

move had become known to the enemy. It was, however, agreed that informal staff contacts should take place through the medium of our service attaches.

Material for these contacts was carefully compiled in Cairo in consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, India. We were prepared to make a firm offer to send British Forces to Turkey in the event of a German attack. But we stressed the importance of being allowed to build up supplies and stores in advance and to reconnoitre and improve maintenance facilities in Anatolia.

During the early part of the conversations the Turks proposed that we should concentrate in north-western Anatolia; but latterly, with the rapid German advance in South Russia and the possibility that the eventual threat might come from the north-east rather than the north-west, the Turkish military authorities were less averse than I had expected from considering Eastern Anatolia as the possible theatre of the German offensive. There was little doubt, however, that the Turkish statesmen and, to a lesser degree, the senior Turkish Generals, were impressed by the rapidity of the German advance in Russia, and uneasy at our association with the Soviet in the occupation of Iran.

Although I believe that the Turks are genuine in their desire to exclude the Germans from their country and to side with us if the situation is favourable, I cannot conceal from myself the possibility of circumstances proving too strong for them, and I am making my plans accordingly.

CO-OPERATIVE PLANNING WITH INDIA.

15. The problem of frustrating a German thrust through Anatolia or the Caucasus or both can only be solved by the closest co-operation between India and the Middle East. Before General Wavell left the Middle East for India, we discussed the matter, and it was the subject of an exchange of views between the War Office, India and the Middle East. To facilitate liaison an officer from General Headquarters, India, was posted to the Joint Planning Staff, Middle East, during September.

At a conference at Baghdad on the 26th September, attended by the Commander-in-Chief India and myself it was agreed that the Joint Planning Staff should study the problem of defending Persia, Iraq, Palestine and Syria against invasion either through Western Anatolia or the Caucasus or by both routes. A planning party visited those countries and at the beginning of November representatives of the Middle East Planning Staff went to India to discuss the Northern Front. Since then planning has gone forward on the policy agreed to after the joint review of the problem.

EAST AFRICA.

16. In East Africa operations have been very nearly at a standstill during this period. The brilliant campaigns of Lieutenant General Sir Alan Cunningham and Lieutenant General Sir William Platt during the previous six months had eliminated all but one centre of resistance, that in the Gondar area. Owing to the heavy rains, our troops could not at once attempt the task of reducing this stronghold. During the months of July, August, and September, therefore, operations were confined to harassing raids carried out by our Air Forces.

17. Owing to the complete success of earlier operations, General Wavell had been able to withdraw three divisions which had been operating in this theatre. By the beginning of July the 1st South African and the 4th Indian Divisions had been withdrawn, and the last brigade of the 5th Indian Division had received orders to move. I carried on my predecessor's policy of withdrawing every unit that it was possible to release. Finally, there remained only the 11th and 12th African Divisions to carry out all the necessary internal security duties in this vast stretch of territory, as well as to contain the Italian forces in the Gondar area until these could be finally liquidated, and also to enforce the landward blockade of French Somaliland.

18. The administration of the conquered territories presented a large number of problems, which were ably handled by Major-General Sir Philip Mitchell, Chief Political Officer, who on the 27th June had become British Representative in Ethiopia. On the first of August by formal Proclamation I delegated to him the full legislative, judicial, administrative and financial authority which I exercised in Eritrea and Somalia, and an Administrative Instruction of the Secretary of State for War entrusted to him supervisory powers over the Military Governor of British Somaliland. Although it was impossible in international law for me to divest myself of the authority which I held by right of conquest in Somaliland and Eritrea, by the Proclamation I was in fact released from all but ultimate responsibility.

On the many problems involved in organising and directing the administrations in the conquered territories it is unnecessary for me to enlarge. Let it suffice to say that Sir Philip Mitchell lost no time and spared no effort in handling these problems with the energy and discretion they demanded. The achievements of Sir Philip and his assistants were remarkable, especially as officers and police were scarce and communications difficult. Although it was far from complete when I relinquished command of the areas, much progress had been made in the task of pacification.

19. From both political and military standpoints the problem of French Somaliland was pressing and difficult. This territory, which is controlled by a Government committed to collaboration with the enemy, adjoins the Straits of Bab el Mandeb and is therefore a potential base for hostile naval operations against us in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Yet to reduce it by force might well lead to the destruction of the port of Jibuti and the railway to Addis Ababa, making the evacuation of the numerous Italian civilians interned in the Addis Ababa area difficult, if not impossible. The evacuation of these Italians, for some time past the subject of negotiations with the Italian Government, was essential. Their continued presence constituted a menace to internal security in that they might escape; a military liability, in that they must be protected from the possible vengeance of the Ethiopians; and a political stumbling-block in that their protection involved a measure of interference in Ethiopian affairs which filled the Emperor and his subjects with suspicion and resentment.