory, or to get in touch with patriot chiefs in Abyssinia.

9. During this time the responsibilities of the Middle East Command were growing rapidly. It soon became obvious that operational control could not be exercised without at least some control over administration, and the Command gradually began to assume a considerable measure of administrative responsibility. Complete administrative responsibility was assumed in June, 1940. The Command also had to watch closely the political situation in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and the neighbouring countries, and the work of the Middle East Intelligence Centre was considerably enlarged. It was also necessary to form a number of Training Establishments.

10. The only reinforcements received in the Middle East between September, 1939, and March, 1940, were:

5th Indian Infantry Brigade, which arrived in Egypt on 4th October, 1939;

2nd Battalion Durham Light Infantry, which arrived in Egypt from China on 31st January, 1940;

1st Cavalry Division (Horsed), which completed arrival in Palestine on 24th March, 1940. It was incomplete in training and equipment.

16th Australian Infantry Brigade and a portion of divisional troops of 6th Australian Division, who arrived in Palestine in the middle of February.

4th New Zealand Infantry Brigade with some divisional troops of the New Zealand Division arrived in Egypt at the same time.

These Dominion contingents were magnificent material, but were only partially trained and equipped.

The Secretary of State for War, Mr. Anthony Eden, paid a special visit to Egypt to greet the arrival of these contingents.

11. On 3rd February, 1940, the East African Command, which had previously been directly under the War Office, was placed under Middle East for operational control, though administration remained under the War Office.

In March I visited the East African Command and then went on to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia for discussions with the Governments and Military Authorities of those countries. The Union Government decided to send a Brigade and an Air Force contingent to Kenya. These actually reached Kenya during June. Their quality was extremely high, and they are proving themselves excellent troops.

12. At the end of April a valuable reinforcement of 24 officers and 666 men had been received from Southern Rhodesia. These were posted to various arms and units in which they formed, as far as possible, separate sub-units. The quality of the personnel was high and a considerable number have since received commissions. Southern Rhodesia had already, in September, 1939, sent a number of officers and N.C.Os. to reinforce the Camel Corps in British Somaliland. These were of great value.

13. Other British Colonies are also represented in the Middle East. Malta has supplied an efficient A.A. battery which forms part of the defences of Alexandria, and many Maltese are serving in the R.A.S.C. and technical units.

Cyprus has made a very considerable military effort. A Cyprus Regiment has been formed which includes an infantry battalion, Pioneer companies and Pack Transport companies. Some of these, which served with distinction in France, have now returned to the Middle East. A number of Cypriots have also enlisted as drivers in the R.A.S.C. and are doing good service.

Mauritius has sent a valuable draft of 100 tradesmen for the R.A.O.C.

The British Mandated Territory of Palestine has also contributed a large number of men, both Arabs and Jews, for service with the British forces, either as combatant companies or in various Services. A Palestinian Pioneer Company served in France, where its work earned high praise, and has now returned to the Middle East.

#### *May to June, 1940*

14. Meanwhile our relations with Italy were deteriorating, and during May, as a result of the success of the German attack on France, it became obvious that Italy was likely to enter the war. On 10th June Italy declared war.

The military situation at the time of the entry of Italy into the war was as follows: There were estimated to be over 215,000 Italian troops in Libya and over 200,000 in Italian East Africa. Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, and British Somaliland, which had frontiers with these countries, became at once liable to attack. Their garrisons at the time of Italy's entry into the war were as follows:—

Egypt.

(a) 7th Armoured Division—comprising:

4th Armoured Brigade	{ each of two regiments, only partly equipped.
7th Armoured Brigade	