

to settle the matter, reinstated the President and released the other detainees. During the eleven days which the crisis lasted, feelings had run very high, and it was only the confidence that His Majesty's Government would see justice done that prevented a serious explosion. Once the detainees had been released and the Lebanese Government re-installed the situation rapidly returned to normal.

337. As a result of this political crisis, the General Officer Commanding Ninth Army anticipated a difficult period in regard to security, as there were indications that the Lebanese were no longer disposed to accept the limitations on their independence imposed by the necessities of the war. It was clear that both the Syrian and the Lebanese Governments would now demand a very considerable transfer of powers from the French, and that these demands would include a considerable share of the control of security arrangements and of the *Troupes Speciales* or native levies. After a preliminary examination of the problems involved, Ninth Army began discussions with His Majesty's Minister and the French military authorities, as a result of which it was hoped that full agreement would be reached as to the extent to which powers could be transferred to the local Governments, without damage to the interests of His Majesty's Government in the successful prosecution of the war.

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338. The situation in the Lebanon was held in check until the arrival of General Catroux largely because the Lebanese had confidence in the British Government and in the local British military administration. These feelings have been general throughout the Middle East during my period of command and have been a condition without which the vast training and administrative commitments of the Command could not have been carried out.

339. Without such feelings, also, the burden of the garrison and line of communication troops would have been heavy. As things were, the garrison and line of communication areas in my Command were able to provide troops to take part in active operations or to release others to meet the heavy demands which were made; Ninth Army and Palestine have been the only two areas in which problems of internal security have required serious consideration.

340. In Syria and the Lebanon the continued Russian successes created a new problem by removing the threat of German invasion; the demands of the Syrians and Lebanese for independence became more insistent and the task of maintaining an adequate standard of security more difficult. It therefore became of primary military importance to keep those populations quiet by maintaining a belief of operational urgency in spite of the continued progress of the Russian armies in the North.

341. The role of Ninth Army, in addition to the above, has been to prevent sabotage and spying by enemy agents, to assist in the operational training of formations located in the Ninth Army area, to supervise schools and training centres and to maintain law and order in Syria and the Lebanon.

342. Relations between the British and French military authorities in Syria have remained good. Feeling ran high for a few

days during the November political riots, but on the resolution of the crisis the situation rapidly returned to normal.

343. In Palestine, apart from political agitation by the Jews, nothing of military importance happened throughout the year. The movement of troops from Persia and Iraq Command to Egypt and preparations for the mounting of the attack on Sicily entailed a good deal of work, but the organisation was able to cope with all that was demanded of it.

344. Although the political situation in Egypt has required constant watchfulness, and the rise in prices has led to increased pilfering and made additional train and other guards necessary, no serious problems have occurred. The decision of Admiral Godefroy to bring the French fleet at Alexandria over to the Allies, on 21st May, 1943, relieved a state of considerable tension and enabled me to release troops, detailed for action in case Admiral Godefroy should reach a different decision, to other duties.

345. In Cyrenaica and Tripolitania the administrative arrangements have worked smoothly; there has been no outbreak of serious trouble between Arabs and Italian settlers, the British Military Administration has won the confidence of the civilians, and it has been possible to use the facilities of these areas to the full and to reduce garrison troops to a minimum.

346. The defeat of the Axis in North Africa and Sicily removed the threat from Malta, and the island was used as an advanced headquarters and staging post for the attack on Sicily. The 1st Malta Brigade (later 231st) from the garrison was taken for this operation, and the 2nd Malta Brigade (later 234th) for the operation in the Aegean. Reconstruction and administration in the island have proceeded without major incident since the completion of the programme for the invasion of Sicily.

347. The opening of the Mediterranean decreased the importance of the line of communication through West Africa from the Belgian Congo. In consequence, the movement of military stores on the Nile route declined to negligible proportions, and in Sudan and Eritrea dumps and installations left over from the Eritrean operations, as well as from Africa lines of communication and as reserves for Egypt (accumulated during the period before Alamein), have been disposed of. This has released many troops for other operations.

348. Throughout the period, the Sudan Defence Force troops have been employed in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania on line of communication and garrison duties. The 12th Division, which consisted of the 4th Motor Battalion, 7th and 8th Infantry Battalions and ancillary units, was established in the Tripoli area by mid-February, 1943. The 9th Motor Battalion moved to Benghazi in May and the 12th Infantry Battalion to Tobruk in August, 1943, and until the end of the year there were always considerable numbers of Sudan Defence Force troops in Libya. A regular system of reliefs was carried out.

349. No problems likely to provide a threat to internal security have arisen in Sudan or Eritrea, and the Sudan has continued to provide large quantities of supplies for Middle