

the base areas and on the lines of communication was out of all proportion to the comparatively small forces actually in contact with the enemy. This matter was constantly in my mind and continually under expert examination; and I was able to satisfy myself that in administration there was little waste of manpower or misdirection of energy throughout the whole Command. I consider this reflects the greatest credit on those responsible for organising and controlling the vast administrative machine on whose efficient running our ability to wage the war entirely depended.

War anywhere is primarily a matter of supply and movement and these problems are particularly acute in the Middle East. Placed at the end of very long lines of sea communications the countries of the Middle East are for the most part undeveloped, possess few modern industrial plants and are singularly poor in land communications of every kind. Moreover the Libyan Desert itself rivals any country in the world in barrenness.

APPENDICES.

I.

*Letter to Lt.-General Sir Alan Cunningham,
Commander, Eighth Army.*

2nd September 1941.

Western Desert Offensive Autumn, 1941.

1. After consultation with Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean and Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East, I have decided to carry out an offensive this autumn with the object of driving the enemy out of North Africa.

2. The offensive will be carried out in two phases:—

First phase: The capture of Cyrenaica.

Second phase: The capture of Tripolitania.

First phase:

3. The object of the operations in the first phase is to recapture and hold Cyrenaica. Your immediate objective is the destruction of the enemy's armoured forces, thereby facilitating the holding of Cyrenaica and the subsequent capture of Tripolitania.

4. The attack is to be launched as soon as the necessary forces can be trained and concentrated, and the necessary maintenance arrangements completed. I estimate that this should be possible by the beginning of November, and every effort is to be made to avoid the necessity for a postponement.

5. In order to deceive the enemy as to the direction of our main blow, the original deployment will be on a wide front from the coast to Giarabub. Arrangements are to be made to establish dumps in the forward areas as soon as the necessary protection can be provided.

6. The establishment of dumps in the forward areas, leakage of information as to the strength of our forces, and other factors may cause the enemy to modify his present dispositions, so it is essential to organize the offensive on a flexible basis. In broad outline there are two courses open to us:—

Course A: To base our main striking force on Giarabub and advance *via* Gialo to cut off the enemy's retreat whilst maintaining pressure and advancing as opportunity offers along the coast.

Course B: To attack with our main striking force from the coastal sector, south of the escarpment, and to feint from the centre and south.

7. You will prepare detailed plans on each of the above bases and be prepared to submit your recommendations when called for after 1st October, 1941, so that a decision may be made.

Second phase:

8. The object of the operations in the second phase is to capture and hold Tripolitania.

9. Alternative plans for these operations will be prepared in outline by G.H.Q.

General:

10. This campaign will be a combined operation entailing the closest possible co-operation between all three Services and dependent on the Navy, not only for direct support from H.M. ships when opportunity offers, but, to a very large extent, for the maintenance by sea of the land and air forces. Arrangements will be made to enable you to effect a landing with a brigade group behind the enemy lines, should you so wish, but the success or failure of your general plan must not be made to depend on the feasibility of this operation.

11. Maintenance will be one of the limiting factors of these operations and mobility one of the most important. Formations will be trained to carry out their mobile roles on a very low scale of baggage, food and water.

12. You may assume that the forces available for the first phase of the operations will comprise:—

One Army H.Q. and Signals.

One Armoured Corps H.Q. and Signals.

One Armoured Division.

One Armoured Brigade Group.

One Corps H.Q. and Signals.

Four Infantry Divisions (of which at least two will be fully motorized).

Two Infantry Brigades.

Tobruk Garrison.

Further details will be forwarded to you separately.

13. Acknowledge.

C. J. Auchinleck,

General.

C.-in-C., M.E.F.

2.

*Appreciation of the Situation by Commander,
Eighth Army.*

In the Field, 28th September 1941.

1. The following short appreciation examines the problem of the recapture of Cyrenaica under the terms of the C.-in-C.'s directive dated 2nd September 1941.*

2. *Object:*—

The destruction of the enemy armoured forces.

3. The appreciation is based on information contained in J.P.S.64, which is not therefore reproduced in detail here. The following are the salient factors which have influenced the plan:—

(i) Dispositions of the enemy, *viz.*, one armoured division in the forward area and one west of Tobruk have been taken as a

* Appendix 1.