

To ensure the greatest possible flow of aid to Russia, not only had the bulk of Tenth Army been withdrawn some 500 miles from its deployment area, but the preparation of the lines of communication on which it would depend had been retarded. Furthermore the decision to curtail or suspend the supply of material aid to Russia, to permit of my forces being maintained in their forward operational areas, would have been fraught with many difficulties, both political and military; clearly it had to be deferred to the last possible moment and would have called for very careful timing.

#### THE IRAQI ARMY.

9. By agreement with the Government of Iraq, it was arranged that, in the event of a German threat to that country, the Iraqi Army would resist aggression and for this purpose would deploy two divisions for the defence of the minor passes leading from the direction of Lake Urmia into North Iraq.

Plans were prepared for the co-operation of this force with the Polish Army, to whom the defence of this region was to be entrusted.

#### THE POSSIBILITY OF ATTACK THROUGH TURKEY.

10. Although preparation for operations in North Persia was the dominating consideration in Persia and Iraq throughout the autumn of 1942, the possibility of a German threat through Anatolia in the Spring of 1943 could not be dismissed altogether.

Plans previously made by the Commander-in-Chief Mideast to meet this case, which involved the employment of Tenth Army in North Iraq, remained unaltered and were kept under review.

#### INTERNAL SECURITY.

11. Iraq has remained quiet and no threats to internal security have occurred, nor have there been any indications of attempted sabotage. Precautions in this country therefore have been limited to the provision of military guards over installations and depots, as a deterrent to the theft and organized robbery of military stores which have everywhere been prevalent.

In Persia, on the other hand, the problem of internal security has been constantly to the fore. There is a wide distribution of arms throughout the country. The natural propensity of the tribes to attack anything likely to yield food or clothing has been intensified by Axis propaganda and by economic distress.

Threats to the security of our communications through Persia have arisen mainly in the hill sector of the railway about Durud, and on that portion of the Bushire-Isfahan road which passes through Qashgai territory. In both these areas minor incidents have been frequent. In the former it has been necessary to locate various garrison defence units along the railway; in the latter I have been mainly concerned to secure the tranquillity of the tribes without the necessity for using military force—a commitment, once undertaken, almost certain to remain and increase. In November, after consultation with Sir Reader Bullard, the British Minister in Teheran, I ordered military reconnaissance of the Bushire-Isfahan road and subsequently arranged to lend some assistance to the Persian Military Governor, in an effort

to achieve security of the roads by means of the Persian Army and Gendarmerie.

Teheran has also been a centre of trouble. In October, 1942, a political crisis occurred in connection with the provision of paper currency for allied use; arrangements were made, in consultation with the British Minister in Teheran, for a force of one British Brigade to be prepared to move to Teheran at short notice. This crisis was eventually averted without recourse to the use of troops. In December, shortages of food in the capital led to trouble, which culminated in rioting between the 8th and 10th December. The rioting subsided on the arrival of a British Infantry Battalion at Teheran, without the necessity for military action; some minor accidental casualties were sustained.

12. Investigations over a considerable period culminated in the discovery of an extensive plot, instigated by the German agent Meyer and others, to organize Fifth Column activities in Persia in preparation for the expected German invasion. This plot involved a Persian Cabinet Minister, three Members of Parliament, eleven Generals and many other senior officers of the army, as well as the Qashgai tribes. Early in December General Zahidi, who was implicated, was arrested in Isfahan, and this had a steadying effect.

As several German agents, including Meyer, are known still to be operating in South East Persia, I sent a small independent detachment of Kalpacks on an extensive mission throughout this area, the results of which are not yet available.

#### THE ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATION OF THE COMMAND.

13. Administrative preparation for possible operations has formed a major part of the activity of this Command. Following on the British entry into Iraq and Persia, an extensive programme of administrative development became necessary. Port capacities have had to be increased by developing existing ports and constructing new ones; railway communications extended and improved; a comprehensive programme of road construction and improvement carried through; hospital accommodation, workshops and storage facilities of all kinds to be provided at the cost of a great deal of engineer construction. In addition it was necessary to prepare groups of aerodromes, all-weather and dry weather, for the Squadrons and Base installations of the Royal Air Force, and to provide accommodation for repair and servicing, fuel and explosives.

By the time the Persia and Iraq Command came into being most of the work had already been planned by General Headquarters Middle East and by Headquarters Tenth Army. Much had been completed, and much was in course of construction.

Prior to 1942, planning and development were directed primarily to meeting a German threat through Anatolia, when North Iraq rather than Persia would have been the theatre of operations. Preparations were thus more advanced in Iraq than in Persia; by September, 1942, the existing port of Basra had been developed and construction of an additional port begun at Um Qasr; base depots and the connected establishments had been developed at Shaiba; and an advanced base at Mussayib was nearing completion. The development of