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OPERATIONS IN EAST AFRICA, NOVEMBER, 1940—JULY, 1941

The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on the 21st May, 1942, by General SIR ARCHIBALD P. WAVELL, G.C.B., C.M.G., M.C., Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East.

(TO COVER REPORTS BY LIEUT.-GENERAL W. PLATT AND LIEUT.-GENERAL A. G. CUNNINGHAM.)

1. I forward herewith accounts of the operations in the Sudan from November 1940 to July 1941 by Lieut.-General W. Platt and of the operations from Kenya between November 1940 and August 1941 by Lieut.-General A. Cunningham. These two accounts between them describe the conquest of practically the whole of Italian East Africa between the dates given. This covering despatch is intended to give the strategical background of the operations and to explain the instructions I issued as Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East.

2. In a previous despatch dated 11th December, 1940, I described how East Africa was placed under my command on 3rd February, 1940. The very small force then in East Africa was reinforced by a South African brigade and South African Air Contingent in June and two West African brigades in July. The remainder of the 1st South African Division arrived during the autumn of 1940, so that by October 1940 there were three divisions in East Africa, the 1st South African Division, and the 11th and 12th African Divisions. None of these divisions was of normal composition; their organisation is given in the Appendices to Lieut.-General Cunningham's report.

3. During the autumn and winter of 1940-41, in deciding the operations to be conducted from East Africa, I had to take into account two conflicting policies which were urged on me from different quarters. I was being pressed by the Defence Minister at Home to move forces from East Africa to Egypt; he complained that there were large masses of troops and

transport standing idle with no prospect of successful employment while there was great need for both further north in the Sudan and Egypt. During a visit I paid to London in August 1940 he had urged on me the policy of reducing troops to an absolute minimum in Kenya and he continued to suggest that a proportion of the troops in East Africa could more usefully be employed elsewhere. On the other hand I was made well aware of the undoubted feeling of nervousness, not only in Kenya but also in Rhodesia and even in South Africa, that the forces in East Africa were not sufficient to prevent an Italian invasion of Kenya and of the countries further south; in particular there was fear of an enemy occupation of the port of Mombasa. General Smuts frequently impressed on me the danger of reducing the Forces in East Africa.

Furthermore, the South African Division had originally been provided on the understanding that it was not to be used north of the Equator, while it was very doubtful whether the African troops for climatic reasons and their low scale of equipment would be so suitable for operations in other theatres. I resisted, therefore, proposals to reduce the force in East Africa, at least until we had driven the enemy further back.

4. On 1st November Lieut.-General A. Cunningham took over command in East Africa from Lieut.-General D. P. Dickinson.

5. On the 2nd December, 1940, on the eve of the offensive against Marshal Graziani's forces in the Western Desert, I held a meeting at Cairo, at which the Commanders in the Sudan and East Africa were present, to consider the strategy to be adopted against Italian East Africa. I laid down the following general policy at this conference:—

In the Sudan:

(a) To prepare an operation for the recapture of Kassala, which had been occupied by the enemy soon after the outbreak of war with

Italy, to be carried out early in 1941 if the necessary reinforcements could be made available from Egypt; this depended mainly on the success of the Desert offensive.

(b) To maintain pressure in the Gallabat area where a minor attack had been made early in November, but to undertake no large scale operations on that line.

(c) To further the rebellion in Abyssinia by all possible means.

In Kenya:

(a) In the south to advance to the frontier on the line Kolbio-Dif as soon as possible.

(b) On the northern frontier west of Moyale to maintain pressure on the enemy by means of small mobile columns.

(c) In May or June, after the rainy period, to advance on Kismayu; I had hoped for an advance on Kismayu before the rainy season but General Cunningham at this meeting informed me that after careful examination he did not consider it possible owing to water difficulties and lack of sufficient transport.

(d) In the spring and summer of 1941 to penetrate into south-west Abyssinia in conjunction with operations from the Boma area of the Sudan.

6. The ruling idea in my mind in the decisions taken at this conference was that the fomentation of the patriot movement in Abyssinia offered with the resources available the best prospect of making the Italian position impossible and eventually reconquering the country. I did not intend at the time a large scale invasion either from Kassala towards Asmara and Massawa, or from Kismayu to the north. The two operations to Kassala and Kismayu were designed to secure our flanks and I intended that our main effort should be devoted to furthering and supporting the rebellion by irregular action. I intended after the capture of Kassala and Kismayu to withdraw as many troops as possible from the Sudan and East Africa for the theatres further north. I had carefully examined the possibilities of an invasion of Italian East Africa in force during the period before Italy entered the war. I had come to the conclusion that the only two lines of invasion which offered a good prospect of success for a regular force were from Jibuti on Addis Ababa or from Kassala on Massawa; and of these the advance from Jibuti offered the better prospect of success, since it seemed that the natural difficulties of the Kassala-Asmara route would require too great a force for the single road by which it would have to be supplied. The French collapse and the Italian occupation of British Somaliland in August 1940 ruled out the possibility of the Jibuti advance.

7. During a visit to the Sudan in November with the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Anthony Eden, I had discussed at length the requirements for the development of the rebellion in Abyssinia and had made arrangements to do everything possible to assist the patriots. I appointed Lieut.-Colonel O. C. Wingate as staff officer for patriot activities and his energy and initiative was an important factor in the means by which the patriot movement gained so great an impetus in the succeeding months. Towards the end of November he had flown into Abyssinia and met Brigadier Sandford who

was already there with a small mission to prepare the way.

8. There were thus three separate lines of operation against Italian East Africa: in the north from the Sudan by Kassala into Eritrea, in the centre from the Sudan and later from East Africa into Abyssinia, and in the south from Kenya against Italian Somaliland.

9. The success of the offensive in the Western Desert of Egypt decided me to transfer the 4th Indian Division to the Sudan to enable the Kassala operation to be carried out. The decision for this transfer had to be made at very short notice, while the battle in the Western Desert was still in progress, since otherwise shipping would not have been available for some time and it would not have been possible to stage the attack on Kassala early in 1941 as I intended. Part of the 4th Indian Division was actually moved practically straight from the battlefield of Sidi Barrani to ships which conveyed them to the Sudan, and they were in action again in the Sudan very shortly after their arrival.

The 4th Indian Division moved partly by sea to Port Sudan and partly by railway and boat up the Nile Valley. The whole division was due to complete its arrival in the Sudan about the middle of January. General Platt originally fixed the date for the advance early in March but I issued orders to him that he was to attack early in February at the latest. Eventually the date, 9th February was fixed for the operation. I had sent one squadron of infantry tanks to the Sudan for the operation; these were the only tanks I could spare in view of the operations in the Western Desert against Marshal Graziani's army.

10. Meanwhile the preparations for the rebellion in Abyssinia were pushed on with great energy. The chief objective was to place a sufficient quantity of food and stores into Abyssinia beyond the escarpment before the rain rendered further movement of transport impossible. A small force of one battalion of Sudanese and a number of specially selected British officers and N.C.Os. were also sent forward. The Emperor, Haile Selassie, himself crossed the frontier and entered his kingdom on 20th January. The subsequent operations of the small force which cleared the Gojjam of large Italian forces was a very remarkable achievement, due largely to the energy and initiative of Brigadier Sandford, head of 101 Mission, Colonel O. C. Wingate, who commanded the regular forces taking part, the British officers and N.C.Os. who assisted him, and the fine fighting qualities of the Sudanese battalion.

11. During the winter a small mobile force, known as Gazelle Force, under Brigadier Messervy, continually harassed the Italian communications with Kassala and caused them great inconvenience and considerable losses. Early in January there were indications of the enemy's intention to withdraw from Kassala; and while on a visit to Khartoum I instructed General Platt to be ready to advance his operation to prevent the enemy withdrawal. Before he could get his troops into action, however, the enemy had evacuated Kassala and commenced his retreat.

12. This enemy withdrawal and the rapid and effective pursuit which General Platt at once initiated caused me to review my original

intention to confine the operation to the occupation of Kassala and a small part of Eritrea and to consider whether I should carry out a large scale operation into Eritrea with the intention of capturing Asmara. This would prevent my withdrawing troops from the Sudan for Egypt as early as I had intended, but operations were going very well in the Western Desert, there was no immediate need of additional troops in Egypt and there seemed a possibility that the enemy could be rushed over the mountain passes on to the Asmara plateau. I therefore instructed General Platt, during a visit I paid to the Sudan towards the end of January, to continue his pursuit and to press on towards Asmara. I also approved his proposal to use some Free French troops which were arriving at Port Sudan, together with the British and Indian troops already there, to advance along the Red Sea coast and into the hills towards Asmara.

13. I also visited Kenya at the end of January where General Cunningham informed me that in view of the success of the operations in the Western Desert, which was bound to have a considerable effect on Italian morale, and the fact that he had discovered additional supplies of water on the southern front, he was prepared to make an attempt to capture Kismayu early in February instead of waiting till after the rains in May. I instructed him to proceed with his intention and told him that if the operation against Kismayu was successful he should endeavour at once to cut the Mogadiscio-Addis Ababa road by which the enemy drew a considerable proportion of his supplies.

14. On 12th February, after I had received the Cabinet decision to send all available troops from the Middle East to the assistance of Greece, I had to decide whether or not to continue operations against Italian East Africa or to withdraw troops from that theatre to replace those who had been ordered to Greece. In view of the complete defeat of the Italian forces in Cyrenaica, I decided to allow the operations against Italian East Africa to continue for the present at any rate. I issued instructions to General Platt to endeavour to capture Asmara and Massawa and to General Cunningham to continue his operations against Kismayu. I told General Platt that he was to confine his operations to the occupation of Eritrea and was not to advance south from Eritrea into Abyssinia and that I should withdraw two or three brigade groups from him as soon as possible after his capture of Eritrea. I told General Cunningham that if he was successful in capturing Kismayu, he should advance on Mogadiscio if possible, but I warned him that I should probably require the withdrawal of the 1st South African Division at an early date.

15. Early in 1941 the Union Government had offered a second South African division for service in East Africa. I considered however that I had at that time sufficient troops in East Africa and asked that the division might be reserved for use further north.

16. On 24th February, in view of the rapidity with which General Cunningham's operations had progressed and the apparently complete disorganisation of the Italian forces in the south, I instructed General Cunningham that after the capture of Mogadiscio he should

if possible advance on Harrar to cut the communications between Addis Ababa and Jibuti, and told him that I proposed to initiate operations for the reoccupation of Berbera and British Somaliland, in order to open up a short line of supply to the forces which advanced on Harrar. General Cunningham pressed on his operations with the greatest vigour and was usually a little ahead of my proposals and intentions.

17. About the third week of March I had cause to reconsider the operations against Italian East Africa. At this time signs of an enemy counter-offensive in Cyrenaica were becoming apparent, practically the whole of my trained reserves were in Greece or on their way there and my need of troops to form a fresh reserve in Egypt was urgent. The 4th and 5th Indian Divisions were held up in front of the strong Keren position which they had failed to carry in spite of very gallant efforts. I had to decide whether to make another effort to capture the Keren position and reach Asmara or to adopt a defensive attitude in Eritrea and begin withdrawing troops. The position we held opposite Keren was not well situated for defence and the Italians, who were still in very superior numbers, might begin a counter-offensive if we accepted failure at Keren; and General Platt considered that a fresh attack might succeed. I therefore authorised him to continue his attempts to storm the Keren position, which he successfully accomplished on March 27th. The capture of this natural stronghold which the Italians had defended with such determination was a fitting climax to the great work in Eritrea of the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions, ably commanded by Major-General N. M. de la P. Beresford-Peirse and Major-General L. M. Heath respectively.

After the fall of Keren the Italians made little further effort to defend Eritrea, their oldest colony.

18. About the same time I had to decide whether to authorise General Cunningham to go on to Addis Ababa. I had originally intended to halt the operation after the capture of Dire Dawa and the reoccupation of British Somaliland, since I had urgent need of the 1st South African Division and some of the large quantities of transport which General Cunningham's operations were employing. Also it seemed to me that the occupation of Addis Ababa would confront us with an embarrassment of very large numbers of Italian civilians and would have no very great strategical object. I found, however, that General Cunningham was quite confident of capturing Addis Ababa and of dealing with the civilian problem and decided to allow him to continue his advance.

Addis Ababa was occupied on 6th April. In a remarkable campaign of two months General Cunningham's forces had captured over 50,000 prisoners and had occupied some 360,000 square miles at a cost of only 500 casualties, of whom under 150 were killed. His leaders in these operations were Major-General A. R. Godwin-Austen (12th African Division), Major-General H. E. de R. Wetherall (11th African Division) and Major-General G. E. Brink (1st South African Division).

19. Meanwhile a very skilfully conducted operation from Aden under the A.O.C., Air Vice-Marshal G. R. M. Reid, had resulted in

the recapture of Berbera on 16th March. This was speedily followed by the reoccupation of the whole colony. The use of the port of Berbera and the road from thence to Harrar enabled General Cunningham greatly to shorten his line of communications.

20. The success of General Cunningham's operations involved us in some very difficult administrative and political problems, the administration of the conquered territory, the security and feeding of the very large Italian civilian population in Addis Ababa and its vicinity, and the question of French Somaliland with the port of Jibuti and the railway from there to Addis Ababa.

I had begun preparations for the administration of enemy-occupied territory in Italian East Africa as early as December 1940 and a nucleus organisation was in existence at the time the occupation began. So rapidly, however, did the advance proceed, especially in the south, that it was almost impossible for administration to keep pace. In the circumstances it reflects the greatest credit on Sir Philip Mitchell, Brigadier Lush, Brigadier the Hon. F. R. Rodd and others that so much was accomplished and that there was no general breakdown of administration or of law and order.

21. The problem of the large Italian civilian populations in Asmara, capital of Eritrea, in Addis Ababa and elsewhere gave me anxiety both with respect to their safety and to the food problem. In the end our apprehensions were, however, largely relieved, the behaviour of the native population towards their former conquerors was in general tolerant and no revenge was sought, while the problem of food supply was of less difficulty than had been expected.

22. In connection with the feeding and possible evacuation of the population of Addis Ababa the position of the port at Jibuti and the railway was obviously of considerable importance. From the point of view of military administration the obvious policy was to come to an arrangement with the Vichy authorities for the use of the port and railway under certain terms in exchange for relaxation of the blockade to French Somaliland. It would probably have been possible to come to a satisfactory agreement and I proposed to open negotiations with the Governor of French Somaliland. The Free French were, however, anxious for political reasons to bring French Somaliland over to the Free French movement and were confident that this could be done by propaganda and by strict maintenance of the blockade. H.M.G. decided that the Free French policy should be adopted. The problem remained unsettled up to the time that I left the Middle East; the Free French authorities failed to win over the colony to their movement and the blockade failed to have the effect of reducing its resistance.

23. After the occupation of Addis Ababa on 6th April, General Cunningham wished to employ his forces to the west and south-west in order to reduce the enemy centre at Gimma and to secure his line of communication in the Lakes area. I was, however, anxious to get as quickly as possible the South African division and a large quantity of transport to Egypt and ordered him to advance north to secure the main road from Addis Ababa to Asmara so that troops and transport from South Abyssinia

could reach Egypt by embarkation at Massawa or Port Sudan or by the Nile Valley route. The 1st South African Brigade Group accordingly left Addis Ababa on 13th April and after capturing Dessie reached Amba Alagi on 8th May. The combined attack of the South Africans and the Sudan forces from the north resulted in the surrender of Amba Alagi on 17th May. The Duc D'Aosta, the Viceroy of Italian East Africa, surrendered at this place.

24. After the fall of Amba Alagi, the remaining centres of enemy resistance were in the Galla-Sidamo area in the south-west and in the Gondar area in the north-west. Some brilliant operations by the African divisions, assisted by a Belgian force from the Sudan, resulted in the complete liquidation of all Italian resistance in the south-west of Abyssinia, while the Italian outposts of the Gondar area were also cleared. The Gondar area itself was allowed to remain for the present as it could have no further influence on operations and I was anxious to transfer troops back to the main theatre in Egypt as rapidly as possible. The 4th Indian Division had begun to return to Egypt immediately after the fall of Keren and the 5th Indian Division followed after the fall of Amba Alagi.

25. During the operations by regular troops in the south and in the north, the west centre of Abyssinia was being cleared by some daring operations of Colonel Wingate's small regular force of Sudanese troops and bands of Abyssinian patriots assisted by British officers and N.C.Os. The Emperor, with Brigadier Sandford, followed the operations of these troops, and the Emperor made a formal entry into his capital of Addis Ababa on 5th May.

26. The conquest of Italian East Africa had been accomplished in four months, from the end of January to the beginning of June. In this period a force of approximately 220,000 men had been practically destroyed with the whole of its equipment and an area of nearly a million square miles had been occupied. Some of the chief features of this remarkable campaign were the storming by British and Indian troops of the formidable mountain barriers at Keren and Amba Alagi, the boldness and skill with which the operations from East Africa were pressed over a distance of about 2,000 miles from the base, and the very skilful guerilla fighting in Western Abyssinia.

The ultimate pattern of the conquest was a pincer movement on the largest scale, through Eritrea and Somaliland converging on Amba Alagi, combined with a direct thrust through Western Abyssinia by the patriot forces. It looks Teutonic in conception and execution; but, as explained above, this result was not foreseen in the original plan but arose gradually through the development of events. It was in fact an improvisation after the British fashion of war rather than a set piece in the German manner.

27. As will be seen from the above, General Platt and General Cunningham acted on broad general instructions from me and I made no attempt to control their operations in detail. Success was due mainly to their boldness and skill in execution, the quality of their subordinate commanders and to the dash and endurance of the troops. Both South African and African troops greatly distinguished themselves.

28. The support of the R.A.F. and S.A.A.F., with comparatively small numbers and equipment far from modern, was altogether admirable; and the co-operation between army and air forces close and efficient.

29. The Royal Navy assisted with their usual efficiency and spirit at Kismayu, Mogadiscio, Berbera, Massawa and elsewhere.

30. I should like to add a special tribute to Field-Marshal Smuts for his unfailing support of the East African campaign; and to the generous response that the Union Government invariably made to any requests for assistance, either in personnel or material, during the whole period of my command in the Middle East.

REPORT BY LT. GEN. SIR WILLIAM PLATT, K.C.B., D.S.O., ON THE OPERATIONS IN ERITREA AND ABYSSINIA.

From 1st December, 1940, to 26th August, 1941.

H.Q. Tps., Khartoum.

11th September, 1941.

PART I (A)

The Planning for the Battle of Kassala.

On 2nd December, 1940, at a conference held at G.H.Q. Middle East, the C.-in-C. outlined the policy for the troops in the Sudan as follows:—

- (a) To prepare to capture Kassala triangle in February.
- (b) To maintain pressure in Gallabat area but to attempt no large-scale operations at present.
- (c) To foster the rebellion in Abyssinia by all possible means.

The Enemy Situation.

By this time the enemy's chances of a successful major offensive against the Sudan had passed. Reinforcements consisting of 5th Indian Division, less one brigade group, much exaggerated by the enemy, were already in the country. We had fought the partially successful action at Gallabat. It was therefore probable that the Italian strategy would be:

- (a) To remain on the defensive on the Kenya front.
- (b) To prevent access from outside Ethiopia to the patriots, while concentrating inside to stamp out the revolt.
- (c) To protect Asmara and Massawa and to remain on the active defensive in the Kassala and El Ghena areas.

Although the Italian main strategy would probably be defensive, an attack in force to recapture Gallabat seemed likely. If successful, this would do much to prevent the passage of men, arms and money into the patriot areas from the Sudan. Furthermore, a success in the Sudan was needed to offset the serious reverses the Italians had suffered in Albania and were then suffering in the Western Desert.

Enemy Strength.

At this time there were the equivalent of two Italian Divisions in the Kassala area, one in the area Kassala—Tessenei—Sabdarat and

one in the general area Adardeb—Serobatib—Wachai—Baraka Valley. The defences of Kassala had been developed to such an extent that considerable forces would be needed if Kassala was to be attacked with any chance of success.

As a result of our recent offensive at Gallabat, the enemy had increased his forces in the neighbourhood of Metemma and along the Gondar—Metemma road, making it necessary for us to retain sufficient forces in this area to prevent a successful hostile offensive.

Preliminary Operations.

Additional to these plans to achieve surprise in the major action, certain complementary operations were to be staged:—

(a) In the Boma area, G.O.C. East Africa intended to operate about 15th January to capture Baco and Maji. The Equatorial Corps and Patriots were to co-operate.

(b) In the Upper Nile area, minor operations were to be carried out in January by 2/6 King's African Rifles and the Upper Nile Police Forces.

(c) In the Blue Nile area the company of the Frontier Battalion, which was already in the Belaya massif, was to be reinforced and the Emperor himself was to move into this area.

Forces Available for the Attack.

It was necessary, for purposes of defence, to maintain one brigade (7th Indian Infantry Brigade), less one battalion, in the areas Port Sudan—Gebeit and one complete Indian Infantry brigade group (9th Indian Infantry Brigade) to contain the enemy forces opposite Gallabat. That left 4th and 5th Indian Divisions with only two brigades each available for Kassala. Moreover, 5th Indian Division was short of 144 Field Regiment which was split between 9th Infantry Brigade at Gallabat and Gazelle Force. This was, to some extent, compensated for by the addition of one medium battery, 6-inch Hows., and two troops 3.7-inch Hows. Sudan Defence Force.

'B' Squadron 4 Royal Tank Regiment had arrived by sea some time previously and had been concealed near Port Sudan. Considerable difficulties of movement were caused by the wrong specification of weights and length of "I" tanks being given to Sudan Railways. This resulted in the flats for moving this Squadron by rail being strengthened in the wrong way. When the real weights and lengths were discovered, hardly any time was left to modify the flats. It was never possible to move the whole squadron by rail at once. The first troop was moved forward 15th January and reached Sabdarat on night 23rd January.

Topography.

The country round Kassala can be compared with a sea studded with islands. The desert is the sea, the jebels the islands, rising steep and rocky from the desert plain. West of Kassala the jebels are few and unimportant. Eastwards they increase in numbers and size until the foothills are reached. North and South are scattered jebels of considerable tactical importance. The desert is, on the whole, good going for M.T. of all types. If

* NOTE.—"I" (Infantry) tanks are medium tanks used for co-operation with infantry.

the enemy held these jebels determinedly, it was an infantry task to drive him out. Previous experience in minor operations in this area had proved that the Italians did, in fact, hold these natural strong points even if surrounded by mechanized or motorised forces.

Concealment.

Such a country was unsuitable for the concentration of large forces if their presence was to remain undiscovered, quite apart from the difficulty of finding sufficient water. At the Butana Bridge, though water was plentiful, cover was scanty. For these reasons and to aid deception three brigade groups were initially concentrated at or near Gedaref.

Running North from Kassala is the Gash Delta, an area thickly covered by bush, containing ample water and intersected by numerous dusty tracks. This was capable of hiding a considerable force but it was too near the enemy in Kassala for it to be possible to conceal troops there for any length of time without their presence being discovered. The cover was sufficient to conceal the strength of troops located therein. 4th Indian Division, less two brigades, was eventually concentrated in the Gash, screened by Gazelle Force, which had been using this area as a harbour for some time.

Strength Needed to Capture the Kassala—Sabdarat—Tessenei Triangle.

To capture the Kassala—Sabdarat—Tessenei triangle, and confirm the victory, a force of four brigade groups supported by some medium artillery, tanks and aircraft, was necessary.

The Commander-in-Chief made a force known as "Force Emily" available for operations in the Sudan. This force was moved partly by sea and partly by the Nile Valley route. The first flight consisted of the 7th Indian Infantry Brigade Group plus 68 Medium Regiment, less one battery, and certain other units which arrived at Port Sudan on 30th December. This brigade was moved to the Port Sudan-Gebeit area. The remaining parts of the force were due to arrive by sea on 7th, 14th and 21st January. The part moved by Nile Valley route, consisting of the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade Group and the Divisional Cavalry Regiment, plus other units, was due to arrive at Wadi Halfa over a period of five weeks from about 30th December. For its success the attack needed a waning moon and 9th February was provisionally fixed. It will therefore be seen that there was very little time between the arrival of the last units of Force Emily and the attack. This was compensated for by the fact that the units of Force Emily were all seasoned troops and had had active service experience.

Arrival of Force Emily in the Sudan.

The arrival of Force Emily in the Sudan taxed the Sudan Staff and Railways to the utmost. At this time there were no L. of C. signals in the Sudan and the difficulty of getting instructions and orders to units as they arrived was very great. Although every effort was made to deliver to each unit as it disembarked at Port Sudan, or as it arrived at Wadi Halfa, a complete set of documents, code lists and instructions appertaining to the Sudan, this was

not in every case successful. The Sudan railway is only single line and the circuit had been cut by the enemy at Kassala. Accurate timing was needed so that the necessary rolling stock and flats should always be available to meet units as they arrived into the Sudan. The shortness of time available made it impossible to keep stock waiting and it was for this reason that some units had to be sent forward to concentration areas without their transport. This meant that on arrival they were immobile and were unable either to move themselves away from the railway or even to draw rations. In spite of this, no very great discomfort was experienced by any of the units. In general, the concentration can be said to have been carried out successfully and that, with the exception of the unfortunate bombing of the train containing 3/14 Punjab Regiment, enemy action caused no delay or casualties. Credit is due to the Q Movement staff in Khartoum that this move was completed without a hitch.

Operations during the Concentration Period.

During December and January, all through the period of concentration of Force Emily, active patrolling was continued both in the Gallabat area and in the country around Kassala. Day and night patrols kept commanders well informed of the dispositions and strength of the enemy. In the Gallabat area our artillery cost the enemy much loss, and, although we were unable to occupy Metemma itself, it was made untenable by the enemy as any movements seen immediately drew our artillery fire. In the country round Kassala, frequent and daring patrols by day and night established such an ascendancy over the enemy that he never ventured out of his defended positions except in strength, and that only rarely. Gazelle Force and 2 M.M.G. Group, S.D.F. from Butana Bridge dominated all the country that was not actually inside the Italian wire and fortifications.

Patrols laid frequent ambushes on the roads leading east and south from Kassala, destroying enemy vehicles and keeping him continuously on the alert. The effect of these patrols was to give the personnel of Gazelle Force and 2 M.M.G. Group a feeling of confidence and superiority over the enemy which may account for the skill and dash with which they led the pursuit in later days. Documents subsequently captured prove that, so effective was the screen put up by our forces at this time that the enemy's intelligence was gravely at fault. His estimate of our strength was exaggerated. Throughout this period 203 Group, R.A.F., afforded support to ground troops. The Rhodesian Army Co-operation Squadron, operating with Gazelle, carried out several successful joint operations with ground troops, both by bombing and low-flying attack. Long distance raids were made from Khartoum as far as Gondar, Gura and Asmara, and into Ethiopia in support of Patriot activities.

Enemy Action.

On the other hand, this period was not without anxiety, for the enemy forces concentrating between Gondar and Metemma were considerable. Reports of the enemy strengthening his garrisons at Kurmuk in the Upper Blue Nile sector and of improving the motor road from

Asosa to Kurmuk, were constant threats to the Nile L. of C. and the railway at Sennar.

Period before Italian Evacuation of Kassala.

From early January there were strong indications from all sources of intelligence that the enemy might be intending to evacuate Kassala. At first it was not possible to say definitely whether the moves which the enemy was making were a re-grouping of his forces to resist an expected attack by us, or were the preliminaries to complete evacuation. Our forces were far from concentrated and there was considerable risk that if a premature attack was launched against the Kassala-Sabdarat-Tessenei triangle, it might suffer a reverse from lack of sufficient strength and delay the eventual advance unduly. So strong were the indications that the enemy really did intend to withdraw, probably to the line Aicota-Keru, that by 12th January, a conference was called of both Divisional Commanders in Khartoum to decide on the earliest possible date an advance could be made and what strength would be available.

On the evening of 12th January, an order was sent to 4th and 5th Indian Divisions ordering 11th Indian Infantry Brigade Group to concentrate forthwith in the Aroma area and warning them that the brigade might be required to seize the Jebel Mokram and Jebel Kawatab, large jebels on the north-east side of Kassala and approximately three miles from it, not earlier than the night 16/17th January. 5th Indian Division was warned that it might be required to seize the Jebel Ibrahim Tau not earlier than the same night. 5th Indian Division was given permission to move forward 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, 68 Medium Regiment, less a battery, and 28 Field Regiment. (These had been held back in Gedaref area for reasons of secrecy and deception.) Gazelle was ordered to be prepared to operate east of Sabdarat. Reliable information revealed that the enemy now intended to evacuate the Walkait (Tsegede) garrison. There were only mule-tracks from this area to Gondar and the L. of C. was to Tessenei. From this it was reasonable to suppose that these forces would retire on Barentu covered for the first part of their move by Umm Hagar garrison. This was confirmed next day by the Manager of the Italian Cotton Scheme south of Tessenei who gave himself up at the Butana Bridge and stated that the enemy intended to retire to the hills "on account of the superiority of our tanks." The date of the attack on Kassala was fixed for 19th January.

Advance Headquarters.

On 18th January, a small Advanced Headquarters was established at the Butana Bridge. Advanced Headquarters, 203 Group, R.A.F., were established at the same place and time.

Orders for Pursuit.

It now became clear that the enemy had escaped from Kassala. At 1940 hours, orders were issued for the pursuit to commence and 4th Indian Division were directed first on Sabdarat, second on Wachai, and third to exploit towards Keru up to the limit of administration. 5th Indian Division was directed first on Tessenei, second on Aicota, and third to be prepared to exploit either towards Barentu or Biscia. The "I" tanks were to follow 4th Indian Division as soon as they detrained at

Aroma, although it was doubtful whether the country further east would be suitable for their employment.

Administrative Note.

A few words on the administrative difficulties are not out of place here. 4th Indian Division was extended from Sabdarat as far back as Derudeb, 165 miles to the north, with 5th Infantry Brigade moving from the Gedaref area, 150 miles to the south-west. The Central India Horse and some transport for 5th Infantry Brigade were still on the Nile Valley route, 250 miles to the north-west in a straight line across the desert, and more than double that by rail. The situation of 5th Indian Division was, if anything, even more difficult as its rear H.Q. was still in Gedaref and it also had to maintain the force operating up the Setit River based on Showak. Signal communications were becoming stretched and later, particularly in the case of 4th Indian Division, reached breaking point.

The pursuit started on the northern road Sabdarat-Wachai-Keru with Gazelle Force leading 11th Indian Infantry Brigade and 4th Indian Division; 5th Infantry Brigade a long way behind and not reaching Kassala until 20th January. Gazelle had its first brush with the enemy near Wachai, where a rearguard of approximately one battalion was unable to impose any great delay on our advance. It was here that our troops had their first serious air attack, but luckily few casualties were inflicted and the troops were unshaken.

Simultaneously, 5th Indian Division led by 10th Infantry Brigade succeeded in crossing the Gash near Tessenei and pursued the enemy toward Aicota which was reported unoccupied on the morning of 21st January.

Kassala itself was found to be very little damaged. Railway water tanks were destroyed and some rails had been removed. Signal cable lines were left intact. On his entry into Tessenei Commander 5th Indian Division was given a letter from the late Italian Civil Governor pointing out that he had left the town practically undamaged and expressing the hope that throughout the campaign both sides would respect civilian property. The repair of the railway line was put in hand immediately and the first train arrived at Kassala, which became railhead, on 25th January.

Action at Keru.

On 21st January the first serious resistance was encountered by 4th Indian Division on the northern route at Keru, where the road passes through a long steep ridge of hills. The road runs through a very narrow gorge and was a bad road for M.T. even before the enemy demolitions had made it more difficult.

4th Indian Division attacked from the east, and at the same time a Mechanized Column consisting of No. 2 M.M.G. Group with 2 Highland Light Infantry under command (Commander El Miralai Orr Bey, D.S.O.), moved from Aicota via Biscia towards Daura Toat, thus getting behind the enemy forces at Keru. The reconnaissance of the Keru position revealed that the gorge was narrow with hills rising about 1,500 ft. on either side. The position was well prepared and held by five enemy battalions. It was an ideal rearguard position and it appeared that the enemy

intended to hold this for some time. During the early morning, 21st January, the gun positions of 25 Field Regiment and H.Q. Gazelle Force were charged from the flank by a party of about sixty enemy cavalry. They pressed home their attack with gallantry, throwing bombs at our troops, and were only stopped 25 yards from the gun positions by the guns firing point-blank, and by fire from L.M.Gs., rifles, and even anti-tank rifles. An attack by an enemy battalion from Keru was repulsed by Skinner's Horse. Throughout the day there was considerable enemy air activity though no great damage was done. Signal communication was very difficult, the wireless being variable owing to the proximity of the hills, atmospheric and distortion. By the evening, 3/14 Punjab and 31 Field Regiment had arrived at Sabdarat. 5th Infantry Brigade, less 4/6 Rajputana Rifles, all its carriers and much of its M.T., had arrived at Kassala and was there joined by a detachment of four "I" tanks. 3/14 Punjab Regiment were unfortunate in being the only unit to suffer casualties from enemy air action during the concentration period. The train in which they were travelling was bombed south of Derudeb, one British Officer and 23 O.Rs. were killed, two British Officers and 20 O.Rs. wounded.

During the early hours of 22nd January, 4/11 Sikh Regiment, less one company, which was the motorised battalion operating with Gazelle, attacked the enemy positions on a hill to the south of the Keru gorge. This action was successful.

During the night 22nd/23rd January, the enemy retired eastwards from his strong positions, probably due to the arrival of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade across the road Aicota—Biscia east of Keru, but it was not until 1500 hours on 23rd January that Gazelle Force was able to get through the Keru gorge, due to the large number of mines and damage done to the road. Practically the whole of the enemy force, 41 Colonial Brigade, fell into the hands of the Mechanized Column and 10th Infantry Brigade, the enemy Brigade Commander and most of his staff with about 800 prisoners being captured.

With the unopposed occupation of Aicota on 21st January, and the forcing of the Keru gorge by 23rd January, the enemy had been forced off his first line of resistance. The way was now open for our forces to advance on Agordat and Barentu. 4th Indian Division, whose L. of C. had to remain on the line Kassala—Sabdarat—Wachai—Keru, was faced with considerable administrative difficulties and ever increasing length of signal communication. It was still encumbered by its "tail", consisting of 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, a large proportion of whose transport had not yet caught up. The road Kassala—Keru and beyond was little more than a track. It had to cross several khors and constant work was necessary to keep it passable. The evacuation of wounded over this long and rough track caused considerable hardship.

5th Indian Division, on the other hand, once they had passed Tessenei, were on to the main strada which runs all the way from Tessenei via Barentu, Agordat and Asmara to the sea at Massawa. This strada was a well made motor road, capable of taking two lines of traffic, and although it was not tarmac it had a good macadam surface.

10th Infantry Brigade and the mechanized column which had been sent from Aicota to cut off the Keru garrison, once 4th Indian Division had passed on towards Agordat, were collected about three miles south of Biscia. It could either be moved back through Aicota and thence east along the strada to assist 29th Indian Infantry Brigade advancing on Barentu from west; or, if a way could be found, directed south-east across country to cut the Barentu—Agordat road. This would allow an attack to be developed against Barentu simultaneously from north and west. The only available maps gave no clue. A route was found starting approximately two miles east of Biscia railway station, which, after running across country in a south-easterly direction, struck the Barentu—Agordat road near Terchina, 25 kilos north of Barentu. During the period while this track was being made by the sappers, some of the transport of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade was lent to 4th Indian Division to assist 11th Indian Infantry Brigade forward towards Agordat. 11th Indian Infantry Brigade was directed to cut across the Agordat—Barentu road south of Agordat as early as possible on 26th January.

In the meantime 29th Infantry Brigade had advanced along the strada from Aicota towards Barentu, and, having fought two successful small actions, first at Gogni, which they captured on 25th January, and secondly at Tauda on 29th January, was closing in on Barentu from the west.

The cross-country move of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade, which had one and a half field regiments and one troop of 6-inch howitzers under command, was carried out without interference from the enemy. Barentu was threatened from the north by 28th January as well as from the west.

While these advances were taking place, the force operating up the Setit River had been active, and by 26th January had occupied Umm Hagar. The enemy force in the Walkait, finding that their line of retreat through Barentu was likely to be cut, were directed across-country on to Tole. Up to this time there was no information that a road or track practicable for M.T. existed, leading eastwards from Barentu towards the escarpment at Arresa, and it was not until late in the action against Barentu that ground reconnaissance behind the enemy position discovered this route, by which the enemy eventually attempted to escape.

Biscia is the terminus of the Italian narrow-gauge railway. From Biscia towards Agordat the road is slightly better, and was in parts metalled. 4th Indian Division, led by Gazelle Force, moved rapidly on to Agordat and by the evening of 25th January. Skinner's Horse were in a position west of Agordat from which the town could be seen. The route had been blocked in various places by fallen tree-trunks and a few mines, but nothing serious was met, and it was clear that the enemy had been hurried in his retreat. On this side of Agordat, the road runs for some miles close to the Baraka River, which at that time was a broad, sandy, dry river bed—a considerable obstacle for M.T. without the use of Army track or other extemporised crossing material. Both banks are thickly overgrown with palm trees, impassable for M.T. except on the tracks. While 11th Indian Infantry Brigade was being pushed

forward to place itself astride the Barentu-Agordat road, south of Agordat, Gazelle Force covered its left flank and secured the L. of C. of 4th Indian Division. The Commander 4th Indian Division took a risk by side-stepping his force from the west to the south of Agordat, and against a determined enemy capable of launching a counter attack his L. of C. would have been in jeopardy, but, throughout the advance from Kassala, the enemy had shown no very determined fighting spirit, and in the circumstances this risk was justifiable. By 27th January, 5th Indian Infantry Brigade had reached Biscia and was moving forward to join 11th Indian Infantry Brigade as quickly as it could be moved, bringing with it the "I" tanks. Such had been the speed of the move that 4th Indian Division Signals had now reached breaking point. Over 100 miles of cable had been used, and there had been no time to collect the cable which had been laid out in the Gash area before the advance had commenced. The cypher personnel were overworked, and were approximately 48 hours behind hand with their messages. Commander 4th Indian Division destroyed these messages and started afresh.

Agordat was the first town of any size met in Eritrea. It was a strong defensive position. To the north and west the Baraka Valley; south was the feature known as Laquatat—a large hilly feature, with concrete trenches, emplacements and O.Ps. East of the Laquatat feature and extending for about two miles is an open plain, intersected with dry stream beds, and defended by a series of field defences and anti-tank pits. This plain was bounded on the east by M. Cochen, a big, rocky feature rising 2,000 feet from the plain. At the foot of M. Cochen towards Laquatat is a low underfeature, a mere pile of rocks 100 feet high, forming a natural flank to the line of artificial defences across the plain. This feature was named Gibraltar by 4th Indian Division. The strada from Barentu approaches Agordat from a direction slightly west of south, and on entering the town turns sharply east and runs through a narrow gorge bounding M. Cochen on the north. From thence it runs through more open country until crossing the River Carabei at the Ponte Mussolini, a large modern bridge 18 kilos from Agordat.

The Course of the Battle.

The course of the battle was as follows.

Gazelle Force was first ordered to explore the possibility of encircling Agordat from the south, but found themselves entangled in the many khors and had to return. They next attempted to get round the north flank, but again difficulties of the Baraka River and the dom-palms were too great. Gazelle was then left watching the northern flank, whilst 11th Indian Infantry Brigade was moved across towards M. Cochen, 5th Indian Infantry Brigade stepping-up and taking its place on the left of 11th Indian Infantry Brigade, connecting 11th Indian Infantry Brigade and Gazelle Force. A night reconnaissance in force discovered that Laquatat was very strong. Commander 4th Indian Division therefore directed 11th Indian Infantry Brigade on to M. Cochen and two battalions supported by an Artillery O.P. Party succeeded in establishing themselves on the top of the mountain. They were strongly resisted

by five battalions of the enemy and although severely counter-attacked, and on one occasion nearly driven off, a grip was maintained on the hill for 48 hours. A note-worthy incident of the fighting on this hill was the gallant bayonet charge by a party of Sappers and Miners led by an Indian Officer in aid of a hard-pressed party of 3/14 Punjabs. On the morning of 31st January, 2 Camerons attacked and stormed the rocky ridge known as Gibraltar. On this being secured, 1 Royal Fusiliers, supported by "I" tanks, launched a successful attack against the enemy positions in the plain between Laquatat and M. Cochen. 2 Camerons exploited along the lower slopes west of M. Cochen, knocking-out enemy medium tanks with anti-tank rifles as they advanced. Shortly before mid-day three "I" tanks and the carriers of 2 Camerons carried out a raid along the west side of M. Cochen towards the main road. In this area they encountered enemy medium and light tanks and troops which were probably the enemy's counter-attacking force waiting in this area. Five medium and five light tanks were destroyed and large numbers of enemy troops, both Italian and Native, were killed. At 1430 hours 3/1 Punjabs, supported by two "I" tanks, passed through 1 Royal Fusiliers and secured some low hills just to the south-east of Agordat. These were captured just before nightfall, and the enemy's main L. of C. was cut. Artillery O.Ps. on M. Cochen had reported during the afternoon that they could see the enemy withdrawing from the Laquatat feature into the town, and the R.A.F. reported large bodies of enemy streaming through the gorge north of M. Cochen. Two "I" tanks under command of a Second-Lieutenant were sent into the gorge after dark in an attempt to create a panic. Next morning Agordat town was occupied by 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, and although the enemy and native population had indulged in a night of looting, destruction of property was not unduly great. A large quantity of war material and guns fell into our hands. A proportion of the enemy infantry escaped by rail and over the hills to the north of the main road.

Barentu Front.

In the meantime 5th Indian Division was attacking Barentu. By 27th January, 10th Indian Infantry Brigade advancing on Barentu from the north after their action east of Keru had reached a point about two miles north of the town. Here the road winds up a long and very steep gorge. The road itself works its way up the western side, and near the top the enemy had carried out a successful demolition, blowing hundreds of tons of rock down on to the road.

The country around Barentu is excellent for defence, consisting as it does of a number of low ridges, thickly covered by scrub. To a defender they offer a series of good rearguard positions. To an attacker they are difficult, as it is hard to point out an objective, and even harder for the attacking troops to know when they have reached an objective. Barentu itself is on a little knoll in the centre of a saucer of hills. The defence had the advantage of excellent covered lateral communications and although pressed from two sides, could deny artillery observation to us until the rim of the saucer was secured. It was through this type

of rolling country that 29th Indian Infantry Brigade had to make its way ever since leaving Aicota. The advance of 29th Indian Infantry Brigade compared with that of the other brigades was slow. This was due to the rear-guard actions fought, the enemy's use of mines, and the fact that this brigade could be given no troop-carrying transport. Only one demolition of any size was encountered by this brigade when on reaching a road bridge approximately 12 kilos west of Barentu they found it severely blown and an alternative route through the bushes heavily mined. This, however, did not impose any great delay, the artillery supporting 29th Indian Infantry Brigade being brought forward into action with praiseworthy energy and determination. On 1st February, No. 2 M.M.G. Group S.D.F., having worked its way across-country, carried out a successful raid on the road running east from Barentu where it inflicted heavy casualties on an enemy Colonial Battalion which was withdrawing eastwards. During the night 1/2nd February, the enemy evacuated Barentu, and, on the early morning of 2nd February, 10th and 29th Indian Infantry Brigades occupied the town. An immediate pursuit to the limit of endurance was ordered and taken up by No. 2 M.M.G. Group S.D.F. assisted by the R.A.F. The enemy suffered casualties all the way. He was intending to reach Arresa and the escarpment by way of an old track which had been allowed to become overgrown. This track ran through from Barentu via Scipitale Defile—Tole—and thence up the Torrenti Ambessa to Adi Raghebla. Some miles beyond Adi Raghebla the track descends steeply into the valley of the Mai Terageit and here the enemy finally abandoned the last of his vehicles and guns. Only one light car and possibly one motor cycle reached Arresa. The rest of the enemy force escaped as a weary and disorganised rabble.

PART I (B).

Gallabat Area.

Throughout the period of the pursuit, the 9th Indian Infantry Brigade had been containing the enemy at Gallabat, and, by active patrolling, had kept him fully occupied. On 25th January the advance towards Asmara had gone so well that the decision was made to make this the main thrust, and to be content with watching the route Gedaref—Gallabat—Gondar with a minimum force. Orders were issued cancelling the work already begun on the extension of the Sudan railway from Gedaref towards Gallabat. The railway from Kassala was to be extended as quickly as possible as far as Tessenei. This work was given priority over all other railway work in the Sudan. It was further decided that an all-weather road from Rashid to Gallabat was not now necessary, and that a well maintained dry-weather track would suffice.

The first indications that the enemy intended to withdraw from Gallabat came from Intelligence sources early in January, and there was every indication that this withdrawal would be co-ordinated with the withdrawal from Umm Hagar, Walkait and the Kassala—Sabdarat—Tessenei triangle. 9th Indian Infantry Brigade had kept up continuous patrol activity, but it was not until 30th January that the enemy's withdrawal became imminent. If this should happen 9th Indian Infantry Brigade were instructed to pursue with a mechanised column

only. The main body of 9th Indian Infantry Brigade was ordered to remain in the Metemma area, so that they could be quickly switched to the main front. By 1st February the enemy was on the move, pursued by the mechanised column consisting of the carriers of 9th Indian Infantry Brigade and a Motorised Company of 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment, preceded by a detachment of 21 Field Company, Sappers and Miners. The enemy's retirement on this front was much less hurried than on the 4th and 5th Indian Divisional lines of advance and great delay was imposed by his lavish use of mines along the seventy miles from Metemma to Chelga. It was in clearing these mines that Second-Lieutenant Bhagat of 21 Field Company, Sappers and Miners, earned his V.C. for cool and conspicuous gallantry and endurance over a long period. After crossing the River Gandwa, where our mechanised column first made contact with the remnants of the Italian garrison of Karawa which was retreating in disorder harassed by the patriots, steady progress was made, and by 10th February, contact was made with the Abyssinian patriots in Wahni. By 13th February, 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, less 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment, was concentrated in Gedaref, leaving 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment supported by 144 Field Regiment, less one battery, 21 Field Company and one troop of "X" Light A.A. Battery, Sudan Regiment, in the areas Metemma—Gandwa—Wahni.

PART II.

Pursuit to Keren.

On 1st February, immediately after the battle of Agordat, Gazelle Force was directed to pursue the enemy towards Keren, but 18 kilos from Agordat it was held up until 1700 hours by the demolished Ponte Mussolini. The main girders of this bridge had been blown, and it was impossible to get M.T. over it. The Baraka at this point is about 150 yards wide, and at that time consisted of a strip of soft, deep sand over which vehicles could not pass without some form of temporary track. The construction of this track was made more difficult by the large number of mines which the enemy had laid around all the approaches to the bridge, and along the only alternative route. The enemy had covered this demolition and minefield by a pack gun and a few machine-guns. Accurate shooting by a section of field artillery succeeded in knocking these out quickly. By the evening of 2nd February, Gazelle with six "I" tanks and 11th Indian Infantry Brigade were only five miles from Keren.

Topography.

After crossing the Ponte Mussolini the strada runs in a general north-easterly direction over open, slightly rolling country. Ahead is the escarpment, a high, dark, solid wall barring the way into Eritrea. From this distance it appears to be a sheer cliff, stretching as far as the eye can see without a break. For the last few miles before Keren the road runs through a narrow valley, bounded on the left by the escarpment itself, and on the right by a great spur, whose highest peak rises to 6,000 feet.

In this valley and on the surrounding heights was fought the battle of Keren. Nowhere were the enemy O.P.s. less than 500 feet above the valley; in most cases they were 2,000 feet up.

Throughout the hours of daylight no movement of man, beast, or vehicle was possible unseen from at least one and usually many enemy view points. The valley was of sand and gravel, with sparse scrub and occasional tebedi trees affording, in places, some cover from direct observation to men at rest and guns.

The valley varies in width from half-a-mile to a mile-and-a-half. The road runs along the south side until opposite M. Dologorodoc where it turns sharply north over a bridge, and, after climbing the lower slopes of this hill, enters the Dongolaas gorge. Up this narrow slit in the hills, nowhere more than 300 yards wide, the road climbs to the higher level of the plain of Keren.

Below Fort Dologorodoc and east of where the road crosses the valley is a wide amphitheatre known as the Happy Valley. The only entrance for wheeled-traffic is over the bridge at the corner where the road turns north. In the north wall of this cup is the Acqua gap, really only a lessening of height and steepness, down which the rain water from the plain of Keren makes its way. This gap is flanked on the east by M. Zelale, a high, rocky hill known from its shape as "The Sphinx".

Fort Dologorodoc, guarding the entrance of the Dongolaas gorge is itself overlooked on the east, north-east and north-west by Mts. Falestoh, Zeban and Sanchil. From all of these fire could be brought on to the Fort. Troops on M. Dologorodoc could never be out of sight of at least one of these.

North-westwards from M. Sanchil the series of features, Brigs Peak, Sugar Loaf, Saddle, Near Feature, Hogs Back, Flat Top Hill, Molehill, M. Samanna and North of Saddle, M. Amba, were all the scenes of serious fighting. These mountains are very steep. Their slopes are covered with large boulders and scrub. There were no paths up them when the troops first arrived. As an indication of their size and steepness, it was a good hour-and-a-quarter's walk to the gunner O.P. on Rajputana Ridge which is itself only half way up Brigs Peak. The railway from Agordat to Keren runs along the north side of the valley, and by the time it reaches Dongolaas gorge has climbed a third of the way up the lower slopes of M. Sanchil. A man standing in the valley sees the railway clinging, high up, to the hill-sides above him. This railway was subsequently of great assistance to 4th Indian Division in maintaining the troops holding the heights.

At the time of the fall of Agordat the garrison of Keren was known to be one Colonial Brigade, and it was hoped that by moving rapidly, the town might be reached before reinforcements could arrive. By 2nd February it was discovered that one other Colonial Brigade and part of the Grenadier Division from Addis Ababa had been brought up. In the first rush Gazelle Force reached the road-block in the Dongolaas gorge. This was a formidable demolition covered by fire, and situated on the west side of Fort Dologorodoc. Once the enemy were in position it was difficult to get a view of this road-block from any point in the battlefield, except Cameron Ridge (a sub-feature of M. Sanchil). A detailed reconnaissance was, thereafter, only possible inside an "I" tank. 11th Indian Infantry Brigade was moving

behind Gazelle with 2 Camerons embussed. On 3rd February the "I" tanks made a determined attack upon the road-block but were unable to get past. 2 Camerons went up the hill on the left towards Brigs Peak and secured Cameron Ridge. Skinner's Horse secured the right flank and a battalion was sent into Happy Valley to try and find a way round the right.

Factors Affecting the Decision to Fight at Keren.

The storming of the Keren position was no light task. Its natural strength, the difficulties of maintenance and the climatic conditions had to be faced. Every day the temperature was rising. A numerically superior enemy had chosen Keren as the ground on which to fight what might prove to be a decisive battle. The enemy had every advantage of observation and possessed a still strong and active air force. Gaining surprise was unlikely. The forcing of Keren was bound to mean hard fighting and casualties which would be difficult to replace. The desirability of finding a way round was obvious. From almost the day of the first contact at Keren continuous and wide reconnaissances were made to north and south seeking an alternative way through the escarpment wall. 3 Central India Horse searched south for 60 miles until making contact with No. 2 Motor Machine Gun Group S.D.F. which was facing Arresa. At Arresa was a possible gap, but the route had proved so difficult that the retreating Italians from Barentu had been forced to abandon all their vehicles. Now, not only were there the natural difficulties, but the way was blocked by enemy forces. No road capable of maintaining a force strong enough to fight its way through existed from Barentu, and the time it would take to build one would allow the enemy to make the Arresa position as formidable as Keren. A successful attack here would not return the same dividend as at Keren. Rain would bring M.T. moving between Barentu and Arresa to a stand-still. No way was found to the north either. It became clear that Keren is the only practicable approach to the higher levels of the escarpment for a force of any size.

First Attack on Acqua Gap.

By 6th February, as the situation in Agordat was quite calm, 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, less one battalion, was moved forward to the Keren area with the intention of attacking round the right flank through Happy Valley and Acqua gap. The difficulties of this operation will be appreciated when it is realised that throughout the entire battle the enemy had the high ground, and all movements, whether in M.T. or on foot, were clearly visible to his O.Ps. O.Ps. on Fort Dologorodoc and M. Sanchil have the road almost in enfilade for miles. O.Ps. on M. Samanna and M. Amba overlooked all administrative areas of the forward brigades. During the night 4/5th February, 3/14 Punjab Regiment went through 2 Camerons on Cameron Ridge and occupied Brigs Peak, but were driven off on the afternoon of the next day. 11/6 Rajputana Rifles occupied the extension of Cameron Ridge south of Brigs Peak, and although severely counter-attacked, held on. Throughout all this early period of the battle, the enemy was being rapidly reinforced, and was counter-attacking

with skill and determination. At this time his troops were rather better at moving on the hill than were ours, and a certain amount of the lessons of Frontier Warfare had to be unlearnt due to the influence of artillery, mortars, L.M.Gs. and aircraft on mountain warfare. During the night 7/8th February, 5th Indian Infantry Brigade moved into the Happy Valley, and on the early morning of 8th February, 4/6 Rajputana Rifles attacked the Acqua Col. This was found to be wired and strongly held, and they were unable to reach their objective, eventually consolidating on a ridge below the col. 5th Indian Infantry Brigade remained in this valley some days, being subjected to fairly heavy attacks from the enemy airforce. Pressure against 11th Indian Infantry Brigade on Cameron Ridge and Rajputana Ridge features was severe, and a second attempt to secure Brigs Peak, which would relieve pressure on 11th Indian Infantry Brigade and give us artillery observation of Keren, was decided upon. This attack was carried out by 3/1 Punjab Regiment at 1500 hours in the afternoon of 10th February supported by a heavy concentration of artillery fire on Brigs Peak and M. Sanchil. The attack was successful and Brigs Peak was captured. Part of M. Sanchil was also captured, but had to be evacuated as the battalion was seriously reduced in numbers. During these operations our casualties in officers had been heavy. Lt.-Col. Whitehead, commanding 3/1 Punjab Regiment, Lt.-Col. Purvis, 4/11 Sikhs, Lt.-Col. Edwards, 1 Royal Fusiliers, Lt.-Col. Scott, Skinner's Horse, and Major Proctor, of 3/1 Punjab Regiment, were all seriously wounded.

Second Attack on Acqua Gap.

For the second attempt to force the Acqua Col., 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, which was garrisoning Barentu, was placed under command 4th Indian Division, with the limitation that it was only to be used to exploit complete success, and was under no circumstances to be employed as a reinforcement. The reason for attacking the Acqua Gap was that, in spite of the administrative difficulties of maintaining two brigades in the Happy Valley, this attack if successful, would cut across the enemy's line of communication at a most vulnerable spot, and offered the chance of cutting-off and capturing the greater part of his forces in Keren and on the hills to the West. The period between 10th and 12th February was very trying for the troops holding Brigs Peak and Cameron Ridge. The enemy counter-attacked continuously, and during the early hours of 11th February 3/1 Punjab Regiment were driven off Brigs Peak back on to Cameron Ridge.

The second attack on the Acqua Gap was carried out by 4/11 Sikhs on the right, directed on the Sphinx (M. Zalale) and the 4/6 Rajputana Rifles directed on a feature known as Hill 1565. Although attacking with great gallantry these battalions were unable to reach their objective, and owing to the shape of the ground and the length of telephone communications necessary, adequate artillery support was not forthcoming. Commander 4th Indian Division decided to terminate the operation. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade were withdrawn from the Valley, and returned to Barentu. During the night of 13/14th

February the rest of our forces were also successfully withdrawn. Both of these brigades had to withdraw through the bottleneck described above, under observed and registered artillery fire from the enemy's guns on Fort Dologorodoc and surrounding features. In spite of this, and in spite of the activity of the enemy's artillery, the total casualties during withdrawal were two men slightly wounded.

After the second unsuccessful attack on the Acqua Gap it was clear that any further assault on the Keren position would be a major operation. Shortage of transport made it impossible to maintain both divisions in the Keren area and at the same time build up sufficient reserves of ammunition, petrol and rations. It was decided that 29th Indian Infantry Brigade should remain in Barentu. The rest of 5th Indian Division was withdrawn to the area between Sabdarat and Tessenei where it could maintain itself from the railhead at Kassala with its own first-line transport. All second-line transport was put under control of H.Q. Troops in the Sudan. While it was in this area, 5th Indian Division carried out intensive training in mountain warfare for the purposes of studying tactics and making every man as physically fit as possible. For the purposes of deception, measures were taken to induce the enemy to believe that a thrust was intended from Barentu to Arresa and thence on to the plateau directed on Adi Ugri. During this period of patrol and administrative activity it was left to 4th Indian Division to hold the heights already secured opposite Keren and to make preparations for the reception at short notice of 5th Indian Division.

The Red Sea Coast.

As early as 21st January, Commander 7th Indian Infantry Brigade had reported that the enemy was withdrawing from the Karora area and asked permission to start a minor operation against the enemy garrison there. This permission was given. The idea of a thrust down the Red Sea Coast had been previously considered and at first it had been used to divert attention from Kassala. It was difficult to get accurate estimates of what water was available, but, after consultation with the Royal Navy, it was considered feasible to direct a force of approximately one brigade group from Port Sudan via Suakin—Karora—Nakfa—Cub and on to Keren from the north.

The forces available were 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, less 4/11 Sikhs, which had previously been motorised and sent to join Gazelle Force. The battalion garrisoning Khartoum, 4/16 Punjab Regiment, was released. One battery, 25 pounders, No. 4 M.M.G. Company, S.D.F., 12 Field Company, Sappers and Miners, and 170 Light Field Ambulance were withdrawn from Keren front and sent to join 7th Infantry Brigade. Added weight was given to this force by the arrival in the Sudan of Free French Forces. These were 14 Battalion Etranger of the Foreign Legion, plus certain supporting troops, and Troisième Battalion de Marche (Tchad), known as Battalion Garby. The Foreign Legion, seasoned troops who had seen service in Norway, arrived by sea. Battalion Garby entered the Sudan by overland route from French Equatoria. These two units, under the command of Col. Monclar, were formed into a Demi-Brigade, known as the Brigade d'Orient.

All French forces were placed under command of 7th Infantry Brigade.

To overcome the administrative difficulties of an advance down this coast, the plan was to use barges, dhows and small ships to move both troops and stores by sea first to Aqiq, and later to open a small port at Mersa Taclai. It was intended that if this force should be used later to threaten Massawa, Marsa Kuba would be opened as well. By 10th February, a column consisting of 1 Royal Sussex had occupied Mersa Taclai and by the 12th, after some minor engagements, was moving towards Nakfa and Cub Cub. 7th Indian Infantry Brigade Group gained wireless touch with 4th Indian Division on 17th February and from then on a nightly conversation in Pushtu took place between the G.S.O.I. of 4th Indian Division and the Brigade Major of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade. The first serious resistance encountered was at Cub Cub where the Battalion Garby distinguished itself. By 1st March, 7th Indian Infantry Brigade Group had cleared the Mescelit Pass, some 20 kilos north of Keren, and here the advance paused for a time to concentrate its scattered units and recast its plan for the advance on Keren.

Keren Front.

During this period 4th Indian Division endured a long and anxious time holding the hills on the north side of the road. The enemy extended his right flank further and further to the west, thus overlooking all the administrative areas of forward units and causing the 4th Indian Divisional Commander continual anxiety and a steady drain of casualties. The weather was hot and the strain imposed upon the troops considerable. During this period various expedients were used to get the railway working. Two diesel engines were sent from Atbara, which, after some delays, worked successfully. Owing to the gradients, the tonnage these diesels could move was small. Trolleys and trucks pulled by 15 cwt. lorries were also used forward of railhead. Railhead was only shelled once. Throughout all this period the enemy's air was active but confined itself exclusively to attacks on the forward troops. The long columns of transport continually on the road between Keren and Kassala were never interfered with from the air. In order to build up sufficient reserves, R.A.S.C., R.I.A.S.C., and Cape Corps personnel were overworked and lorries were regularly doing a 48-hour turn-round between the dumping area and railhead. It is to the credit of the administrative staffs and services that, in spite of the large number of shells actually fired throughout the Keren battle, the gunners were never short and did, in fact, have a surplus. At this time troops in this area were suffering minor casualties from small cuts and scratches going septic. The administrative staffs managed to supply troops, even in the forward positions, with the oranges and fresh fruit necessary to maintain health. The forward dumping programme also needed considerable administrative skill and much hard work by the troops. Upwards from the railway, every article of necessity, including water, had to be carried by men and mules. Two Cypriot mule companies which had come into the Sudan about a month previously were moved up, and, after the mules and men had got used to moving at night on the steep, narrow, rocky tracks, proved themselves in-

valuable. 4th Indian Division, which was well equipped for desert warfare, had to adapt itself in battle to mountain warfare conditions. It was faced with both types of problem in the space of fifteen days.

On 17th February, the situation on the Keren front was as follows:—

5th Indian Infantry Brigade had relieved 11th Indian Infantry Brigade on the hills. 11th Indian Infantry Brigade was resting in reserve. The enemy had been reinforced by the majority of the Savoy Grenadier Division, in addition to the First Division, and was aggressive. He held the highest ground, and was continuing to extend his right round the northern flank of 5th Indian Infantry Brigade. On the other hand there was a steady flow of deserters at the rate of 150 a day. The enemy was known to have suffered heavily in the recent attacks. 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, from the north, was closing on Cub Cub, which, if taken, would allow this brigade to make its presence felt against Keren. The Foreign Legion, which had reached Suakin, was awaiting a ship to carry it forward to join 7th Indian Infantry Brigade. Administrative activity in building up the necessary reserves in the forward areas continued.

Reliefs.

The continued strain on 4th Indian Division was unavoidable. The relief of 4th Indian Division by 5th Indian Division would have delayed the administrative programme, as there was not enough transport to carry out this relief and continue dumping simultaneously. A suggestion that the forward troops of 4th Indian Division might withdraw to a position some miles further west out of the Keren Valley where they would not be so closely overlooked by the enemy on the high ground, though possibly tactically sound, would have had a depressing moral effect on our troops, and would have encouraged the enemy. 4th Indian Division was suffering 25 casualties a day. This flow of losses, a severe drain which the division could ill afford could only have been diminished by retiring between 10 and 12 kilos. For the sake of the bigger issues they had to be accepted. Withdrawal from the valley would have made the assault on Keren impracticable.

Plan and Concentration.

On 1st March the outline plan for what was hoped would be the final assault on Keren was formulated. The attack was to be by both divisions. 4th Indian Division was given objectives on the left of the road which included M. Sanchil, Brigs Peak, Hogs Back, Saddle, Flat Top Hill, Mole Hill and Samanna. The left flank having been thus secured, 5th Indian Division would attack right of the road. Exact objectives were not at this time defined, pending the results of further reconnaissances.

These attacks were to be consecutive and not simultaneous, so that each division could be supported by the maximum number of guns. Sufficient time was allowed between attacks for the necessary defensive fire on 4th Indian Division front and supporting concentrations on 5th Indian Division front to be arranged.

The date of the attack was fixed as 15th March. 5th Indian Division was not to come forward until the last possible moment. This was both to keep the enemy in the dark about

the date of our intended attack, and to allow the forward dumping programme to continue unhindered. 5th Indian Division was to arrive in accordance with the following programme. Artillery—one gun per Battery and reconnaissance parties would arrive on 8th March; the remainder, 12th March. Infantry—the reconnaissance parties and one battalion from the leading infantry brigade on 10th March; balance of the leading infantry brigade on 11th March, and the second and third infantry brigades on the 13th and 15th March respectively. By this time 9th Indian Infantry Brigade Group from Gallabat, less one company of 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment and 21 Field Company, had rejoined 5th Indian Division from Gedaref. Certain Sappers and Miners companies were also sent forward in advance of 5th Indian Division for essential work in the forward area and the making of an advanced landing ground.

Administrative Arrangements.

Administrative layout was to remain on a divisional basis: 4th Indian Division's installations north of the road, 5th Indian Division's south of the road. An exception was made to this in the case of medical arrangements, in which 5th Indian Division was superimposed on 4th Indian Division, co-ordinated by A.D.M.S. 5th Indian Division.

By 8th March the 4th Indian Divisional plan was taking shape. It consisted of two attacks known as the right and left attacks. The right attack was to be carried out by 11th Indian Infantry Brigade, which had two additional battalions placed under its command. These were 1 Royal Fusiliers, borrowed from 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, and 2/5 Mahratta Light Infantry, which had been the L. of C. Battalion in the Sudan. The attack was to be on a three battalion front. Right—2 Camerons on M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak; centre—1/6 Rajputana Rifles on to Saddle and Hogs Back; on the left 2/5 Mahratta Light Infantry on Flat Top Hill. 1 Royal Fusiliers and 4/6 Rajputana Rifles were to hold a firm base on Cameron Ridge and Rajputana Ridge. The role of these two battalions was in reality a reserve under the Divisional Commander for exploiting from M. Sanchil to Keren in conformity with the success gained by 5th Indian Division.

In the left attack 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, less 1 Royal Fusiliers plus 51 Commando, was to secure the left flank of 11th Indian Infantry Brigade from counter-attacks from the M. Amba direction by taking the three ring contours, known as left, centre and right bumps, of M. Samanna.

Artillery.

The artillery programme for 4th Indian Division was almost ready, and involved dumping 300 rounds per gun at the gun positions, with another 450 rounds per gun readily available behind. The provisional estimate for the 5th Indian Division attack was 600 rounds a gun.

5th Indian Division's Plan.

After reconnaissance 5th Indian Division was directed to capture M. Zeban by way of Fort Dologorodoc. This objective, though most formidable, had certain advantages. The attack was to be in close co-operation with 4th Indian

Division; each division could effectively help the other. The time-lag between the two attacks could be reduced to a minimum as the gunner problem of switching from support of 4th Indian Division to support of 5th Indian Division was comparatively simple. These objectives were within range of almost all the artillery of both divisions without guns having to be moved. The reduction of the time between the attacks automatically relieved the strain on 4th Indian Division which was bound to be counter-attacked strongly shortly after reaching its objectives.

The alternative was to attempt once again to force the Acqua Gap. Success in this area offered the chance of cutting-off and capturing the greater part of the Keren garrison. Its disadvantages were that the two divisions could not effectively support each other; the artillery problem was intensified and 5th Indian Division would not get the benefit of all the 4th Indian Division's guns; maintenance of a division through the bottleneck between Fort Dologorodoc and the bridge would be liable to enemy interference; there was no chance of getting the tanks and carriers up the Acqua Gap; against a numerically superior enemy there was a chance that both attacks would fail from lack of weight. Although a drive through the Dongolaas Gorge would not succeed in cutting-off so many of the enemy forces, it offered a better chance of opening the road to Asmara.

The task of assaulting Fort Dologorodoc was given to 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, and 2 Highland Light Infantry from 10th Indian Infantry Brigade was placed under its command. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was initially concentrated close behind 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, and was to be prepared to go through and capture M. Zeban, and thence onwards to M. Canabai. Exploitation eastwards over Falestoh Col between M. Falestoh and M. Zeban was to be limited to point 1565.

Effect on 4th Indian Division Plan.

The decision to attack Fort Dologorodoc enabled Commander 4th Indian Division to place the two battalions holding Cameron Ridge and Rajputana Ridge at the disposal of Commander 11th Indian Infantry Brigade, to give the assault on M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak a greater chance of success. Should M. Sanchil not be captured, enemy fire from there would have a serious effect on 9th Indian Infantry Brigade on Fort Dologorodoc.

R.A.F.

In support of these operations, one squadron and one flight of Army Co-operation aircraft were available, based on the main landing ground at Agordat, and using the advanced landing ground at Force Headquarters to keep in the closest touch with the tactical situation. Three bomber and one fighter squadrons and a fighter flight were kept under direct control of the Air Officer Commanding. These formations were warned that detachments of bombers and fighters might be called for in close support of ground troops. For the day of the attack, six sorties were placed at the disposal of C.R.A.'s, and six sorties were retained for tactical reconnaissance.

Operations on 15th March.

Zero hour for the 4th Indian Divisional attack was timed for 0700 hours 15th March. Sunrise

was about 0630 hours. The sun rose straight over the opposite ridge, shining down the valley, blinding artillery O.Ps. and the attacking troops. It was not until 0700 hours that the sun was sufficiently high to see clearly eastwards. The Italians "stood to" at dawn and usually went back behind the slopes for breakfast shortly after. The artillery concentrations would make it hard for them to get their men up again. Zero at 0700 hours would allow the attacking troops to have breakfast and start the day reasonably administered. During the early hours of the morning 9th and 29th Indian Infantry Brigades had concentrated behind the lower slopes of Cameron Ridge. The assault on Fort Dologorodoc was to be carried out by 2 Highland Light Infantry, which was to approach its objective from a south-westerly direction. This attack was not to go in until M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak had been secured. It was calculated that these hills would be in our hands by 0900 hours. The exact time of the attack depended on when the artillery supporting 4th Indian Division could be spared to support 5th Indian Division. By 0945 hours the situation on the 4th Indian Division front appeared to be sufficiently satisfactory for the order to be given to 5th Indian Division to attack. At this time it was not confirmed that Brigs Peak and M. Sanchil had been captured, but progress appeared to be satisfactory, and there was every prospect that both M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak would be secured shortly.

The attack of 2 Highland Light Infantry was stopped within 200 yards of the starting line by severe flank fire by machine-guns in enfilade, located on the lower eastern slopes of M. Sanchil. By 1300 hours it was clear that 2 Highland Light Infantry could make no further progress from this direction, and it was decided that they should be side-stepped to their right to approach Fort Dologorodoc from the south instead of the south-west. This new attack was timed for 1530 hours.

Capture of Fort Dologorodoc.

The weather on 15th and 16th March was extremely hot, with cloud and a heavy, oppressive atmosphere. The heat and radiation from the rocks for troops awaiting in the bottom of the valley was very trying. The lack of success of 2 Highland Light Infantry was as much attributable to physical exhaustion as to enemy action, although this was severe. It was also clear that Fort Dologorodoc was far too big an objective for one battalion. Commander 9th Indian Infantry Brigade planned to assault Fort Dologorodoc at dusk from the south with two battalions: right—3/12 Frontier Force Regiment; left—3/5 Mahrattas. These two attacks were successful in capturing two sub-features of Fort Dologorodoc, known as Pimple and Pinnacle, by midnight. Touch with these two battalions was lost, but Commander 9th Indian Infantry Brigade ordered 2 West Yorks on to the col between Pimple and Pinnacle where they arrived shortly after midnight. Before first light the enemy from the Fort itself counter-attacked strongly, but met the whole of the 9th Indian Infantry Brigade in line. The plan had been for 2 West Yorks to go through 3/12 Frontier Force and 3/5 Mahrattas and assault the Fort under cover of a timed artillery programme. In the confusion of the

counter-attack, communications broke down, and it was impossible to stop the artillery concentration which came down on the Fort as planned. This, in fact, was most fortunate, as the enemy's counter-attacking forces found themselves between the small arms fire of 9th Indian Infantry Brigade and the artillery fire falling on their own fort behind. They broke and were pursued into the Fort by 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, 2 West Yorks reaching there at 0600 hours, immediately exploiting 800 yards beyond.

Situation on 4th Indian Division Front.

By this time the true facts of the 4th Indian Division right attack became clear. 2 Camerons had reached their objectives but had suffered such heavy casualties that they had not sufficient remaining strength to clear the enemy off M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak. The 1 Royal Fusiliers, sent forward to reinforce 2 Camerons, also reached the objective, but could not clear the enemy off, and by nightfall, confused fighting was still in progress. 1/6 Rajputana Rifles secured the Hogs Back, losing 50 per cent. of their strength, but succeeded in maintaining their grip, and repulsing the enemy counter-attacks with heavy loss. Two companies 4/6 Rajputana Rifles were sent forward to reinforce 1/6 Rajputana Rifles. 2/5 Mahratta Light Infantry gallantly carried Flat Top Hill, and succeeded in consolidating, but this battalion was also so reduced in numbers that it could not exploit to Mole Hill. It was decided that no useful purpose would now be served in doing so.

In the 4th Divisional left attack, 4/11 Sikhs captured the left bump of M. Samanna, but although making repeated attempts failed to gain the centre bump, which was held by a battalion of Alpini. On 16th March 4/6 Rajputana Rifles less two Companies attacked Brigs Peak, but was unable to make any progress beyond that already achieved. Confused fighting continued throughout the day, the enemy, who consisted of Bersaglieri and the Savoy Grenadiers, fighting determinedly, were holding positions under the rocks which were practically immune from shell fire. During the evening, a report was received that Brigs Peak was captured, and that only a few enemy remained on M. Sanchil. On receipt of this information, 10th Indian Infantry Brigade, which was being held as force reserve, was put under command 4th Indian Division and sent to Cameron Ridge in order to move over the col separating M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak; and exploit into the plain west of Keren. Unfortunately this report was premature. The leading battalions of this brigade were committed during the night to attacks on M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak. 3/18 Garhwal Rifles in particular suffered heavy loss. The Commanding Officer and all other British officers except one became casualties. The enemy still held ground from which he could direct effective machine-gun and mortar fire against advancing troops.

Withdrawal from M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak.

By the evening of 17th March it was clear that the much reduced forward elements still on M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak could not be maintained. They were suffering heavy casualties. The intervention of the only remaining battalion of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade, the

weak 2 Highland Light Infantry, would be unlikely to produce the required results. A further assault would probably cause the destruction of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade, the only available force reserve. 3/18 Ganhwal and 4/10 Baluch were withdrawn during the night 17th/18th March to the valley. 2 Highland Light Infantry were left on Cameron Ridge until night 18th/19th March, when they also were withdrawn and 10th Indian Infantry Brigade was concentrated as Force Reserve. M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak were thereafter subjected to heavy shelling by 6-inch Hows. Flat Top Hill and Hogs Back were firmly held.

Effect on 5th Indian Division.

On the 5th Divisional front, the capture of Fort Dologorodoc was only half way to the Divisional objective. The plan was for 29th Indian Infantry Brigade to go through 9th Indian Infantry Brigade and capture M. Zeban. Until M. Sanchil was secured it was not considered wise to launch 29th Indian Infantry Brigade. The direction given was to hold the Fort throughout the 16th, while the 10th Indian Infantry Brigade assisted 4th Indian Division to secure M. Sanchil. The enemy counter-attacked determinedly. These attacks were broken up by artillery and the dogged resistance of 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, helped, throughout the day by close support from the R.A.F.

Attack Resumed by 5th Indian Division.

Shortly after midday, orders were issued for the advance to be resumed during the night 16th/17th March. 5th Indian Division was to start from the Fort at approximately 2200 hours. Unavoidable delays, caused by difficulties of communications, the delay in making a mule track up to the Fort, and unexpectedly serious casualties in the administrative staff of 1 Worcesters, compelled zero hour to be postponed until 0030 hours 17th March. This delay, though unavoidable, caused great anxiety, as it was expected that the thrust by 5th Indian Division would relieve the severe pressure on the tired and much reduced battalions of 11th Indian Infantry Brigade.

Progress of 29th Indian Infantry Brigade.

In their advance from the Fort 29th Indian Infantry Brigade encountered strong opposition, and were unable to reach their objective, 1 Worcesters becoming pinned half-way up Falestoh Col. The enemy's fire was severe. Communications were broken. Supply became difficult, and during the 17th both food and ammunition were dropped on 1 Worcesters by the R.A.F., using one Wellesley and one Vincent. Eventually it was found impossible to get on, and 29th Indian Infantry Brigade consolidated positions already held between six and eight hundred yards beyond the Fort. By 1530 hours on 17th March, the Commander of 29th Indian Infantry Brigade appreciated that administrative difficulties and the great heat of the day had broken the impetus of his attack. 10th Indian Infantry Brigade having been committed on M. Sanchil, there was nothing left with which to make a further advance without a period of reorganisation. Carriers of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade and some "I" tanks were in the Happy Valley to secure the right flank of 5th Indian Division and prevent any debouchment by the enemy

from the Acqua Gap. There then ensued a period of holding what had been gained, with daily counter-attacks by the enemy, who fought most determinedly to recapture Fort Dologorodoc.

Arresa Area.

Before the main attack on Keren on 15th March, subsidiary operations had been started by No. 2 M.M.G. Group, reinforced by Skinner's Horse and two Mounted Infantry Companies S.D.F. against Arresa. Although operations here were unable to make ground, they did succeed in delaying the move of enemy forces.

Co-operation by 7th Indian Infantry Brigade.

The operations of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade were co-ordinated with 5th Indian Division attack on the 15th. These operations were successful in containing a large part of the enemy's forces although they were unable to make very much ground. The enemy was holding M. Engiahat, a large square hill of the same type as those around Keren. The road from the north winds through narrow passes and along the edge of river beds, where in places it hangs above the river on a ledge 50 or 60 feet above the river bed. Commander 7th Indian Infantry Brigade had hoped to be able to send a column across-country east of M. Engiahat to cut the Keren-Asmara road east of Keren. At this time a practicable route had not been found. The enemy were still holding positions east of Engiahat which blocked any advance in this direction. The effort of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade was of assistance to the main battle in that it did contain forces which the enemy commander badly needed at Fort Dologorodoc.

Death of Gen. Lorenzini.

On 19th March General Lorenzini was killed. This officer was held in high repute by his own troops. He was personally gallant and had had much experience of fighting in the Middle East. His death was a severe blow to the enemy.

Offensive resumed 25th March.

After a week, during which the enemy launched no less than eight counter-attacks against Fort Dologorodoc, the Commander, 5th Indian Division, was in a position to resume the offensive. His object was to open the road to Keren for the passage of mechanised forces.

The enemy positions covering the road.

M. Sanchil throws off a spur to the north-east. Along the east side of M. Sanchil, round this spur, and then in a westerly direction, runs the railway. At the level of the railway the spur flattens out and its surface is much broken. This area was aptly named "Railway Bumps". The Railway Bumps spur ends at a junction of two dry stream beds. The main one is the khor which comes down the Dongolaas gorge parallel with the road. The subsidiary comes in from a north-westerly direction and where it joins the main khor, its banks are steep, the right bank being the Railway Bumps, the left bank Railway Ridge. Machine-guns in position on Railway Bumps and Railway Ridge commanded the Dongolaas gorge, the east side of M. Sanchil, the west side of Fort Dologorodoc and the road-block.

As long as they were in position it was impossible for the sappers to open the road. The capture of Railway Bumps and Railway Ridge was the 5th Indian Divisional objective.

This task was given to 10th Indian Infantry Brigade supported by all available artillery. On their left 4th Indian Division was to contain the enemy and attract his attention, but otherwise was given a passive role. On their right, 9th Indian Infantry Brigade was to advance and secure the sub-features known as Hillock A, Hillock B and Red Hill which lie between Fort Dologorodoc and M. Zeban. After these objectives had been reached and when the road-block had been cleared, a mechanised column consisting of "I" tanks, of which there were still fourteen in action, and a force of carriers collected from several battalions was to secure Keren and then move west into the Mogareh valley to engage any mechanised forces or troops found there. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was to advance through 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, capture M. Zeban and exploit to M. Canabai commanding the road east of Keren. In this attack also, 7th Indian Infantry Brigade from the north was to co-operate to the full.

The Attack.

10th Indian Infantry Brigade attack went in at 0415 hours on 25th March and made rapid progress in securing all its objectives. By about 1000 hours the sappers were able to start work on the road-block. They were still under mortar and artillery fire. 10th Indian Infantry Brigade succeeded in consolidating its objectives and, throughout the 26th, work on the road-block continued. On this day the Italians made one of their last air-attacks against our troops. The R.A.F. with their variety of machines from Hurricanes to Vincents had gained air superiority. By a continuous forward policy they had driven their opponents from the air and destroyed their machines on the ground. The army was indeed grateful for the immunity from hostile air-attack thus gained. The advance of the mechanised column and 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was timed for 0530 hours on the morning of 27th March. During the early hours of 27th March there were indications that the enemy might be withdrawing. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade advance went with great speed and it became clear that the enemy's resistance was broken. By 1000 hours the mechanised force had established itself in Keren. Throughout the morning white flags appeared on M. Sanchil, Brigs Peak, M. Zemanna and M. Amba. The battle of Keren was won. It had been won by the tenacity and determination of commanders and troops, by whole-hearted co-operation of all ranks, whether forward or back, of whatever race or creed, and by the continuous support given to infantry by the Royal Artillery, who, between 15th and 27th March, fired over 110,000 shells borne by 1,000 lorries from rail-head over 150 miles away.

This time the Foreign Legion succeeded in making its way across-country and by 28th March had reached the road, unfortunately too late to cut off the retreating enemy, but taking 800 prisoners on the way.

5th Indian Division took up the pursuit, led by the mechanised column, and by 2030 hours that night had reached Kilo 56 at the bottom of the hill up to Ad Teclesan. 4th Indian

Division, less 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, took no further part in operations, being under orders to return to Middle East.

Casualties.

Casualties amounted to 500 killed and 3,000 wounded with a high proportion of slight cases. These were regrettably high figures, but they were only five per cent. of the eventual losses of the enemy in killed, wounded, and prisoners of war.

Ground at Ad Teclesan.

Asmara is in the centre of a plateau about 7,000 feet high. The road from Asmara to Keren falls steeply from Ad Teclesan down to the level of Keren, a drop of over 2,000 feet.

The natural difficulties facing 29th Indian Infantry Brigade when they reached Kilo 56 on the evening of 27th March appeared even more difficult than those at Keren. Though the road winds upwards following the contours, and is throughout its length well graded, its general trend is a slope from left to right, across the face of the escarpment of the Asmara Plateau. As at Keren, the road ascent ran almost parallel to the enemy positions crowning the heights.

Between Kilo 56 and Ad Teclesan, the country consists of big, rounded hills, less rocky than those at Keren, and on the whole not so steep. There is more vegetation and the country is greener.

From an operational point of view, the main difficulty is that there is no flat ground. The road is carved out of the sides of the hills. During the greater part of the action at Ad Teclesan, movement, except on foot, was confined to the road. Transport could not be parked off it. It was impossible to deploy more than a few guns and even they were at an undesirably long range.

The railway takes a different route, south of the road, but even along the railway there are few, if any, places where it was possible to deploy wheeled-vehicles off the railway track itself.

The enemy's withdrawal from Keren had been cleverly carried out. He had been able to remove about 60 per cent. of his artillery, which was now in position at Ad Teclesan. All his anti-aircraft artillery had likewise been withdrawn. He had managed to get back some of his infantry units, but all had been severely handled. Their morale was low, as was evidenced by the quantity of rifles and war material of all kinds abandoned by the road side and the numbers who surrendered as prisoners of war. Had the enemy not been so soundly beaten at Keren, the task confronting 5th Indian Division at Ad Teclesan would have been one of extreme difficulty.

Situation on 28th March.

By 0900 hours 28th March, the enemy was being pursued by the tanks and carriers known as Fletcher Force, which had reached the first road-block and demolition at Kilo 56 on the evening before. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade Group, with two of its battalions in lorries, 3 Central India Horse, No. 1 M.M.G. Group, S.D.F., and 20 Field Company, Sappers and Miners, under command, was close behind. Every effort was being made to get 68 Medium Regiment over the road-block at Fort Dologorodoc. It was the intention that they might hit the retreating enemy at the

earliest possible moment. The enemy's distaste for this weapon was known.

The difficulties at the road-block were still considerable. It needed good driving and excellent traffic control if serious delays were to be avoided.

7th Indian Infantry Brigade Group had been ordered to clear mines from the road leading into Keren from the north and to make touch with 5th Indian Division, but only to employ the minimum of troops for this task. The remainder of the brigade was to concentrate back at Chelamet preparatory to operating along the Red Sea littoral against Massawa. The French troops who had come over the hills and cut the road east of Keren, arrived without rations or water, and very tired. They were collected in M.T. and taken back to Chelamet.

Arresa Front.

There was no longer any need to keep mobile forces tied up, attempting to break through to Arresa. Two mounted Infantry Companies S.D.F. were left in that area with instructions to make their way through to Adi Ugri and cut the Gondar road south of Asmara. Skinner's Horse and No. 2 M.M.G. Group S.D.F. were withdrawn via Barentu and Agordat to Keren so that they would be ready to take up the pursuit as soon as the enemy was forced from the Ad Teclesan area.

Action at Ad Teclesan.

The enemy had made three effective road-blocks on the road below Ad Teclesan. Each of these was covered by machine-gun and artillery fire. Out-flanking tactics were necessary; these took time. The mules used at Keren had not caught up. Maintenance of troops operating off the road was difficult. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade succeeded in forcing their way past the first two road-blocks and nearly to the top. Simultaneously, two companies of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade, with a detachment of Skinner's Horse and one M.M.G. company S.D.F., moved along the railway threatening the enemy's flank. Finally 9th Indian Infantry Brigade moved forward through 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, and, after hard fighting, cleared the last road-block on the early morning of 1st April. At 0630 hours on the same morning, the leading troops of 5th Indian Division were met by emissaries of the enemy, who stated that they had been ordered to cease resistance and asked that Asmara should be treated as an open town. Our leading troops entered Asmara at 1315 hours.

Though troops in Asmara itself had been ordered to cease resistance, there was no indication that resistance would cease in other areas. Air reports confirmed that the enemy were withdrawing troops and guns to the south of Asmara. These columns were successfully attacked by the air. By 0655 hours on 1st April, orders had already gone out directing that the operations by the 7th Indian Infantry Brigade and the Free French against Massawa should commence. Special instructions were given to these forces to prevent sabotage of the port of Massawa.

Immediately after the fall of Asmara, the main object became the capture of Massawa, if possible undamaged, and with the shipping known to be there intact. The plan was for 7th Indian Infantry Brigade Group to move

eastwards from Chelamet over an unknown track, which proved to be extremely difficult. The troops had to work hard in a high temperature to get their vehicles over bad going, varying from boulder-strewn tracks to soft desert sand. Preparations were made to open a port at Mersa Cuba for the supply of this force when it reached the sea.

Further Pursuit by 5th Indian Division.

At the same time pursuit of the enemy was organised along both the main roads leading south from Asmara. The limits of pursuit were defined as the River Tacazze on the way to Gondar, and on the eastern route, the position which the enemy were known to be preparing at Amba Alagi. 5th Indian Division was directed to send one brigade group from Asmara down the main Asmara-Massawa road to co-operate with 7th Indian Infantry Brigade in the capture of Massawa. A road-block was encountered between Asmara and Nefasit, but it was not covered by enemy fire, and imposed no great delay. Later 144 Field Regiment and 68 Medium Regiment, less one battery, reinforced 10th Indian Infantry Brigade.

Dealings with Italian Civil Authorities.

On 2nd April it was made clear to the civil authorities that the future welfare of the civil population depended to a large extent on the degree of co-operation afforded by them. As communications to the Sudan were long and difficult, transport of all kinds was limited, and the needs of the fighting forces necessarily came first, it was to their own interests not only to prevent sabotage, but to repair the railway, roads and teleferica at the earliest possible moment. It was most strongly stressed that unless the port and port facilities at Massawa were surrendered intact, together with the shipping lying in the harbour, the British authorities could not guarantee to feed the civil population of whom so many were women and children. The civil authorities agreed to assist in reopening communications and in keeping order in the city, but said they could not answer for the military authorities in Massawa.

Situation in Asmara.

The population of Asmara at the time was approximately 40,000 Italians and 40,000 natives. The problem of administering this large mixed population, mostly armed, with limited staff to deal with civil problems, no police and no surplus of troops, was one which taxed all resources severely. Natives, particularly units still in existence as such, had to be disarmed before the Italian population.

Surprisingly little difficulty was encountered. There was some shooting by natives, but no major disorders occurred, nor were there any serious attempts at sabotage.

Communications with Italian Commander, Massawa.

Telephonic communication with Massawa was still open on one line. By this the Italian commander at Massawa was warned that the British would accept no responsibility for the feeding of the Italian population of Eritrea and Abyssinia if any of the ships in the harbour were scuttled, or of the harbour or its facilities were damaged. On 2nd April, the Italian commander of Massawa opened communications with Commander 10th Indian Infantry

Brigade through his Chief Staff Officer. The warning about destruction of the port was given to him in writing, and he was informed that this warning had also been communicated to the Duke of Aosta.

At 0830 hours on 3rd April, 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, advancing south, was only 25 miles from Massawa. By that evening it had made contact with the enemy forces. 7th Indian Infantry Brigade Group was placed under command 5th Indian Division in order to co-ordinate the attack on Massawa.

On the other fronts the Mounted Infantry from Arresa had reached Adi Ugri, releasing all British and Imperial officers and men who had been taken as prisoners of war by the Italians. Mobile forces had occupied Adowa and Adigrat over 100 miles from Asmara.

At Adigrat natives were found looting mattresses on which their wounded compatriot soldiers lay. Beyond Adowa native children, some not more than two years of age, were found brutally and horribly mutilated.

In the meantime, 4th Indian Division, less 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, were clearing Keren battlefield, preparatory to moving back to Middle East. On 29th March, orders were issued for the first brigade group of 4th Indian Division to move to Port Sudan for embarkation.

On 5th April, further demands for troops were received from Middle East, and practically all of the remainder of 4th Indian Division, less 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, was released. It was sad to part with this Division, which had rendered such distinguished service under Major-General Sir Noel Beresford-Peirse, K.B.E., D.S.O.

Terms of Surrender of Massawa.

That evening, the Admiral commanding the Italian Forces in Massawa sent in a flag of truce, and asked for our terms for the surrender of Massawa. These were dictated over the telephone to Commander 5th Indian Division, who passed them on to the Italian envoys. A truce until 1100 hours 6th April was imposed, but the terms were refused and hostilities were resumed at 1300 hours.

Capture of Massawa.

Massawa was now attacked from the north and west, and after some fighting, the enemy surrendered. Commander 5th Indian Division entered Massawa, receiving the surrender of the Admiral Commanding at 1410 hours on 8th April. It was then found that considerable destruction to the town had been carried out, many ships scuttled in the harbour, and the port facilities badly damaged. Prisoners included over 450 Officers and 10,000 Other Ranks, both Italian and Native. Many enemy units were represented from the forces that had been broken at Keren and Ad Teclesan, and had made their way to Massawa.

PART III.

Operations leading up to the Battle of Amba Alagi.

After the capture of Massawa, the two main enemy centres of resistance in Northern Ethiopia were Amba Alagi and Gondar. The remnants of the Italian armies from Eritrea had retreated along the two main roads from Asmara to these areas, and for some time

previously the enemy had been preparing a defensive position to hold the Toselli Pass where the road goes over the first big range of hills leading into central Ethiopia. Gondar had always been a big military station, the centre of the Italian military organisation in the country North and West of Lake Tana. At this time, commitments elsewhere made it imperative for the C.-in-C. to withdraw as many forces as possible from Eritrea. The policy laid down by him was that no major operations should be undertaken in Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia which would interfere with the withdrawal of troops to the Middle East. Though the enemy forces which had withdrawn southwards were no longer a menace to the Sudan and though they had little chance of staging a counter-offensive to recapture Eritrea, their continued presence in the country was a source of possible future trouble and disturbance. It was desirable that they should be eliminated.

Forces available.

The forces which remained and were available for operations against Amba Alagi and Gondar and for internal security for the whole of Eritrea were:—

- 5th Indian Division.
- Two M.M.G. Groups S.D.F.
- One Commando.
- One Battery 68 Medium Regt., R.A.
- Two Companies Mounted Infantry, S.D.F.

Commitments.

One brigade, at least, was needed to garrison Asmara.

One brigade could easily have been expended on guarding important centres and dumps of captured stores in other parts of Eritrea and the Tigre. At the time of the fall of Massawa, only light mobile forces had pursued the enemy southwards along the two roads from Asmara. Central India Horse was in the area of Mai Mescic. They were soon withdrawn on relief by Skinner's Horse. No. 1 M.M.G. Group had reached the river Tacazze at Mai Timchet on the way to Gondar. No. 2 M.M.G. Group was carrying out a reconnaissance down the Red Sea coast as far as Zula.

The task of attacking the Amba Alagi position was entrusted to 5th Indian Division. Amba Alagi is 235 miles south of Asmara. Transport was very limited. Reconnaissance revealed that the Amba Alagi position was naturally strong. The administrative problem of staging a battle in this area was considerable and involved a dumping programme which necessarily took time. At first only the minimum troops were kept forward in the area Mai Mescic, Quiha and Macalle. Their task was reconnaissance and to act as a screen to protect the dumping programme and the concentration of other troops at the last possible minute. Sufficient troops were not available for operations to be undertaken in strength against Gondar and Amba Alagi simultaneously. It was decided to engage Amba Alagi first as success here would open the road to Addis Ababa, allowing the move of South African forces to be routed through Massawa to Middle East.

Topography—The Amba Alagi Position.

Amba Alagi is a mountain over 10,000 feet above sea level. The road into Ethiopia crosses a spur of this mountain at the Toselli

Pass which is defended by a fort. The approach from the north is steep and winding and for some miles the road works its way through a narrow valley overlooked on both sides by commanding heights. The general run of the high ground which culminates at Amba Alagi is north-west to south-east. North-west of Amba Alagi itself is a long range. Little Alagi, Middle Hill, Elephant, Pinnacle and Sandy Ridge are prominent features of this ridge, all of which had tactical importance. South-west from Amba Alagi runs the narrow Castle ridge, culminating in Castle Hill. Almost due North of Amba Alagi and Little Alagi is Bald Hill, a high flat-topped feature with precipitous sides. South-east of Amba Alagi and the other side of the pass, two prominent hills, Triangle and Gumsa, intervene between Toselli and Falaga Passes. The road over the Toselli Pass is a good all-weather, graded main road. The road to the Falaga Pass takes off from the east side of the main road some 35 kilos north of Amba Alagi. This road was found to be bad but just practicable for one-way M.T. for some distance beyond Debub. This was the route that the Italians themselves had used in the final stages of the Abyssinian war. Opposite where the Falaga road leaves the main road, another track strikes off to the south-west through the hills as far as Socota. With difficulty this was practicable for M.T. but there was no road or track from Socota eastwards to rejoin the main road. As an indication of the size and steepness of the country, it was a four hours' walk from the main road to Sandy Hill, where H.Q. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade were later established.

The Plan of Attack.

There were three possible ways of attacking the enemy forces at Amba Alagi. To the east by way of the Falaga Pass; astride the road directly at the enemy position; from the right along the ridge which leads from Sandy Hill to Amba Alagi. At this time accurate estimates of the enemy strength were not available but his force was known to be a collection of bits and pieces from many units with a large number of guns, including anti-aircraft. Many of these latter were sited on the tops of the hills. There was a road-block beyond the village of Enda Medani Alem overlooked and covered by fire from Bald Hill. The enemy, as at Keren, had the high ground and the observation. As at Keren the problem was one of attacking an enemy holding a naturally strong position of his own choosing. The plan was based on a double bluff. First, a force was to move against the Falaga Pass playing upon the enemy's fears. As the Italians themselves had used this route in the Abyssinian war, it was reasonable to suppose that they were nervous of this flank as they would consider this the most probable line of advance. The second bluff was to make the enemy think that we intended to advance astride the road. At Barentu, Agordat, Keren and Massawa, our advances had been astride road approaches. It was hoped that he would be deceived by movements indicating that we intended to follow custom. The real attack was to be carried out along the ridge to the west of the road. At first sight the country here appeared to be unsuitable and it was for this reason that it was calculated that the enemy's defences would not be so strong on this side.

Preparations.

In order to stage an attack along the ridge, very careful preparations were necessary. Everything, once it left the road, had to be carried either by men or mules and at this time there were no mule units with 5th Indian Division. Scarcity of lorries had made it impossible to ferry forward either of the Cypriot Mule Companies which had done so well at Keren. 5th Indian Division were forced to collect mules from the countryside and to detail mule-leading parties from each unit, thus further reducing fighting strength. Sandy Hill and Sandy Ridge, which were the starting areas of the attack, were in view from Amba Alagi. Precautions were taken to deceive the enemy. No M.T. was allowed beyond truck-head some miles away but in full view of the enemy; movement of formed bodies was forbidden west of the main road; maximum use was made of all available cover; reconnaissance parties of all kinds were kept to a minimum and their movements rigidly controlled. Movements of units were carried out at night or in the twilight. No movement, unusual noises or smoke fires were permitted in the forward bivouac areas. These precautions continued throughout the 72 hours taken to move 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, its supplies and ammunition, up the mountain to its battle positions. Despite patrol encounters the enemy failed to discover the presence of this brigade.

Disposition of Forces.

Commander, 5th Indian Division, divided his forces as follows.

On the left operating against Falaga Pass was a formation known as Fletcher Force. This consisted of:—

Skinner's Horse.

51 Commando.

One Company 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment.

One M.M.G. Company S.D.F.

Troop 25 Pounders.

Troop 6-inch Hows.

Troop 3.7-inch Hows., and

One Section of a Field Company Sappers and Miners.

This force was to demonstrate against the Falaga Pass, timing its operations to produce their maximum effect on the night before the main attack. In the centre 3/18 Garhwal Rifles, with a detachment of Sappers and Miners, were to stage a demonstration up the main road on the evening before the main attack, maintaining this deception by a bold action throughout the night with the object of simulating the beginnings of a brigade attack. The main attack was entrusted to 29th Indian Infantry Brigade.

Course of the Operations

The maps in possession of 5th Indian Division were bad and inaccurate. Operations had necessarily to be conducted step by step as it was not possible to deduce accurately from the map what type of country was likely to be met. It was also necessary to fight both to gain observation for our own artillery and deny it to the enemy.

4th May was fixed for the attack. For a week before this Fletcher Force fought its way forward towards Falaga Pass. Their operations were successful and resulted in the

capture of many prisoners as well as securing Commando Hill from which good observation was obtained. On the night of the 3/4th May, Skinner's Horse and 51 Commando attacked strongly but met with stiff resistance and had to withdraw about midnight. Though this attack may have appeared to Fletcher Force to have been a failure, it did in fact achieve its object and the enemy was convinced, until too late, that our attack was coming from the direction of the Falaga Pass.

Feint by 3/18 Garhwal Rifles.

On the afternoon of 3rd May the carriers of 3/18 Garhwal Rifles debouched in the Enda Medani Alem valley, occupying it by 1730 hours as if anxious to make as much ground as possible before dark. The rifle companies occupied in succession the hills to the west of the village, so timing their movements that the last thing the enemy saw before dark was a steady advance towards his position. After dark vigorous patrolling was carried out and one patrol succeeded in scaling the precipitous Bald Hill. This bluff was successful. The enemy believed he had repulsed a strong attack. Behind 3/18 Garhwal Rifles noise, activity and the display of lights, all carefully controlled, gave added realism to the deception. The enemy was deceived by these manoeuvres, and placed his forces to repel an attack astride the road and from the direction of Falaga Pass.

The Attack of 29th Indian Infantry Brigade.

At 0415 hours on 4th May, 29th Indian Infantry Brigade moved forward to the attack supported by all available artillery. The attack went with great dash and speed, capturing Pinnacle and Elephant Hill. Beyond this the ridge narrows and is devoid of cover, all approaches being commanded by machine-guns from Bald Hill, and other prominent features. The maps had given no indication of the exceeding steepness and narrowness of the ridge beyond Elephant. Further advance in daylight was impossible. At 0415 hours on 5th May, the attack was resumed and Middle Hill was captured. Between Middle Hill and Little Alagi the ridge again narrows to a razor-back about 150 yds. wide, wired, flanked by precipices and under machine-gun fire. 1 Worcesters reached, and at one place went through, the wire, but became pinned and could not move in daylight. Middle Hill was consolidated and the Worcesters were withdrawn to this area on the night 5/6th May. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was now definitely checked.

Operations by Patriots and South African Forces.

In other areas Allied forces were closing in on Amba Alagi. A strong force of patriots under Ras Seyoum and accompanied by a small force of S.D.F. had advanced over the hills to Socota, 50 miles south-west of Amba Alagi. Here they had captured the Italian garrison and destroyed the fort. Proceeding eastwards across-country, they struck the main road about Quoram and Alomata on 2nd May and then advanced on Mai Ceu which they summoned to surrender on 6th May. Elsewhere patriot forces had been directed to cut the roads Debarech - Gondar - Chelga, Gondar - Dessie, Dessie-Assab and communications round Dessie itself.

South African Forces.

A detachment of 1st South African Brigade, which had captured Dessie, was sent forward from Dessie on 30th April. Advancing rapidly, in spite of road-blocks, by 5th May their advanced forces had reached Alomata, where they were delayed by a serious road-block. Their advance moved so successfully that the rest of the 1st South African Brigade Group, less one battalion, was ordered to join their leading troops and operate against Amba Alagi. G.O.C. East Africa signalled that he proposed to place this brigade group under command Troops in the Sudan on its arrival at Alomata. This offer was gratefully accepted. On 8th May 1st South African Brigade came under command 5th Indian Division. Difficulties of communication were considerable. Wireless was not working very satisfactorily in the mountains. Touch was made with the South African Brigade by liaison officers. Later the Commander 5th Indian Division flew to meet Commander 1st South African Brigade. From now on the enemy forces at Amba Alagi were closely beleaguered.

Re-adjustment.

Since 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was now held up, it became clear that more weight was necessary on the left flank and that Fletcher Force needed infantry. The advance so far had made the L. of C. much more secure and 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment could now be spared from L. of C. work. This battalion was sent to join Fletcher Force. 3/18 Garhwal Rifles, having accomplished their job of deceiving the enemy in the centre, were relieved by Skinner's Horse and also joined Fletcher Force, which became 9th Indian Infantry Brigade (less one battalion).

Attack on 8/9th May.

On 29th Indian Infantry Brigade front an out-flanking movement further to the south was carried out. 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles, with one company 1 Worcesters under command, descended by night some 2,000 feet into a narrow valley from which they climbed up to within assaulting distance of Castle Ridge. This was attacked silently at 0410 hours on 8th May, artillery concentrations being put down to simulate a dawn attack on Little Alagi and Bald Hill. All objectives except a small portion of Castle Hill were quickly captured. On the north end of Castle Hill a white flag was displayed but when 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles advanced to take over the position, they were greeted by a shower of bombs and suffered severely. A thick mist then came down on the hill-tops, under cover of which the Italians were able to assemble for a counter-attack. This was successful and Castle Hill was re-captured by the enemy. Owing to the need for achieving surprise and complicated by the mist, our artillery had not ranged on Castle Ridge and could not consequently give effective support to 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles.

In the centre demonstrations were kept up to play upon the enemy's nerves and keep him watching this sector. These demonstrations drew a most impressive amount of enemy fire.

Operations of 9th Indian Infantry Brigade.

During the night of 7/8th May 9th Indian Infantry Brigade had made ground towards the

Falaga Pass, capturing many prisoners and much material. On the following night they secured the pass but found that the M.T. track ended. From there they were directed across-country, capturing Gumsa ridge which gave direct observations on to Toselli Fort. 5th Indian Division now held the centre hill on Castle Ridge, Middle Hill and Gumsa, thus closely investing the enemy position on three sides. Throughout all this period our artillery had been obtaining better and better observation until by this time they were making life very difficult for the enemy.

In the meantime, 1st South African Brigade had been making good progress, and, by 13th May, were in close touch with the Amba Alagi position from the south. The problem of command was difficult, particularly in regard to artillery support, while the South Africans were advancing from the south side of the hill. Throughout 14th May the South African Brigade advanced towards Triangle, the big feature overlooking the pass from the south-east. Assisted by the Patriots, who, in this area, did excellent work, the Triangle was captured by 0800 hours on 15th May, finally closing the circle. This made further resistance by the enemy merely useless waste of life, and, on 16th May, an armistice was asked for and granted. Subsequent negotiations resulted in the unconditional surrender of the Italian garrison who were granted the honours of war.

PART IV.

Operations leading to the capture of Debra Tabor.

After the surrender of the Italian garrison at Amba Alagi it was essential for political and operational reasons to capture Debra Tabor as a preliminary move against Gondar. G.O.C. East Africa had no troops available but ordered Commander 101 Mission to move against Debra Tabor. He, however, became involved in the battle near Addis Dera, where the Italian forces under Maraventano were defeated after a three days' battle.

Situation at Debra Tabor.

Debra Tabor lies on the road between Dessie and Gondar, over 150 miles from Dessie. It is naturally strong and was defended by field-works and wire. The road is in parts an unmade track, which, in wet weather, becomes impassable for all wheeled traffic. The Italian garrison was estimated as about 2,500. This proved to be an under-estimate.

At this time Debra Tabor was being watched by a force of patriots known as Begemeder Force, who were unable to make headway against its defences. The detachment of the Frontier Battalion S.D.F., which had been co-operating with them, had been withdrawn to Dessie. The following force was collected and ordered to make its way to Debra Tabor where it was to act in co-operation with the patriots. One squadron, Skinner's Horse, less the carrier troop, plus one troop. One company, 3/2 Punjab Regiment, plus a mortar detachment of three 81 mm. Italian mortars. One section 20 Field Company, Sappers and Miners, and a detachment of M.T. Section 20 Field Company was later relieved by a section of 8 Army Troops Company, Sappers and Miners.

The Rains.

The timing of this operation was made difficult on account of the increasing rains. There was a distinct chance that the whole force, or at least all the vehicles of the force, might get completely bogged and have to be abandoned until after the rains ceased some time in September. On the other hand it was important to strike at the Italian forces quickly before the effect of the surrender by the Viceroy at Amba Alagi had time to wear off.

By 7th June the road Dessie-Gondar was cleared as far as Kilo. 154, but beyond this there were still road-blocks and land-slides which took time to repair. It was not until 14th June that the road was sufficiently repaired for the column to start from Dessie, reaching Debra Tabor on 16th June where contact was made with the patriot forces.

Situation on 16th June.

On 16th June the garrison of Debra Tabor, though not surrounded, was completely cut-off, patriot forces being astride the road both east and west of the town. The total number of patriots was about 8,000. Reports that the enemy in Debra Tabor were only waiting for the arrival of a British force before surrendering proved incorrect. There was much jealousy between the patriot forces who were making no serious attempt to capture the town. After reconnaissances, plans were made to attack in co-operation with the patriots but on no less than five separate occasions, after all plans and arrangements had been made, the patriots failed to co-operate. The total strength of our column was only 250 men, too weak to stage a successful attack without patriot co-operation. The difficulties of co-operating with patriots are exemplified by the fact that on every occasion our commander was assured that "the attack would really go in this time."

Parley with the Enemy.

On 25th June the enemy opened negotiations under a flag of truce asking for terms of surrender. These were substantially the same as at Amba Alagi and were handed to the Italian envoys. An armistice was agreed on until 1600 hours, 27th June. No satisfactory answer being received, operations recommenced.

Operations 27th June-22nd July.

No further confidence could be placed in patriot co-operation so the column commenced harassing tactics with light machine-guns and mortars. These continued until, on 1st July, a letter was received from the Italian Commander asking for a meeting which was fixed for 1100 hours on 2nd July. At this meeting terms of surrender were discussed and settled. Our troops entered Debra Tabor on 3rd July and took over all important installations. The enemy garrison marched out on 6th July, and, after receiving the honours of war, laid down their arms. Patriots occupied the forts and native quarters. Prisoners captured were 2,400 Italians, 2,000 natives and a miscellaneous collection of M.T., sufficient to lift 1,200 men. Six guns and a quantity of ammunition were also taken. The surrender of Debra Tabor was strange, considering the Italian Commander at Gondar intended to relieve this garrison on 15th July.

Weather.

The weather throughout these operations had been bad and was getting worse. The ground was sodden, movement of M.T. difficult. Nights were cold and usually wet. Bivouacking on sodden ground in soaked blankets was a daily occurrence and the troops suffered much discomfort.

Subsequent Operations.

The next problems were first to evacuate the prisoners and to protect them from patriot attentions during their move to Dessie, and secondly to reconnoitre towards Gondar and make contact with the commander of a party of patriots known to be some miles further to the west. One troop, Skinner's Horse, and a section of Sappers and Miners, moved off from Debra Tabor and by 8th July had reached a point 42 miles to the west having surmounted considerable difficulties of bad and blocked roads. The whole force was successfully concentrated back in Dessie by 14th July, Debra Tabor being left in charge of officers of 101 Mission and the patriots.

PART V.

*Advance against Gondar from Gallabat.**Own troops.*

On 3rd March 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment, less one company, was withdrawn to Gedaref to join 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, before moving to Keren. One company 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment and 21 Field Company, Sappers and Miners, was left to continue the pursuit along the Gallabat-Gondar road. This force patrolled forward until finally stopped by the enemy holding the escarpment a few miles west of Chelga. On 5th April they were joined by 3 Ethiopian Battalion and C Troop Light Artillery Battery, S.D.F. By 15th April, the company 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment and 21 Field Company, Sappers and Miners, were withdrawn to rejoin 5th Indian Division and a force known as Kerforce, comprising 3 Ethiopian Battalion and a Composite Battalion made up of companies from various S.D.F. units, took over operations on this sector.

Enemy positions.

Opposite the Composite Battalion the enemy was holding the western edge of the escarpment. His forward line of defended localities was some eight to ten miles west of the escarpment, and was held in strength. The escarpment itself is between five and ten miles west of Chelga. A flanking movement was the only possible way of striking at Chelga or the communications behind.

Administration.

Administrative difficulties were considerable. The road Metemma-Gondar is only a dry-weather track, and becomes impassable by wheels during the rains. It is seriously interrupted some 25 miles east of Gallabat by the unbridged Gandwa River. Movement by M.T. off the road in the Chelga area is not practicable. The country had been burnt. There was not sufficient grass for camels, nor could they have been used in the steep hills in that area. Mules and horses belonging to the Composite Battalion were below strength and in poor condition as a result of previous strenuous campaigning. Rain began to fall by 15th April.

Neither time nor resources admitted the construction of an all-weather road. The decision was made to operate against Chelga for as long as possible, and if success had not been achieved to withdraw this force to the Sudan when rain made its further maintenance impossible. The Composite Battalion was assisted by various bands of patriots. On 22nd April an action took place near Tankal, a village on the edge of the escarpment, eight miles south of Chelga. The enemy attempted to drive off our forces, consisting of one company and some patriots. They were unsuccessful and Tankal was held. Enemy casualties were eighty dead.

This thrust against Gondar from the west contained a force of enemy greater than itself, and kept it watching in both directions during the time of the operations against Debra Tabor.

Operations on 18th and 19th May.

On 18th May the Composite Battalion worked its way round on to the plateau, establishing itself on a ridge 1,000 yards north-east of Chelga Fort. In getting there they captured five officers and 300 other ranks.

On 19th May the enemy, strongly reinforced, attacked the Composite Battalion inflicting fairly severe casualties. Rain and the impassability of the tracks prevented further operations north of Chelga, and, on 22nd May the Composite Battalion returned to Amanit, on the road west of Chelga. Except for harassing tactics and a minor offensive by two companies to cover the withdrawal, no further operations took place on this front. By 30th June the Composite Battalion was concentrating at Gallabat, with forward posts on the Gandwa. As a result of this withdrawal, the enemy was able to move forces from the Chelga area across to the south-east of Gondar, where they were established some 36 miles south-east of Gondar covering the road to Debra Tabor.

PART VI.

Operations against the Wolcheft Pass.

By 12th April No. 1 M.M.G. Group, S.D.F., pursuing the enemy retreating towards Gondar, crossed the Tacazze River with little opposition. By 13th April it had reached the Wolcheft Pass, but, in attempting to patrol up it, two vehicles were ambushed and destroyed.

Topography—The Wolcheft Pass.

The Wolcheft Pass is not in the true sense of the word a Pass. It is an ascent from a lower level on to a plateau 4,000 feet higher. The road from Debivar zigzags up the face of Green Hill. Before it reaches the top of Green Hill it turns sharply, being carved out of the sheer cliff face along the western side. To construct this portion of the road, the Italians had been forced to suspend men by ropes over the top of the cliff. The top of Green Hill itself is a ledge still a considerable distance below the level of the plateau proper. The road from half way up Green Hill is covered by machine-gun and mortar fire. The original garrison on the top of the Wolcheft was estimated as 3,000 white and 2,000 native troops, with thirty guns, machine-guns and mortars. There were also reported to be a few light tanks but these have never been confirmed. The natural strength of the Wolcheft is twice that of Amba Alagi and five times that of Keren. Exhaustive reconnaissances have proved that there is no feature in the area of Debivar from

which any observation could be got on to the top of the plateau. The enemy has command of movement in the valley. His guns and mortars are placed out of range of anything smaller than 25 pounders. The country round Debivar is such that Battery positions for field artillery, within effective range and under cover from enemy fire, are difficult to find. One battery of 25 pounders is about the limit that can be fitted in.

The only other way on to the escarpment so far discovered is by a mule track which winds eighteen miles through the hills and comes up on to the plateau at Bosa, fifteen miles west of Debarech. This track is only fit for mules, and at times in the rains is impassable even by them. The plateau itself reaches 10,000 feet. Conditions on the top in the rainy season are uncomfortable and cold. The country on top is rolling. As far as is known, no great physical difficulties exist between Wolcheft and Gondar. The road Wolcheft-Gondar is an all-weather M.T. road. Up the pass it is mined and blocked by demolitions. The exact extent of these demolitions are not yet known but it is believed that they are not unduly serious and that a Sappers and Miners Company with power tools could probably clear a way in a few days uninterrupted work.

Operations.

Up to date it has been impossible to force a way up the Wolcheft Pass. Operations have been confined to assisting patriot forces already on the plateau. These consist of a force operating from Bosa, commanded by Major Ringrose with one company of 3 Ethiopian Battalion under command. Nearer Gondar a party of patriots under el Bimbashi Sheppard came across from the Chelga direction and occupied Amba Giyorgis on the road Wolcheft-Gondar. The third party are the patriots who assisted in the capture of Debra Tabor under Major Douglas. These three parties, all of which vary daily in numbers, have been the only forces directly threatening Gondar since the fall of Debra Tabor and the withdrawal from Chelga.

Capture of Debarech.

By 28th May el Bimbashi Sheppard was occupying Amba Giyorgis and the whole road from inclusive Amba Giyorgis to exclusive Debarech was in patriot hands. Between 28th and 31st May severe fighting in the Debarech area resulted in the capture of Debarech. The enemy suffered more than 400 killed and over 150 deserters. Three small forts to the west of Debarech were also captured and the enemy was penned into the tongue of land immediately round the Wolcheft forts.

Night Attack 17th June.

Nothing further was undertaken until 17th June when Major Ringrose made a successful night attack on one of the forts at the Wolcheft. His troops were allowed to enter by unsuspecting sentries and the Italians were caught sleeping. The enemy casualties were over 100, several places were burnt and mines laid. Our casualties were three slightly wounded.

Loss of Debarech.

On 23rd June the enemy counter-attacked strongly against Ringrose's patriots who were dispersed and defeated. Ras Ayalu and his

son, who had loyally supported Ringrose, were captured. Major Ringrose himself was slightly wounded and barely escaped with a small bodyguard and his two British wireless operators. The enemy recaptured Debarech and advanced some distance westwards towards Bosa.

Formation of Necol.

On 27th June one battery 28 Field Regiment was sent down to the Wolcheft and "Necol" was formed consisting of 28 Field Regiment less one battery, No. 2 M.M.G. Group, S.D.F. less one company, 51 Commando and 20 Field Company, Sappers and Miners. This force was ordered to assist the patriots by every means in their power with the object of securing a bridgehead on the top of the pass, and thus allow the road-blocks to be cleared for an advance on Gondar. On 6th July a plan was made to attack the Wolcheft Pass with regular troops, the patriots co-operating. In outline the plan was as follows:—

Plan to attack Wolcheft.

3/14 Punjab Regiment was to start from Zarema, the village where the mule track to Bosa leaves the main road, and march to Bosa. From there a reconnaissance was to be made, it being left to the discretion of the Officer Commanding 3/14 Punjab Regiment to decide whether or not the operation was feasible. He alone could decide, after having seen the country. A gunner O.P. with a wireless set accompanied 3/14 Punjab Regiment. The supply of regular troops on the top of this pass was a matter of difficulty, and the success or failure of the operation depended upon very close timing and the maintenance of wireless communication with the troops on the plateau. The R.A.F. guaranteed 30 sorties by Wellesley aircraft for the purpose of dropping ammunition and supplies. It was realised that a full scale of rations for Indian troops could not be maintained until the road was opened. Major Ringrose was confident that sufficient fresh meat and vegetables could be obtained locally, and would be supplied by the patriots to ensure that this battalion had enough to eat. There was no organised mule transport but patriot volunteers were plentiful, though, in the event, proved themselves extremely unreliable.

Course of the Operation.

3/14 Punjab Regiment arrived at Bosa on 13th July. On 14th July a reconnaissance in strength was made. The enemy had been fully informed of these operations and launched an immediate counter-attack against the leading companies of 3/14 Punjab Regiment. The gunner O.P. was over-run within 15 minutes of being established. A cloud descended, making observation difficult. Patriot forces had become mixed with the enemy native troops, and it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. There were undoubted cases of treachery. Patriots supposed to be friendly were seen firing on our officers and men. Commander 3/14 Punjab Regiment was killed. Surprise was lost, and, there being no further chance of renewing the operation, 3/14 Punjab withdrew.

In these operations time again was the limiting factor, not only on account of supplying 3/14 Punjab Regiment but also because

28 Field Regiment was under orders to sail for the Middle East, and could not be retained in the forward area later than 19th July.

R.A.F.

Since this operation, the pressure on Gondar and the Wolcheft Pass has been maintained mainly by the R.A.F. and S.A.A.F. On completion of their operations in the Galla Sidamo, the S.A.A.F. was placed at the disposal of 203 Group R.A.F.

Patriot Activity.

Since 15th July patriot activity has died down. The weather is bad and the patriots are anxious about the cultivation of their crops. It is unlikely that they will produce any major effort until their crops are harvested. Major Ringrose, his bodyguard, and one company of 3 Ethiopian Battalion attacked the enemy positions at Cianch between Wolcheft and Bosa on 26th August capturing 108 Italians, 8 natives and some mortars and machine-guns. The patriot forces under Major Douglas have moved closer to Gondar and, supported by the S.A.A.F., are increasing their pressure on Gondar from this direction. Communications at the moment are bad, and news is only coming through by runner, taking in some cases five or six days to reach Asmara.

PART VII.

Operations in the Blue Nile Frontier Area and Baro Salient.

Along their western frontier, the Italians had maintained garrisons covering the entrances into Ethiopia. During the summer and autumn of 1940, the strength of the Sudan Defence Force had not allowed more than defensive patrolling by Police and "Armed Friendlies." Many of these patrols were led by Political Officers of the Sudan Civil Service, who were not professional soldiers, but who displayed commendable skill and courage in this frontier patrol work. The efforts of these small parties were assisted by the R.A.F. who effectively bombed enemy garrisons and carried on a leaflet and propaganda war, mainly directed against his native troops, whenever aircraft could be made available.

It was not until January 1941 that sufficient reinforcements in the form of 2/6 King's African Rifles and the Belgian Contingent in the Sudan allowed of more active operations being undertaken in the frontier area.

It was important that the enemy's frontier posts in the neighbourhood of the Blue Nile should be removed so that the camel routes into Ethiopia could be opened for the supply and maintenance of the rebellion, which could not have flourished without a steady flow of arms, money and material from the Sudan. The removal of the enemy forces from this area automatically lessened the threat against the Nile L. of C. and the Sudan Railway, which, if cut about the Sennar Dam, would have left the troops operating in the Butana Bridge and Gallabat areas isolated from Khartoum.

On 9th January our patrols entered Guba, the Italian frontier post covering the north bank of the Blue Nile. The post was found deserted, and a considerable quantity of war material was discovered. This post had been induced to evacuate by air action, and the action of armed friendlies.

On 20th January 5 Patrol Company, Frontier Battalion, encountered a force of the enemy at the Shogali crossing of the Blue Nile. A sharp action ensued, the enemy withdrawing towards Asosa. On 12th February Kurmuk was captured by detachments 2/6 K.A.R. and Sudan Frontier Police. This cleared the last Italians out of the Sudan. Operations continued with the object of attacking Asosa.

Topography.

The Sudan, east of the White Nile, is mainly flat grass country. As the frontier is approached, the country rises into foothills of considerable size, and, about Asosa and Afodu, is mountainous, Afodu itself being on top of an escarpment.

At this time 2/6 K.A.R. were spread from Kurmuk to the Baro Salient, a distance of over 200 miles. The Belgian Contingent was disposed behind the K.A.R. protecting the White Nile. Advancing from the north based on Roseires, the Eastern Arab Corps, Sudan Defence Force, with 5 Patrol Company, Frontier Battalion, and C Troop Light Artillery Battery, S.D.F., under command were co-operating with the northern detachment 2/6 K.A.R. Between 14th February and 9th March Qeissan and Belad Deroz were captured by the Sudan Defence Force, and, on 9th March, after heavy fighting, the escarpment at Afodu was stormed by the Eastern Arab Corps with two companies 2/6 K.A.R. under command. Guns and stores, and some M.T. fell into their hands. The advance was immediately pressed on towards Asosa.

In the meantime a detachment of the Belgians had moved forward, and was in a position facing Asosa from the south. Unfortunately the Belgian Contingent, which had been ordered to cut the road east of Asosa, was too late, and a considerable body of the enemy escaped.

After the fall of Asosa the whole of the Blue Nile frontier was cleared and open for the passage of camel caravans to the Gojjam. Units of the Eastern Arab Corps were moved to the area east of Gallabat, as has been previously described.

Operations against Gambela.

The next important centre of enemy resistance was in the area Gambela-Dembi Dollo. A detachment of 2/6 K.A.R. which had been operating at Asosa now marched south-east, encountering strong enemy positions on the Dabus River based on Mendi. By 20th March the remainder of 2/6 K.A.R. had been concentrated, and was about three miles west of Gambela. Here they were subjected to heavy attacks by enemy aircraft. On 23rd March the Belgian Battalion from the Asosa area was also moved south to operate against Gambela, and from now on the whole of the Belgian Contingent, later brought up to three battalions and one field battery, operated in this area. On 22nd March 2/6 K.A.R. with that portion of the Belgian Contingent which had been moved forward, attacked Gambela and, after severe fighting, captured it on the 23rd. Here again the enemy escaped.

From Gambela the Belgian Contingent patrolled towards Dembi Dollo, while 2/6 K.A.R. moved north to the Dabus River and Ghidame. The enemy's position at Dembi Dollo was found to be strong. Throughout April there was considerable fighting here, with

patrol actions along the Dabus River. On 21st April 2/6 K.A.R. were ordered to operate south and south-east towards Mendi and Ghimbi in co-operation with one Belgian battalion which, after the capture of Dembi Dollo, was directed on Yubdo. Thereafter 2/6 K.A.R. was to continue eastwards to Lekempti, and the Belgians towards Gore, as far as the administrative situation permitted. Patrol activity continued in this area, and various small actions were fought, but the enemy positions at Dembi Dollo were too strong for the Belgians to take. The enemy had air superiority in this area, the majority of our Air Force being engaged in Northern Ethiopia.

At the end of April the Belgians had six companies spread out from the Bortai River to Gambela. Throughout the month of May, 2/6 K.A.R. and the Belgian Contingent were thrown on the defensive. Initiative had passed to the enemy who threatened to retake Asosa and Afodu with his considerable garrison in the Mendi area. This necessitated the disposition of 2/6 K.A.R. to cover the approaches from Mendi over the River Dabus, and the temporary evacuation of Ghidame. The weakness of our forces must now have been apparent to the enemy.

The Belgians were subjected to regular air bombing. There was a considerable amount of sickness amongst them. Until the westward drive from Addis Ababa and the Lakes diverted the enemy's threat to Asosa, it was not safe to move 2/6 K.A.R. southwards from the Dabus River to co-operate with the Belgians.

In June 2/6 K.A.R. moved south to Ghidame, operating from there south-eastwards to cut the road Dembi Dollow-Yubdo. The road was attacked on 3rd July, and by the 4th July good progress was being made. On 2nd July the Belgian Contingent forced the River Bortai, attacking towards Dembi Dollo on the 3rd. At 0200 hours on 4th July General Gazzera asked for terms and surrendered the remnants of his army to the Belgians.

PART VIII.

Operations in the Boma.

During the early stages of the war operations on the Boma Plateau had been confined to patrol activity only. It was not until forces operating from Kenya along the west side of Lake Rudolph were ready, that the Equatorial Corps could undertake an advance into south-west Ethiopia. Maji was the centre of the Italian resistance in this area. The natives were friendly neither to the Italians nor the British and even before the war had been a constant source of trouble. Sudan forces in this area consisted of four companies of the Equatorial Corps and a nebulous force of patriots who, in this area, achieved very little. Time and resources did not allow the making of an all-weather road across the Boma Plateau towards the frontier. It was therefore not possible to maintain regular forces in active operations during the rains, which, in this area, begin early in the year. On 17th February these decisions were conveyed to the O.C. Equatorial Corps. He was instructed to take steps immediately to dump forward sufficient supplies to maintain at least one company of the Equatorial Corps and the patriots, who numbered about 500, during the rains.

The general outline of the plan was for companies of the Equatorial Corps to move on Maji via Zilmanu in co-operation with 25th East African Brigade. On 19th February No. 2 Company of the Equatorial Corps encountered a battalion of 18th Colonial Brigade. An action ensued in which the enemy left 150 dead, our casualties being 5 killed and 9 wounded including one British officer. The enemy battalion was driven off.

On 2nd April Maji was reported strongly held by the enemy and there was a considerable number of anti-British natives with a stiffening of regulars in the Zilmanu and Beru areas. Between these posts the country was in a state of semi-civil war. On 8th April a message was received from G.O.C. East Africa that Maji had been evacuated and expressing the opinion that the Merille tribe would not submit unless Maji was occupied by regular troops. He also stated that 25th East African Brigade would only be able to garrison Maji for a limited time as it was wanted for further operations. He asked if the Equatorial Corps could take over the garrisoning of Maji. This was agreed to and the Equatorial Corps moved forward to occupy Maji. The rains had already started and the state of the tracks was appalling. The country is covered with tropical jungle. Progress was slow and difficult. By 25th April the Equatorial Corps was still ten miles from Maji, having been held up by road conditions and flooded rivers. It was not until early in May that Maji was occupied. The only practicable route into Maji came from the north, and O.C. Equatorial Corps found it necessary to establish a garrison at Masci, nine miles north of Maji, where contact was made with 2/4 K.A.R.

On 13th May, O.C. Equatorial Corps reported that he was confident of being able to occupy Maji indefinitely but it was essential that one company should occupy Masci to cover the only practicable route which came into Maji from the enemy's direction. Owing to the rains his L. of C. was precarious. He had reached the limit of M.T. Beyond garrisoning Masci and Maji, only defensive patrols could be undertaken. At this time the whole Boma area was under heavy, continuous rain. The many rivers were rapidly rising and some were now twelve feet deep.

By 1st June, Advanced Headquarters of the Equatorial Corps was fully established in Maji. Irregular activities were directed from there, mainly in the direction of Shoa Gimira. During June the country was gradually cleared of enemy.

PART IX.

The Patriot Campaign—1940.

The month of November 1940, when a forward policy in Gojjam was decided upon, found the enemy and ourselves disposed as follows in the area of potential revolt:

Gojjam.

The enemy had three Colonial Brigades (sixteen battalions) concentrated on the three main strongholds, Dangila, Burye and Debra Markos, with four Blackshirt battalions in support.

We had Mission 101, consisting of Colonel D. A. Sandford, D.S.O., two other British Officers and three N.C.Os., accompanied by the Emperor's representative Azajh Kabada and

protected by the patriot leaders, Dedjasmatches Mangasha and Nagash, who had received about 1,000 rifles from us.

Armacheho-Begemeder.

Excluding the forces gathered at Metemma to meet our offensive there, the enemy had one Colonial Brigade, twelve Blackshirt battalions and two Cavalry Groups in the area.

We had Major Arthur Bentinck of Mission 101, accompanied by the Emperor's representative, Tsahañ Taezaz Haile, as a result of whose efforts only one chief, Gerasmatch Redda of Chelga, took armed action against the Italians. In addition Captain Foley, R.E., was operating on the Gondar-Metemma road with a small band and supply of explosives.

Walkait.

The enemy had three Colonial battalions and one Blackshirt battalion in the area.

We had no representative but had armed two chiefs, Dedjasmatch Adane and Fitaurari Misfin, who caused the Italians a certain amount of trouble.

Shoa and Wollo.

We had no communication with these areas, which contained some important patriot leaders, Ras Ababa Aragai, Fitauraris Gerasu Duke and Shakka Bakale.

The Plan.

One convoy had reached Mission 101 in the Gojjam since its departure from the Sudan in August, 1940. The R.A.F. based on the Sudan had begun deep raiding on Dangila, Bahrdar Giyorgis and Enjabara. This had stirred the patriots to some activity of a minor nature, and the Italians to counter-activity, raids and cross-country marches. Some of the irregular Banda leaders on the escarpment of Gojjam were thinking of transferring their allegiance to the Emperor. The Italian command, anxious about the potential threat in Gojjam, appointed their most distinguished colonial commander, General Nasi, to the new Western Command, which included the three first zones mentioned above. They further agreed (on a financial consideration) with the hereditary leader of Gojjam, Ras Hailu Tekla Haimanot, that he should return to the province, and by their concentrations at Metemma and in Beni Shangul were clearly hoping to forbid our arms traffic into Gojjam, limited though that was by the lack of animal transport and the poverty of our own resources.

In November, following the visit of the Secretary of State for War (Mr. Anthony Eden), a new G(R) staff for the rebellion was appointed in Khartoum. Major O. C. Wingate, D.S.O., took charge of operations. They were given considerable resources in finance and weapons, and the first step in the forward policy now initiated was a flight on 20th November by Major Wingate to Colonel Sandford's Headquarters in central Gojjam, where the principles of the forthcoming offensive were discussed.

At this and later conferences the following plan of action was evolved.

The Emperor Haile Selassie, with his bodyguard, was to enter Ethiopia as soon as possible and to make his first camp on the massif of Belaya, a patriot area detached from the escarpment and lying 90 miles north-west of Burye.

For this purpose, one company of the recently formed Sudan Frontier Battalion was to

occupy Belaya, and later was to be followed by three of the remaining companies.

1 Ethiopian Battalion, which had just begun its training in Khartoum, was to be distributed into Operational Centres under British Officers and N.C.Os., and these were to march into Gojjam via Belaya and attach themselves to various patriot chiefs.

2 Ethiopian Battalion and 4 Eritrean Battalion were to be brought from Kenya to form the nucleus of the Emperor's Bodyguard, which would, however, have a fighting role.

Further members of the Bodyguard were to be found by Colonel Sandford in Gojjam and sent to Belaya for training.

Up to 25,000 camels were to be raised in the Sudan to transport the necessities for a nine months' campaign as far as the escarpment.

Colonel Sandford was to raise up to 3,000 mules in Gojjam for the escarpment haul.

The supply of arms and ammunition to the quarrelsome and ineffective chiefs north of Gojjam was to cease, but the section of Mission 101 was to remain there to keep the population sweet with money and food.

The ultimate object of this plan was to seize an Italian stronghold in Gojjam, preferably Dangila, instal the Emperor nearby, and from this centre to widen the area of revolt and desertion.

For the rest of 1940 and until 20th January, 1941, work to put the plan into operation went steadily ahead. 2 Ethiopian Battalion arrived in the Sudan from Kenya and began its training, though 4 Eritrean Battalion arrived too late to participate in warlike activity. Three Operational Centres were formed and by 20th January, one had already gone forward. By the same date four companies of the Sudan Frontier Battalion, who were to be the spearhead of the movement, reached or were marching for Belaya, at whose foot an aerodrome was nearing completion. Thousands of camels with volunteer drivers had been collected from all over the Sudan, and were on the move to Belaya. Difficulties, however, were experienced in getting the Abyssinian end of the scheme to keep pace with the Sudanese. It was found that the patriot chiefs did not take kindly to the idea of releasing men from their own forces and so weakening themselves in order to increase the Imperial Bodyguard. They were also very slow in collecting mules. In the end it was found necessary to drive the camel transport up the escarpment into Gojjam, and this, in combination with the arduous approach over lava soil to Belaya, was responsible for the large animal mortality (12,000 out of 15,000 camels) of the Gojjam campaign. First attempts to break a route for M.T. to Belaya failed.

Meanwhile the R.A.F. continued to drop bombs and propaganda on the Gojjam strongholds, and included Burye and the main frontier Banda posts of Guba and Wanbera in their programme. Exploiting the rout of Colonel Rolle's Banda in October, we armed the negroid Gumz people near Guba, and this, associated with the intensification of our propaganda and a series of heavy air attacks, led to the panic abandonment of Guba in the first days of January. This constituted the first Italian territorial loss in the campaign, and, by removing the threat to our lines of communication from the south, greatly simplified our penetration of Gojjam.

The Advance.

On 20th January 1941 the Emperor Haile Salassie crossed the frontier from the Sudan into Ethiopia at a point near Umm Idla, escorted by 2 Ethiopian Battalion. A special security route had been chosen for him running east-south-east by compass-bearing to the north-western slopes of Belaya, but this proved too difficult for M.T. and he eventually reached Belaya by horse on 6th February. In the meantime Colonel O.C. Wingate had been appointed commander of the forces in Gojjam, and Brigadier D. S. Sandford became Political and Military Adviser to the Emperor.

The appearance of this mixed Sudanese and Ethiopian force, enlarged by rumour, at Belaya, and the arrival of the Emperor, had the desired effect on the Italians and their dependents. The system of guarding the entries to the escarpment by territorial Banda broke down entirely. The chiefs of Tumha, the important district on the scarp-edge west of Dangila, who were brothers of Fitaurari Tafere Zalleka, the patriot chief of Belaya, had already come over; and now Fitaurari Zalleka Birru who commanded the local bands both in Matakal (the key to Enjabara and Burye) and in the Wanbera district, proclaimed his submission to the Emperor.

This crumbling of their first line of defence, coming after the failure of their last efforts to crush the central Gojjam patriot chiefs, Dedjasmatches Mangasha and Nagash, and coming also at a time when they were in sore need of reinforcements for the Eritrean and Somalia fronts, seems to have decided the Italians to abandon, at a convenient time, western Gojjam and the Brigade H.Qs. of Dangila and Burye, and to fall back in the north on Bahrdar Giyorgis and in the south on the line of the Temcha river south of Dambacha.

The first step in this retreat was taken before our regular forces could intervene. On 16th February, when one company of the Frontier Battalion was approaching his area, Colonel Torelli, commanding the nine battalions in Dangila, withdrew to Piccolo Abbai, and thence after a short rest at Meshenti, to Bahrdar Giyorgis. He lost several hundred deserters en route and was harried by patriots and by a Bimbashi of the S.D.F. with one mortar and 20 regular troops, but his casualties to fire were not large. In the following weeks he was able to withdraw all the outlying garrisons of Alefa and Achefer, Zeghie, Debra Mai and Addiet, without great loss, to Bahrdar, where he was invested by "Beghemder Force" consisting of one company of the Frontier Battalion and an Operational Centre of 180 men acting under the G.S.O.2 of Mission 101. The role of this small force, which it successfully accomplished, was to prevent Torelli from breaking back and attacking the rear of the Frontier Battalion and 2 Ethiopian Battalion once the Italian Commander understood the midget from which he had run. Dangila had meanwhile been looted by the patriots.

With the danger from the north sealed off, the remainder of the Frontier Battalion (less 5 Company), 2 Ethiopian Battalion, No. 1 Operational Centre, a platoon of four mortars and a Field Propaganda Unit were formed into "Gideon Force" under the command of Colonel Wingate and assembled in the former

Italian Fort of Enjabara on the axial road of Gojjam on 23rd February. One week previously Colonel Natale, commanding the Italian Brigade Group in Burye, had withdrawn the garrisons of two Colonial battalions from Enjabara on to Burye. This column had again been harassed, somewhat more vigorously, by the patriots of Dedjasmach Nagash but had nevertheless been able to reach Burye. The timely arrival of our troops in Enjabara stopped looting and saved a month's supply of Italian rations for the entire force. From now on it was discovered that it was possible for Gideon Force to live on the country and on captured food.

It was now necessary to operate rapidly if the garrison of Burye was not also to escape, without damage, to a defensible line preparatory to the next step in Italian policy, which was to hand over the government of the Gojjam to Ras Hailu and trust to the jealousy between the Imperial and the Gojjam dynasty to divide Gojjam and smother the revolt. The British Gojjam command therefore decided to march south by night on 25th February in order to bypass Burye to the north and occupy the road south of Burye leading to Debra Markos, where, with the aid of a rebellious countryside, they might hope to ambush Natale's column.

The Italian commander at this moment played into our hands by his indecision. Believing that too much prestige had already been lost by the precipitate withdrawals from Dangila and Enjabara (and in the first case the Italians had been obliged to abandon all their M.T.), fearing that further withdrawals would increase the rate of desertions and, supposing that, for the time being, he was safe in Burye, Natale decided not to withdraw for the present. If the Italians had withdrawn at this moment after destroying their copious stores in Burye, with their M.T. and their forces intact, they might have confronted Gideon Force with great difficulties of administration and have checked its advance.

As things were, Natale does not seem to have been aware of the approach of Gideon Force until it was on the outskirts of Burye. By that time, the column, four miles long as it marched at night with its 700 camels and 200 mules, had been exaggerated past recognition by local report and propaganda. 600 men had been multiplied by ten, with the result that when Natale left, he left in a disorderly hurry, and his retreat was harried by troops of a fighting quality and a persistence many times superior to those of the irregular patriot forces with whom he had skirmished in the past.

The Road Battles.

In the new plan, 2 Ethiopian Battalion, supported by patriot irregulars, were to attack the forts of Jigga and Dambacha on the Gojjam road, while the Frontier Battalion and mortars were to threaten the outer forts of Burye and the fort of Mankusa a few miles to the south of Burye. These operations were successfully carried out in the period 27th February-4th March, while the main forts of Burye were effectively attacked by the R.A.F. After a smart action in daylight (the only such action deliberately undertaken by Gideon Force during the campaign) on Burye southern fort on 27th February, followed by harassing fire on the fort

throughout the night, attention was switched to Mankusa fort on the enemy's line of retreat. Mankusa was harassed and set ablaze by mortar and Vickers fire and by the cries and conjurations of the propaganda unit. Considerable desertions were suffered by the Italians, morale was at a low ebb, and this final threat to his only communications persuaded Natale to break out to the south on 4th March, screened by low-flying Italian aircraft.

The retreat was followed up and skilfully harassed in camp at night with light machine-gun fire from two companies of the Frontier Battalion, who inflicted losses on the enemy later reported as four lorry-loads of wounded. The enemy was thus pushed through Jigga fort, and, on 6th March fell into an ambush laid by the 2 Ethiopian Battalion (some 400 men) in a river-bed west of Dambacha. Here some 1,000 casualties, including 180 killed, were inflicted on the enemy column and two of his armoured cars were captured before he had been able to smother 2 Ethiopian Battalion by sheer weight of numbers. The losses of this Ethiopian Battalion were surprisingly light—one British Officer, 90 men and the whole of the battalion camel transport—but the disorganisation that they suffered in this gallant action was such as to render them practically valueless for the rest of the campaign. Attacked at the same time from the rear by companies of the Frontier Battalion and on the flank by patriot bands, which were always more active when he was on the move, the enemy was thoroughly scared. On 8th March he evacuated Dambacha, and, on the 10th, burned down and abandoned Fort Emanuel east of the river Tamcha, thus giving up his original plan of defence of Eastern Gojjam. The commander of Gideon Force and the Frontier Battalion pressed hard on his heels, and on 13th March were in contact with him on the Gulit Hill position just west of Debra Markos. He had concentrated here all the remaining forces of Gojjam except for the garrison of Bahrdar Giyorgis, and a battalion at Mota. Ras Hailu was also called in with his Banda to help in the defence of the town.

Operations round Debra Markos.

As the enemy withdrew deeper into Gojjam his forces naturally increased and the British and Ethiopian regular forces diminished, since it was necessary, if only for the protection of valuable stores, to garrison positions such as Emanuel and Dambacha, to reform 2 Ethiopian Battalion, and to protect the L. of C. used by the few lorries captured at Burye, on which supply now depended. At Debra Markos the disparity of the forces opposed had reached something fantastic; 12,000 Italians and Colonial troops were contained by two companies of the Frontier Battalion, supported by the mortar platoon (four mortars) of 2 Ethiopian Battalion, totalling 300 men. The enemy's illusions as to our regular strength were at last beginning to be dispelled; Natale was disgraced by General Nasi and replaced by Colonel Maraventano, and the enemy broke back on 17th March and re-occupied Fort Emanuel with some 1,500 troops.

In this predicament, which synchronised with a heavy enemy counter-attack for Bahrdar Giyorgis, the commander of Gideon Force had to decide whether to withdraw to the Tamcha

river and take up a position defending the Emperor's Headquarters, which were now outside Burye, or to advance boldly and by continuous manoeuvre pin the bulk of the enemy's forces to the perimeter forts of Debra Markos. The latter course was rightly taken, and after a small Ethiopian regular force, accompanied by a British engineer, had been detached to interrupt the road between Debra Markos and the Blue Nile and to contact the chief Lij Belai Zelleka, whose help, it was thought, might be useful in that area, a series of new attacks was launched on the enemy defences north and north-west of Debra Markos.

In view of our great poverty in numbers, a new technique had to be thought out for these attacks, which were strikingly successful in inflicting casualties upon the enemy and in lowering his morale. The country was well covered, and our forces were thus able to lie up in the day-time, only a few miles from the enemy's positions without detection by his air or his native cavalry. Action was taken only at night, when approach marches reconnoitred during the day were carried out by parties which rarely exceeded a hundred men for a single operation, and usually numbered forty to fifty. The alternative methods used were to lay light machine-guns from close range on the enemy's camp fires when they were still burning, or (more commonly, for the enemy soon adjusted himself to this ruse) to approach, armed simply with bomb, rifle and bayonet, bomb his positions from ten yards range, carry them with the bayonet, beat off counter-attack, and withdraw before dawn. The hour chosen for these attacks was usually when the enemy was sleepest, and his customary reaction was to continue firing with machine-guns and artillery until dawn, thus waging a war of nerves upon himself. Naturally the most absolute discipline of silence, fire-control and sense of direction was demanded of the troops who took part in these attacks, and it was here that the natural fighting qualities of the Sudanese and the training of the Frontier Battalion and its officers were demonstrated. Between 19th March and 3rd April, when the Ethiopian flag was raised by Ras Hailu over the citadel of Debra Markos and the last Italian troops had abandoned the town, attacks of this kind were made with success on Abima Fort, Addis Fort, and all the Gulit positions. The most impressive of these took place on Gulit on the night of 24th March, when four of the main positions were entered by our men. The effect of these guerilla methods could be judged by the stream of desertions coming at the rate of over a hundred men a day from the enemy's forces in Debra Markos. On 1st April the enemy abandoned Gulit and the evacuation of Debra Markos began.

A small force of three platoons and the mortar section was detached to support the troops that had already joined Lij Belai Zelleka on the line of the enemy's retreat to the Blue Nile. They were accompanied by the irregulars of Azaj Kabada, the Emperor's representative. If it had not been for the treachery of Lij Belai, who abandoned the ambush by agreement with Ras Hailu (into whose noble family, he, a commoner, wished to marry), it is possible that the Maraventano column which was already shedding thousands of deserters, would

have surrendered north of the Blue Nile crossing. As it was, twenty-eight enemy lorries and two armoured cars were ambushed and destroyed by the forces left in the lurch by Lij Belai, and a large number of Italian Colonial troops were killed. Azaj Kabada's men cooperated creditably in this action, which, apart from one bomb raid on the Debra Markos forts, was the first in which Ethiopian irregular patriot forces had played a prominent part since the entry of Gideon Force into Gojjam. From now on a striking characteristic of the patriot irregulars came into evidence. Unwilling to sacrifice themselves when the issue of the war was in doubt and providing nothing more concrete than a camouflage to the small number of our forces, from henceforward to the fall of Addis Ababa they risked themselves more and more in open battle and were largely responsible for the eventual surrender of the Maraventano column at Agibar east of the Blue Nile on 22nd May. Operations carried out beyond the Blue Nile were under the direction of Lt.-General Cunningham, G.O.C. East Africa, and therefore are not described in this report. It is sufficient to say that Maraventano surrendered 7,000 men, with 7 guns and nearly 200 automatics, heavy and light, to 140 Sudanese and Ethiopian regulars and 2,000 patriots under Ras Kassa, after a three-day battle in which the Sudanese showed their customary address, discipline and coolness and the Ethiopians a new reckless courage. This quality may partly be attributed to a desire for loot and partly to the removal of the haunting fear of Italian reprisals on their families and villages.

The Emperor entered the citadel at Debra Markos on 6th April. As Ras Hailu (believed to be in communication with the enemy) remained in the town with 6,000 Banda, and as relations between him and the Emperor were frigid, the bulk of Gideon Force was kept in Debra Markos until 28th April, when they accompanied the Emperor across the Blue Nile to Addis Ababa. By this time some of the Frontier Battalion M.T. had been skilfully driven across the difficult country of Belaya and hauled by rope and manpower up the escarpment, and the pontoon bridge across the Nile at Shafartak had been repaired. The last remaining Italian force in eastern Gojjam, 69 Colonial Battalion at Mota, had also been reduced by the usual combination of deception and harassing force, after a strenuous march by the Sudanese plainsmen of the Frontier Battalion in their cotton uniforms through a blizzard in the 14,000 foot Chokey Pass. At Mota 400 Italian Colonial troops surrendered to sixty Sudanese and stores and ammunition were captured. Similarly big stores of foodstuffs had been saved from looting at Debra Markos.

Thus in a campaign which lasted for six weeks and in which the sole regular force had been 50 British officers, 20 B.O.R.'s, 800 Sudanese and 800 Ethiopian troops, with four 3-inch mortars and without air support after the Italian evacuation of Burye (when the Sudan's limited resources of aircraft had to be concentrated on Keren) the whole of Gojjam had been cleared of sixteen Colonial battalions, two regular Banda groups and four Blackshirt Battalions, with pack artillery appropriate to three Colonial brigades (six batteries) and with considerable aircraft. Half of this force was

eventually captured by the regular troops described above, the other half was evacuated across Lake Tana to the neighbourhood of Gondar. This remarkable achievement in guerilla warfare was due to the far-sighted and determined organisation of transport from the Sudan base, to the skill of the Frontier Battalion, the drive of the command and the patient preparation of the Gojjam countryside by Mission 101 and the Emperor's representative. Gideon Force was broken up at the end of April 1941, but elements of the Frontier and two Ethiopian Battalions formed the guard of the Emperor when he re-entered Addis Ababa on 5th May.

Operations at Bahrdar Giyorgis and in Beghemder.

Major A. C. Simonds, M.B.E., G.S.O.2 to Mission 101, had been appointed to the command of "Beghemder Force" in February, with the special role of investing the Italian Force under Colonel Torelli in Bahrdar Giyorgis and later marching across the Blue Nile into Beghemder where he was ordered to cut communications between Gondar-Debra Tabor-Dessie and to force the evacuation of all small enemy forts in the province. The forces under his command were 3 Company Frontier Battalion, No. 2 Operational Centre (180 Ethiopians) and Fitaurari Birru, the Imperial nominee as Governor of Beghemder, who arrived with 500 Beghemder peasants at Bahrdar Giyorgis and lost 450 of these to desertion the following day.

Bahrdar was closely and successfully invested by this small force, whose main role of securing the rear of Gideon Force was thus achieved. On two occasions, on 19th March and 26th April, Torelli made determined sorties to the south from Bahrdar Giyorgis with greatly superior forces, but failed with loss to break through. On the first occasion he came out with five Colonial battalions, pack artillery and mortars against 250 Sudanese and 75 patriots but was stopped after losing 175 men. On the second occasion he lost 150 killed and wounded, our losses being two killed and three wounded. As usual the Sudanese soldier set a high example of coolness and discipline. Torelli was himself wounded, and on 2nd May he evacuated Bahrdar Giyorgis, which was occupied by 3 Company Frontier Battalion.

Meanwhile the commander of Beghemder Force, with No. 2 Operational Centre and the stores of No. 3 Operational Centre, Fitaurari Birru and 74 Ethiopians, was ordered to cross the Blue Nile into Beghemder. The province was entered on 28th March.

In Beghemder two patriot chiefs, Dedjasmatches Danyo and Bellai, with 7,000 men, exercised a nominal control over about a quarter of the province. Another quarter was found to be neutral and the rest actively hostile. Immediate action was taken on the Gondar-Debra Tabor-Dessie road which was blocked and mined. A sharp engagement was fought against an enemy force some 300-400 strong on 13th April by No. 2 Centre and Dedjasmatch Danyo, who blew up four enemy lorries and killed 52 Italians including the commander of the column as well as about 100 Banda. Reinforcements were sent in about 90 M.T. from Gondar but the new column was halted and a relieving force of one battalion, sent out from Debra Tabor,

was also ambushed and forced to retire. Another relieving column from Debra Tabor succeeded in extricating the Italians at the cost of six ammunition lorries, 80 killed and 200 Italians wounded. The patriots fought gallantly, and, from this time onward, the enemy made no more attempts to reach Debra Tabor with M.T. from the north, with consequent far-reaching effects on local morale. Whole sections of the province declared themselves for the Emperor, including the large districts of Gaint and Dera, and the Italians evacuated all outlying posts in Beghemder on Gondar, Debra Tabor, Ifag and Taragadam. Debra Tabor was in effect isolated, for mining and sabotage operations to the south had cut it also off from Dessie, and, in conjunction with the operations of Imperial forces at Amba Alagi, rendered retreat impossible for the garrison of Dessie when 1st South African Brigade broke through the defences of that town.

On 3rd May, the day after the capture of Bahrdar Giyorgis, the commander of Frontier Battalion moved 3 Company across the Blue Nile into Beghemder, leaving 4 Company at Bahrdar Giyorgis with orders to collect animal transport and follow to Debra Tabor. H.Q. Frontier Battalion reached the outskirts of Debra Tabor on 7th May and from then until arrival of 4 Company on 16th May, in spite of continual rain, inadequate clothing and cover, and much lameness caused by jigger sores, they maintained systematic nightly bombing attacks on the Debra Tabor garrison, which consisted of two Blackshirt and two Colonial battalions and a regular Banda group. 4 Company continued the work with mortar support until 20th May, when the battalion was ordered to Dessie, much to the regret of the commander, who, after an exchange of correspondence with Colonel Angelini, commanding the Debra Tabor garrison, believed, that in spite of his instructions to hold out to the last man, Angelini would have surrendered with a little more pushing. Major Simonds was withdrawn at the same time. Debra Tabor did not fall until the beginning of July 1941, but it remained isolated throughout the intervening period as a result of the work of Beghemder Force and the Frontier Battalion.

Operations North and West of Gondar.

As stated above, an early decision was taken to stop the supply of arms and ammunition to the quarrelsome patriot chiefs of Armacheho, among whom, hampered at the same time by the incompetence of the Emperor's representative, Major Count Arthur Bentinck had now to keep the peace. The withdrawal, with the loss of all their M.T., of the Italian garrison from Walkait and northern Tsegede, however, gave a fillip to patriot activity at the beginning of February, and Major Bentinck was able, without the support of an operational centre or a single British officer or other rank to occupy Colle Chek a few miles north-west of Gondar, and so to draw off part of the enemy's reserves during the battle of Keren.

Meanwhile the various patriot and former pro-Italian chiefs in Walkait and Tsegede assembled in conference, and, under the influence of Major Ringrose, who was later to lead the patriots in this area, and of an able Abyssinian priest Abba Qirqos, at length resolved their differences and decided to go to war. Part of them, without a British representative, went

east to the main crossing of the Tacazze on the Gondar-Adowa road; but although they captured two Italian posts there and caused some anxiety to the Italian command, which is reflected in the war diaries for March of General Frusci, G.O.C. Northern Command, they were unable to stop the flow of reinforcements from Gondar to Keren and Asmara at a crucial moment of the Keren 'battle.' Major Ringrose meanwhile marched south with the rest of the chiefs and eventually occupied Dabat and Debarech and a large part of the road between Gondar and the main Italian defence position on the Wolcheft Pass. Though later driven out of Debarech by a break-back of the beleaguered Wolcheft garrison, with loss of his transport and wounds to himself, his forces still threaten the road joining Gondar to its outlying northern forts and have recently carried the position at Cianch.

Part of the Eastern Arab Corps and the whole of 3 Ethiopian Battalion had meanwhile destroyed 27 Colonial Battalion on the hills near Chelga, but the despatch of a reserve Colonial Brigade by the Gondar Command and the flooding of the communications at the Gandwa crossing obliged this force to withdraw to the Sudan along its only L. of C., the earth road from Gondar to Metemma.

FIRST REPORT BY LIEUT. GEN. SIR ALAN CUNNINGHAM, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C., ON EAST AFRICA FORCE OPERATIONS COVERING THE PERIOD FROM 1ST NOVEMBER 1940 TO THE FALL OF ADDIS ABEBA, ON 5TH APRIL, 1941.

PART I.—INTRODUCTION

When I took over command of East Africa Force on 1st November 1940 the military policy, which of necessity had had to be one of passive defence, was assuming a more offensive character. Owing to the few troops which had been in existence in Kenya when the Italians came into the war, to the fall of Moyale, and to the evacuation of British Somaliland, the morale of the civilian population was at a low ebb, and schemes had even been worked out for the evacuation of women and children from Nairobi. The recent arrival of 1st S.A. Brigade, which preceded the remainder of 1st S.A. Division, marked the turn of the tide for the local morale.

2. At the beginning of November 1940 the force consisted of 11th and 12th (African) Divisions each containing one East African and one West African Brigade. 1st S.A. Brigade had been attached temporarily to 12 (A) Division. The force was on a two divisional front with 11th (A) Division on the right holding a line from Malindi, thence to Bura on the river Tana and along the river to Garissa. The right of 12th (A) Division was at Wajir whence, westwards, Marsabit and Lokitaung were held. The military boundary between the Sudan forces and the E.A. forces was the political boundary between the Sudan and Kenya, a fact which was made necessary for administrative reasons, but was not really satisfactory from the military point of view because any general advance would entail both E.A. and Sudan forces operating in the same area. The distance from Malindi to Lokitaung was 650 miles as the crow flies. It will be

appreciated therefore that the defence of Kenya had to be carried out by holding isolated localities where water existed, on the tracks leading out of Kenya into Italian territory. Most of these localities have been mentioned in the description of the line held above. The policy for defence was to provide the localities with the strongest physical forms of defence possible, e.g., wire, mines, tank traps, etc., but that they should be lightly held. The main defence depended on the provision of highly mobile reserves kept outside and behind the localities for immediate counter-attack.

3. My predecessor had been able to establish energetic patrol superiority over the large area of desert which separated the two forces, but owing to shortages of various sorts, chiefly M.T., was unable to do more.

An important part in establishing control over No Man's Land was played by the Irregular Companies. The first two Somali Irregular Companies were formed in September 1940 with the object of countering the activities of Italian Banda in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya. Italian Banda consisted of Colonial troops specially enlisted and normally operating in the vicinity of the areas from which they were recruited. They were well led by specially selected Italian officers who "lived native" and with their knowledge of the country, and independence of communications, not only had a serious nuisance value but also provided the enemy with much valuable information about our troop movements.

The two Somali Irregular Companies each about 125 strong under British officers selected for their local knowledge, proved a valuable counter to Italian Banda in the Northern Frontier District. Backed up by offensive patrols of regular troops, they operated from one water hole to another, and although always inferior in numbers to the Italians very soon forced the enemy to adopt a much more defensive attitude in the vast No Man's Land which then separated our leading troops from those of the enemy.

At a later stage Irregular Companies were similarly organised from Abyssinian refugees and deserters, and later still from Turkana tribesmen in the area west of Lake Rudolf. During the operations in this area, and in the operational area of the 1st S.A. Division, Irregular Companies were frequently employed to cooperate with regular troops. Their principle role was the protection of exposed flanks, and movements directed against the enemy's L of C in cooperation with attacks carried out by regular troops.

4. With the arrival of the 2nd S.A. Brigade and later of the 5th S.A. Brigade the 1st S.A. Division was established under command of Major General G. E. Brink, C.B., D.S.O. I was then able to place the force on a three division front, 11th (A) Division on the right, 12th (A) Division in the centre, and 1st (S.A.) Division on the left. The length of the front to be held seldom permitted me to form a force reserve, though from time to time I depended on formations out resting in the Highlands or units under training. The Order of Battle of E.A. Force on 1st January 1941 is given in Appendix "A", and the Air Forces stationed in Kenya in Appendix "B".

5. In view of the mixed composition of E.A. Force, e.g. all the artillery less the light batteries was South African, I felt I must be in a position to move South African formations and units from one Division to another as the situation demanded. I appreciated that the desire on the part of the South Africans to keep 1st (S.A.) Division complete would very naturally be strong. I was able to take advantage of Field-Marshal Smuts' visit to Kenya in the first week of November to put this point before him. Field-Marshal Smuts most helpfully gave me a free hand in the matter, with the exception that he did not wish me to break the Brigade Group organisation. I was able to give this undertaking readily. As a result one S.A. Brigade was continuously employed under one or the other of the African Divisions, and other South African units were changed about as required. This gave an elasticity to the force which was of the very greatest value to me and enabled me to use the splendid South African troops to the best advantage. I am most grateful to Field-Marshal Smuts, and to the South African Commanders and troops who accepted this decision so loyally, and co-operated so well with the Imperial Commanders on the occasions when it became necessary to place them under African formations.

6. Although everywhere except at Marsabit itself our troops were in desert country, the characteristics of the terrain on the east of the forward line held were quite different to that on the west. The 400 miles of country from the sea to just short of Marsabit was all waterless, flat bush. The actual density of the bush varied considerably, but there were very few places where the light tanks could not push their way through. Movement of armoured cars off the tracks was restricted in parts of this area, but large portions of it were by no means impassable to these vehicles. Except in the rains, the surface of the soil permitted movement by M.T. anywhere, where the bush was thin enough to let it through. During the rains the many large patches of black cotton soil became impassable for days at a time.

Round Marsabit and west of it was quite a different picture. The Chalbi desert and the lava escarpment which surrounded Marsabit hill were completely open. The lava belts were impassable to M.T. without preparation, but in dry weather the sandy portions of the Chalbi desert could be driven over anywhere. Further west, north and west of Lake Rudolf, was stony country with some very thin bush, and hills from which observation was possible over great distances. Furthermore armoured cars could drive over it anywhere, albeit slowly.

To the east the bush country extended unbroken to the foot hills of British Somaliland and the Arussi Hills. In the west, on the northern side of the Chalbi desert, the country facing 1st (S.A.) Division was firstly similar to that north of Lake Rudolf already described, and then consisted of low hills covered with bush of varying density.

7. I had been instructed by General Wavell at the Khartoum Conference at the end of October to examine, immediately on my arrival, the possibility of carrying out an operation for the capture of Chisimaio before the rains broke in March. I came to the conclusion that the forces required for such an operation at that time, would be six brigade groups, one of which

should preferably be an armoured brigade. I very reluctantly decided that the operation would not be possible until after the rains were over in May. The morale of the Italian troops was obviously good; many of them had fought in British Somaliland, and in the small local brushes we had with them they were fighting very well. On the other hand many of my own troops were untrained in field-work and movement by M.T.; some battalions had not even completed their musketry. Furthermore, there was not sufficient M.T. in the country to motorise fully the six brigades I felt were necessary, to carry supplies over the long L. of C., nor to provide the water echelon required to transport the water over the stretch of country between Tana and the Giuba, which my information at that time gave as being completely waterless. Also the shortage of supporting arms caused me some concern. It was not then apparent that the enemy would fail to put up a determined resistance, and his positions were strongly wired, entrenched, mined, and provided with tank traps. In February when the main advance took place the total supporting arms in E.A. Force for all fronts, outside the infantry units, was as given below. Furthermore my battalions had no Bren carriers:—

Artillery—

- 36 field guns, 18 pdrs. and 4.5 hows.
(Equal to 1½ modern regiments.)
- 24 3.7 hows.
- 4 60 pdrs.
- 4 6 in. hows.

Tanks—

- 12 Light Mk. 1.

8. I decided therefore to occupy the period before the rains broke in reducing the distances everywhere between my own forces and the Italians preparatory to a major offensive after the rains, to make every effort to find and develop water in the waterless belts, to construct routes forward through the bush suitable for two lines of M.T., and to establish large forward dumps. I may say here that the 280 miles of bush between the Tana and the Giuba was traversed only by narrow, winding bush tracks originally made by game and widened later merely by occasional human use.

Further, it was my intention to make use of this period to obtain moral ascendancy over the Italians by every means possible, such as by vigorous offensive patrolling, and by cutting out isolated posts. Initially I ordered the forward move in the south to the boundary of Italian Somaliland, and in the north as far as Hobok, these advances to commence on 15th January. Nevertheless I later instructed my Divisional Commanders that the extent to which they did in fact move forward was only to be limited by administrative possibilities.

9. It will be readily appreciated that the administration and maintenance of the forces in the type of terrain over which the operations were to be carried out presented problems of considerable difficulty. For instance, before any advance was undertaken all forward troops were already being maintained by road hundreds of miles in front of railhead. The troops on the Tana were 230 miles in front of railhead, at Wajir 300 miles, at Dukana 390 miles, at Lokitaung 317 miles. The greater portion of the roads were liable to be impassable in wet

weather. The resultant commitment in transport, particularly as these distances were increased by our forward moves, was extremely heavy, but by the establishment of large dumps as far forward as I could get them I was able to reduce the transport requirements for the first phase of the campaign. In spite of the large amount of transport I was able to obtain through the good offices of the Union of South Africa, at no time had I too much, and during subsequent operations my plans had invariably to be based on the availability of transport as one of the main factors in deciding my moves.

10. Even before operations began the 1,300 miles of road which had to be maintained under military arrangements was a heavy enough commitment; but our subsequent advance throughout the whole campaign increased this out of all proportion.

11. Another important aspect of the operations from the point of view of administration was the provision of water. This problem had received special previous study in conjunction with the Quartermaster General of the Union Defence Forces, Brigadier General J. Mitchell Baker, C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C.

M.T. convoys for the carriage of water were organised, and special vehicles and equipment provided by the Union Government. A very valuable supplement to the water convoys was furnished by the work of the 36 Water Supply Company, S.A.E.C. which, aided by geographical experts, developed boreholes, and a limited supply of water in the vast track of hitherto waterless bush between the Tana and Giuba rivers. The existence of this waterless area had been regarded as one of the most formidable obstacles to an advance on the Giuba position. The fact that at no time were the troops without the daily allowance of one gallon per man and half a gallon per radiator does credit to those who organised the supply.

12. The first of the cutting-out operations, directed against El Wak, some 110 miles from our forward positions at Wajir, took place between 16th and 18th December 1940. This raid was most successfully carried out by 12th (A) Division. In order to gain maximum experience of moving large M.T. columns over long distances at night, both the 1st S.A. and the 24th Gold Coast Brigades were used, although the forces in El Wak were known to consist of only one battalion and 16 guns and some Banda. A large proportion of the enemy battalion escaped into the bush, but all the guns, a quantity of stores, and a number of prisoners were captured at a very small loss to our troops, and considerable loss in killed and wounded to the enemy.

I cannot speak too highly of the way in which Major General A. R. Godwin Austen, C.B., O.B.E., M.C., planned the operation, nor of the dashing manner in which it was carried out by both brigades. This action marked the start of the ascendancy of the morale of E.A. Force over that of the Italians.

13. Shortly after this raid the whole military aspect in Africa was altered by the successes in the Western Desert, and the enemy withdrawal in Eritrea. About the 1st February 1941 I came to the conclusion that an operation on a reduced scale against Chisimaio would have a reasonable chance of success owing to the lowered morale of the Italians. I calculated I had sufficient transport for a force of four brig-

ades, as the finding of a limited supply of water by boring on both possible routes forward had reduced to a certain extent the amount of water transport required. In view of the short time before the rains, and the necessity for a full moon, so that the initial moves could be carried out at night, I decided to commence the operation on 11th February, i.e., 10 days time. No written orders were issued, and only a minimum number of individuals were informed.

The original orders covered the capture of Chisimaio and a bridgehead at Giumbo only, but I informed my Commanders that if the enemy resistance on the Giuba broke, the line I would aim for would be Mogadiscio-Ischia Baidoa-Lugh Ferrandi.

14. Meanwhile on the northern front the 1st S.A. Division, which then consisted of 2nd and 5th S.A. Brigades and the 25th E.A. Brigade, had been ordered to make good the triangle El Yibo, Gorai and Hobok, and to capture Kalam.

The object of these operations was to open up the patriot country in the Galla Sidamo and gain touch with the patriot chiefs. At the Cairo Conference I had been specially instructed to employ South African troops for this purpose, as General Wavell considered their organisation and training rendered them more suitable for it. At the time 1st S.A. Division was sent up to this front, I was of the opinion that operations on the other fronts before the rains would have to be limited and hence hoped I had cast the South African Division for the more active role. I always had in mind the possibility of turning from the west the strong enemy position on the Moyale-Mega escarpment.

15. When I assumed command the struggle for air supremacy was in its early stages, and the enemy's preponderance in bombers and fighters was very pronounced.

Our Air Forces then comprised one A.C. Squadron of the S.R.A.F. (which was transferred to Sudan in the first week in November) and one A.C. Squadron of the S.A.A.F., the latter in embryo. A further A.C. Squadron of the S.A.A.F. was formed and took the field in the middle of December. In addition there were two bomber squadrons and two fighter squadrons of the S.A.A.F. Of the latter, one was equipped with Hurricanes and the other with ancient Furies.

Owing to the direct threat to Mombasa, the gateway of Kenya and of our L. of C., the Hurricanes had to be concentrated there and in Nairobi for purely defensive purposes, leaving the defence of the whole of our troops, aerodromes and such important places as Nanyuki, to the Furies.

For some inexplicable reason the Italians utterly failed to make use of the golden opportunity at this time to take the offensive in the air, though our troops behind the River Tana and our outlying communications were open to heavy bombing attacks by them.

As soon as the Italians' lack of enterprise was realised, some of the Hurricanes were dispersed over the front with the result that the course of the air operations changed rapidly, and by the beginning of February our Air Forces had established air superiority.

At Appendix "B" is shown the Order of Battle of Air Forces in Kenya on 1st January 1941, and the estimated number of Italian aircraft within reach of our bases, and in Appen-

dix "J" is shown how the Army Co-operation Squadrons were allocated to divisions during the operations.

PART II—OPERATIONS.

A. Operations of 1st S.A. Division.

(1st January to 5th April, 1941).

16. As already explained, I had allotted the 1st S.A. Division, consisting of the 2nd and 5th S.A. Brigades and 25th E.A. Brigade, to the northern front, with the object of penetrating the Galla Sidamo country to stir up the chiefs there to rebellion and if possible to turn the enemy out of his strong position on the Moyale-Mega escarpment.

Facing me on this front the enemy had approximately three Italian divisions (21, 22 and 24) in considerable depth, of which two (21 and 24) were east of Lake Rudolf with some artillery in the Moyale-Mega-Iavello area, while the Hobok-Gorai-El Yibo triangle was held by approximately 1,600 Banda under European officers and N.C.O.'s.

17. By the end of December the S.A. Division had taken over this sector, with the 2nd and 5th S.A. Brigades, which had arrived in Kenya in October and November respectively, at Marsabit, and the 25th E.A. Brigade at Lokitaung.

The Order of Battle of 1st S.A. Division on 1st January 1941 is given in Appendix "A."

18. Operations on this part of the front are really divided into two parts, those to the west of Lake Rudolf being entirely separated from those on the east, the only road communication being round the south of the lake.

19. The 2nd and 5th S.A. Brigades were employed on the east of Lake Rudolf. Marsabit, where the brigades started from, is separated from Southern Abyssinia by a waterless stretch of country about 120 miles wide, across which there were at the time only two possible ways into enemy territory. The first was the road from Marsabit to Moyale, which wound up the steep escarpment through country favourable to the defender. The enemy position on the escarpment was known to be strong, and a direct advance against it over this road offered little chance of success. The road was not only in a very bad condition but also likely to become impassable during the wet weather. The second was the road across the Chalbi desert, via North Horr, to Dukana. This road was also in very bad condition and, moreover, it was said that during the rains even animals were unable to move across the Chalbi desert. But in spite of these disadvantages the road did present a route into Abyssinia around the Moyale-Mega escarpment.

20. With the object of stirring up rebel activity Intelligence officers had been operating in this area for some time, supplying arms and ammunition to patriots who went back to operate behind the enemy lines. There were considerable hopes, which unfortunately were not realised, that a Shifta rebellion thus encouraged would break out in the Galla Sidamo area.

21. At this time the rebels in the Tertale area were beginning to harass the enemy and my information was that active support of this uprising might possibly spread the rebellion throughout Southern Abyssinia.

22. On this front the Irregular companies had already paved the way for an advance by capturing Dukana, an important water-point north of the Chalbi desert, and they further proved their worth by the assistance they gave to the S.A. Division both in securing the Hobok-Gorai-El Yibo area, and in subsequent operations.

23. On 16th-18th January El Yibo and El Sardu were taken by 1st N.M.R. (2nd S.A. Inf Bde) and the enemy pushed over the border. 2nd Regt. Botha of 5th S.A. Inf Bde were sent to Turbi near the foot of the escarpment to prevent the enemy moving on to Marsabit. It remained there until Moyale fell.

24. On 31st January 1st S.A. Division, which had completed its concentration at Dukana, moved 2nd and 5th S.A. Infantry Brigades up to the frontier in preparation for an attack on Gorai, El Gumu and Hobok the following day. The move was made in M.T., armoured cars being used for a distance of 25 miles to break a way through the bush for the troop carriers after the road finished. The two brigade groups, with 2nd S.A. Brigade on the right, each moved in several parallel columns towards El Gumu. When 2nd S.A. Brigade struck the road El Gumu-Gorai it swung right-handed and moved against Gorai from the north, whilst 5th S.A. Brigade moved straight across country against El Gumu.

Gorai was strongly defended by the enemy, who had well-prepared positions, but after a sharp engagement the fort was occupied at 1645 hours by the 2nd F.F. Battalion. The thick bush in the area unfortunately prevented one company of this battalion, which had worked round N.E. of the fort, from cutting off the retreating enemy. The enemy did not abandon their positions until the armoured cars had smashed down the barbed wire entanglements round the fort and the infantry had gone in with the bayonet across 400 yards of open country. Our casualties were slight. In the meantime 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade had captured El Gumu with the loss of only one O.R. killed.

The resolute action of the armoured cars undoubtedly saved us many casualties at both Gorai and El Gumu, but the bush prevented pursuit.

25. On 2nd February 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade moved against Hobok along the road El Gumu-Hobok. Attempts to cut off the enemy's line of withdrawal to the north, along the Lac Bulal, failed owing to a bush fire which the enemy had started to cover his withdrawal. Once the brigade had worked round the bush fire, armoured cars made two more attempts to reach the Lac Bulal north of Hobok, but the country was so broken that the attempt had to be abandoned. After the enemy post had been heavily shelled by our artillery, and also bombed and machine gunned by aircraft, armoured cars crashed through the wire at 1715 hours, but found that the enemy had withdrawn leaving a considerable quantity of equipment behind.

26. In furtherance of the object of helping the rebellion another advance was made and on 7th February Ganciaro was occupied without opposition while on 9th February the 1st S.A. Irish (5th S.A. Inf Bde) with one company of 1st F.F. Bn occupied Banno after a sharp engagement with the garrison of two

Colonial Infantry Battalions, which withdrew into the mountains to the north. Four days later the enemy brought some guns and shelled our positions at Banno in order to cover the removal of a large dump of stores in the mountains immediately to the North of the fort. The fact that the enemy were able to do this showed the amount of trust which could be placed on the Shifta.

27. General Brink now asked whether, in order to secure his right flank and ensure a more reliable and shorter L of C, he could not carry out operations against the Moyale-Mega escarpment. This was an operation which I always had had in mind, and now that the Shifta had turned out to be nothing more than groups which merely harrassed Italians and looted wherever they could, I gave the necessary permission.

28. The plan adopted was for the 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade to move direct from Ganciaro on to Mega. The 2nd S.A. Infantry Brigade was to make an enveloping movement round the north of the town to get astride the Mega-Moyale road where they would be able to prevent the escape of the Mega garrison on that route, or its reinforcement from Moyale. The brigade was then to carry out an attack from the east on Mega, in conjunction with that being carried out by 5th Infantry Brigade from the west.

29. On the 14th February the 2nd S.A. Brigade, leaving 1st N.M.R. in divisional reserve, broke off from the Ganciaro-Mega road due east across country to El Sod. The first part of the cross-country route took some time to traverse as the column had to wind about among the trees, through sand which was deep in places. After crossing the Mega-Iavello road the going became much better. One company of the 2nd F.F. Battalion was left on this road to prevent enemy movement along it in either direction. This company was attacked from the direction of Iavello by a strong enemy force of 15 tanks and motorised infantry which was evidently attempting to reinforce the Mega garrison. After a sharp encounter in which both sides suffered casualties, the enemy withdrew hurriedly towards Iavello. There is no doubt that the action of this company in preventing the arrival of these reinforcements had a material effect on subsequent operations at Mega.

On the morning of the 15th there were indications that the enemy were attempting to reinforce Mega from Neghelli, but they were dispersed by 2nd Infantry Brigade by artillery fire from El Sod. 2nd Infantry Brigade then recommenced their march on Mega, encountering very thick bush and sticky black cotton soil. The original intention for them to attack Mega directly from the east was found to be out of the question as the country was entirely open and exposed to the enemy artillery. Brigadier F. L. A. Buchanan, M.C., therefore continued with all his forces round to the south of the town but found the defile, through which the road in went, was very heavily mined and guarded by machine-gun nests.

Meanwhile the 5th S.A. Brigade had approached from the west, and on the 16th February attacked the high ground dominating the approaches to Mega from that side. They came under considerable artillery fire but fortunately it was ineffective owing to the high percentage of blinds. In the afternoon very heavy

rain fell over the whole area and continued throughout the rest of the day. The black cotton soil became sodden and prevented the transport with water and supplies from reaching the troops, the 2nd Brigade not receiving any until after the fall of Mega. On the 17th, while the 2nd S.A. Brigade were searching for a way in through the hills south and south-east of the town, the 5th S.A. Brigade attacked, and consolidated their position within two miles of Mega, with troops on their left flank overlooking the town. Eventually on the 18th Lieut-Colonel C. L. Engelbrecht leading one company of the 2nd F.F. Battalion from the 2nd S.A. Brigade scaled a precipitous cliff on the south-east of the town, although a native guide had reported this route to be completely impracticable, and captured the enemy's main gun positions.

Meanwhile, the two battalions of the 5th Brigade had attacked again in the rain and mist, working forward from feature to feature, till eventually at 1745 hours they were about to launch their final assault. The enemy however, who had just lost his guns, realised his position to be hopeless and surrendered.

Besides 26 officers, 598 Italians and 374 natives, our captures at Mega included four medium and three field guns and a large stock of machine-guns, rifles and ammunition.

30. In the evening of 22nd February a patrol of Irregulars who had been sent forward by 2nd S.A. Brigade to contact friendly natives, entered Moyale without opposition, the garrison having hurriedly withdrawn to Neghelli on the day Mega fell. 2nd S.A. Infantry Brigade following up the Irregulars occupied the town the next day and found that the enemy had abandoned a large quantity of war material, including one field and four medium guns.

31. Both the brigades patrolled actively from Mega and Moyale towards Iavello, Neghelli and Mandera, and plans were being made for the capture of Iavello, but the heavy rains which then began made all the roads impassable at periods and movement and maintenance became increasingly difficult.

32. During this period 25th E.A. Brigade, which had only two newly-formed battalions, carried out the operations to the west of Lake Rudolf. I had given instructions that this brigade was to move forward with the eventual object of capturing Kalam. The initial advance proceeded with no difficulty and Todengang and Namuruputh were occupied on 9th February. The subsequent advance towards Kalam proved a different matter. The country to the north of Lake Rudolf, in the Omo Valley, was occupied by wild Merille tribesmen whose traditional enmity towards the Turkana had been fostered by the Italians so that it included us. A large number of these tribesmen concentrated to stop the advance of the 2/4th K.A.R. who were very soon in difficulties, as they were not able to reach the water-holes which the tribesmen were guarding and their transport was unable to get up to them owing to the badness of the track. The Battalion was eventually extricated by the dispersal of Merille concentrations by air action and by sending forward water trucks escorted by armoured cars. This was not done, however, before considerable suffering from thirst had occurred.

33. I decided it would be unprofitable at this stage of the campaign to try to carry out operations against the Merille, so I ordered General Brink to take up a defensive position in the area Namuruputh-Todengang on this part of his front.

34. A meeting was arranged on the 19th February between Brigadier W. Owen, M.B.E., M.C., commanding 25th E.A. Brigade, and the Merille chiefs, which at first appeared successful. But it was soon apparent that they would only come to heel when the enemy was evicted from the Omo delta and we occupied Kalam which, it was reported, was held only by Merille and some of the Donyiro tribe.

Owing, however, to administrative difficulties and the state of the road it was not until 24th March that we were able to capture Kalam and push patrols further up to the north.

35. The problem of settling this area is a difficult one as the tribes are hereditary enemies of each other. It is impossible, therefore, to persuade one tribe to disarm unless the next tribe does so simultaneously. This obviously cannot be done until all the country to the north is in our hands.

36. After the capture of Mega and Moyale I was considering employing the 1st SA Division for the advance from Mogadiscio into Abyssinia as not only did I think that their greater fire power and superior equipment would be needed in the Abyssinian Highlands where the conditions would be strange and difficult for African troops, but also because I wished, for political reasons, to give the South African Division a more prominent part in the campaign, and it appeared doubtful whether operations north of Mega and Moyale would be possible in the approaching rains. I therefore issued orders for the 21st EA Brigade to move from Wajir to relieve the 2nd and 5th SA Brigades on the escarpment where there was a danger of their being marooned in the rains, and for these brigades to move back where they would be suitably placed should I decide to move the 1st SA Division over for the advance into Abyssinia from Italian Somaliland.

During the period 5th-10th March the change-over was completed, but only with great difficulty owing to the state of the roads. Divisional Headquarters, Divisional troops and 5th SA Infantry Brigade went to Wajir and 2nd SA Infantry Brigade to Isiolo. At this time I was continually receiving reports which indicated that the rains would be early and had in fact set in in some parts of the Northern Frontier District. Since the move across to the eastern front was only practicable if the roads, or rather tracks, were dry, and as I found I was able to continue the advance north into Abyssinia with troops already in Italian Somaliland very much earlier than was at first estimated, I was very regretfully forced to abandon the project of using the South African Division on the other front and therefore gave orders for it to concentrate in Kenya.

37. It had recently been decided that as soon as I could spare the 1st SA Division it should be transferred to Egypt. I therefore notified C-in-C Middle East that the 1st SA Division Headquarters and 5th S.A. Brigade could now be spared, but that I required 2nd S.A. Brigade for operations in British Somaliland to back up the forces which Aden were landing to take

Berbera. This Brigade, less one battalion which went by road with the first line transport, embarked at Mombasa on 16th March and arrived at Berbera on 23rd March.

38. Meanwhile, on the northern front, 21st E.A. Brigade occupied Iavello which patrols had discovered to have been evacuated by the enemy.

On 31st March, 21st E.A. Infantry Brigade, after a short, well-conceived and skilfully carried out operation, drove the enemy out of Soroppa, capturing the commander of the 18th Colonial Inf. Bde., 27 Italians and 360 natives, as well as five field guns and a number of machine guns.

39. On 6th April, 12th (A) Division assumed command of the 21st and 25th E.A. Infantry Brigades and the area for which 1st S.A. Division had hitherto been responsible.

40. At the beginning of these operations to the east of Lake Rudolf the 2nd and 5th S.A. Brigades had to endure appalling conditions of heat and dust from the hot lava bed of which the country up to Gorai is composed. What made it worse was that there was no shade whatsoever. Although in subsequent operations the heat was not so great, the men always had to be on short rations of water, as until they captured Mega, it had to be carried up 200 miles from the rear. Until the fall of Moyale opened up the shorter L. of C., the difficulties of supply were always great, as the roads were either so rough that considerable driving ability was required in crossing them or so thick in powdered dust that even a little rain made them impassable.

41. I wish to place on record my appreciation of the sound judgment and determination in face of great difficulties of terrain, shown by Major-General G. E. Brink, C.B., D.S.O., Commander 1st S.A. Division, in bringing these operations to a successful conclusion.

*B. Operations of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions.
(11th February to 25th February, 1941.)*

42. After the raid at El Wak, and while our forward policy was developing, the enemy decided to withdraw practically the whole of his Colonial Forces to the Giuba, leaving west of the river only a screen of Banda, and one battalion and some guns at Afmadu in a strongly wired position.

At the commencement of the operations I estimated that his forces were disposed as under:

Lower Giuba and Chisimaio (i.e., south and inclusive of Gelib), 102nd Division (Four Brigades and Div. troops, three Banda groups and Chisimaio command.)

Upper Giuba (north of Gelib exclusive), 101st Division (Two Brigades and Div. troops, and three Banda groups.)

Against this force I employed four brigade groups fully motorised. The Order of Battle of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions at the commencement of these operations is given at Appendix "C."

43. It will be recalled that although patrolling was being carried out many miles forward of them, the actual forward localities occupied by my troops were along the River Tana to Garissa, thence to Wajir, joining up with the 1st S.A. Division at Matsabit. The defended

localities at Bura, Garissa and Wajir were initially the bases of the various advancing columns.

44. My plan for the capture of Chisimaio directed 12th (A) Division (1st S.A., 22nd E.A., and 24th Gold Coast Brigades) from the Garissa-Wajir area on to Afmadu. From there one column (1st S.A. Brigade) was to move south, capture Gobuen, and form a bridgehead at Giumbo, while another column (24th G.C. Brigade) was to capture Bulu Erillo, and move on to Alessandra and threaten Gelib. I did not expect, in view of the strong positions held by the enemy in this area, that this brigade by itself would be able to capture Gelib, and gave instructions that provided sufficient threat was developed to draw the enemy reinforcements at Margherita northwards, or at least to prevent them moving south, I would be satisfied until greater strength was available. The timing was so arranged that this threat was to be produced before Gobuen was attacked. In view of the importance of Gobuen the bulk of the artillery and the tanks went to the 12th (A) Division.

11th (A) Division (23rd Nigerian Brigade) from the Bura area, proceeding by Lac Badana, was to attack and capture Chisimaio. As I wished first to make sure of the key position of Gobuen, and to conceal the advance of the southern column against Chisimaio as long as possible, the move forward of the 11th (A) Division was ordered to take place on 15th February, viz., after the attack had developed on Gobuen.

45. The Royal Navy, "Force T" under Capt. J. H. H. Edelsten, R.N., and consisting of H.M.S. Shropshire, H.M.S. Hawkins, H.M.S. Hermes, H.M.S. Capetown, H.M.S. Ceres, H.M.S. Kandahar, were co-operating by bombarding Brava and movement on the coastal road in the early stages of the operation so as to assist the deception that the attack was to take place farther north, and a plan was prepared for the bombardment of Chisimaio in support of the attack of 11th (A) Division. Arrangements were also made to sail a convoy into Chisimaio as soon as practicable, and if Gobuen and not Chisimaio were captured an attempt was to be made to land stores on the beach near Gobuen, so as to enable operations to continue.

46. Previous to the operation the S.A.A.F. had carried out a most successful fighter attack on Afmadu, Dif and Gobuen accounting for 10 enemy aircraft.

Highly effective bombing of Afmadu and Gelib was also undertaken on the afternoon of the day preceding the attack.

Arrangements were made whereby fighters and A.C. aircraft should land on Afmadu and Gobuen aerodromes as soon as they were captured.

47. In order to lead the enemy to believe that another column was advancing via El Wak a feint was made on this sector. From subsequent information received it is believed that the Italian Commander of the sector opposite Wajir claimed that his troops had stopped the advance of an enemy division, this "division" consisting in fact of little more than two platoons and a few armoured cars.

48. Food and water were taken with the forces engaged to last up to 21st February. If Chisimaio had not been captured by then, or

the Navy had been unable to land those commodities on the beach near Gobuen, it would have been necessary for our forces to return to the Italian Somaliland border as I would have been unable to maintain them forward.

49. Under the policy laid down before I decided to attack the Giuba, the initial forward moves to the frontier of Italian Somaliland commenced on 15th January, and by 11th February the forward troops of 11th (A) Division were at Badada, and those of the 12th (A) Division had attacked and taken Beles Gugani. The 22nd Infantry Brigade and attached troops carried out the advance on 12th (A) Division front to Beles Gugani with speed and determination, and their rapid advance over tracks which quickly became dust pans, was in all probability instrumental in causing the Italians to make the decision, which became known later, to evacuate Chisimaio without fighting.

50. On 11th February 22nd Brigade Group, 12th (A) Division, attacked Afmadu which was in our hands by 0700 hours, the bulk of the enemy garrison having withdrawn during the night. 24th Gold Coast Brigade Group were passed through Afmadu that night directed on Bulo Erillo and Gobuen respectively. At this period it was thought advisable to carry out all moves at night, both to conceal our lines of advance, and to avoid air action against our columns.

On the morning of 13th February 24th Gold Coast Brigade Group attacked Bulo Erillo. This attack met with considerable resistance on the part of the enemy, who was entrenched behind strong wire, and used armoured cars. After severe fighting the enemy was driven out leaving a number of prisoners, 5 armoured cars and some artillery and other weapons in our hands. The attack was led by the 2nd Gold Coast Regiment, with great gallantry. Although the leading troops of this Battalion had practically all their white personnel killed or wounded, the attack was pressed home with unabated vigour and courage.

51. On the evening of this day (13th) information reached me which indicated that some or all of the enemy were evacuating Chisimaio. Although every effort was made to accelerate the advance of 1st S.A. Brigade and cut off the withdrawing enemy, they succeeded in eluding our advance. On the following morning (14th) 1st S.A. Brigade attacked Gobuen supported by 12 Light Tanks. The village was held by weak enemy rear guards which were rapidly driven in, retreating across the river Giuba and burning the bridge behind them. During this action the enemy developed considerable shell fire from Giumbo on the far bank of the river against our forward troops. Consequently the crossing of the river was not accomplished at once as I had hoped.

Meanwhile I received information that Chisimaio harbour in front of the oil tanks was covered with oil; that aircraft flying low drew no fire, and that Commander "Force T" had gone in with H.M.S. Shropshire to bombard the forts at point blank range and had drawn no reply. I was therefore convinced that Chisimaio had been wholly evacuated. In consequence I ordered 12th (A) Division to send 22nd Brigade from Afmadu to occupy Chisimaio immediately as, in accordance with my original plan, 11th (A) Division

were too far back for the purpose. This was safely accomplished by 1700 hours 14th February, and the forts in Chisimaio Island were occupied by 1900 hours. All the white population had been evacuated and considerable demolition done. That the evacuation was hurried, however, was proved by the fact that we were able eventually to put into commission three of the eight 4.9 C.D. guns, and ten of the sixteen 77 mm. A.A. guns. Quantities of stores and ammunition were abandoned by the enemy.

The capture of Chisimaio was completed six days before the date I had given in the timetable for the operation.

52. A remarkable feature of the operation up to this period was the almost complete lack of enemy interference from the air. The fighter ground attacks at Gobuen and Afmadu aerodromes, and in the air, preceding the opening of the campaign had resulted in driving the enemy out of the air practically altogether. At this stage enemy aircraft were seldom seen by day and he confined himself to bombing on moonlight nights. I was therefore able to remove all restrictions on daylight movement and henceforth our columns moved almost entirely by day.

53. At that time it became apparent that there was considerable apprehension and disorganisation amongst the enemy forces. It was clear therefore no time was to be lost in forcing a crossing over the river, a fact which I impressed on the Commander of 12th (A) Division. The river was 580 feet broad at Gobuen, and tidal for 14 miles, but narrowed and became shallower northwards. At Gelib, and in some places north of this point, it could be waded. On both banks was a belt of tropical growth of varying thickness, north of Gelib continuous, south of Gelib sometimes broken by cultivation. The enemy had disposed the greater part of his forces along the river bank defending all the more obvious crossing places, but my information was that he had one fully motorised brigade (15th) in reserve behind Gelib.

54. I realised that it was quite impossible for the enemy to defend the whole river and that to effect a crossing could only be a matter of time, the only danger being immediate counter-attacks delivered from the rear. I urged the Commander of 12th (A) Division to tap in all along and seize possible bridgeheads, and it was my intention, had he not been successful in doing so with his own resources, to bring up the 11th (A) Division and place the force on a two-divisional front so as to increase the chances of finding a suitable crossing place quickly. On the night of 17th/18th February however, the 1st S.A. Brigade managed to effect a crossing at Ionte. During that night they were counter-attacked by a force of the enemy from Giumbo; the counter-attack was successfully beaten off with great loss to the enemy. On 19th February the Gold Coast Brigade also succeeded in forcing a crossing at Mabungo. This crossing entailed cutting a track for three miles through the tropical jungle belt mentioned above, which work was successfully and rapidly carried out.

To cover the movement to Mabungo and to delude the enemy into thinking that a frontal attack was intended, a concentration of field and light guns was directed against the defences

covering Gelib. In addition enemy communications in Gelib itself were kept under fire by 60 pdrs. This ruse was entirely successful. Many casualties were inflicted by this bombardment and the enemy had to change his L. of C. in this area.

By the morning of the 20th pontoon bridges of improvised bridging material had been established both at Ionte and at Mabungo and I was in a position to bring up the 11th (A) Division, and place them close up behind the bridgehead at Mabungo preparatory to advancing on Mogadiscio should the attack across the river be successful. Before this advance could take place it was essential that Gelib should be taken, and I instructed the Commander of the 12th (A) Division to carry out an operation with this in view. Meanwhile the 1st S.A. Brigade had crossed the river at Ionte and were directed to cut off Gumbo. This operation was carried out with considerable skill, and entailed an arduous march across the peninsula to the sea. Practically the whole of the garrison at Gumbo capitulated, those that did not proceeded on foot along the sea coast towards Modun, and were taken prisoner later.

55. The plan of the Commander of the 12th (A) Division for the capture of Gelib was as follows. The 22nd Brigade Group was ordered to proceed from Mabungo along a track which was marked on the map, but of the condition of which nothing was known, to cut the road to Mogadiscio some 18 miles east of Gelib. Meanwhile the Gold Coast Brigade Group was to advance south from Mabungo, and the 1st S.A. Brigade Group north from Ionte. This operation was carried out with complete success on 22nd February. All three brigades completed their tasks in an exemplary manner, but I must particularly mention the march, practically across country, of the 22nd Brigade Group, which called for the greatest endurance and skill, and also the rapid manner in which 1st S.A. Brigade was able to fight its way north in the face of opposition, and be the first to enter Gelib at 1000 hours on the 22nd February.

56. I wish to commend Major-General Godwin Austen for the skilful plan which he made for the crossing of the river, and the careful instructions he gave for its implementation. The battle of the Giuba undoubtedly dealt the enemy a blow from which he never recovered, and laid the foundation for subsequent successes.

57. During this day enemy forces from Bardera counter-attacked the bridgehead at Mabungo which was held by the 2nd Nigeria Regiment of 11th (A) Division. The counter-attack was not pressed home, was easily beaten off, and did not interfere with my plans of passing the 11th (A) Division across the bridge.

58. At this time I became aware that the enemy had committed practically the whole of the forces facing me to the defence of the river, and very little was left between the river and Mogadiscio. Some thousands of prisoners had been taken; it was known that whole units were dispersing into the bush, and the orders and counter-orders given by the enemy were indicative of extreme confusion. I felt sure, therefore, that in view of the disorganised state of the enemy, I would have little difficulty operating northwards to Harrar after Mogadiscio had been captured. Although the distance by road from Mogadiscio to Harrar was 804 miles,

I found that by denuding the troops left on the Kenya front of transport, I would just be able to use a force of three brigades against Harrar. I therefore cabled on 22nd February to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, pointing out that as the rains in this area arrived later than in Kenya, I would be able to continue operations, and that I thought I could capture Harrar by the end of the first week in April. Permission to continue was duly received.

59. At 0600 hours on the 23rd February the 11th (A) Division with the 23rd Nigerian Brigade and the 22nd E.A. Brigade under command, began their advance from Mabungo to Mogadiscio, and that evening after a sharp fight, elements of the 22nd Brigade occupied Modun, and the next morning Brava. The 1st S.A. Brigade was placed in Force reserve and directed to Brava, and it was my intention that the 12th (A) Division should move northwards via Bardera and Ischia Baidoa. Unfortunately owing to administrative difficulties connected with the amount of supplies which could be landed at Chisimaio, I was not able to advance in this direction till a few days afterwards. The revised Order of Battle is shown in Appendix "D".

60. On 24th February the Nigerian Brigade Group which was destined to lead 11th (A) Division passed through 22nd E.A. Brigade at Modun and Brava. Merca was captured on 25th February after encountering some opposition. That same evening some light forces of the 11th (A) Division entered Mogadiscio, having been unopposed for the final 20 miles.

The distance covered by the Nigerian Brigade Group between 0600 hours 23rd February and 1700 hours 25th was 275 miles.

61. H.M.S. Shropshire carried out a most effective bombardment of enemy camps and dispositions near Modun cross roads on the day previous to its capture. Observation for the bombardment was undertaken by an S.A.A.F. Glen Martin aircraft, the observer of which had fortunately been previously instructed in spotting for naval gun fire. That a large number of casualties were caused during this bombardment was confirmed subsequently on the capture of Modun.

62. About this time all indications showed that the enemy had left Bardera and that 101st Division was withdrawing northwards. I was still not able to operate strong forces from 12th (A) Division, but ordered the Commander to move light forces to Bardera, Dolo and Lugh Ferrandi. These operations were undertaken quickly. Bardera was occupied on 26th February, Ischia Baidoa on 28th February, Lugh Ferrandi on 3rd March, Dolo on 5th March. A further number of prisoners were taken including the commander and staff of 20th Colonial Brigade. It transpired that the whole of the African personnel of this brigade, some 3,000 men, had dispersed into the bush.

63. The policy of breaking the crust and then motoring straight on, regardless of what was happening in rear, was fully justified in the result, though in face of a more determined enemy, counter-attacks against our rear and communications would doubtless have been troublesome.

Shortage of water and difficulties of supply in the hot bush country over which our advance took place worked their effect on the Italian units which had been left behind, the

personnel of which eventually surrendered in great numbers or dispersed into the bush.

64. The rapid advance beyond the Giuba of some 300 miles was met by bringing the port of Chisimaio into use as an advanced base. Stores and supplies were brought by sea from Mombasa. Difficulty encountered at the port due to damage and destruction carried out by the Italians was overcome through the excellent work of the staff attached to the port both ashore and afloat which enabled the main requirements of the Force to be landed. Even so, it was necessary to maintain the 300 miles of road L of C in addition.

65. At a conservative estimate the number of the enemy made non-effective by operations up to the fall of Mogadiscio by killing, prisoners or dispersion was 31,000. This accounted for the whole 102nd enemy division and more than half 101st.

Great quantities of war material, so much that it had not been assessed at the time of writing, was captured, and in Afgoi and Mogadiscio main ammunition dumps, engineer and ordnance stores, etc., were found complete. The amount of war material and military supplies captured did not support the theory that the enemy were short of essential stores, and later captures also confirmed that he still had considerable military means.

Although we were informed in Mogadiscio that no petrol had been left, the offer of rewards resulted in the disclosure of 350,000 gallons of motor spirit and 80,000 gallons of aviation. This enabled the advance to be continued with light forces before the ports of Mogadiscio or Merca were opened.

C. Operations of 11th (A) Division from fall of Mogadiscio to fall of Addis Abeba.

(26th February to 5th April, 1941.)

66. When I asked the C.-in-C. Middle East for permission to advance to Harrar, I also asked him if the port of Berbera could be reopened, to enable me to transfer my L. of C. using that port as a base. From Mogadiscio to Giggiga is 744 miles by road while from Berbera to Giggiga is only 204 miles; hence this transfer would effect a reduction of the road L. of C. of 540 miles. Consequently A.O.C. Aden was ordered by C.-in-C. Middle East to prepare a plan for the retaking of Berbera by sea in co-operation with the advance of my forces northwards.

67. Some difficulty occurred at this time in regard to the opening of the port of Mogadiscio. On 2nd February magnetic mines had been laid by Naval aircraft in the entrance of the harbour. Apparatus for successfully sweeping these mines was not immediately available. Consequently I decided to establish temporarily a base port at Merca using lighters and tugs which had been found at Mogadiscio. Some 200 officers and crews of the British Mercantile Marine had been discovered as prisoners on capturing that port. My thanks are due to a number of these who, in spite of having suffered the privations and hardships of 6 months of prison life, with great self-sacrifice volunteered to assist in the reconditioning of the damaged tugs and the opening of Merca as a port.

As soon as Mogadiscio was declared safe ships were diverted there and it was brought into use as the Advanced Base. Damage to cranes, jetties and decauville railways had been done

by the Italians and lighters had been sunk. In a very short period of time, however, thanks mainly to the good work of the S.A. Harbour Construction Company and the 24th Workshop Park Company, over 500 tons were being unloaded daily, and, as excellent storage sheds existed, Depots were soon established.

68. As no shipping for M.T. was available, the road L. of C. from Kenya—now some 800 miles in length—had still to be kept open for use by M.T. convoys; a large portion of it had broken up into dust pans and this journey was becoming increasingly difficult.

69. The administrative arrangements of the advance from the Tana River had been based upon the previous establishment of dumps of supplies, petrol and ammunition as far forward as possible. This avoided heavy daily convoys from railhead, and had the effect of reducing the length of the L. of C.

For the advance north from Mogadiscio no such facilities were available. There was no respite for the accumulation of reserves, for the reorganisation of transport units, by now much dispersed and in need of servicing, nor for the regrouping of staffs to establish new depots. Improvisation and individual initiative followed by much hard work on the part of lorry drivers, depot staffs, and others too numerous to mention, alone made it possible for the flow of supplies to keep pace with the advance. The line of supply to the 11th (A) Division increased at a rate of 40 miles a day to a distance of 750 miles from Mogadiscio and that to the 12th (A) Division to over 450 miles.

With the sole exception of the 70 miles narrow gauge railway from Mogadiscio to Villagio d'Abuzzi which the 38th S.A. Railway Construction Company very soon had working, maintenance over these distances had to be effected entirely by M.T. convoys over roads which could at best be said to be good only in parts.

70. After the fall of Mogadiscio my information was to the effect that the remnants of the Italian Giuba forces were withdrawing on Giggiga and, except for these, no other serious enemy forces existed south of this place. The enemy in the northern area consisted of three fresh brigades between Giggiga and Harrar and one in British Somaliland.

71. After a pause of only three days, thanks to the petrol captured from the enemy and the possibility of using the port of Merca, the 11th (A) Division was in a position on 1st March to resume the advance on Giggiga with a mobile column from the Nigerian Brigade.

The strength of this column varied with the ability to supply it. Thus Dagabur, 590 miles north of Mogadiscio, was attacked on 10th March by a column consisting only of some armoured cars and two companies of the 2nd Nigeria Regiment, with the remainder of the battalion 100 miles behind. I consider the courageous advance of this column under the command of Lieut.-Colonel J. A. S. Hopkins, unsupported for many miles back, is worthy of special mention. At Dagabur a small Italian rear guard was surprised on the point of withdrawing in lorries, and Lieut.-Colonel Hopkins was able to cut off the retreat of the rear lorries with some loss to the enemy in killed, prisoners and transport.

The average distance covered daily by the leading troops after leaving Mogadiscio was 65

miles. The Order of Battle of 11th (A) Division on 11th March is given in Appendix "E."

72. Information was now in the hands of the Air Force that the enemy were using almost exclusively Dire Dawa aerodrome and its two satellites close by. Another fighter ground attack was organised and took place between 13th-15th March. This operation resulted in the loss to the enemy of 20 aircraft, 6 destroyed in the air, 9 on the ground and 5 damaged. Our losses were two Hurricanes. The value at this particular period of these heavy losses to the enemy was very great. Our further advance was over mountain roads through many narrow defiles and passes, where our columns would have been extremely vulnerable to air attack. Although they were bombed sporadically the attacks were not pushed home and little damage resulted. Our columns were still able to advance by day.

73. On 19th March supply arrangements permitted 11th (A) Division to continue the advance from Dagabur with the whole of the Nigerian Brigade.

The remaining two brigades which had been placed under the orders of 11th (A) Division, namely, 1st S.A. Brigade and 22nd E.A. Brigade, were not able to operate forward of Dagabur till 21st and 26th March respectively owing to administrative restrictions.

Giggiga was attacked on 17th March and occupied by advanced forces of the 23rd Nigerian Brigade with only slight opposition, the enemy retiring to a position covering the Marda Pass.

74. Meanwhile, A.O.C. Aden, taking advantage of the threat to Giggiga, through which ran the only easily passable road from British Somaliland into Abyssinia, successfully attacked Berbera on the 16th March from the sea, with two Indian Battalions and attached troops.

The plan for the capture and opening of the port, the provision of the port personnel and the landing of the stores necessary for the further advance of my troops, were all in his hands.

I would like to place on record my appreciation of the great ability shown by Air Vice-Marshal G. R. M. Reid, D.S.O., M.C., in carrying out the operation, and the fine spirit of co-operation and helpfulness displayed by both Air Vice-Marshal Reid and his staff in the establishment of the port. Colonel A. H. Pollock, M.C., who commanded the troops which carried out the landing, and who subsequently became Area Commander Berbera, was responsible, with the assistance of the Royal Navy from Aden, for the handling of the supplies from Aden destined for my troops. I wish also to commend the efficiency shown by the Royal Navy and Colonel Pollock in this work. Although short-handed and with poor facilities, great energy and determination resulted in landing sufficient stores to enable my advance beyond Harrar to proceed without a pause, a state of affairs which at one time I did not think would be possible.

75. As our advance was proceeding northwards from Mogadiscio the enemy in British Somaliland had issued orders for the withdrawal of their forces. The rapid advance on to Giggiga, however, cut their normal route for retirement and the 70th Colonial Brigade under General Bertello attempted to escape by Borama and Dire Dawa. The subse-

quent adventures of this column are obscure. It became known that General Bertello had passed through Dire Dawa mounted on a mule shortly before we captured that place. Furthermore, large parties of prisoners in British Somaliland and just south of the border were captured at various subsequent dates. It is assumed therefore that 70th Brigade melted away.

On the 20th March a small column of Nigerians occupied Tug Wajale on the British Somaliland border, and two armoured cars, led by the Chief Engineer E.A. Force, motored through Hargeisa to Berbera and established contact with Aden Force.

76. The occupation of Giggiga marked the end of the fighting in the flat bush country, and the commencement of a period of hill fighting in the Abyssinian highlands. Up to the present our tactics had almost invariably been the same, the reconnaissance to find the flanks of the enemy position by armoured cars, its rapid envelopment by armoured cars and embussed infantry if the going permitted, or infantry on foot if it did not. It was seldom during the period up to Giggiga that some form of mechanised column could not be placed behind the enemy position. It was our experience that as soon as the Italian Colonial Infantry realised there was something behind them their resistance gave way.

With the entry into the hills it was clear that A.F.Vs. could no longer be depended upon to the same extent as heretofore, and that the Infantry would have to revert to true infantry fighting on their feet. In anticipation of such a situation arising I had formed a small transport company of 600 mules in Kenya, and had arranged to portee one 3.7 in. How. Battery, mules and guns complete. Owing, however, to the extreme difficulty of getting them over the long distance from Kenya, I was not able to get them up in time for the operations covered by this report.

77. The Marda Pass appeared to be held strongly by the enemy, and viewed towering above the extensive flat plains of Giggiga, looked indeed a formidable proposition. Nothing could move on the Giggiga plain without being seen, and the aerodrome was in full view of the hills 9,000 yards away. The enemy appeared to be holding a broad front and therefore Commander 11th (A) Division decided he would await the arrival of 1st S.A. Brigade and attack the pass with two brigades on 23rd March. Patrol activity by the Nigerian Brigade during this period resulted in a claim by the enemy that heavy attacks had been carried out, all of which had been repulsed with great loss. On 20th March I received definite indications that the enemy was planning a further withdrawal and it was decided to attack with the Nigerian Brigade only, next day. After stiff fighting 1st Nigeria Regiment were able to take a height overlooking the pass on its northern side by 2000 hours on the evening of the 21st. The enemy evacuated the pass that night. It transpired that the position was in fact 4 miles in breadth. It was heavily wired, had gun positions tunnelled into the hills, extensive tank traps and mine fields. It had however no depth, and there is little doubt that the occupation of the height captured by our troops had made it untenable.

78. After the action at the Marda Pass it became possible to transfer the L of C of the 11th (A) Division to the line Berbera-Hargeisa.

The Force at this time was, therefore, maintained from two advanced bases, Berbera and Mogadiscio, with L of C from the former 250 miles and from the latter 800 miles. It was, moreover, necessary simultaneously to maintain from the port of Chisimaio some 4,000 L of C troops and, in addition, to keep the whole of the 1,600 miles of road L of C to Kenya open for the passage of motorised units and M.T. convoys, since facilities for handling M.T. at the ports did not exist.

79. Two more enemy prepared positions remained in front of Harrar, the first at the Babile Pass, the second above the Bisidimo River. In order to force the first of these the Commander 11th (A) Division planned to move by two roads, sending the Nigerian Brigade by the southern route, while the Royal Natal Carbineers took the old road to the north. The Babile position looked even more formidable than the Marda Pass. High broken hills, steep-sided and formed of granite blocks, flanked the roads on both sides. The southern road had been blocked by cratering and a cliff fall. Some considerable resistance was met by the Nigerians, who owing to better going reached the position first. The Royal Natal Carbineers found the old disused road extremely difficult going; by dint however of energetic perseverance, they were able to make their presence felt. The Italians had not expected the old road to be used, and feeling the weakness of their left flank, were forced off the position on the evening of 24th March, and the Nigerian Brigade continued their advance on the 25th.

80. On the morning of the 25th an announcement was picked up on the wireless that Harrar had declared itself an open town. Having had no official communication to this effect, I had a message dropped on the town informing the authorities that operations would go on, and unless all troops were withdrawn to the west of the town, it could not be considered open.

Notwithstanding this, the Nigerian Brigade met with opposition at the Bisidimo position during the morning of the 25th, coming under fire at first light from Medium and Field guns based on the high ground covering Harrar.

Two batteries of the 7th S.A. Field Brigade were brought into action in the only possible position which was entirely open except for a little cover from observation by scrub and bushes. Although they came under intense fire while deploying, they succeeded by 1200 hours in establishing a superiority of fire over the enemy guns which they eventually silenced. At the same time they gave supporting fire which enabled the 1st and 2nd battalions of the Nigeria Regiment to advance.

With the arrival of a section of six inch Hows the enemy abandoned his guns and withdrew.

81. As soon as the enemy had withdrawn an Italian Civil Official appeared with a white flag, and was met by Major-General H. E. de R. Wetherall, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., Commander 11th (A) Division. This official attempted to insist that the message which had been dropped in the morning meant that the Italian forces should be given time to withdraw west of the town, and said they would

have done so by 0700 hours the following morning. Major-General Wetherall however, left him no illusions on this point, and sent him forward with the armoured cars to occupy the town. The occupation took place without incident on the evening of the 25th, the Italian troops encountered laying down their arms. Amongst other war material captured were two batteries of 105mm. guns, weapons which had not before been met.

82. In the period covering the advance from Mogadiscio to Harrar a further 19,000 of the Italian armed forces were accounted for, killed, prisoners, or by desertion, bringing the total up to that time to 50,000.

83. I would here bring to notice the achievement of the Nigerian Brigade and attached troops, under the command of Brigadier G. R. Smallwood, M.C., who commenced their advance from the Giuba on 23rd February and were in the van of 11th (A) Division until the capture of Harrar on 25th March. Thus in 30 days they had covered 1,054 miles, an average of 35 miles a day. The final 65 miles into Harrar entailed an advance through most difficult country in face of opposition from three strong positions, yet the distance was covered in three-and-half days. The Nigerian soldier, unaccustomed to cold and damp, fought his way from the hot and dusty bush to the wet and cold highlands of Abyssinia, where he maintained his cheerfulness and courage in spite of strange conditions and the strenuous climbing operations made necessary by the terrain.

84. On 21st March I had received a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief Middle East to the effect that he saw no military advantage in going beyond Dire Dawa unless it was likely to end the campaign, and pointing out the dangers of becoming too deeply committed. I was told that the C-in-C did not wish to hamper my action, and was asked for my views.

I replied that my information showed that there were only two brigades between my forces and Addis Abeba; furthermore that there were no signs of reinforcements being moved up to the Auasc River which would be the enemy's last line of defence before Addis Abeba; that the morale of the Colonial troops in front of me was very low, and they had little fighting value. Under these conditions the capture of Addis Abeba seemed quite possible. Although I was not prepared to say that this would result in the capitulation of the enemy, yet if Eritrea went as well, I thought they would give in.

85. It should be mentioned that it was at this time that the German threat from Tripoli was developing. I had been informed that 1st S.A. Division was to proceed to Egypt as soon as my operations were finished, and that as much transport and as many other units as possible, were to be sent up as they became available. I therefore informed C-in-C that on account of the Jibuti railway there would be no new transport commitment in an advance from Dire Dawa to Addis Abeba. Furthermore I stated that I could release 1st S.A. Division Headquarters and 5th S.A. Brigade then in Kenya, at once. I received permission to proceed with the advance on Addis Abeba.

86. On 27th March the 1st S.A. Brigade took the lead and advanced from Harrar on Dire Dawa. Two routes were available to the Auasc

River and it had been the intention of Commander 11th (A) Division to move 1st S.A. Brigade through Dire Dawa westwards by the northern route over the low ground, and to send a column from the Nigerian Brigade by the southern road over the Mountains. The enemy however, had carried out extensive demolitions, more particularly on the mountain pass leading down to Dire Dawa where in five separate places the road was blown on the steepest slopes. The crater in one of these demolitions was 70 yards long. An initial estimate for the filling up of these craters was given as eight days. Some of the Nigerian Brigade were moved up to assist in the re-establishing of the road. In the event, the road was open in 36 hours, an achievement which gives great credit to the 1st S.A. and 54th E.A. Field Companies and 1st Nigeria Regiment who worked continuously until the demolitions were cleared.

Meanwhile two companies of the 1st Transvaal Scottish were sent off on foot to capture Dire Dawa which was entered unopposed on 29th March. The retreating Italians had left the town some time before our troops, delayed by demolitions, entered. It was found that 7 Italians had been murdered and mutilated by armed deserters from the Italian Colonial Infantry. Order was quickly restored by our troops.

Owing to the demolitions Commander 11th (A) Division was not able to adhere to his original plan, namely to advance a Nigerian column by the southern road, but had to send 1st D.E.O.R. from 1st S.A. Brigade by this route instead. He did, however, maintain his original intention to send the greatest weight by the northern road.

87. During the advance an enemy map had been captured, marked with successive delaying lines, which it was thought had been worked out some time before against the threat of an advance from French Somaliland. It appeared also as if demolitions and defences had been partly prepared a considerable time previously, as from this point to the Auasc very extensive cratering was met on both roads. It was a matter of some amazement that during this period in only a few cases did the enemy cover his demolitions by fire, and even then at the first sign of an enveloping movement by our troops he either surrendered or withdrew. From this time to the Auasc very little resistance was made, though considerable toil was required to overcome the demolitions.

It was expected that the enemy would put up a fight on the line Miesso-Asbar Littorio, and it eventually became known that he intended to do so. He placed the weight of his troops, however, covering the southern road, as he over-estimated the time it would take us to clear the Dire Dawa road. He was therefore taken by surprise when he found our heaviest attack developing on the northern route, and he withdrew, one column retiring behind the Auasc, the other column by the southern road through Sire towards Cofole.

On 1st April 1st S.A. Brigade occupied Miesso and 22nd E.A. Brigade were passed through towards the Auasc.

Air operations at this period were mainly directed towards the enemy columns retreating by both rail and road. The railway system from Dire Dawa to Addis Abeba was the main

target and several direct hits by bombs on trains were registered. The attacks added still further to the confusion amongst the enemy.

88. At this stage, in view of the low morale of the enemy facing me, a condition which had now spread to the Blackshirt Battalions and other white units, I had no doubt whatever that my troops would cross the Auasc without difficulty, and that the fall of Addis Abeba was imminent. Addis Abeba had to my knowledge a white civilian population of some 20,000 and a native population of about 100,000. The protection of the white population in Abyssinia under circumstances such as were now coming about, had always been a matter of some concern to me. I was most anxious to avoid any form of pillage or more serious incidents in that dangerous excitable period, which always exists in a town between the withdrawal of the enemy and the first entry of our troops. I was well aware of the significance of any untoward incident in the eyes of the United States and the rest of the civilised world.

89. On 30th March I therefore telegraphed General Wavell placing these views before him and suggesting that the time had come for a direct approach either by himself or by myself to H.R.H. The Duke of Aosta in Supreme Command of the troops in Italian East Africa, on the question of the protection of the population of the town. On 31st March I received the following message from the C-in-C for H.R.H. The Duke of Aosta.

"I am anxious to avoid any possibility that Italian women and children should be endangered in the course of military operations. Your Royal Highness must realise that your present military situation may make their protection in certain areas a difficult matter. I am prepared to offer co-operation in ensuring their safety so far as is consistent with my military duty of continuing action against your forces still in arms. I have therefore authorised General Cunningham to get in touch with Your Royal Highness by means which he will suggest and to report to me any proposals which may mutually ensure the safety of women and children in zone of operations."

This message was duly dropped on Addis Abeba from the air with a message from me to say that an envoy could be sent by air during certain hours, to land behind our lines with safety. On 2nd April an Italian aeroplane dropped a message for me from H.R.H. acknowledging the receipt of the C-in-C's message and saying that his envoy would land next day on the aerodrome specified. I telegraphed General Wavell at once giving him a summary of the conditions I proposed handing to the Italians.

Next morning, just before the envoy arrived, I received a further wire from the C-in-C which was so badly mutilated that I was unable to make much sense from it. As by this time my troops were across the Auasc, and might have been fighting near Addis Abeba that evening, I felt there was no time for further reference and I would have to act on my own initiative.

It should be noted that the envoy was only authorised to speak about the particular position in Addis Abeba. A copy of the conditions handed to him is given in Appendix "F" together with the Italian reply I received next day. This was merely acknowledged without comment.

90. On 4th April I received from Troopers direct a wire to say that the Defence Committee did not endorse the conditions put forward by General Wavell and that no offer to assume responsibility for feeding and protecting enemy civil population should be made without mentioning the unconditional surrender of Italian armed forces. Terms should be included also that ships in Massawa harbour were to be handed over to us intact for the evacuation and feeding of the Italian civilian community. It appeared to me that it was not clear to the Defence Committee that the conditions were to cover Addis Abeba only, a town which was necessary to me for the continuance of military operations, being the junction of all the main roads in Abyssinia.

If I had made demands as outlined above, in the event of refusal, the only action I could have taken was to stop short of Addis Abeba. In fact, I had nothing to bargain with. There was no direct threat to Addis Abeba, with which the Italians were not in a position to deal, by any forces other than my own. Nevertheless, as the Italian Military Command in their reply had not accepted the terms I had laid down in full, I cabled C.-in-C. Middle East offering to delay my advance and reopen negotiations.

As I had no reply in 24 hours I removed all restrictions and allowed the troops to continue their advance.

91. While these negotiations were taking place the advance of 22nd Brigade on to the Auasc was continuing, and our troops were in contact on the river on 2nd April. Both the road and railway bridges were found to be blown. The enemy put up some resistance to frontal attacks, but about half a mile from his main position a place was found where the river could be waded, and as soon as he discovered his flank was being turned he withdrew. A new road bridge was built and the advance was continued next day, 3rd April. The 22nd E.A. Brigade reached Adama that day, and were instructed to try to cross the river Auasc at Ponte Malcasa, and attempt to cut off the enemy column which was known to be withdrawing by Sire. The bridge had been destroyed and the enemy offered considerable resistance. A large part of the enemy column therefore escaped, though the capture of the road junction south of Ponte Malcasa some days later resulted in the cutting off of some units.

92. On 4th-5th April a series of combined bomber and fighter attacks were carried out by the Air Force on Addis Abeba aerodrome. The results of these attacks were the most successful yet attained. It was estimated that the enemy lost 32 aircraft, 3 destroyed in the air, 17 on the ground, and 12 damaged. The shambles on Addis Abeba aerodrome was apparent to our troops after entering the town, and further increased their confidence in the efficiency of the Air Force in aiding their advance.

93. During this time the 1st S.A. Brigade was being moved up to occupy Addis Abeba, which was entered by a mixed force officially at 10.30 hours 6th April.

On the evening before, while at Adama, the 22nd Brigade had received a request from the Italian officials in Addis Abeba to send some troops in to prevent looting. A few armoured cars and infantry were duly despatched.

During the period between the commencement of the advance from Harrar and the entry

into Addis Abeba a further 15,000 of the enemy were calculated to have become non-effective. Millions of pounds worth of war material of all sorts was found in the city and captured on the way there.

94. It is interesting to note that although during the whole period of the advance from the Giuba 11th (A) Division consisted of three brigades, only on one occasion, namely, at the Babile Pass engagement, was it found necessary to use more than one at a time. At the Babile Pass only one extra battalion was employed. I consider the greatest credit is due to Major-General Wetherall, Commander 11th (A) Division, for his cool-headed judgment, drive and daring acceptance of risks throughout the advance.

95. It was not found possible immediately to use the railway line from Dire Dawa to Addis Abeba, as the Italians had not only removed all the serviceable engines and the spare parts and machinery from Dire Dawa to Addis Abeba, but had also completely destroyed the railway bridge over the Auasc River.

Eventually with the assistance of some Greek mechanics, one engine at Dire Dawa was made sufficiently serviceable to go out along the line and bring in others from which one engine was then made available for drawing a train. This train conveyed 100 tons of supplies and stores to Auasc on 9th April, only three days after the occupation of Addis Abeba.

D. Operations in British Somaliland

(16th March to 5th April, 1941.)

96. As already referred to, a force from Aden was landed in British Somaliland and captured Berbera on 16th March. By previous arrangement with Aden, it was my responsibility to relieve one of the two Indian battalions sent over from there, and to take over command of Berbera and administration of British Somaliland as soon as possible after the landing.

In view of the importance of my L. of C., of the presence of formed but isolated groups of the enemy still in that area, and the necessity for a senior military commander on the spot, I decided to move the personnel of the H.Q. and two battalions 2nd S.A. Infantry Brigade by sea from Kenya to Berbera, the remaining battalion and all the transport proceeding by march route.

Brigade H.Q. and 2nd F.F. Battalion and 1st Natal Mounted Rifles duly arrived at Berbera on 23rd March. The transport proceeding by road did not arrive until 5th April. In spite of this, by the use of twenty 30-cwt. lorries sent over from Aden, and some hired transport procured through the offices of Lieut.-Colonel R. H. Smith the Senior Political Officer, Brigadier F. L. A. Buchanan, M.C., V.D., commanding 2nd S.A. Brigade was able to do valuable work in cleaning up isolated pockets of the enemy and establishing political control over the country.

97. On 8th April Brigadier A. R. Chater, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., who had been appointed Military Governor British Somaliland under my general direction took over from Brigadier Buchanan.

Immediate steps were taken to re-raise the Somaliland Camel Corps, the Illalos and the police force, many of the personnel of which

were left in British Somaliland when the evacuation took place.

The troops left under my command by A.O.C. Aden are given in Appendix "G."

*E. Operations of 12th (A) Division
(26th February to 5th April, 1941.)*

98. On 25th February 12th (A) Division consisted of the 21st E.A. Infantry Brigade at Wajir and the 24th G.C. Brigade which was at Gelib. The 22nd E.A. Brigade had been put under 11th (A) Division for the advance on Mogadiscio, and 1st S.A. Brigade had come into Force Reserve. 12th (A) Division had been instructed on 24th February to reconnoitre towards Bardera and, if it was found unoccupied, to make demonstrations towards Iscia Baidoa.

On 26th February I met the Commander 12th (A) Division at Gelib and explained the scope of future operations and emphasised the limitations imposed by the existing supply situation. Commander 12th (A) Division anticipated that if Bardera was occupied he could capture it by 2nd March and Iscia Baidoa by 5th March. To assist in the capture of Bardera and subsequently to garrison that place it was arranged that one battalion of 21st E.A. Brigade from Wajir should move there direct. Considerable apprehension was felt at the time about troops getting caught by the rains in Bardera and Iscia Baidoa with insufficient supplies. The same day a report was received that a patrol of the 24th G.C. Brigade had entered Bardera which was found to be unoccupied. Reports were also received that Iscia Baidoa and Dinsor had already been evacuated as a result of a message from the Duce ordering the evacuation of Italian Somaliland for Abyssinia. This was confirmed by patrols which occupied Iscia Baidoa on 27th February and captured 200 native troops and large quantities of ammunition, supplies and petrol.

99. At this period 12th (A) Division was given a call on 1st S.A. and 22nd E.A. Brigades to assist in pacifying the large area of country for which it was responsible. The right boundary of this Division was brought right up to the Mogadiscio-Belet Uen road so as to free 11th (A) Division of pacification tasks.

100. On 3rd March patrols reported Lugh Ferrandi unoccupied except for a few civilians whom they collected. H.Q. 24th G.C. Brigade moved to Iscia Baidoa and further patrols were sent to Dolo and Oddur. The patrol to Dolo found it unoccupied. The Oddur patrol reported Uegit evacuated and looted, and then proceeded on 4th March to occupy Oddur which was also found deserted.

On 6th March a patrol was despatched from Dolo to Mandera on receipt of information that Mandera had been evacuated and that the nearest enemy were at Neghelli. This patrol reported Mandera deserted on 15th March. A further patrol was despatched from Iscia Baidoa along the road Belet-Uen and found this route to be impassable in wet weather.

101. In anticipation of the projected transfer of 1st S.A. Division to the eastern sector to take Harrar, 12th (A) Division H.Q. moved on 7th March to Bullo Erillo so that it would be more conveniently placed to move into 1st S.A. Division area. When this project was abandoned owing to early rains hampering

movement, 12th (A) Division H.Q. opened on 11th March three miles north of Giumbo to facilitate the supply of Division H.Q. and Divisional troops from Chisimaio.

102. During the whole of this period both the 1st S.A. Infantry Brigade and the 22nd E.A. Infantry Brigade which, for reasons of supply were located at Brava and Merca, had been rounding up a considerable number of prisoners left over from the Giuba battle and locating large quantities of ammunition, supplies and petrol in the area Bur Acaba-Afgoi-Modun. Active patrolling by these brigades resulted in hundreds of Italians, Colonial Infantry and Banda surrendering with their arms and equipment, and much was done to restore order in this area. Patrols of 2nd Gold Coast Regiment from Iscia Baidoa to Bur Acaba collected further prisoners.

As a result of desertions, armed bands in considerable numbers were engaged in banditry and looting all over the occupied territory. From this time onwards troops were in constant demand by the Political authorities for the restoration of order and this state of affairs still exists.

103. On 11th March 22nd E.A. Brigade reverted to command 11th (A) Division and 1st S.A. Brigade together with the 22nd Mountain Battery, 4th S.A. Field Brigade, and 2nd S.A. A.Tk. Battery were also placed under command 11th (A) Division.

104. A column consisting of 3rd G.C. Regiment, 51st G.C. Light Battery and a troop of armoured cars left Dolo at 0630 hours on 17th March to reconnoitre to Neghelli. Progress was slow owing to minefields and road-blocks. Four miles east of Neghelli opposition was met and overcome, and Neghelli itself was occupied at 0830 hours on 21st March. No administrative arrangements could be made at that time to maintain troops in Neghelli, so the column returned to Dolo on 26th March. On 23rd March the Commander 12th (A) Division had been ordered by me to do what he could to keep the enemy forces north of Neghelli engaged. By making a show of force in this area it was hoped to delay the withdrawal of enemy forces on the route Neghelli-Addis Abeba and thus to contribute to the success of operations being undertaken by 11th (A) Division in the Harrar-Auasc River area. Unfortunately this message was delayed and before receipt the Neghelli columns, which had never been intended to stay, had been withdrawn. Accordingly, re-occupation was decided upon provided the necessary administrative arrangements could be overcome. A column of 3rd G.C. Regiment less two companies, one troop of E.A.A.C. Regiment and a section of 51st G.C. Light Battery left Dolo early on 30th March and reached Neghelli on 1st April. In the meantime, however a patrol of 1/2nd K.A.R. from the 21st E.A. Infantry Brigade at Iavello had already re-occupied Neghelli on 30th March. The 3rd G.C. Regiment remained in Neghelli and the 1/2nd K.A.R. patrol returned to Iavello. No enemy were reported near Neghelli but local riots were taking place between Boran and Somali tribesmen and punitive patrols had to be sent out to round up offenders. The enemy were believed to be holding a position in the area Uaddara and a patrol was accordingly sent out to investigate. The patrol returned on 5th April

and confirmed that the enemy were holding a strong position in the area of Uaddara.

105. On 6th April 12th (A) Division H.Q. moved to Neghelli and took over from 1st S.A. Division, the 21st and 25th E.A. Infantry Brigades and all Divisional troops not proceeding to Middle East. The 24th G.C. Brigade less 3rd G.C. Regiment at Neghelli remained under command of Force in the area Lugh Ferrandi-Oddur-Iscia Baidoa with the task of clearing up and patrolling the area.

The Order of Battle of 12th (A) Division at this time is given in Appendix "H".

PART III.—GENERAL.

106. *Control and Headquarters.*

The problem of control of the operations was intricate. Although originally Force H.Q. was based on a Corps Staff Establishment, it was found necessary owing to the many local problems of supply, personnel, finance, &c., to expand it into a minor G.H.Q. whose dealings were very largely concerned with South Africa, the Government of Kenya and the Governors' Conference. A large portion of my staff, and strictly speaking myself also, had firm roots in Nairobi and many major responsibilities in that place.

In the campaign which has been described it will be remembered that the main advance in the south was, in the initial stages, carried out by two divisions at one time, and it was quite clear to me that it would be necessary either to improvise a Corps H.Q. and place one of the Major-Generals in command, or to go forward and control the battle myself. It was quite impossible for me to give a general directive to 1st S.A. Division in the north and to rely on General Brink to carry it out, but in view of the interplay between the 11th and 12th (A) Divisions which was bound to happen when they reached the Giuba, I was convinced I could not follow this procedure in their case. I did not like the idea of forming an improvised Corps H.Q. as neither the Commander nor the staff would have time to get to know each other. I therefore decided to form an Advanced H.Q. and go forward and fight the battle myself.

107. On 9th February, therefore, Force H.Q. was divided into two, with Rear Force H.Q. at Nairobi and Advanced Force H.Q. at Garissa. Advanced Force H.Q. consisted of the majority of the General Staff and representatives of the branches, while the Rear H.Q. continued to operate with the remaining personnel. As operations progressed, Advanced Force H.Q. moved forward. Moves were carried out in three echelons. The main operational group was air-borne. It was preceded by an advance signal centre and a portion of Advanced H.Q., which went by road two or three days ahead to establish communications. After the departure of the air party the rear echelon of Advanced Force H.Q. followed by road. Owing to the distances involved in the moves and the state of the roads, it was usually a week after the departure of the Advance Party before the Rear Party arrived, and Advanced Force H.Q. was complete again.

The following moves were carried out by Advanced H.Q. :—

- 10th February. Nairobi—Garissa.
- 18th February. Garissa—Chisimaio.
- 27th February. Chisimaio—Mogadiscio.

20th March. Mogadiscio—Gabredarre.

27th March. Gabredarre—Giggiga.

1st April. Giggiga—Harrar.

108. Although the arrangements for Advanced H.Q. worked reasonably satisfactorily, things were not so happy at Nairobi. Many important matters were either neglected or left in the hands of junior officers who had not the experience to deal with them. Heads of services had no one to go to for guidance and control, and, moreover, were out of touch with what was going on in front. I was only once able to go back to Nairobi myself.

Before serious operations began I had always felt that the best solution would have been to add a floating Corps H.Q. to the Force which could have taken charge of any front where two divisions were being employed; my experience during operations confirmed this view.

As Advanced H.Q. got further and further away from Nairobi I asked for a Major-General with the idea of making Nairobi a base area under his command. Before sanction had been obtained, however, Addis Abeba had fallen and a new situation presented itself.

109. I should call attention here to the necessity for rapid, accurate and efficient staff work in all branches which the speed and nature of the operations demanded. Both at my Advanced and Rear H.Q. and in all formations the staffs and subordinate personnel were not found wanting. I wish to mention particularly the work of Brigadier J. K. Edwards, M.C., my B.G.S., as being of outstanding merit. In his cool-headed yet rapid and clear interpretation of my directions he showed himself a staff officer on whom complete reliance could be placed.

Administration was the key-note of the operations, the burden of which fell mainly on the shoulders of the A.Q.M.G.s Colonel A. C. Duff, O.B.E., M.C., and Colonel Sir Brian H. Robertson, Bt., D.S.O., M.C., one of whom was always with me forward and the other at Rear H.Q. I found them undaunted by the magnitude of the demands made on them. That, through all the vicissitudes of bad roads, and ports without appliances, ample supplies were able to keep up with the troops, must be accounted a fine achievement by these two officers and all who worked to the same purpose.

110. It would not have been possible to split the H.Q. into two unless large numbers of male clerks, signallers, cipher personnel and M.T. Drivers had been replaced in Rear H.Q. by women.

Great credit is due to Lady Sidney Farrar for raising a F.A.N.Y. unit from local resources and for the tireless efficiency shown in training and organising it. The work of these ladies was invaluable, and in spite of long and arduous hours always remained excellent.

III. *Intelligence.*

By the end of January, 1941, the small Intelligence Section, which had been formed in September, 1939, had been expanded into a G.H.Q. Section complete, with a total strength of 75 officers and 110 O.Rs. All these, except two officers, were found from South African, East African and West African resources.

Information about the enemy was obtained from many sources. Until Italy declared war, reasons of policy had prevented employment of agents in Italian territory, but after June, 1940,

Galla and Somali tribesmen were employed. Although they were not skilful agents they produced useful information.

All information received in Nairobi was quickly sifted and signalled on by the quickest means to the small Intelligence Branch which worked at Advanced Force H.Q. This information often proved of inestimable value.

Intelligence Officers worked in the field and employing agents were often joined by so many volunteers that they became leaders of bands of Patriot scouts, and as such played an active part in the operations.

112. The question of security had necessarily to receive close attention in view of the Italian civil population which remained in the various towns which were captured. Security personnel were moved immediately in rear of the leading troops and as soon as a town was entered they established security control. In addition, they often had to carry out various administrative and political duties until the arrival of the appropriate staffs. To maintain wireless security it was necessary to have a regular system of changing code names and stencil ciphers. The organisation of these changes over such a wide front which lacked normal means of communication required careful preparation.

As the situation demanded, Censorship offices were opened to deal not only with letters from the troops and communications to the Press but also to censor enemy civilian and Prisoners of War correspondence.

I consider that one of the main reasons why our intelligence was better than the enemy's was because of our better security organisation.

113. Particular attention was paid to propaganda which, though under the general direction of Cairo, had necessarily to be evolved locally to a great extent on account of the delay in communications. Great use was made of locally-prepared pamphlets dropped on enemy troops. My policy in these pamphlets was to ensure that all enemy troops knew what was happening in the operations in Italian East Africa, to encourage the Somali and Eritrean troops to desert and return to their homes before they were taken as prisoners of war, and to incite Abyssinians to throw off the yoke of the Italian. Considerable success was achieved; many desertions and several surrenders were directly due to the pamphlets, while reports showed that the Italians were always very concerned about our activities in this direction in lowering the morale of their troops.

News for the troops was not neglected, news sheets being prepared and issued regularly, while in Mogadiscio and Addis Abeba Italian and vernacular newspapers were started to keep the local population informed of world news.

114. *Engineers.*

Until January, 1941, the Engineer troops were employed on defensive positions, principally on the Tana and at Wajir; on construction or improving and maintaining the roads or tracks running fanwise from Nairobi to Lokitaung, Marsabit, Wajir, Garissa and Bura; and providing water supplies in the base areas and along the Lines of Communication, by deep-well boring.

During the period immediately preceding the advance to the Giuba four floating bridges were built over the Tana, two at Garissa and two at Bura.

115. From the crossing of the Giuba onwards the L. of C. lengthened so rapidly that very little transport could be spared for engineer materials from the carriage of rations, petrol and ammunition. Consequently most of the engineer work depended upon finding materials on the line of advance and fortunately, the enemy usually left ample materials to repair his demolitions.

Italian engineer stores at Mogadiscio and at Addis Abeba in particular saved invaluable time and transport. Near Mogadiscio three road bridges and one railway bridge over the 200ft. wide Uebi Scebeli were destroyed by the enemy and rebuilt from materials left in his engineer park at Afgoi; which provided also an excellent bridge, portable in light parts, which was later used to replace the demolished road bridge over the Auasc River. At Addis Abeba also sufficient of this equipment was found to provide a 220ft. bridge at Ponte Malcasa and a considerable reserve for future needs.

116. Engineer work on the advance from Mogadiscio to Addis Abeba consisted mainly of the clearing of minefields and road blocks, and making deviation causeways across streams where bridges had been demolished, followed by bridge construction.

Apart from the pontoon bridges over the Tana and the Giuba, upwards of 70 bridges from 25' to 220' in length, in single or multiple spans, were built, almost all of captured Italian material. This process is still going on.

117. The most notable engineer task in the operations northwards from Marsabit, and probably of the whole campaign, was the construction of a new road 180 miles long from Marsabit via Kalacha and east of the Huri Hills to Mega climbing 4,000 feet in the last 20 miles. This new road made a vital all-weather link to replace the track across the Chalbi Desert to North Horr, Dukana and Ganciaro over which the advance of the 1st S.A. Division had been made, but which is impassable after rain. The new road was built in six weeks under most trying conditions across lava debris thrown out by the numerous volcanoes in the region. The heat of the sun and reflected heat from the hard basalt boulders made work extremely arduous in the daytime, and heat radiated from the rock allowed little relief for several hours after sunset.

118. In the south during the preparatory period Road Construction companies, covered only by very light forces, drove broad roads through the bush 70 miles forward from both Garissa and Bura on our front line, the River Tana, and water-boring units were also at work right forward at this stage. In quite a number of the preliminary operations auto-patrols from the Road Construction companies moved forward just behind the most advanced troops. This plan proved of the greatest assistance in maintaining the speed of the advance.

119. No service pattern bridging equipment arrived from the United Kingdom in time to be used in this operation.

This was not unexpected in view of shipping difficulties. Locally designed pontoon bridging, assault boats and S.B.G. bridges were therefore made in Kenya and South Africa and a "Bridge Coy" was improvised from lorry chassis for their carriage to the Giuba. Because of a shortage of steel plates of suitable

thickness the pontoons were heavy, and a complete lack of high tensile steel made it necessary to use timber (necessarily "green" as there was no seasoned stock), for the superstructure, and mild steel for the S.B.G.

The improvised equipment was therefore clumsy, and the timber parts warped in the sun, making assembly difficult; but it served its purpose.

120. The four native African Field Companies, one East African, two Gold Coast and one Nigerian, have done remarkably good work in spite of having been ill equipped and sixty per cent. under strength in British N.C.O.s.

The main engineer effort was supplied by South Africa which provided well trained and well equipped units for every purpose. I cannot mention all the units who have earned it, but their comrades in other units will not grudge particular attention being called to the Road Construction and Maintenance Companies and the Water Company. The vital work of these units has been carried out with great skill and perseverance under the most arduous conditions.

I must draw attention to the work of Brigadier A. Minnis, C.B.E., who, before the operation took place, by his initiative and foresight had made R.E. provision, to a large extent locally improvised, which enabled the advance to proceed without serious check.

121. *Survey.*

Until the establishment of a Survey Directorate at the end of October, 1940, the only maps available for the operations were the out-of-date 1/1,000,000 series. Organised mapping of the probable area of operations on the 1/500,000 scale was then started, the data for the maps being collected from many sources, chiefly from Italian maps. As fresh data became available new editions were issued, while road strips of the more important roads were compiled from air photographs, and the details incorporated in the maps.

By the day operations began maps were ready as far as Mogadiscio. Artillery maps on the 1/25,000 scale had also been prepared from air photographs for the River Giuba position from its mouth to just north of Mabungo, together with large scale maps of Chisimaio and Mogadiscio.

As the advance proceeded, maps were prepared and issued well in time, information being mostly collected from captured Italian maps and from air photographs along the routes. Artillery maps of the Marda Pass and the Auasc position were also prepared. In view of the speed of the advance this must be considered a very successful achievement.

The satisfactory position in East Africa Force with regard to maps was mainly due to the careful preparation and detailed organisation made in the few months preceding the start of operations, under the direction of Colonel M. Hotine whose special knowledge and ability and untiring drive were outstanding.

122. *Signals.*

From the time Advanced Force H.Q. left Nairobi on 10th February, 1941, communications had to be maintained almost entirely by W/T. This was due to the tremendous distances separating Advanced Force H.Q. from the Divisions, Divisions from their Brigades, and sometimes Brigades from their battalions.

At one period Advanced Force H.Q. was as much as 740, 570 and 250 miles away from the three Divisions.

The daily average of messages dealt with at Advanced Force H.Q. including D.R. messages and re-routing was over 1,000, while that of the Divisional H.Qs. was about 250.

123. Under the best conditions communications in these circumstances would not have been easy, but as it was, the Signals had to compete with three grave disabilities, lack of powerful wireless sets, a large percentage of partially-trained personnel, and the complete blackouts or heavy fading which constantly occurred owing to the atmospheric and terrestrial conditions in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya and Italian Somaliland.

124. 25 (A) Corps Signals and reinforcements for the skeleton 11th and 12th (A) Divisional Signals only arrived in this country from England as operations were beginning. The men in these units, owing to various circumstances, had received little training before embarkation, a fact fully realised by the War Office, who I understand, sent a certificate with them to this effect. Had the other two disabilities not been present, the partially-trained operators would more easily have been able to deal with the volume of traffic, but as it was, the lack of skilled operators capable of working sets under adverse circumstances proved a considerable hindrance to the free flow of orders and messages necessary to control operations over such large areas.

After approximately 2½ months spent on board ship all the officers and men experienced severe physical exhaustion during the marches and long spells of duty. Life suddenly maintained on bully beef, biscuit, and a small supply of water did not help to improve physical or mental fitness. This strain was further increased by the high percentage of sickness due to lack of acclimatisation which was unavoidable, since many of the men went direct from the boat to the field.

125. The limited resources in trained personnel had continually to be split owing to the necessity of sending forward advanced signal centres whenever Headquarters moved. Force H.Q. moved six times, the shortest distance being 200 miles in a straight line, and the greatest over 300 miles. This meant it was generally a week between the Advance Signal Centre leaving for a new H.Q. and the Rear Signal Centre arriving there. The 11th (A) Division moved its H.Q. 21 times, the average distance covered being 77 miles; the movements of the H.Q. of 12th (A) Division were similar, while those of the 1st S.A. Division were also abnormal.

126. 15-cwt. Ford trucks were issued in lieu of a proportion of motor-cycles as the latter were found unsuitable in the bush. These trucks proved invaluable for D.R. and D.R.L.S. work. The D.Rs. themselves worked heroically for very long hours, covering enormous distances over the bad roads and tracks.

127. The fact that reliance had to be placed almost entirely on W/T communication meant considerable strain on the cipher personnel, the shortage of which was further aggravated by having to detach men for the new sub areas made necessary by the advance. Extra men who were withdrawn from units to fill gaps

only received their cipher training as operations proceeded. This involved a great strain on all the trained cipher personnel who worked tirelessly for very long hours under difficult conditions throughout the operations.

128. The fact that communications functioned even as well as they did is a tribute not only to the endless work of the experienced officers and N.C.Os. but also to all ranks, who worked hard during real and active operations to bring themselves up to the standard which they eventually reached.

129. *Medical.*

A remarkable feature of the campaign was the very low incidence of sickness of both white and native personnel, having regard to the terrain over which the operations took place. In the pre-war Kenya Military Report the following passage occurs:—

Chapter VI., para. 1 (4th Sub-para.).

Active Service Conditions.

“ One of the outstanding lessons of the last campaign in East Africa was the unsuitability of other than native troops for employment on active service in East Africa. British, South African and Indian troops alike had a very high sick rate and were generally unable to adapt themselves to local conditions.”

Yet one South African Brigade, many other South African technical units, and Imperial white personnel were continuously in the hot, low-lying Northern Frontier District of Kenya from August, through the “ little ” rains, until the advance started, and fought on throughout it. Their sick rate was never abnormal.

130. The following figures are given as an indication of the health of the force, up to 5th April, 1941:—

(a) Admission rate all diseases. 500 per thousand per annum. (This figure was 2,200 per thousand in the 1916-1918 E.A. Campaign.)

(b) Death rate from all diseases. Per thousand per annum: Europeans 1.8, Non-Europeans 3.8. From malaria only .28 and .26. (The similar figure for E.A. Campaign 1916-1918 was 42 per thousand per annum.)

No one measure adopted to protect the health of the troops can be given pride of place. It was appreciated that under active service conditions a high degree of efficiency is not attainable by any one means; reliance was therefore placed not so much on perfecting any single means as on bringing to bear as many protective measures as could be reasonably applied.

131. The lessons of the E.A. Campaign 1916-1918 on both sides showed the necessity of ample and balanced diet during operations of long duration. Although, therefore, except on the few occasions when there was time to buy and butcher fresh meat, during the advance the staple bully beef and biscuit formed the basis of the ration, yet throughout the whole period the hard scale was supplemented by other items both more appetising and health producing.

The usual anti-malarial and anti-dysentery protective measures, and the necessity of disease prevention generally, were stressed. Credit must be given to the various medical officers, on the staff and with units, in that they were able to bring home to individuals the importance of preventive measures, and the C.Os.

for their efficient co-operation in seeing that they were adopted.

132. The evacuation of sick and wounded from a force continuously advancing with great rapidity is in any country a source of difficulty. In country such as East Africa it is not only a source of difficulty, but one of great anxiety, since apart from geographical conditions, climatic conditions have also to be contended with.

In the first stages, evacuation was only possible by air for a limited number of the more serious cases. The remainder had to go by Motor Ambulance Convoys for hundreds of miles. Later evacuation by Motor Ambulance Convoys was only necessary as far as the ports of Chisimaio, Mogadiscio and Berbera, whence it was effected by Hospital Ship.

Throughout the operations there was no hitch in the attention to, and the care and evacuation of, the sick and wounded.

It will be clear that at all stages of the operations, for most casualties long and trying evacuation by bad tracks was unavoidable. I had continually stressed the need of air ambulances for this particular campaign, but the demand on production for fighting aircraft precluded their supply. Had the casualties not been low, the lack of air ambulances would have caused great suffering.

133. I wish to bring to notice the high standard of work and unfailing devotion to duty of all the Medical staff and personnel of the force, and I feel that the very satisfactory medical situation owed much to the great experience and practical knowledge of Brigadier A. J. Orenstein, C.M.G., LL.D., M.D., M.R.C.P. the D.M.S. of East Africa Force.

134. *Transport.*

Right up to the time of the occupation of Addis Ababa it was necessary to keep open the whole length of the 1,900 mile road L of C to the base at Nairobi for use by motorised units and M.T. convoys who had to move on all or any part of it.

It will be apparent that with the enormous distance of road L of C involved, an immense amount of work was demanded from the M.T. Companies of the Force. Long and continuous driving over indifferent roads and sand tracks in high temperatures must have been a considerable strain. It was borne by South African, East African and West African drivers alike with a willing and cheerful devotion to duty that is beyond praise.

135. To the mobile and static workshops that repaired and kept the M.T. vehicles on the road, praise is no less due. Their work was never ending and often had to be carried out under very trying conditions.

PART IV.—CONCLUSION.

136. The campaign up to the capture of Addis Ababa resulted in the occupation or re-occupation of 360,000 square miles of territory, the freeing of British Somaliland, and the capture of the enemy's capital. Forty thousand prisoners were left in our hands, and many more are still coming in. Reliable information showed that including desertion and other causes, at least 75,000 of the enemy's armed forces had been rendered non-effective. For this result I must pay tribute to the Commanders and Staffs for their skilful planning

and speedy initiative, to the troops for their relentless persistence in advancing under the varied arduous conditions which they met; in the Northern Frontier District, in heat and dust, and long periods on only a gallon of water per man; in the Abyssinian hills in wet and cold, and undertaking operations calling for the highest degree of physical fitness and resistance to fatigue. Although food was always plentiful the staple "Bully Beef" was seldom replaced by fresh meat, and most of the white personnel had no bread for the whole period of two months. Owing to the speed of the advance and the distances covered, it was impossible to maintain a regular service of mails, a matter of considerable concern to many of the men. All these discomforts were met by both white and native troops with the imperturbable cheerfulness which has long been the characteristic of the British soldier.

137. Our total casualties during the period 11th February to 5th April were:—

Killed	...	...	...	...	135
Wounded	...	...	...	...	310
Prisoners	...	...	...	...	4
Missing	...	...	...	...	52
					501

It might appear from this figure that there was in fact very little serious fighting. This is by no means the case. Nearly always when our troops met the enemy they were heavily fired on, and the number of automatics and heavy machine-guns captured testified to the fire power the enemy could develop. I attribute the reasons for the low number of casualties firstly to the superior mobility of our forces which enabled them quickly to find the "soft spot," secondly to the cover provided by the bush, and thirdly to lack of marksmanship of the Italian Colonial Infantryman who when pressed was inclined to shoot high.

138. I wish to express my grateful thanks to Vice-Admiral R. Leatham, C.B., R.N., Commander-in-Chief East Indies, and all ranks and ratings concerned, for the invaluable help rendered by the Royal Navy throughout the operations, commencing with the efficient support given by "Force T" in the bombardment of the coast before the capture of Chisimaio, and later during the forcing of the Giuba. The successive opening of the ports of Chisimaio, Merca, Mogadiscio and Berbera enabled my operations to proceed without a pause. In every case facilities for unloading were poor or non-existent, but the difficulties were surmounted with the efficiency and drive we have come to expect from our sister service.

139. I cannot speak too highly of the part played by the Air Forces in this campaign. The Air Officer Commanding remained with me throughout the operation, thus facilitating the requests for immediate air assistance. From the commencement of the campaign our Air Forces, under Air Commodore W. Sowrey, D.F.C., A.F.C., ably assisted by Brigadier H. Daniel, M.C., A.F.C., S.A.A.F., established complete air superiority, with the result that the advance of the troops was little interfered with by enemy air activity, and after the crossing of the Giuba we moved wholly by day. Bombing and "ground strafing" by the enemy was sporadic and normally ineffective. During the later stages of the campaign a support

group consisting of bombers, fighters, and A.C. machines was formed, and its Air Force Commander with his own communications advanced with the Commander of the leading troops. The value of this arrangement to the army point of view cannot be overstressed. Air support for the forward troops of the nature called for by the situation, was "on tap," and engendered the greatest confidence amongst both commanders and men.

140. To the pilots of the S.A.A.F. fighters, who destroyed such a number of enemy machines on the ground, and to the S.A.A.F. bombers which created such havoc amongst the retreating enemy, must be ascribed their great share of the credit for the successes gained. The invaluable work of the S.A.A.F. Army Co-operation Squadrons was carried out with daring and efficiency. Without the continuous employment of the Communication Flight, R.A.F., control of the operations spread over such a large area of country would have been impossible. I would like to mention the ground staff which, in spite of lack of spares and facilities generally, by dint of unceasing toil kept the maximum number of machines in the air.

The number of enemy aircraft destroyed during the period was 57 against our own losses of 8.

141. Here I must express my great appreciation of the assistance given so freely in every way possible to the Army by His Excellency the Governor of Kenya, Their Excellencies the Governors of Tanganyika, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Uganda through the East African Governors' Conference, the Government of Southern Rhodesia, and various civil authorities and institutions. All requests that I have had to make from time to time met with immediate response.

142. It is not too much to say that the willing co-operation given to the Army at all times by the Kenya and Uganda Railways and Harbours Administration played a large part in furthering the operations. In particular, their invaluable assistance in the construction and repair of large quantities of military material of various types must be mentioned. To Brigadier General the Hon. Sir Godfrey Rhodes, C.B.E., D.S.O., and the officers and employees of the Administration the Army owes its gratitude.

In addition to this practical help the Kenya and Uganda Railways and Harbours has as part of the common war effort assisted His Majesty's Government by large remissions of financial charges that would normally be due to them for military traffic.

143. A great deal of voluntary work for the benefit of the Army has been undertaken. Subscriptions have been made towards the welfare of, and gifts for, the troops. Ambulances and mobile canteens have been presented, and my Welfare Officers have been greatly assisted by provision of accommodation for officers and other ranks for periods of leave.

144. The Force owes a great debt to Lady Moore who, in addition to many other activities, organised and managed the voluntary Kenya Women's Emergency Organisation which ran the badly-needed canteens in Nairobi, and provided vegetables and other comforts for the forward troops when possible.

145. It would be idle to close this report without reference to the assistance given by the Union of South Africa, without which the campaign could not have been undertaken.

Apart from the fighting troops, I was indebted to the Union for much of the mechanical transport which made the supply of troops over such great distances in front of the railheads and ports possible, and to them also I owed the provision of a large number of special technical units without which operations in the type of terrain covered could not have taken place. It was with remarkable forethought that these units had been formed before the war and furnished with the most modern equipment.

Through the personal interest of Field Marshal Smuts I was at the start able to knit the Force into a whole, and all the many resources which the Union placed at my disposal were pooled for the common good of the whole force. I knew that no appeal to them would go unanswered if it was humanly possible to meet it. The spirit of co-operation extended right down to the lowest ranks, giving me the greatest confidence in the South African troops, a confidence which was fully justified by the achievements of the South African Division and all other South African troops during the campaign.

(Sgd.) A. G. CUNNINGHAM,
Lieutenant General,
General Officer Commanding,
East Africa Force.

6 June 1941

SECOND REPORT ON EAST AFRICA
FORCE OPERATIONS COVERING THE
PERIOD FROM OCCUPATION OF ADDIS
ABEBA ON 6TH APRIL, 1941, TO THE
CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES IN THE
AREA FOR WHICH EAST AFRICA
FORCE WAS RESPONSIBLE. ON 11TH
JULY, 1941.

PART I.—INTRODUCTION.

My previous report dealt with the operations carried out by E.A. Force up to the entry of the troops into Addis Abeba on 6th April, 1941.

After this date my immediate responsibilities were both operational and political. It was most desirable to deal the enemy a knock-out blow as soon as possible, but at the same time it was imperative to release as many units and as much transport as possible for Egypt. On the political side it was necessary to place the administration of Ethiopia on a firm base, to re-establish the Emperor, and to lay the foundations of an Ethiopian administration so that full use of Ethiopian military resources could be made after the shortest time, with the eventual object of releasing more of my troops. The pacification of the occupied territories and particularly of the eastern border of British Somaliland where there had been considerable looting of cattle and rape was also imperative.

2. After the fall of Addis Abeba, Asmara and Massawa, the enemy withdrew into three centres or "ridotti" and into the province of Galla-Sidamo. The centres were Dessie, Amba Alagi and Gondar, whereas in the Galla-Sidamo his main forces of approximately 40,000 infantry and militia with about 200 guns, were

in three groups covering an area of about 400 by 300 miles, one group in the Uaddara-Alghes-Sciasciamanna-Soddu area, one in the Gimma area and one in the Lechemti area. The Civil Government had gone to Gimma, but the Viceroy himself went to Dessie.

3. The situation of my own troops was as follows: (H.Q.) 1st S.A. Division and 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade were in process of being transported to Egypt. 2nd S.A. Infantry Brigade had also been offered to Middle East and were at or near Berbera waiting for ships to take them north.

11th (A) Division, consisting of 1st S.A. Brigade, 22nd E.A. Brigade (less one battalion on the L. of C.) and 23rd Nigerian Brigade, were at Adama and Addis Abeba.

12th (A) Division were attacking northwards from Iavello with 21st E.A. Brigade. One Battalion 24th G.C. Brigade was garrisoning Neghelli and the remainder of the Brigade were employed in restoring order in southern Italian Somaliland. 25th E.A. Brigade, also under this division, was advancing towards Maji.

4. After the fall of Addis Abeba I felt my best chance of a speedy liquidation of the enemy in the south was to advance on Gimma, the seat of Government for Iea, and I commenced operations to this end. Before these had developed I received a message from the C.-in-C. to the effect that it was essential that the road from Addis Abeba north to Asmara should be opened as soon as possible so as to allow passage of troops to Egypt via Massawa or Port Sudan, and he wished me to attack Dessie which was 250 miles north of Addis Abeba. I therefore instructed Commander 11th (A) Division to undertake this task with 1st S.A. Brigade Group with the idea that they should fight their way northwards and eventually embark from Massawa or Port Sudan for Egypt. This Brigade Group commenced their advance from Addis Abeba on 13th April. I informed C.-in-C. Middle East that I felt I could not clear the road northwards of Dessie with my own resources, and asked that the Sudan forces should attack Amba Alagi which was the only important remaining defended position on the road. In due course I received notification that the Sudan Forces would carry out this attack but not until 3rd May.

5. It was now apparent to me that I had not enough troops to carry out my first intention of both advancing on Gimma and, by pressure from both divisions advancing north and south, clearing the enemy out of the area of the Great Lakes south of Addis Abeba. I considered that of the two objectives, if only one were to be carried out, the latter was the more important. The troops at Sciasciamanna were a constant threat to my L. of C. at Moggio and Adama, and it would be a great advantage to me also to have a through road via Neghelli from Kenya. I therefore ordered 11th (A) Division to concentrate on attacking Sciasciamanna, and 12th (A) Division to advance on Dalle and Hula. For this latter purpose I relieved the Commander and two battalions of 24th G.C. Brigade, who were restoring order in Italian Somaliland, by garrison battalions, and on 16th April sent them to 12th (A) Division.

The account of the action of 1st S.A. Brigade on Dessie and the operations of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions are given in paras. 54 to 62.

6. During the whole period after passing Harrar my commanders were receiving continual requests from civilians in outlying districts all round Addis Abeba and along the lines of communication to rescue them from the threats, either real or imaginary, of attack by Ethiopians. The answering of these calls for assistance was hampering the real effort of the fighting troops, and I felt the time had come to make another approach to H.R.H. Duc D'Aosta and to tell him that I could no longer be responsible for any civilians not in our hands. Therefore on 9th April I telegraphed to General Wavell asking him if I could make an approach on these lines, and received permission from him to do so by return.

I thereupon had the following message dropped from the air at both Gimma and Dessie.

"To His Royal Highness Amedeo of Savoia, Viceroy of Ethiopia, Duke of Aosta or to his representative of the Supreme Command, from General Cunningham, Commanding British Forces in East Africa.

"In view of present military situation have further communication to make to Supreme Command on the subject of the safety of Italian women and children in Ethiopia which is now precarious. If in the interests of Italian civilians the Supreme Command wishes to receive this communication arrangements will be made as before for a representative to land by aeroplane on Chinile aerodrome between the hours of 9 and 10 returning between 2 and 3 on the 14th or 15th April."

7. In due course an Italian aeroplane landed at Diredaia satellite aerodrome between 0900 and 1000 hours on 15th April. I met the envoy myself and explained the situation to him verbally, namely that all the Rases who had worked with the Italians had submitted to the Emperor and Ethiopians everywhere were flocking to his standard; moreover the whole country was swarming with armed deserters from the Italian army who were turning into marauding bands, which were attacking Italian civilians and property; if I were to answer all requests for protection which I was getting, military operations would be hampered, and that neither myself nor my Commanders would be fulfilling our military duty of waging war against the Italians to the utmost degree; only on one condition could we accept any responsibility for civilians not in our hands and that was the unconditional laying down of arms, when we would be in a position to undertake the protection, feeding and evacuation of Italian nationals. The envoy asked me to confirm that we would look after the civilians already in our hands. I said I would to the best of my power, but took the opportunity of impressing upon him that incidents such as shooting of Abyssinians in Addis Abeba by Italian police made my task extremely difficult. I gave the envoy until 1000 hours on 17th April to reply. On that day an aeroplane again landed at the same aerodrome with a message to the effect that, in view of the importance of the proposals and the grave responsibilities they carried, they would have to be referred to Rome. Furthermore they were required in writing. I thereupon sent the following message

"In the interests of humanity, and in view of the perilous military situation in

which the Italians in Ethiopia are now placed, I am authorised by the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, to send the following message:—

"Unless the Italian troops in Italian East Africa lay down their arms, no responsibility for protecting and succouring Italian nationals can be accepted except in places already occupied by forces under British Military command.

"It is the duty of the British Military Commanders, with all the forces at their disposal, to prosecute the war against the Italian army with the utmost vigour, and nothing will be allowed to interfere with this object as long as fighting continues.

"A reply may be sent on 9700 K/cs British call YNC, Italian call YNI, between the hours of 0515 and 0815 GMT, and 1215 and 1515 hours GMT up to inclusive 20th April."

That very morning the BBC made an announcement to the effect that H.R.H. Duc D'Aosta had sent an envoy over to ask for peace terms. It was quite clear to me that such a premature announcement, which was in fact an iniquitous misrepresentation of the real facts, could only result in prejudicing any chance there was of getting the Duc D'Aosta to agree to the terms. Up to that time his attitude, as shown through his envoys, had been courteous and displayed a willingness to listen. The announcement could only have the effect of stiffening him, more particularly as it would prejudice him in the eyes of the Fascist Chiefs with whom he was reported already to be on bad terms.

On 20th April I received the reply given in full below.

"With reference to your letter do not take into consideration your proposals of military character Stop The responsibility concerning white population passes on to you when your troops or natives armed ordered by your officers or whoever under your orders occupy the places in which the white population is.

di Savoia."

8. In order to understand the background against which operations by my troops were being undertaken, it is necessary here to explain the activities of the Ethiopian patriots. The Emperor, by his presence in the Gojjam, had rallied most of the leaders in that province to his cause. The notable exception was Ras Hailu, who had been working in co-operation with the Italian forces in Debra Marcos. When forces under the Kaid occupied this place and the submission of Ras Hailu to the Emperor had been obtained, the Patriot movement grew in momentum and it became possible to direct forces to specific tasks under instructions from the Emperor.

On the arrival of the Emperor at Addis Abeba on 5th May he re-established personal contact with the leaders from other provinces and fresh impetus was given to the movement in different parts of the country.

On the same day, all irregular troops which had entered Ethiopia from the Sudan came under my command, except for certain Sudanese units, which were gradually being withdrawn to the North.

9. In the Gojjam it had been found that the formation of "operational centres" was a good method of enlisting and directing patriot

activities. The "Operational centre" consisted of a British Officer and four or more B.N.C.Os., who formed the nucleus, and to which were attached up to 70 selected Ethiopians. They were well armed, carried explosives and money, and, when possible, W/T sets.

Owing to the rapidity of the enemy withdrawal in the Gojjam, and commitments in connection with the raising of units for the Emperor's entry into Addis Abeba, only a few centres had been formed. The general policy decided upon, therefore, was for each Division to direct Patriot activities in their own areas, a special Staff Officer being attached to each Division for that purpose, and I arranged with the Emperor that he would instruct selected Ethiopian leaders to provide the desired numbers of Ethiopian soldiery. Officers to lead the Patriots were found from various sources as, by experience, it had been found that patriot activities proved most successful under the general direction, and in some cases, the personal leadership, of selected British Officers, though the men remained under the immediate control of their own leaders. With the progress of the campaign, certain patriot leaders displayed, more than once, powers of leadership which may well be employed in the future Ethiopian army.

This policy proved successful in the north and central Abyssinia, but was not so satisfactory in the area north of Neghelli and Javello owing to the generally disturbed state of this district, the Amhara-Galla problem, and the lack of outstanding leaders.

10. The Patriots proved most successful in harassing enemy lines of communication and in besieging isolated enemy garrisons. By carrying out these tasks, these Ethiopian forces caused the Italians considerable alarm and anxiety and lowered their morale. By this means they contained large numbers of the enemy away from the main scene of the operations.

Patriots have also excelled in following up an enemy withdrawal. This was very evident in the final phase after the crossing of the Omo, when Patriot forces operated ahead of our regular forces. In this respect their familiarity with, and speed across, country was used to the best advantage.

It was found that Patriots would fight with great courage and take great risks in certain circumstances, especially when following up a beaten enemy, but, as a rule, they were unsuccessful in direct attacks on fortified positions and disliked such actions. They were apt to be unreliable and difficult to control at night, and it was best to leave it to them to conduct such operations themselves. Finally, it was never safe to assume that a force of Patriots would take the field on two consecutive days at the same strength owing to food difficulties internal feuds and rivalries.

Administration.

11. Up to the capture of Addis Abeba the troops in the northern sector were being maintained by road from Berbera, a distance of 550 miles, and in the southern sector from Mogadiscio. The roads in the south were however rapidly deteriorating by reason of the rain, and the bridges at Dolo and Lugh Ferrandi were precarious on account of floods. It was therefore decided to maintain the

western portion of the Southern Sector from a railhead at Nanyuki in Kenya, in spite of the very long road L of C.

All the roads north from Mogadiscio were in a very bad way through wash-outs and mud, but it was still just possible to get a few wheeled vehicles through from Kenya.

12. In the Northern Sector every effort was made to get the railway from Diredaua into action. There were plenty of rolling stock and engines in Addis Abeba, but with the blowing of the Auasc Bridge these were cut off from the Diredaua section. The Auasc Railway Bridge had been of special girder construction borne on high piers, the track being 120 ft. above the water. Its replacement was impossible for a very long time. Work on a low level diversion was commenced though it was not expected to be ready until 10th July. Between Addis Abeba and Diredaua there were no other major demolitions on the railway. Six engines had been left in Diredaua but all had parts taken away or some other form of demolition carried out on them. Furthermore the machinery in the well fitted machine-shops had been treated in the same way. Nothing daunted, 38 Railway Construction Company set to work, and on 7th April had the first train running from Diredaua to the Auasc with 100 tons of supplies and stores. By getting spares from Addis Abeba and making others, by the end of May they had all six engines running at Diredaua and were able to run two trains a day to the Auasc. Here a road link had to be introduced to transport the stores to the other side of the river.

13. The disabilities of Berbera as a port were a cause of constant concern, and it was not before the end of May that a start could be made to build up a reserve. Up to that time the forces in the Northern Sector had been living hand to mouth. Meanwhile their ration strength had been steadily increasing, as had their petrol consumption. The latter had risen by the end of June to 45,000 gallons a day.

14. By the beginning of July some 30,000 prisoners had been evacuated, a matter of considerable intricacy in view of the slender transportation resources.

This evacuation entailed the formation of four staging camps between Addis Abeba and Berbera whence they were evacuated by sea to Mombasa as shipping became available.

In this connection the AOC at Aden rendered great assistance by forming a camp for 2,500 prisoners there. This camp was kept filled from Berbera and emptied by sea to Mombasa as shipping became available at Aden.

This enabled the camp at Berbera periodically to receive additional prisoners and permitted continuous evacuation to take place from the forward areas.

PART II.—OPERATIONS.

A. Operations of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions (6th April—3rd July, 1941).

(The Order of Battle of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions at this time is in Appendix "A".)

15. At the commencement of this period 11th (A) Division had 1st SA Brigade in Addis Abeba, 22nd EA Infantry Brigade with two battalions at Ponte Malcasa south of the Auasc River, and 23rd Nigerian Brigade back at Diredaua.

12th (A) Division had head of 21st EA Brigade at about Soroppa advancing north with great difficulty on account of the rains, 3rd GC Regiment were patrolling north from Neghelli to Uaddara, and also experiencing difficulty due to the weather but not to such a great extent. The 24th GC Brigade less 3rd GC Regiment were clearing up in Italian Somaliland. The important bridges at Dolo, Lugh Ferrandi and Melka Guba were being continually broken by the floods, the latter being the only one by which troops could be sent from one line of advance to the other, i.e., from the Iavello road to the Neghelli road and vice-versa. This was a great handicap as it eventually proved very difficult to send supporting arms from one Brigade Group to the other, a procedure which the shortage of guns etc. made very necessary.

25th EA Brigade (12th (A) Division) were undertaking operations against Maji with the object of handing it over to the Equatorial Corps in the Sudan when captured. It was thought that the capture of Maji would have a stabilising influence on the turbulent tribes of the Ilembe triangle.

16. The enemy Order of Battle south and west of Addis Abeba was as follows:—

Uaddara front	...	24th Division
Giabassire front	...	21st Division
Sciasciamanna	...	25th Division
Gardulla-Soddu	...	101st Division
Gimma-Bonga	...	22nd Division
Lechemti	} front	{ 26th Division
Ghimbi			{ 23rd Division

It should however be remembered that many of the units had been heavily engaged, and no reinforcements were available. The divisions were therefore considerably below strength. Nevertheless they were strong in guns (about 200 exclusive of AA), possessed armoured cars, and between 20 and 30 medium and light tanks.

17. My instructions to Commander 11th (A) Division were to attack Gimma as early as possible and to operate southwards from Ponte Malcasa against the tail of the column retreating south through Aselle under General de Simone, who had been commanding the Italian troops since the Giuba. I impressed on Major General Wetherall the importance of ensuring proper protection of Adama and Moggio on his L or C, which would have been very vulnerable to attack by a determined enemy.

A battalion of 1st SA Brigade with supporting arms was immediately despatched down the Gimma road, and steps were taken to move up 23rd Nigerian Brigade to relieve the remainder of 1st SA Brigade so that they could carry out the attack on Gimma.

18. On 11th April I received a cable from C-in-C, which has already been mentioned, to the effect that he considered it imperative for me to attack Dessie and open up the road north to the Sudan. I therefore countermanded the orders for the attack on Gimma and directed 1st SA Brigade Group on Dessie.

23rd Nigerian Brigade relieved 1st SA Brigade who had two battalions in Addis Abeba, and one on the Omo River where the Gimma road crossed it. The bridge at this point had been blown by the enemy.

1st SA Brigade commenced their march on Dessie on 13th April. The account of the operations carried out by the Brigade Group is given later.

19. It was now apparent that with only two brigades in the Adama-Addis Abeba area I could not expect to accomplish any great success against the enemy in Gallo-Sidamo from the north. It was known that a considerable force of the enemy in the Quoziam area on the Blue Nile had been cut off by our occupation of Addis Abeba, and west of that town, at Lechemti and Ghimbi, strong forces existed. Although the presence of the large number of Italian civilians in Addis Abeba was a cogent form of protection in itself, I could not leave the Fiche and Lechemti roads entirely open. It was therefore necessary for both local defence and internal security reasons to keep two battalions in Addis Abeba. 11th (A) Division was left therefore with only three battalions for operations southwards. One of these battalions, 3rd Nigerian Regiment, was located on the Omo with instructions to rouse local patriots and direct them against the rear of the Abalti position on the other side of the Omo River. 22nd EA Brigade with the remaining two battalions advanced southwards from Ponte Malcasa on Aselle and Cofole with the object of maintaining maximum pressure on Sciasciamanna in conjunction with the advance of 12th (A) Division northwards. My object at this time was to effect a junction of the two divisions on the Addis Abeba-Dalle road.

On 16th April the 22nd Brigade Group advanced successfully to Bocoggi taking some prisoners on the way, but here found that the road ceased to exist. As rain had already commenced falling it was decided to abandon the Aselle road and transfer the 22nd Brigade effort to the Moggo-Adamitullo road where it was hoped the going was better. Steps were taken to repair the bridges blown by the enemy on that road, and by 24th April 22nd Brigade were advancing south of Ponte Machi.

20. About this time I received information that a mechanised enemy column of a brigade group with tanks, armoured cars and six batteries, was assembling near Sciasciamanna under General Bertello with the avowed intention of attacking the L. of C. at Noggio. Considerable M.T. movement at night with headlights had been seen on the roads, and heavy A.A. fire was encountered by our aeroplanes whenever they approached the woods north of Sciasciamanna. These woods were bombed by the Air Force with what was known afterwards as considerable effect. It was considered advisable until the situation was cleared up to arrest the southward movement and be ready to occupy a defensive position between the Lakes Lagana and Algato. Nevertheless a small column operating west of Lake Algato towards an enemy position at Ficche continued with its attack, captured the position, and took 8 guns and 100 prisoners. It seems probable that this small attack upset the enemy's plans for counter-attack as the only northward movement of the enemy appeared to be carried out by a few tanks which advanced up the road from Sciasciamanna as far as the Auada River and then returned; no counter-attack materialised.

21. Meanwhile 12th (A) Division had concentrated the whole Gold Coast Brigade on the Neghelli road and both this Brigade and 21st Brigade on the Iavello road were advancing slowly northwards. Two positions on these roads at Uaddara and Giabassire respectively had been responsible for holding up the Italians

in the Abyssinian war for nearly a year. Both these positions had been prepared by the Italians a long time previously and were strongly held and fortified.

22. 24th Gold Coast Brigade commenced their initial moves for the attack on the Uaddara position on 19th April and finally captured it on 10th May. The country in that area is precipitous, intersected with deep ravines and covered with impenetrable forest. During the period up to 2nd May extensive patrolling was carried out in the thick bush to determine the enemy's strength and to locate his flanks. The enemy's position was found to extend to a depth of 5 miles on either side of the road. The nature of the country almost entirely precluded the use of A.F.V.s. The position was held mainly by Eritreans who, as it proved, had apparently not been shaken as were the other Colonial troops. The conditions of wet and mud were appalling and the Gold Coast troops were feeling the cold. In spite of all these difficulties the attack was begun on 3rd May when the 2nd Gold Coast Regiment made a wide flanking march cutting their way through the belts of thick forest with their pangas. On 4th May 1st Gold Coast Regiment supported by artillery attacked two prominent hills which were strongly held by the enemy. A.F.V.s were sent up an old Abyssinian track to support the flank attack by 2nd Gold Coast Regiment but could make little progress. Later in the afternoon 2nd Gold Coast Regiment came in on the enemy's left rear and by 5th May had cut the road behind the position. The enemy however still held his main positions and it was not until 10th May that he was finally driven from them on the two hills. In capturing this very formidable position the determination shown by the Gold Coast troops sustained the fighting reputation which they had gained in the first phase of the campaign.

23. During this period 21st E.A. Brigade on the Iavallo road was advancing towards Giabassire. On 5th and 6th May they attacked with success the forward position at Budagamo and continued their march under almost impossible road conditions.

It must be remembered that the whole of the operations of 12th (A) Division round Neghelli and Iavello were being carried out during the period of the heavy rains of which the peak period in that area is the month of April. As the advance of 12th (A) Division proceeded the rains proceeded with them; the peak period in the Addis Abeba area is August, and month by month the volume of rain in this area was increasing while decreasing in the south. I had been told before leaving Kenya that no operations could be carried out in Southern Abyssinia after March. Yet operations were in fact undertaken right up to the present time (July). It would be idle to pretend that the rains were not the greatest hindrance, but the conditions were conquered by grit and determination, and in this connection I particularly wish to mention the march of 21st E.A. Brigade over practically non-existent roads. Brigadier A. McD. Ritchie, D.S.O., was never daunted and his cheerful tenacity was echoed right through his Brigade. To the columns in the north I had added caterpillar tractors, which had been captured, carried in lorries, to salvage vehicles which got stuck, but I was unable at that period to get them round to 12th (A) Division.

24. About this time I received a wire from the C.-in-C. suggesting that operations should now cease against the Italians left in Italian East Africa as there appeared little chance of liquidating them before the heavy rains. I was asked for minimum garrisons on the defensive, and told to be prepared to release everything else for Egypt. I replied to the effect that I was extremely anxious to clear the Neghelli-Addis Abeba road of the enemy so as to remove all threat to Moggio and Adama, which I considered very vulnerable points on my L. of C., and to get a through road to Kenya. That if General Wavell wished it I would put a term to the operations. The C.-in-C. wired back I could have until the end of May.

25. For the whole of this period 2nd S.A. Brigade had been waiting for shipping and I had very regretfully been unable to use these troops. I now pressed Middle East to give me the earliest date by which shipping could arrive, to which question 3rd June was given in reply. On 21st and 29th April respectively I therefore decided to place 1st Natal Mounted Rifles and 1st Field Force Battalion from this brigade under General Wetherall with instructions that they would have to be released on 27th May.

26. Meanwhile 12th (A) Division had captured Alge and the Uaddara position, and Bertello's threat had not materialised, so I instructed General Wetherall to continue his advance southwards, capture Sciasciamanna, and join forces with the 12th (A) Division. If this attack was successful there appeared every prospect that the considerable enemy forces on the two roads leading south from Dalle would be trapped.

His plan was to advance with one battalion west of the lakes, by a track running through Bubissa to cut the Sciasciamanna-Soddu road, while another column of two battalions advanced direct on Sciasciamanna across the Auada and Dadaba Rivers.

27. The Air Force had nullified the enemy air opposition after attacks on Dessie aerodrome on 6th April and on Gimma aerodrome on 10th April, and as the aircraft were therefore available I arranged with Air Headquarters for the formation of a close support group in order to give the divisional Commanders additional air support for their operations. During the advance of the 1st S.A. Brigade towards Dessie 4 Hartbees and 4 Gladiator aircraft had been put under the operational command of the Brigade Commander and the value of their close support had been proved. Accordingly a Close Support Group consisting of two flights of Battle bombers, one flight of Gladiator fighters and two flights of Hartbees co-operation aircraft, was formed on 20th May and put under command of 11th (A) Division.

This arrangement worked with considerable success as the close support group could be stationed on an advanced landing ground in close proximity to the advanced divisional headquarters. Considerable time saving was effected by having the bombers and fighters standing by ready to take-off to attack targets located by the army co-operation aircraft. With the remnants of the Italian divisions attempting to escape across country the quick results thereby achieved were invaluable, especially in the way in which offensive action could be taken against

any enemy A.F.V.s located either from the air or by the ground troops.

The heavy bombers and Hurricanes were stationed in Addis Abeba during the whole period of these operations and in spite of very bad flying conditions they were used extensively to attack targets farther afield and to drop pamphlets.

28. On 11th May the 5th K.A.R. advancing west of the lakes captured Bubissa, taking some prisoners and guns, but were counter-attacked by six medium and three light tanks and a Banda group. The C.O. decided that he would be unable to hold the position and conducted an orderly withdrawal behind the Gidu. The armoured cars covered the withdrawal and acted as a decoy to the enemy tanks. Unfortunately three armoured cars got bogged following the infantry over soft ground and had to be abandoned after all weapons, etc., had been removed. (In point of fact all these armoured cars were eventually recaptured.) Meanwhile on 13th May 1 N.M.R. attacked the positions covering Sciasciamanna. This energetic attack was completely successful and resulted in the capture of 800 prisoners, two batteries of artillery and nine tanks. The advance was continued to Sciasciamanna which was entered on 14th May, and to Dalle which was occupied on 17th May. A further 650 prisoners, some guns and armoured cars were captured.

29. The enemy now appeared to be in a state of great confusion. Their 21st Colonial Division was on the road between Alghe and Dilla, and the 24th Colonial Division between Afrara and Hula, and it seemed that with the occupation of Dalle these two divisions were completely cut off. Our patrols from 12th (A) Division operating northwards towards the very strong Giabassire position north of Alghe found it abandoned, with wounded and heavy guns left behind.

30. I therefore arranged to meet Commanders of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions at the former's Headquarters near Alatu on 17th May, to concert further plans.

At this time I was of opinion that if I occupied Gimma very little more resistance would be made in the Galla Sidamo. Amba Alagi had fallen and the Viceroy was captured. The Supreme Command had been taken over by General Gazzera who had his Headquarters at Gimma which was also the seat of Government. The women and children there, amounting to 2,000, would no doubt be an added embarrassment but were not a very great addition to the large numbers already in our hands. It appeared to me that the great military and political advantages to be gained from the final liquidation of the enemy in Italian East Africa far outweighed any embarrassment the added civilians and prisoners would give us. Finally there appeared every likelihood of cutting off or destroying four of the six enemy divisions left in the Galla Sidamo by the occupation of Soddu, and therefore Gimma could not be very strongly defended. I placed this point of view before the C.-in-C. concurred.

It was my plan therefore to stage an attack towards Gimma as soon as possible. In order, however, to make the Neghelli-Addis Abeba road absolutely secure, and to complete the cutting off of the enemy 21st, 24th and 101st Divisions, I considered that Soddu should be my immediate objective. This place stood at

important road junctions which would preclude any enemy movement either north or east against my forces except from Gimma itself.

I had hoped to carry out this attack with a formation of 12th (A) Division and to transfer the pressure of 11th (A) Division from the Sciasciamanna area to the all-weather Addis Abeba-Gimma road where 3rd Nigeria Regiment was holding the left bank of the River Omo, so that Gimma could be attacked from two directions. 12th (A) Division had however been experiencing very heavy rain all over their L. of C., and the advances they had been making against very strong positions had of necessity been slow. I could not count on getting them up quickly. The enemy were clearly straining every nerve to form a defensive front east of Soddu, and I considered therefore that I must attack them as soon as possible and not give them time to do so. I therefore ordered 11th (A) Division to advance on Soddu as soon as possible. I told General Godwin Austen, however, that he was to make every effort to concentrate one of his brigades as soon as possible with the object of relieving 11th (A) Division, either at Soddu if it was captured, or to continue the attack against it if it were not. It was my intention only to leave one brigade of 12th (A) Division and all the supporting arms in the north and to withdraw the remainder to the Kenya frontier so as to ease the supply situation, and release more transport for Egypt.

31. The enemy 21st and 24th Divisions were still continuing their weary march northwards to Dalle which, it will be recalled, was in our hands. The only road by which withdrawal in M.T. could take place branched left from the Uondo-Sciasciamanna road some 10 miles north of Dalle. If this road could not be opened up the only alternative was for these divisions to abandon their equipment and take to mule tracks. Contact had been made with the rear of 24th Division by the 1st Gold Coast Regiment which was leading the eastern column of 12th (A) Division, and the Brigade Commander and the greater part of the rear Brigade was captured at Hula. The 21st E.A. Brigade had now reached a stage where it was impossible to advance further with M.T. owing to the state of the roads. 1/2 K.A.R. was therefore placed on an improvised pack basis and continued the advance northwards on foot with the object of driving 21st Division into the hands of the South Africans at Dalle. The remaining two battalions of 21st Brigade returned to Iavello.

32. General Gazzera was issuing a constant flow of orders to 21st and 24th Divisions to attack our forces at Dalle who, he thought, were in very small numbers. He was obviously quite out of the picture as to the real state of affairs. Desertions of Colonial troops were becoming wholesale, and it was only a short time after this that, having become aware of the true state of affairs, Gazzera issued an order that only nationals were to continue the retreat, and all Colonial troops were to be abandoned. I cannot say I was enamoured of the internal security prospect with which I was almost certainly to be faced in the future as the result of this order.

33. 11th (A) Division had now available the 22nd E.A. Brigade in which 1/1 K.A.R. (who were still on L. of C. duties north of

Mogadiscio) were replaced by 2nd Nigeria Regiment from Addis Abeba. 1 N.M.R. and 1 F.F. Battalion were directly under command of the division.

The Commander 11th (A) Division therefore decided to form a defensive flank in the Dalle area with the two South African battalions, and to use the 22nd E.A. Brigade to carry out the attack on Soddu. The enemy were known to be organising a defensive position west of the River Billate, which was crossed by the Soddu road at Colito.

34. On 19th May Colito was captured by the 2nd Nigeria Regiment and a bridgehead established by 1/6 K.A.R. The bridge was not completed until 21st May but the attack on the main position was carried out by 1/6 K.A.R. on 19th May. This action was distinguished by the way in which an enemy counter-attack, which was supported by M.II medium and light tanks and armoured cars, was broken up before it properly materialised. In spite of having no anti-tank guns and only anti-tank rifles on a very reduced scale, the native troops destroyed the counter-attack with great loss to the enemy, and as a result of a most dashing charge, captured a number of prisoners and tanks. One medium tank was captured single-handed by a British N.C.O. who climbed on to the back of the tank, opened the top of the turret and killed all the crew with his revolver. The other tanks then turned tail, presumably because, as it was afterwards discovered, their commander was killed in the captured tank.

35. As a result of this action the defence of Soddu crumbled and with only slight opposition the town was occupied on 22nd May. The delay in occupation was due to the time taken in repairing the demolitions left behind by the enemy.

Between the capture of Soddu and the start of the Battle of the Omo, by the actions of Friche and Sciasciamanna, 12,852 prisoners, 42 guns, 23 A.F.Vs, including 5 Medium Tanks, were captured, including the Divisional Commanders and the greater part of 21st, 25th and 101st Divisions. General Pralormo, with the remnants of 24th Division, took to the bush, having abandoned most of his equipment.

36. It was now necessary for me to make a plan for further operations towards Gimma, and I ordered the Commanders of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions to meet me at Alatu on 24th May. Here Commander 12th (A) Division reported to me the very great difficulties he was encountering due to the rain and the roads. It was quite apparent that I would be unable to use either of his formations to attack towards Gimma from the south as I had hoped to do. I found at the most that the 24th G. C. Brigade of the 12th (A) Division could concentrate in the Dalle-Soddu area soon and could relieve 11th (A) Division of all garrison duties, and protect its rear. This would release the two South African battalions to proceed to Berbera for embarkation, and would free the whole of 22nd E.A. Brigade for the further advance. In order to enable an advance also to be made on the Addis Abeba-Gimma road, where the enemy were holding a position at Abalti south-west of the Omo, I arranged to transfer the Nigerian Brigade to this front. To do this I relieved the 1st Nigeria Regiment in Addis Abeba by garrison troops and moved up 1/1 K.A.R. which had in the meantime been similarly relieved. As time was all important so

that the enemy could not strengthen his defences on the unexpected line of attack from the south, I was unable to sort out the battalions and return 2nd Nigerian Regiment which was with 22nd E.A. Brigade, back to the Nigerian Brigade. I therefore sent 1/1 K.A.R. to the Nigerian Brigade who were to attack Abalti.

37. It should be noted here that administrative limitations in connection with transport and the port of Berbera, precluded the use of more than two brigades for operations beyond Addis Abeba. The L. of C. from Kenya through Javello and Neghelli was in a most precarious condition due to rain, and I could not hope for any easing of the administrative problem from this direction.

38. I impressed on General Wetherall the necessity for speed and that the time factor must take precedence of all other considerations. The period of heavy rains was getting nearer and I was most anxious to liquidate the enemy in the Galla Sidamo before they took place.

The new line of advance towards Gimma opened by the capture of Soddu crossed the River Omo near Sciola. This river was a considerable obstacle, 450 feet wide, and required special bridging equipment. Provision had been made for this equipment for the crossing at Abalti on the Addis Abeba-Gimma road but there was insufficient available forward of Berbera for the second crossing at Sciola. It should be remembered that due to the long road link on the L. of C. from Berbera to Diredaau, priorities for stores and material had to be worked out very carefully so that the most efficient use could be made of the limited transport available. Two crossings of the Omo had not been foreseen and therefore the transport to move more bridging forward had not been made available. This fact unfortunately caused some delay in attacking the enemy position on the Omo south of Gimma. The number of bridges which had been constructed up to this time was 70 and captured or locally made material was beginning to run short.

39. My intention now was for whichever of the two brigades could get across the Omo first to advance and attack the enemy facing the other brigade in the rear. E.g. if 22nd E.A. Brigade succeeded in reaching the Gimma-Addis Abeba road first they were to turn right towards Addis Abeba and not left on Gimma.

At this time, most unfortunately, the Omo came down in flood. Although it was a wide river, in normal times it could be waded in many places, but with the floods it was 6 feet deep with a 6 knot current. This again delayed matters considerably.

So both the Nigerian Brigade at Abalti in the north, and the 22nd Brigade south of Gimma were faced with a considerable problem. In the south the enemy were holding, on both banks, the foot-bridge which crossed the river where the road met it. A gallant attempt was made to rush this foot bridge but was repulsed with some loss of life. The Brigadier therefore decided on crossing with the few assault boats available, some three miles south of the foot-bridge. On 2nd June three platoons of 5th K.A.R. were able to get across, and to establish a precarious bridgehead. In spite of heavy shelling and the fact that no means existed for

rapid reinforcement, this party held on for three days during the whole slow process of getting 5th K.A.R. across the river in the few assault boats available. During this period a platoon of 1/3 K.A.R. (MGs) succeeded in working their way forward and in bringing the enemy 105 mm. gun batteries under M.G. fire. Great difficulties were being experienced in the construction of pontoon ferries and no vehicles had been got over.

In spite of this and the fact that they were out of range of artillery support, 5th K.A.R. executed a wide turning movement northwards, and succeeded, though greatly exhausted, in reaching the road north of the foot-bridge. The enemy Blackshirts counter-attacked several times during this operation, but were beaten off with great loss.

To attack with one battalion without A.F.Vs. or transport, with the river at its back and no means of rapid reinforcement or artillery support, was without doubt taking a considerable risk. Brigadier Fowkes had, however, already been delayed by demolitions and mud and, recognising the need for speed, gladly and justifiably took the risk and met with great success.

40. In the north at the Abalti crossing it had been intended to cross on the night of 1st June. Our troops had been on this position for some time, much reconnaissance had been carried out and thought given to the plans for crossing the river. Even without the flooded river the operation was difficult. All possible places where bridging could be carried out were under direct observation of the enemy from the ground rising up to the Abalti escarpment 9,000 yards back, as were the roads leading up to it. Off the roads the country was broken and steep and could only be covered on foot.

It was planned to cross the river at a point facing the broken and very steep ground south of the road as all information was to the effect that the enemy did not consider this was feasible and had no important defences in that area. A few nights previously a rope was put across the river, and on the night of 30/31st May the 3rd Nigeria Regiment moved into concealment in the bush near where the rope was in position. Here again it would not be possible to put vehicles across for some time and all troops going over had to be self-contained until a ferry could be built. It was estimated that the bridge would take six days to build. (It eventually took 18 days.)

The first attempt to cross was made on the night of 31st May/1st June but unfortunately the current at the place chosen was found to be too swift and the attempt proved abortive. After further reconnaissance another spot was chosen and the attempt made again on the night of 4/5th June. On this occasion the attack was completely successful. 3rd Nigeria Regiment advanced on foot some 2,000 yards and then swung right cutting off the enemy's defences on the river. 1/1 K.A.R., crossing at the same place, advanced straight on and were able to reach the spot where the road climbed the escarpment cliff 9,000 yards back, located the wires for two major demolitions, cut them, and proceeded to take Abalti. The enemy, sure of our inability to cross the river, were completely taken by surprise. A F.O.O. was captured asleep in his O.P. and staff cars containing officers from Gimma coming forward

to ascertain the situation, motored unwittingly into the middle of our troops. In the two crossings of the Omo 3,900 prisoners and 20 guns were taken.

41. It was now apparent that the enemy forces east and south of Gimma had been totally defeated and that Gimma could be taken at any time. The defeated enemy were withdrawing north of Gimma. South-west of Gimma at Bonga was still the 22nd Division although I had information that this Division was withdrawing to Bedelle across country. North of Gimma the 23rd and 26th Divisions were in the Lechemti-Ghimbi area under De Simone. The Lechemti area had been considerably harassed by patriots and there were indications that De Simone thought he was too strung-out and was contemplating withdrawal behind the Didessa at Ghimbi and Bedelle. There was a good motorable road from Addis Abeba to Lechemti. Furthermore the occupation of Gimma at this stage would cause me some embarrassment in view of the large number of civilians there. I therefore decided to transfer the main weight of attack as soon as possible along the Lechemti road, with the object of once more cutting the enemy forces in two and dealing with each portion separately. It was essential to get 22nd Brigade on to a good line of supply as soon as possible. The road through Sciasciamanna and Soddu was in an execrable state and with the increasing rain it was feared might become impassable altogether. Moreover permanent bridging of the Omo on this road would have been extremely difficult. 22nd E.A. Brigade was therefore directed on to the Gimma-Addis Abeba road to the point where it crossed the Little Ghibbie so that its line of supply could be down this road, and 23rd Brigade was ordered to send light forces forward from Abalti to clear the road as far as this point and establish contact with the 22nd E.A. Brigade. Meanwhile the process of transferring 23rd Nigerian Brigade and the bulk of the artillery to the Lechemti Road was begun, and by the evening of 9th June 3rd Nigeria Regiment had arrived at Ambo being followed by the remainder of the brigade and the artillery.

42. I had been quite certain that as soon as we came within measurable distance of Gimma the enemy would make an attempt to hand the town over to us and was equally certain I would not take it over unless and until I required it for the continuance of operations against the enemy forces. I therefore prepared a message for General Gazzera, and held it ready either to drop from the air or hand over to any white flag which might appear. Sure enough, on 9th June Gimma wireless station broadcast a request for us to listen in, and sent over a message declaring Gimma an open town and saying that the town would be handed over to us and representatives would be sent out to meet our forces on the Little Ghibbie. I merely replied that I would hand the representative a message. This was done on 10th June when the following message was handed over.

" To His Excellency General Gazzera.

From Lieut. General Sir Alan Cunningham, General Officer Commanding East Africa Force.

I have to inform you that until all Italian Forces within reach of my troops lay

down their arms, none of the British troops under my command will enter Gimma unless I order them to do so to continue the fight against the Italian armed forces.

In accordance with my previous warning to His Royal Highness di Savoia, I am quite unable to accept any responsibility for the safety of your nationals in Gimma."

Furthermore I instructed 11th (A) Division that until it became an operational necessity, Gimma should only be entered if it appeared that the women and children were in real danger from lawless native elements.

43. Another broadcast message was received from Gimma which is so indicative of the anxious state of mind of the enemy that it is given here in full.

" Italian column commanded by General Pralormo near Kindo on the river Bottego is in desperate condition because attacked by rebels. We beg the English H.Q. to help that column. We will be grateful. Commander of the city of Gimma General Bisson Milio."

General Pralormo was the commander of 24th Division, the elements of which took to the bush after being cut off at Dalle. He had been contacted on the Omo south of Soddu by a few of our armoured cars and called on to surrender. This he had refused to do as he stated we had insufficient forces. He had subsequently failed to cross the river Omo and was repeatedly attacked by patriots. The Gold Coast Brigade brought him in to Soddu with the remnants of his forces on 17th June.

44. Meanwhile General Bisson who had been left by Gazzera in charge of the Gimma area was in constant touch with Brigadier Fowkes of 22nd E.A. Brigade at the Little Ghibbie. On 14th June I received an answer from Gazzera to my message, in which he stated at considerable length that he had left General Bisson to negotiate and that outrages against the civil population would be the responsibility of the British. To this I replied curtly that there was no military or political advantage to me in the occupation of Gimma for the present, and I accepted no responsibility for the safety of the city. I also told Brigadier Fowkes that I would be satisfied with the surrender of all troops south of Mendi, which was in fact the whole of the Italian Southern Command.

45. Previous to the advance towards Gimma, patriots under the Chief Gerasu Duke with British Officers had been instructed to invest the city. This they had done with great success, but in the process the patriot forces had been swelled to some 12,000, not by true patriots but by many lawless elements who had attached themselves to the force in the hope of loot when the city fell. On 15th June it appeared that Gerasu Duke was not in a position to control this force and Brigadier Fowkes told me he was concerned lest the city should be overrun, which he stated could happen in a few hours, before he could get forces into it to keep order. I therefore asked the Emperor to send down his representatives to divert the patriots to fighting the Italian forces, leaving only sufficient to maintain the pressure on Gimma. On 17th June the Emperor's representatives arrived on the spot, but it was reported to me that they had failed in their task. I now received information that Gazzera, who had proceeded to Bedelle some

time previously, had washed his hands of Gimma and was even resenting Bisson's references to him. Furthermore, the advance of the Nigerian Brigade along the Lechemti road was progressing, the enemy rear-guard left east of the Didessa amounting to some 400 white troops had been all either killed or captured, and the attack on the Didessa position would be carried out in a few days time. Also all indications showed that the enemy had given up hope of holding the Didessa and intended to withdraw all their troops to the Dembidollo-Gore area. I therefore decided that no further advantage was to be gained by remaining outside Gimma, more particularly as it was now necessary to commence an advance northwards through Gimma in conjunction with the operations being carried out against Ghimbi, to prevent, as far as possible, the withdrawal of the enemy forces on the Bedelle-Dembi front. I therefore ordered the occupation of Gimma as part of a general advance northwards through that town. It was occupied without incident by 22nd E.A. Brigade on 21st June.

The total number of prisoners taken in the Gimma area was 12,000 Italians and 3,000 Africans. Generals Scala, Tissi, Bisson and Maynardi and eight Brigade Commanders were among the captured.

46. The enemy situation at this time was that 22nd Division which had been at Bonga and had had orders to go to Dembi on foot, were now diverted to Gore. The 23rd Division was being withdrawn from Mendi to move southwards to the Dembidollo area, and 26th Division had some elements behind the Didessa at Ghimbi and some at Bedelle, but were about to withdraw into the Lubdo area.

47. The situation which now confronted us was that the rains were increasing in intensity and the tracks leading on from the Didessa were extremely unreliable and narrow. On the Lechemti, or main front, one-way traffic had to be instituted for many miles.

48. On the other hand the enemy were gradually being reduced in numbers. A very successful action by the patriots under Fitaurari Misfin resulted in the occupation of Bedelle on 20th June yielding a considerable number of prisoners and much equipment.

49. On 27th June 1/1 K.A.R. attacked Dembi and captured General Nam and 700 prisoners.

West of Gimma General Bertello with a small force gave himself up to 22nd E.A. Brigade on 28th June thus closing his long flight from British Somaliland.

50. There could therefore only remain to General Gazzera some 2,000 nationals and 4,000 Colonial troops. The latter, however, were now so unreliable that there was no need to consider them.

By the end of June it became apparent that the enemy had given up all hope of holding out anywhere except in the Dembidollo area. Gore and Bure were occupied by patriots and Pialorsi with 22nd Division was therefore cut off.

In view of the very few enemy left and the scattered nature of his forces retiring on Dembidollo, I impressed on the Emperor that the greatest chance of reaching a speedy conclusion on the Galla Sidamo front lay with the patriots, and urged him to spur them to

greater efforts. As far as my troops were concerned I was sure, if only they could come up to the enemy, no further fighting would be required to cause the enemy to give in.

I was convinced that the forces in Galla Sidamo were on their last legs, my only fear being that they might maroon themselves in the mud and make it impossible for our troops to reach them. My information was to the effect that movement anywhere off the permanent roads, which ended at Lechemti and Gimma, was impossible after the middle of July when it was said that even the villagers shut themselves up in their villages and were unable to move out until September when the heavy rains finished.

51. On 3rd July, however, my anxiety on this score was ended, as General Gazzera broadcast a message to Addis Abeba that he was sending a car-load of delegates down the Dembidollo-Gambela road to negotiate the surrender of all troops in the Galla Sidamo.

52. The only Italians now left in the area for which I was responsible were the very inconsiderable party under Raugei, 600 Italians and some Banda, marooned on the northern borders of French Somaliland. The fiery Danakhils, who inhabited that area and who had hitherto been friendly to him, had turned against him and were attacking him. He was in desperate straits for supplies and eventually surrendered in two parties on 8th and 11th July.

53. The surrender of the Supreme Commander, General Gazzera, the whole of the province of Galla Sidamo and Raugei's column west of Assab, marked the elimination of all Italian troops in the area for which I was responsible and the conclusion of the campaign waged by East Africa Force which had started on 11th February.

It seems worth mentioning, in view of the many enemy claims that they were overwhelmed by superior numbers, that at no time were more than three brigade groups plus two battalions engaged in operations against the 40,000 enemy infantry and militia in the Galla Sidamo, where as at the commencement of these operations the enemy had five times as many guns as we had. After the fall of Sciascamanna only two brigade groups were used.

B. Operations of 1st S.A. Brigade.

(13th April—8th May, 1941.)

(Order of Battle as in Appendix "A".)

54. On 13th April 1st S.A. Brigade Group left Addis Abeba and in spite of extensive demolitions one mile beyond the Mussolini tunnel some 100 miles north of Addis Abeba, were able to occupy Debre' Sina with 1st D.E.O.R. on 14th April. This was done after slight enemy opposition had been overcome, while work on the road demolitions continued. On 16th April the advance continued from Debre' Sina and after encountering minor road blocks the leading troops on the 17th reached the southern approaches of the Combolcia Pass, where they came under enemy shell-fire.

55. It was soon apparent that the brigade was in contact with a strong enemy position well supported by artillery and sited in most difficult country. The enemy shelling was heavy and accurate, and in addition to a number of

casualties two of our 18 pdr. guns were damaged.

The road to Combolcia which ran over a series of saddles with steep mountainous country on either side, could be seen to be deliberately blocked by a mass of enemy vehicles. To the west of the road the ground was open and marshy and impassable to vehicles, but on the eastern side where there was a parallel valley a mile or two away, there was promise of a possible covered approach. The leading companies of the 1st D.E.O.R. were therefore ordered to seize commanding features on that side.

The battle then resolved itself into three phases, which altogether occupied five days, a long and difficult approach, the attack, and the hurried flight of the enemy.

56. On 18th April the 1st Duke of Edinburgh's Own Rifles were ordered to move along the high ground to the east of the road with 1st Transvaal, Scottish operating on the lower slopes and 1st Royal Natal Carbineers in reserve. Patriots under Lieut. A. G. S. Campbell were directed round both flanks of the enemy's position to locate the extent of his position and to harry his rear, and if possible to get astride his L. of C. Enemy artillery interfered considerably with these movements. On the afternoon of the 19th April the Italians launched a strong counter-attack on the right flank of 1st D.E.O.R. which was beaten off with heavy loss to the enemy.

Progress continued to be slow in the mountainous country where all weapons, supplies and water had to be carried by hand, and where signal communications were very difficult. On the night of 20/21st April 1st R.N.C. relieved 1st D.E.O.R. who had then been four days and nights in the mountains.

The steady pressure of our advance had caused a continual thin stream of prisoners and deserters, which undoubtedly lowered the enemy's morale, but all reports showed that his main position was held by at least 2,000 Europeans, apart from African troops.

Meanwhile Campbell's scouts had been doing valuable work in occupying outlying features and harrying the enemy's flanks, and our artillery had moved into more concealed positions and gradually established a superiority of fire.

57. On 22nd April the assault was made by 1st R.N.C. who seized the main enemy position, while the 1st T.S. swept up enemy opposition on the lower slopes down the road. About 1430 hours the enemy were in flight, but road-blocks and the difficulties of the country, no less than the physical strain on the infantry of the preceding days prevented any effective pursuit. A large number of prisoners and material were taken including 8 medium, 12 naval, 4 field, 3 light and 4 A.A. guns.

58. On 23rd April the extensive road-blocks were cleared except for a small one which was covered by accurate enemy artillery fire. The artillery was brought forward into action and the D.E.O.R. who were then once more in the van, moved forward across country, finally occupying on the morning of 26th April features which overlooked Combolcia.

The road-block having been removed under cover of darkness during the night 25/26th April, 1st T.S. moved straight on to Combolcia where a considerable number of prisoners and material were captured.

59. 1st T.S. then continued the advance on to Dessie and found 46 lorries and 6 medium guns abandoned on the road; these evidently having been cut off by enemy demolitions which had been blown prematurely.

While work on the demolitions was proceeding, enemy artillery fire opened from Dessie. Our own artillery was brought into action and the infantry were deployed into the hills to engage enemy infantry now appearing on the mountain tops.

60. However, soon after our medium artillery opened fire, a deputation came from Dessie to discuss terms. Unconditional surrender was demanded and given, and 1st T.S. moved forward into the town in enemy transport, as its own transport was stopped by a destroyed bridge, the passage over which was not made good until 30th April.

The garrison of Dessie consisted of 5,000 Italians and 3,000 native troops; the area was full of guns, M.G., ammunition and war material of all sorts. Altogether in the Combolcia-Dessie engagement 52 guns were captured.

The battle of the Combolcia Pass and the capture of Dessie was a considerable victory. It was evident from the defensive positions and the number of guns captured that the Italians were determined to make a strong resistance. At Combolcia the positions were well dug and heavily wired, and Dessie itself was prepared for all round defence, there being seventeen localities, supported by seven forts and numerous strong points.

61. On 30th April 1st R.N.C. with supporting arms continued the advance to the north, while the remainder of the brigade continued to clear up Dessie and patrol along the roads to Gondar and Assab. On 1st May 1st R.N.C. occupied Waldia taking 200 prisoners, but a demolished tunnel on the road held up further advance for three days. In the meantime Campbell's scouts were directed forward on to Alomata and Quoram. On 5th May Alomata was occupied and some prisoners including two Brigade Commanders were captured; but road blocks 8 miles to the north prevented a further advance until 7th May.

62. On 7th May the remainder of 1st S.A. Brigade Group, less one company of 1st D.E.O.R. and some armoured cars, which were left to garrison Dessie, moved forward, and on arrival at Alomata on 8th May I placed them under command of Kaid for operations against Amba Alagi from the south, which place was then being attacked by him from the north.

C. Operations against Maraventano's Column. (4th April—22nd May, 1941.)

63. On the 4th April the Italians evacuated Debra Marcos. The garrison of Debra Marcos had apparently received orders to withdraw to Dessie, but the occupation of Addis Abeba by our troops on 6th April deprived them of the use of the only known motorable road between Debra Marcos and Dessie. A column of some 14,000 including 700 civilians, under the command of Colonel Maraventano withdrew across the Blue Nile at Safartak and was pursued by one weak company of the Frontier Battalion, Sudan Defence Force, as far as Cuiu near Ficche. On the 8th April this column was located at Quoziyam when they were effectively bombed and machine-gunned by our aircraft.

After further bombing on 23rd April Maraventano abandoned his M.T. and took to the hills. The Frontier Battalion Company which had now been reinforced by portions of two Operational Centres and a platoon of the 2nd Ethiopian Battalion (a total strength of 150 all ranks) again took up the pursuit. Maraventano's column, although reduced by desertions to about 8,000 combatants, made towards Addis Dera presumably with the object of eventually reaching Dessie.

Dessie, however, fell on 26th April to the 1st S.A. Brigade and it then appeared likely that Maraventano would surrender, but in spite of being harassed by his pursuers, hampered by the lack of transport and food, and burdened with many sick and wounded, he stubbornly continued his arduous trek towards Uorro Ilu where he apparently decided to remain as he considered the country suitable for defence and shelter, and food was available. On 14th May, however, there were indications that Maraventano was again on the move, this time in the direction of Debre Sina (Agibar). A small force was sent off at speed to take and hold the fort at Uoghidi which commanded the enemy line of retreat. This fort was successfully occupied and its Banda garrison joined our forces. On 17th May our main force had followed up and gained contact with the enemy rearguard traveling over extremely difficult country.

64. On 18th May the enemy column having deployed on a plateau, Colonel O. C. Wingate, D.S.O., Commander of the Sudan and patriot forces, decided to attack wherever possible, and proceeded to do so. These attacks were continued on the 19th and on the 20th, when the Italians were seen to be withdrawing. Once more a general advance of the patriot forces was ordered. A running fight ensued, the patriots fighting with great courage and inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

Maraventano's column, which had by now been reduced to about 7,000, found their retreat to Debre Sina cut off by our occupation of the fort at Uoghidi and so deployed and took up a defensive position in the Borena area. Opposing him were some 1,000 patriots with a further 500 patriots and 37 Sudanese in reserve, but Maraventano still refused to surrender.

Finally, on 22nd May, after being told that he would be attacked unceasingly, Maraventano capitulated and his force was escorted back to Ficche and handed over to the 11th (A) Division. So ended what must have been for the whole of his column an exhausting and desperate flight through mountainous country full of hostile Ethiopians.

D.—Internal Security and Mopping Up Operations in North East Somaliland.

(20th April—21st May, 1941.)

65. These operations, carried out in north-east Somaliland, resulted in the clearing of that part of the country of all Italian posts, the re-establishment of British control in the Mijertein, and the re-commissioning of the lighthouse of Cape Guardafui, which the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, required.

66. On 20th April, a column under the command of Major G. R. Musgrave, consisting of a company of Aden G(R) troops and a section of R.A.F. armoured cars, also from Aden, left Burao in hired transport. Accompanying the

column was the Senior Political Officer of British Somaliland. Moving by way of Durukhsi and Bohodle, the column reached Garoe on 24th April where the post was handed over by the Italian Residente. The column reached Gardo on the 28th April and found it evacuated by the Italians.

The arrival of the column at Gardo, combined with the movement of a police patrol from Burao to Erigavo and Buran, did little, however, to stop the raiding instigated by dispersed Italian Banda, which was being carried on in the Mijertein and into British territory as far as Adad, and it was not until a detachment of the resuscitated Somaliland Camel Corps engaged a party of raiders at Karamam Plain on 7th May, that the raiders began to show signs of withdrawing from British Somaliland.

67. The column left Gardo on 2nd May and at Laso Dawao, on 4th May, was joined by a flight of Vincent aircraft from Aden.

It was known that there was a small Italian force at Bender Cassim, and opposition was anticipated in a narrow defile at Carin. In order to induce the Italians to surrender a message was dropped from the air over Bender Cassim on 5th May calling for an envoy to be sent to Carin on 6th May. As the aircraft performing this task met no opposition, a second aircraft landed and immediate negotiations were made with the Residente for the surrender of the post. The column reached Bender Cassim on 6th May, and 67 Italians, of whom 50 were naval military or government employees, were collected together with their arms.

68. After Bender Cassim had been taken over by a detachment of police, the column left on 11th May for Dante.

Dante is virtually an island, and to capture it the assistance of the navy was sought; but when the column reached Sousciuban on 13th May, reports were received that the Dante garrison was waiting to surrender. The Residente was met 12 miles from Hordic and, after discussions, the Italians agreed not to destroy the oil-tanks and wireless (which had been prepared for demolition) on the condition that they should not be used for military purposes. Dante was occupied on 16th May, with the assistance of boats provided by the Navy, and the 167 Italians were evacuated by sea.

69. The next objective of the column was Cape Guardafui, which it was decided to take by landing from the sea. On 18th May, the ships arrived off Cape Guardafui and under cover of pom-pom fire the troops were landed. The progress of our troops was slow owing to the extreme heat, high winds and soft sandhills. Any attack on the Tohen wadi, where the enemy was reported to be had to be postponed to the following day. Meanwhile a detachment had been despatched to capture the lighthouse, which it achieved successfully, and the lighthouse was put into use at dusk that day.

On 19th May, the enemy in Tohen Wadi surrendered without opposition, and 19 officers and 61 Italian O.R.s were embarked and evacuated to Aden.

70. On the 21st May, a platoon was sent round by sea to Alula, where 4 Italian officers and 35 O.R.s were evacuated without incident to Aden.

71. The success of these small operations, which entailed a march of 800 miles and the

maintenance by hired transport of a small column 630 miles from its base, reflects great credit on all those who carried them out. Close co-operation between the column, the Navy and the Royal Air Force accounted for the fact that no effective resistance was offered by the enemy.

E. Operations for the Occupation of Maji by 25th E.A. Infantry Brigade

(8th April—20th April, 1941)

72. In accordance with the policy stated in my previous report, I decided to send the 25th E.A. Infantry Brigade north from Kalam to occupy Maji, to get in touch with the Sedan Equatorial Corps which was operating westwards from the Sudan, and to hand over this area to them.

73. The advance from Kalam commenced on 8th April, the 2/3 K.A.R. providing the advanced guard. Washa-Waha, 75 miles to the north, was reached without incident on 9th April. During this period it rained almost continuously and movement of M.T. was only possible through the continuous efforts of the section of the South African engineers attached to the force.

The 2/4 K.A.R. reached Washa Waha on 12th April after further delay owing to floods.

The native chief of Maji district reported to our troops at Washa Waha that the Italians were evacuating Maji and burning buildings and that he was anxious that we should occupy the town.

Owing to the administrative limitations imposed by the state of the roads the 2/3 K.A.R. remained at Washa Waha and only the 2/4 K.A.R. proceeded to Maji.

Slow progress was made owing to rain, land mines and road demolitions. In all 134 land mines were removed from five separate mine-fields and three effective road-blocks were cleared.

74. Maji was entered by our advance troops on 20th April without opposition. The following day contact was made by W/T with the patrol of the Equatorial Corps approaching from the north-west.

Our troops pushed forward to Masci, six miles north of Maji and met the company of the Equatorial Corps there on 28th April.

On the same day a company of the 2/4 K.A.R. with attached troops set out north from Masci to clear the road to Baciuma, 58 miles to the north.

75. Approaching Giamo, 30 miles north of Masci, the force encountered and routed a small enemy patrol. Giamo was occupied without further incident.

Pushing on from Giamo, an enemy force, consisting of some 25 Italians and 200 banda, was found occupying a defensive position on a ridge overlooking the road.

Our patrol attacked the position, inflicting considerable casualties on the enemy with mortar and L.M.G. fire, but was unable before nightfall to clear the whole position.

The following morning, however, reconnaissance revealed that the enemy had withdrawn during the night.

76. Once this district had been handed over to the Equatorial Corps, I had intended to withdraw the brigade to the area Lokitaung-Kalam, but owing to the rains and floods the

road Kalam-Maji became almost totally impassable to M.T. and 2/4 K.A.R. was immobilised at Maji for over a month.

There is no doubt that our occupation of this area had a quietening effect on the Merille, but, since the withdrawal back to Lokitaung, there have again been some signs of truculence.

PART III.—GENERAL

Political.

77. It will be recalled that owing to my fears regarding the possibilities of unfortunate incidents on first entry into Addis Abeba, I had impressed on the Italians the necessity of leaving what in their opinion was a sufficiency of armed men for guarding their civilians during the period my troops were entering the town. On entry into the city it was found that some 10,000 armed men had been left, an indication of their own fear of reprisal for what was proved, on examination of the prison records, to have been a ferociously harsh rule. The greater part of this armed force was police, but two whole Blackshirt battalions were also discovered. Most of the town, which is large and straggling, was surrounded by wire and a ring of blockhouses, and permanent machine-gun posts were sprinkled throughout the area. In addition, on the hills above, covering the main roads into the town, were a ring of forts, all full of armed men. It was quite impossible, without seriously prejudicing military operations, to provide protection on this scale from my troops, nor indeed was it necessary. It was therefore decided to retain two Nigerian battalions in Addis Abeba which in any case would have been the minimum required for the defence of the place, and to pursue a policy of gradual disarmament of the Italian police, replacing them by Ethiopians as and when they could be trained. The Italian civil population had been scattered all over the town, so I also arranged for them to be segregated into three areas.

It was satisfactory to find that my fears of lawless elements amongst the Ethiopians getting out of hand were ungrounded. The Ethiopians behaved with admirable restraint, and except for minor instances of looting, no major incidents on their part took place. Not so with the Italians, who, civilians and police alike, were in a highly nervous condition. Within the first 48 hours of entering the town two shooting incidents on the part of the Italians occurred. The perpetrators were brought to trial before the Military Courts.

78. These incidents convinced the authorities in Addis Abeba that the danger of leaving the Italians their arms was greater than what might be expected from other sources. The disarmament programme was therefore pushed on with all speed, and by the end of April no more Italian police were left in the town, other than a few unarmed wardens in each of the segregated areas. Their place was taken by a number of trusted Abyssinian police employed by the Italians, and a further number drafted in and given three weeks training. A sprinkling of British officers and N.C.O.s had been provided by E.A. Force for this purpose. This work was carried out under Colonel A. A. Hayton, D.A.P.M. of E.A. Force, who had recently arrived from South Africa, where he had had considerable experience in police matters. He accomplished this most difficult

task in very delicate circumstances with calm and efficiency.

79. Meanwhile the armed Italians in the outer ring of forts had been replaced by Ethiopian patriots sent in by the Emperor.

It was felt, in spite of previous customs and traditions, that no armed men of any sort should be allowed in the town. Even the troops when walking out left their arms behind. Armed Ethiopians from outlying districts left their arms at the police stations round the perimeter of the town before being permitted to enter.

80. Before the campaign started it was not apparent that Addis Abeba was going to be entered by the "back door." Both the patriot activity under the Emperor in the Gojjam and the operations proceeding against Keren were many hundreds of miles nearer the heart of Abyssinia than E.A. Force, and appeared to offer the most favourable chances of entering the city. As a result, both the Military Mission to organise the Emperor's offensive movement, and the political organisation (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration) to administer Abyssinia or such parts of it as were captured, were based on Khartoum. With the entry of E.A. Force into Addis Abeba and the occupation by the troops of the greater part of Abyssinia, it was clear that some form of re-organisation would be required. The Emperor was at Debra Marcos and touch with him was most easily maintained through Addis Abeba. It was, therefore, decided to transfer the Deputy Chief Political Officer, Abyssinia, and his staff to Addis Abeba, to work under me, with of course direct reference to the Kaid in connection with matters regarding the area in which his forces were operating. This action gave me a direct link with the Emperor and placed the onus of dealing with him on me.

81. The instructions which I had received were to the effect that I was to establish an Administration in those parts of Abyssinia I had occupied, and that I was to deal with the Emperor on the lines of the statement made by the Foreign Office at the time of the Emperor's entry into Abyssinia. The text of this statement is produced here.

"H.M.G. would welcome the reappearance of an independent Ethiopian State and will recognise the claims of the Emperor Haile Selassie to the throne. The Emperor has intimated to H.M.G. that he will need outside assistance and guidance. H.M.G. agree with this view and consider that any such assistance and guidance in economic and political matters should be the subject of international arrangement at the conclusion of peace. They reaffirm that they have no territorial ambitions in Abyssinia. In the meantime the conduct of military operations by Imperial forces in parts of Abyssinia will require temporary measures of military guidance and control."

The interpretation of this final sentence was a matter of considerable discussion with the Emperor who was always on the look out for any measure which would infringe the Sovereignty which he claimed. The question will be referred to again later.

82. From the moment my troops entered Addis Abeba I was being pressed continually by the Emperor to permit his return to the capital

at once. This I was most anxious to accomplish at the earliest possible moment, both to hasten the structure of an Ethiopian State which might eventually stand on its own legs, and to get the fullest use out of the patriot movement in conjunction with my forces which were still engaged with the enemy, thus compensating to a small degree for the loss of troops and equipment being sent up to Middle East.

It was, however, quite impossible to allow the Emperor back until I had settled the various internal security questions in Addis Abeba and disarmed the Italians. I had some difficulty with the Emperor on this question, and he appeared distrustful of our future intentions towards him. I was, however, in a position to let him in on 5th May on which day he ceremoniously entered the city on the anniversary of the entry by the Italians exactly five years before. In view of the complete disarming of the city there were no major incidents. Considerable credit was due to Brigadier M. S. Lush, M.C., the D.C.P.O., who was in charge of the civil administration, for this happy result.

83. Meanwhile political officers were being sent to the main centres and were engaged in administering the country as far as possible through the local Ethiopian officials and chiefs. The Duke of Harrar, Prince Mackonnen, arrived in Harrar to be the Governor of that Province.

84. The political situation at that time as far as E.A. Force was concerned was that I was Military Governor of Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland, and those parts of Abyssinia in which my troops were in occupation, as far north as Dessie and the Gojjam. D.C.P.Os. were functioning under my orders in Italian Somaliland at Mogadiscio, and as already stated in Addis Abeba for Abyssinia. British Somaliland was placed under a separate Military Governor, Brigadier A. R. Chater, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., under my general direction. In order to avoid for the moment any difficulties with the Somalis in connection with the Emperor's return, Italian Somaliland as delimited by the Italians, and not in accordance with the old boundary, was kept under the D.C.P.O. in Mogadiscio, or in other words, the whole of the area including the Ogaden and southwards from it, was kept under the D.C.P.O. Italian Somaliland, and this area was known as Southern Somalia.

85. At this period considerable trouble was still being given over most of the occupied area by the many armed deserters from the Italian Army who had formed themselves into marauding bands. It was clear that my main object was the defeat of the Italian forces, and therefore I was quite unable to provide the large number of troops which would have been required in the vast area under my control, to establish law and order with efficiency and despatch. I explained to my political officers that they would have to do the best they could with the few garrison battalions I could spare and what they could raise in the way of gendarmerie and police from local resources, and that I quite appreciated I would have to accept a degree of lawlessness until such time as I could spare troops to enforce the law. I have to thank them for the loyal way in which they accepted this position, and the efficiency with which they established a considerable degree of law and order with the assistance of the small military resources available.

86. The general question of military political control in E.A. Force was, however, most unsatisfactory. Owing to operations it was necessary for me to have my Headquarters in Harrar. Under these conditions I was separated from my three administrators in Addis Abeba, Mogadiscio and Hargeisa, by many hundreds of miles. I had no political staff myself. The D.C.P.Os. dealt direct with the Chief Political Officer, Middle East, who had meantime left Cairo and had opened his Headquarters in Nairobi. All political action was presented to me as a *fait accompli*, and hence though I was responsible, I had no means of exerting authority, of knowing what was going on or even of laying down the policy for the area for which I was responsible. For instance, although I was the authority for confirmation of death sentences I had no independent legal adviser. Again, I eventually found that the militarily most important offence of concealing arms was being dealt with by the death sentence in one area, and mere internment in another; I had no machinery by which I could ascertain the details of the administration, or to see that a general policy was being applied throughout.

The situation was considerably eased by the move back of my Advanced H.Q. to Nairobi on 18th June, a move which was made possible by the fact that by the above date military operations in the Galla Sidamo had been reduced to a scale which enabled them to be undertaken wholly by the Commander of 11th (A) Division.

It was, however, recognised that the normal O.E.T.A. organisation could not apply over the large area for which I was responsible, and a scheme is now in hand by which I will be relieved of all purely civil administrative responsibilities.

Evacuation.

87. It had always been my view, and indeed, that of my political advisers, that before any form of Ethiopian control was permitted in Abyssinia it would be necessary to evacuate all Italians, lock, stock and barrel. I expressed this view to the C.-in-C. with the suggestion that by far the best solution would be repatriation to Italy if it could possibly be arranged.

As soon as it was possible to arrive at some estimate of the numbers involved and the accommodation and transport facilities available, the problem was examined in detail. The numbers of civilians to be evacuated were estimated at 55,000 though to this figure some 70,000 prisoners of war had to be added. Women and children were estimated at 11,000 and 7,000 respectively. It was immediately apparent that total evacuation, even if shipping were available, must be a very long process, probably extending over at least six months. It would, moreover, entail the complete stoppage of all essential services in Abyssinia and the many technical institutions and factories introduced by the Italians and entirely supervised by them. I felt, therefore, that I was forced to revise my previous views on the subject of evacuation, and was confirmed in this opinion by the remarkable restraint shown by the Ethiopians up to that time from avenging themselves against the Italians. I decided, therefore, that evacuation should be started as soon as possible, but should be carried out by categories in the following order,

Fascist officials and other undesirables, prisoners of war, police, Government officials, Municipal officials, professional and business men, artisans, etc. As the evacuation of the first four groups would take a considerable time there would be ample opportunity to decide in due course whether the process would have to be carried out to the full or could be halted at any particular stage. As an initial step 80 prominent Fascists with their families were evacuated from Addis Abeba to Diredaoua on 28th April.

Although the evacuation was mainly a political matter, it had to be carried out through military resources and hence required the closest co-operation between O.E.T.A. and the military authorities. An evacuation branch of O.E.T.A. was set up by the C.P.O. Middle East in Nairobi.

The implications of the use of Jibuti in connection with evacuation are set out in the following section dealing with French Somaliland.

French Somaliland.

88. With the reoccupation of British Somaliland and the taking of Diredaoua (thus cutting the Jibuti railway), connections between the Vichy French in French Somaliland and the Italians virtually ceased. The French had been to a great degree dependent on supplies of foodstuffs from Abyssinia which were now wholly cut off. Meanwhile a strict blockade was still being maintained by us of the French Somali Coast. As far as could be ascertained supplies existed in Jibuti for six weeks to two months only.

89. On 5th April I received instructions from Middle East to the effect that some detachments of Free French under General Le Gentilhomme were proceeding to British Somaliland to make an attempt to win French Somaliland over to the Free French cause, and that I was to give them facilities. I therefore instructed Brigadier Buchanan who was then commanding the troops in British Somaliland that facilities for approach to the frontier should be given to these parties. Nevertheless I told him that no form of direct military aid was to be given, his troops were not to get involved in armed clashes but Free French elements from French Somaliland could be allowed to rally on British soil.

90. About 15th April Colonel Brossett, Major Appert and Captain Majendie arrived at Berbera.

The plan was to drop leaflets from a Free French aeroplane inviting the French troops to cross the frontier and join the British at Zeilah and Daouenle. If and when the troops began to come over, leaflets were to be dropped on Jibuti asking the colony to join General de Gaulle to recover its prosperity by the intensive use of the harbour and railway by the British. Finally to give notice to the population that the Colony would be blockaded until surrender to the Free French forces.

The plan was duly commenced, but only a very few individuals came over. It was reported that the frontiers were strongly defended by pro-Vichy units who had orders to shoot anyone who tried to cross the border from any side. It was also reported that the port facilities were all mined and that the Governor through hatred of the British was

quite ready to blow them up, should any offensive action be taken against him. General Le Gentilhomme came to the conclusion that the Free French plan was likely to be ineffective and that reliance could only be placed on the results of the blockade.

91. It should be stated here that the Governor of Jibuti, besides being fanatically anti-British, was reported to be self-opinionated, obstinate and proud to an extent which precluded all reasonable thinking. He had established himself as a complete dictator and used the death penalty ruthlessly against any who showed any pro-Free French leanings or even were seen picking up Free French leaflets. Although it was reported that the railway and commercial elements in the town were at least more moderate in their outlook, there was no one of sufficient weight to stand up to the Governor whose power therefore appeared supreme.

92. On 1st May the Governor at Jibuti telegraphed to the Governor at Aden that he had received official instructions authorising him to deal direct with the Higher British Authorities to arrive at a temporary *modus vivendi* taking into account the local situation. He asked for names of delegates to attend a meeting on board ship or at the frontier. General Le Gentilhomme was very against such negotiations taking place, pointing out that if we used the port of Jibuti, he was convinced that the Italians would demand the use of Bizerta.

93. On 7th May, however, I received from Middle East an order to open up negotiations on the lines indicated in a previous wire. It was stated that arguments in regard to Bizerta did not carry weight as if the Italians wanted to go there, they would do so irrespective of what happened at Jibuti.

I was told to open up negotiations and to report the proposals made and received, but to enter into no commitments. Later I received another wire to say that I was only to receive proposals though I was at liberty to sound the Governor on lines of original instructions "without giving definite indications of our views".

The terms referred to were—

(a) Use of port and harbour for a partial raising of blockade to allow in necessities such as milk, etc.

(b) Blockade would only be lifted completely if Colony became Free French.

(c) Any troops wishing to join Free French should be permitted to do so, but we would consider evacuation of remainder to some other French Colony, e.g. Madagascar.

About this time it did not appear to me that we had very strong reasons for maintaining the blockade. The Colony was almost completely cut off from the Italians, except in the north, south of Assab. In this area there were only very unimportant Italian military forces, cut off from the remainder in Abyssinia.

Again there was no doubt that all the important officials in Jibuti were strongly Vichy French and the presence of the Free French on the borders of the country was serving to inflame them.

Therefore I did not then consider the conditions favourable to a satisfactory agreement.

94. I made arrangements for preliminary conversations to take place near Zeilah on 18th May. On 17th May however, the news of the

German use of the aerodromes in Syria came through. I therefore postponed the meeting until I had further instructions which were on the way down to me from Middle East. I had no longer any doubts as to our reasons for continuance of the blockade.

95. It now became necessary to consider to what extent Jibuti port and harbour were vital to our needs, so as to recommend to the C-in-C a line of future conduct vis-a-vis French Somaliland.

The port might be required for the evacuation of the Italian civilians from Abyssinia, and again it might be vital to us for military purposes. It will be recalled that I had come to the conclusion that although it was desirable to evacuate the civilians from Abyssinia as soon as possible, limitations of transport, and the necessity of providing accommodation en route would under any conditions render the evacuation a slow process. Moreover there was no real shortage of food for the civilians and I was informed by the political branch that they could be fed until the end of November. The question of the evacuation was not therefore a matter of the highest degree of urgency. On the other hand I had been informed by the Political Evacuation Committee that they considered the use of Jibuti vital for their purpose. They felt that the dangers to health involved in establishing staging-camps on the 300-mile road link between Diredaua and Berbera precluded the use of this route. It was therefore apparent that at some time or other Jibuti would be required for evacuation purposes.

On the military side the use of the port and railway would be most desirable, not only because of the great saving of transport due to the cutting out of the Berbera-Diredaua road link, but also on account of the greatly superior port facilities as compared with Berbera. At the same time I was able to maintain three brigades from Berbera, and there was no need at this stage for a larger force to liquidate the Italians, nor did it appear that I would ever have to maintain more. The port therefore, though desirable was not vital to me from the military point of view.

96. The situation was then that the use of Jibuti though desirable for all purposes was only vital to us for civilian evacuation.

Hence it occurred to me that there would be very great advantages in the matter of the evacuation of the civilians being handled on a higher plane with the Italian Government itself. We could deliver the evacuees at the French frontier after which their onward journey would be the responsibility of the Italians.

All arrangements could be made between them and the French direct. There was an Italian Armistice Commission in Jibuti with whom, under a white flag we could arrange local details direct and there would be no need to approach the French at all. The question of the provision of ships, on which I understood tentative feelers had met with some response, and the journey through French Somaliland could be treated as one question on a governmental level as far as the British were concerned.

If this policy were successful we would be left without need to negotiate with the Governor in French Somaliland at all, and there would be no necessity for the somewhat

awkward situation of carrying out negotiations with Vichy under the flags of the Free French which were established at all accessible points near the frontier. Furthermore there would now be no reason to make any concession in respect of the blockade and the full policy of only raising the blockade if the Colony became Free French could be enforced.

I wrote to the C-in-C to the above effect on 25th May, and also suggested that if he was in agreement with the policy, all that would now be required would be to inform the Governor of French Somaliland that in view of the situation in Syria he refused to treat with him.

97. In due course I received a letter from General Wavell for delivery to the Governor of French Somaliland. The letter informed him that the blockade would be maintained until the Colony became Free French, that steps would be taken to see that the population were informed of the true situation, and that a month's supplies of all kinds were ready to be rushed to the Colony as soon as they gave in.

98. This letter was delivered on 8th June, and on 10th June leaflets were dropped on Jibuti giving the gist of the letter. Meanwhile Free French pamphlet dropping, which has been suspended, was resumed, and permission was given to the French sloop to operate in territorial waters and stop the dhow traffic from the Yemen. Furthermore a successful operation for a landing at Assab, from which place there were indications that supplies had been entering French Somaliland, was initiated by Aden with 3/15 Punjabis from Berbera, under Brigadier W. A. Dimoline, O.B.E., M.C., of the 26th E.A. Brigade, and with supporting arms from E.A. Force. 2/2 K.A.R. of 26th E.A. Infantry Brigade (which had replaced 2nd S.A. Brigade on the departure of the latter to Egypt) was moved on to the French frontier on the Zeilah road and at Daouenle. All steps were taken to tighten up the blockade from the landward side, by preventing Somali traffic across the frontier.

The operation against Assab took place with success on 11th June. The enemy were surprised and very little resistance was encountered.

99. On 15th June a reply to General Wavell's letter by the Governor of Jibuti was passed over the frontier. The letter reviewed the steps already taken by the Governor to try and initiate negotiations for the use of the port and railway for "humanitarian purposes." It also drew attention to a communication made by him to the Governor of Aden to the effect that owing to malnutrition some infant mortality had taken place, and it reaffirmed the rigid intention of French Somaliland to remain under Vichy. No reply was sent to this letter.

100. There arose at this time the question of the possibility of the reduction of French Somaliland by force of arms. The defences of the country were mainly centred round Jibuti. These consisted of a strong concrete trench system about 12 miles long with both ends resting on the sea, outside which were three forts on the main communications into the town. Outside Jibuti, forts with small garrisons, but consisting of very strong concrete defences, existed at Hol Hol, Ali Sabiet, Dikkil and Hadji, and other minor positions

were scattered about on the main communications. There was a trench system at Loyada on the frontier on the Zeilah-Jibuti road.

At this period my administrative resources were fully stretched in the maintenance of the two brigades of 11th (A) Division which were engaging the Italians in the Galla Sidamo. Administratively I could engage in no more commitments without ceasing operations against the Italians. Furthermore E.A. Force was not equipped for the reduction of strong concrete defences, neither was the Air Force sufficiently strong in bombers. Admittedly there was a doubt whether the six Senegalese battalions which formed the garrison would fight. There was therefore at least uncertainty whether an attack on French Somaliland could be carried out with success. There appeared no doubt that the blockade must eventually be successful in forcing the Governor to give in, furthermore, by trusting to the blockade, there would be no need for cessation of the operations in the Galla Sidamo. I therefore recommended that offensive operations should not be undertaken against the Vichy French, at any rate for the present.

101. About this time a telegram was received from the War Office, presumably in reply to the representations made by the Governor of Jibuti on the subject of infant mortality, suggesting that the blockade might be lifted sufficiently to allow in milk etc. for the children. I felt that strict supervision of any relaxation of the blockade would be most difficult to ensure without contact and negotiations which I felt were most undesirable at that time. More over I was sure that any relaxation of the blockade occurring immediately after the receipt of the Governor's reply to General Wavell's letter would have an unfortunate effect in strengthening the former's position. He obviously would take steps to gain full propaganda value on these lines. I therefore telegraphed to General Wavell an alternative proposal to make an offer of evacuation of all white women and children to Madagascar or other Vichy French place. In due course I was authorised to make this offer.

102. Meanwhile the Governor of Jibuti had addressed letters both to General Wavell and myself to the effect that he had received instructions that should French Somaliland be reduced by either blockade or direct invasion he was to destroy all facilities which might be of value to the invader. General Wavell replied to this letter to the effect that from the purely military point of view Jibuti was of no consequence to him. If the Governor destroyed the port and railway he would merely make it impossible to feed his own nationals and prevent, or at any rate delay, the evacuation of Italian women and children from Abyssinia.

In due course a reply was received from Jibuti in which the Governor indicated that he took General Wavell's letter as an invitation to open negotiations on a wide scale for the evacuation of the Italian women and children and the relief of Jibuti. I was authorised to reply that General Wavell had given no such invitation and that his intentions remained as notified in the letter summarised in para. 97.

PART IV.—CONCLUSION.

103. During the period after the fall of Addis Abeba E.A. Force, besides capturing

Dessie and assisting in the fall of Amba Alagi, has now completed its task of securing the capitulation of all enemy forces in the whole area lying south and inclusive of Assab-Dessie-Bethor.

The area over which these final operations took place was 125,000 square miles, and although, due to the weather conditions, the tempo of the early part of the campaign could not be maintained, the time taken to complete the task cannot be regarded as unsatisfactory. The latter part of the operations was carried out entirely by East and West African infantry, though South Africa supplied most of the supporting arms. In spite of the continuous wet and cold weather the morale and dash of all troops remained unabated, though the physical difficulties caused by mud and demolitions demanded great endurance. It may again be stated that according to popular belief the campaigning season in Northern Abyssinia should have terminated at the end of May, and in Southern Abyssinia by the end of March. The fighting was the toughest yet experienced, due to the naturally strong defensive positions which abounded in the area, to the greater number of supporting arms, fields guns, medium guns and tanks which were available to the enemy, and also the tougher fibre of some of the Italian commanders. These had at last learnt that the true form of defence against the type of attack which we made, lay in the counter-attack with mobile troops rather than in their previous methods of withdrawal into wired perimeters. Though the East and West African troops met the enemy medium tank, the Mark II, for the first time, after the first uncertainty they were not dismayed and showed confidence in their defence against these vehicles.

104. Mention must be made of the artillery of which all but the light batteries were South African units. The extreme shortage in this arm (only 24 field guns) entailed frequent moves over long distances so as to give the greatest concentration of fire at the decisive points, yet the guns always arrived on time. Their action in silencing the enemy guns, often from most exposed positions was without doubt instrumental in most cases in enabling the infantry to get forward, and in some of the battles artillery action alone caused the enemy to vacate their positions.

105. The nature of the country, steep, rugged, with deep canyon-like ravines and broad swift flowing rivers, lent itself to extensive and effective demolitions. The work of the R.E. units, the greater portion of which were also South African, in the rapid construction of bridges and repair of roads was beyond praise. Had there been any greater delay imposed on the advance than was in fact the case, there is every doubt whether our troops would have been able to close with the enemy and finally liquidate him before the really heavy rains set in.

106. In the early part of the campaign much success had attended the use of propaganda leaflets scattered from the air. The capture of an excellent printing press, capable of printing in all local languages, in Addis Abeba greatly speeded up the process of getting out "hot" news by leaflet and many thousands of these were dropped almost daily. Of a total of 7,300,000 pamphlets dropped 3,500,000

were printed in Addis Abeba. There is no doubt that these leaflets undermined the morale of the Italians, and resulted in wholesale disintegration of the enemy troops.

107. From the fall of Addis Abeba to the final surrender of Gazzera the total prisoners accounted for by E.A. Force amounted to approximately 30,000 Italians and 30,000 Africans. Owing to the number of enemy who were killed and the number who deserted, this figure however, does not give a complete picture of the destruction wrought. It is estimated that during that period 105,000 enemy of all types were rendered ineffective.*

No estimate can yet be given of the war material in our hands, but except in a few commodities, the Italians were well found, and there is every reason to believe that the captures of war stores are very considerable.

A remarkable feature was the great quantity of valuable and up-to-date machinery, much of it new, of all types with which the country was stocked.

108. I must once more emphasise the success with which the Staff and administrative services continued to overcome the many great difficulties of supply and transport, and the manner in which the transport companies maintained their reputation in face of the wretched conditions of rain and mud.

Particular mention must also be made of the staff and personnel of both naval and military at Berbera. Owing to lack of facilities, torrid temperatures, and a high rate of sickness, supply through this port was always precarious. The kharif, a hot wind which commenced blowing in June, increased their difficulties. In spite of these grave conditions the personnel continued to perform their duties with cheerfulness and determination and are still doing so.

109. I can again with great pleasure draw attention to the skill shown by the two Divisional Commanders, Major General Godwin Austen and Major General Wetherall. The greatest credit is due to Major General Godwin Austen for the dogged persistence with which 12th (A) Division undertook and completed their attack northwards under the worst possible conditions of weather and roads against defensive positions which the enemy had deemed impregnable. To Major General Wetherall and 11th (A) Division fell the lot of undertaking the attacks on Dessie, Sciascianna, Soddu and the crossings of the Omo, all of which formidable operations were attended with success and brought about the final collapse.

(sd.) A. G. CUNNINGHAM,
Lieut.-Gen.

22nd July, 1941.

APPENDICES.

Appendix "A"—Order of Battle of E.A. Force, 1st January 1941.

Appendix "B"—Own and Enemy Air Forces in E. Africa, 1st January 1941.

Appendix "C"—Order of Battle 11th and 12th (A) Divisions at commencement of operations, 10th February 1941.

Appendix "D"—Order of Battle 11th and 12th (A) Divisions, 23rd February 1941.

* The total for the whole campaign waged by E.A. Force is estimated at 170,000.

Appendix "E"—Order of Battle 11th (A) Division, 11th March 1941.

Appendix "F"—Conditions presented to Italian envoy on 3rd April 1941, and the reply received on 4th April 1941.

Appendix "G"—Troops left in British Somaliland by A.O.C. Aden for use by E.A. Force.

Appendix "H"—Order of Battle 12th (A) Division, 5th April 1941.

Appendix "J"—Allocation of A.C. Squadrons during operations.

APPENDIX "A."

Order of Battle of E.A. Force.

1st January, 1941.

1st South African Division.

H.Q. 1 (South African) Division.

1 (South African) Division Signal Company.

H.Q. 2 (South African) Infantry Brigade.

3 (South African) Brigade Signal Company.

1 Natal Mounted Rifles.

1 Field Force Battalion.

2 Field Force Battalion.

2 (South African) Armoured Car Company.

12 (South African) Field Company.

12 (South African) Field Ambulance.

2 (South African) Mobile General Workshop.

H.Q. 5 (South African) Infantry Brigade.

1 (South African) Brigade Signal Company.

1 (South African) Irish.

2 Regiment Botha.

3 Transvaal Scottish.

1 (South African) Armoured Car Company.

5 (South African) Field Company.

11 (South African) Field Ambulance.

3 (South African) Mobile General Workshop.

H.Q. 25 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

25 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.

2/3 King's African Rifles.

2/4 King's African Rifles.

27 Mountain Battery, Royal Artillery.

Detachment Somaliland Camel Corps Armoured Cars.

3 (South African) Field Company.

6 (Uganda) Field Ambulance.

25 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

Divisional Troops.

3 (South African) Field Brigade (7, 8, 9 South African Field Batteries).

3 (South African) Anti-Tank Battery.

One Section 6 (South African) Anti-Aircraft Battery.

21 (South African) Field Park Company.

One platoon 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-Gun).

1 (South African) Divisional Supply Company.

1 (South African) Divisional Ammunition Company.

1 (South African) Divisional Petrol Company.

2 (South African) Provost Company.

1 (South African) Motor Cycle Company.

2 (South African) Motor Cycle Company.
No. 2 Irregular Company.
No. 5 Irregular Company.

IIth (African) Division.

H.Q. II (African) Division.

II (African) Divisional Signals.

H.Q. 2I (East African) Infantry Brigade.

2I (East African) Brigade Signal Section.

1/2 King's African Rifles.

1/4 King's African Rifles.

1 Northern Rhodesia Regiment.

53 (Gold Coast) Field Company.

2I (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

2 (Zanzibar) Field Ambulance.

H.Q. 23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade.

23 (Nigeria) Brigade Signal Section.

1 Nigeria Regiment.

2 Nigeria Regiment.

3 Nigeria Regiment.

52 (Nigeria) Light Battery.

5I (Nigeria) Field Company.

23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

3 (Nigeria) Field Ambulance.

Divisional Troops.

"C" Squadron 1 East African Armoured Car Regiment.

7 (South African) Field Brigade (5, 17, 18 (South African) Field Batteries).

1 (South African) Anti-Tank Battery.

One Section 6 (South African) Anti-Aircraft Battery.

16 (South African) Field Company.

Platoon 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-Gun).

1 (East African) Pioneers.

3 (East African) Field Hygiene Section.

II Divisional Ordnance Field Park.

Detachment No. 4 Irregular Company.

12 (African) Division.

H.Q. 12 (African) Division.

12 (African) Divisional Signals.

H.Q. I (South African) Infantry Brigade.

10 (South African) Brigade Signal Company.

1 Royal Natal Carbineers.

1 Transvaal Scottish.

1 Duke of Edinburgh's Own Rifles.

3 (South African) Armoured Car Company.

4 (South African) Field Brigade (10, 11 and 12 (South African) Field Batteries).

1 (South African) Field Company.

1 (South African) Brigade "Q" Services Company.

10 (South African) Field Ambulance.

1 (South African) Mobile General Workshop.

H.Q. 22 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

22 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.

1/1 King's African Rifles.

5 King's African Rifles.

1/6 King's African Rifles.

22 Mountain Battery Royal Artillery.

54 (East African) Field Company.

22 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

1 (Tanganyika) Field Ambulance.

H.Q. 24 (Gold Coast) Infantry Brigade.

24 (Gold Coast) Brigade Signal Section.

1 Gold Coast Regiment.

2 Gold Coast Regiment.

3 Gold Coast Regiment.

5I (Gold Coast) Light Battery.

52 (Gold Coast) Field Company.

24 (Gold Coast) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

4 (Gold Coast) Field Ambulance.

Divisional Troops.

"B" Squadron 1 East Africa Armoured Car Regiment.

2 (South African) Anti-Tank Battery.

1 (South African) Field Battery.

One Section 6 (South African) Anti-Aircraft Battery.

3 (South African) Field Company.

19 (South African) Field Park Company.

One company (less one platoon) 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-Gun).

2 East Africa Pioneers.

2 East Africa Field Hygiene Section.

12 Divisional Ordnance Field Park.

No. 1 Irregular Company.

Det No. 4 Irregular Company.

Force Troops.

1 East African Armoured Car Regiment (less two squadrons).

1 (South African) Light Tank Company.

1 (South African) Medium Brigade (1 and 2 Medium Batteries).

53 (East African) Light Battery.

4 (Rhodesian) Anti-Tank Battery.

APPENDIX "B."

Location of Air Units East Africa.

1st January 1941.

Headquarters.

Air Headquarters East Africa—Nairobi.

Advance Air H.Q., East Africa (as from 9.1.41)—Nanyuki.

No. 1 Bomber Brigade S.A.A.F.—Nanyuki.

R.A.F. Station—Nairobi.

R.A.F. Station—Eastleigh.

R.A.F. Station—Mombasa.

No. 2 Squadron S.A.A.F.

Headquarters—Nanyuki.

"A" Flight (Mobile)—Nanyuki.

"B" Flight Detachment (1)—Archer's

Post.

"B" Flight Detachment (2)—Ndege's

Nest.

"C" Flight Detachment (1)—Marsabit.

"C" Flight Detachment (2)—Lokitaung.

Reserve Aircraft—Nanyuki.

No. 3 Squadron S.A.A.F.

"A" Flight Detachment (1)—Garissa.

"A" Flight Detachment (2)—Lamu.

"B" Flight Detachment (1)—Nairobi.

"B" Flight Detachment (2)—Bura.

"C" Flight—Mombasa.

Squadrons.

No. 11 Squadron S.A.A.F.

H.Q.—Archer's Post.

"A," "B" and "C" Flights—Archer's Post.

No. 12 Squadron S.A.A.F.

H.Q.—Nanyuki.

"A" Flight, "B" Flight and Detachment.

"C" Flight—Nanyuki.

"C" Flight Detachment—Mombasa.

No. 34 Flight.

H.Q.—Mombasa.

Detachment—Mombasa.

Detachment—Dar-es-Salaam.

No. 40 Squadron S.A.A.F.

H.Q.—Marsabit.

"A" Flight—Lokitaung.

"B" and "C" Flights—Marsabit.

No. 41 Squadron S.A.A.F.

H.Q.—Garissa.

"A" Flight—Garissa.

"B" Flight—Bura.

"C" Flight—Ndege's Nest.

Estimated number of enemy aircraft within range of our bases as at 1st January, 1941:—

C.A.	133	...	...	...	28
S.	81	...	...	...	15
S.	79	...	...	...	20
C.R.	32	...	...	...	9
C.R.	42	...	...	...	11
R.O.	37	...	...	...	5
					—
Total		...	...	...	88
					—

Note (i).—It is more than likely that these numbers were added to from time to time during the subsequent months.

Note (ii).—Aircraft stationed north of the line Addis Abeba—Dire Dawa are not included but were of course available for operations against our front.

APPENDIX "C."

Order of Battle of 11th and 12th (African) Divisions at commencement of operations, 10th February, 1941.

*11th (African) Division.**H.Q. 11 (African) Division.*

11 (African) Divisional Signals.

H.Q. 21 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

21 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.

1/2 King's African Rifles (attached 12 (African) Division at Wajir).

1/4 King's African Rifles.

1 Northern Rhodesian Regiment.

53 (East African) Light Battery.

53 (Gold Coast) Field Company.

21 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

2 (Zanzibar) Field Ambulance.

H.Q. 23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade.

23 (Nigeria) Brigade Signal Section.

1 Nigeria Regiment.

2 Nigeria Regiment.

3 Nigeria Regiment.

52 (Nigeria) Light Battery.

51 (Nigeria) Field Company.

23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

3 (Nigeria) Field Ambulance.

Divisional Troops.

"C" Squadron 1 East African Armoured Car Regiment.

2 (South African) Medium Battery (6-inch Howitzers).

7 (South African) Field Brigade (5, 17 & 18 (South African) Field Batteries).

1 (South African) Anti-tank Battery.

5 (South African) Anti-Aircraft Battery (less two sections).

16 (South African) Field Company.

18 (South African) Field Park Company.

"C" Company 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-gun).

1 East African Pioneers.

3 East African Field Hygiene Section.

11 Divisional Ordnance Field Park.

3 Ordnance Mobile Workshop.

Detachment No. 4 Irregular Company.

*12th (African) Division.**H.Q. 12 (African) Division.*

12 (African) Divisional Signals.

H.Q. 1 (South African) Infantry Brigade.

10 (South African) Brigade Signal Company.

1 Royal Natal Carbineers.

1 Transvaal Scottish.

1 Duke of Edinburgh's Own Regiment.

4 (South African) Field Brigade (10, 11 and 12 Field Batteries).

1 (South African) Field Company.

1 (South African) Infantry Brigade "Q" Services Company.

10 (South African) Field Ambulance.

H.Q. 22 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

22 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.

1/1 King's African Rifles.

5 King's African Rifles.

1/6 King's African Rifles.

22 Mountain Battery Royal Artillery.

54 (East African) Field Company.

22 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

1 (Tanganyika) Field Ambulance.

H.Q. 24 (Gold Coast) Infantry Brigade.

24 (Gold Coast) Brigade Signal Section.

1 (Gold Coast) Regiment.

2 Gold Coast Regiment.

3 Gold Coast Regiment.

51 (Gold Coast) Light Battery.

52 (Gold Coast) Field Company.

24 (Gold Coast) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

4 (Gold Coast) Field Ambulance.

Divisional Troops.

"B" Squadron 1 East African Armoured Car Regiment.

3 (South African) Armoured Car Company.

1 (South African) Light Tank Company.

1 (South African) Medium Battery (60 pounders).

1 (South African) Field Battery.

2 (South African) Anti-tank Battery.

4 (Rhodesian) Anti-tank Battery.

One section 5 (South African) Anti-aircraft Battery.

- 6 (South African) Anti-aircraft Battery (less three sections).
- 19 (South African) Field Park Company. "A" Company 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-gun).
- 2 (East African) Field Hygiene Section.
- 12 Division Ordnance Field Park.
- 1 (South African) Mobile General Workshop.
- No. 1 Irregular Company.
- Detachment No. 4 Irregular Company.

Force Troops.

- 1 (East African) Armoured Car Regiment (less two squadrons).
- 1 (South African) Medium Brigade H.Q. (less two batteries).

APPENDIX "D."

Order of Battle of 11th and 12th (African) Divisions.

23rd February, 1941.

*11th (African) Division.**H.Q. 11 (African) Division.*

- 11 (African) Divisional Signals.

H.Q. 22 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

- 22 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.
- 1/1 King's African Rifles.
- 5 King's African Rifles.
- 1/6 King's African Rifles.
- 22 Mountain Battery Royal Artillery.
- 54 (East African) Field Company.
- 22 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.
- 1 (Tanganyika) Field Ambulance.

H.Q. 23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade.

- 23 (Nigeria) Brigade Signal Section.
- 1 Nigeria Regiment.
- 2 Nigeria Regiment.
- 3 Nigeria Regiment.
- 52 (Nigeria) Light Battery.
- 51 (Nigeria) Field Company.
- 23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade Group Company.
- 3 (Nigeria) Field Ambulance.

Divisional Troops.

- 1 East African Armoured Car Regiment (less "A" Squadron).
- 1 (South African) Light Tank Company.
- 1 (South African) Medium Battery (60 pounders).
- 7 (South African) Field Brigade (5, 17 and 18 (South African) Field Batteries).
- 1 (South African) Field Battery.
- 1 (South African) Anti-tank Battery.
- One Anti-Aircraft Section.
- Two BREDAs Anti-Aircraft Sections.
- 16 (South African) Field Company.
- 17 (South African) Field Park Company.
- "C" Company 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-Gun).
- 5 (Kenya) Field Ambulance (less "A" Company).
- 3 (East African) Field Hygiene Section.
- 11 Divisional Ordnance Field Park.

*12th (African) Division.**H.Q. 12 (African) Division.*

- 12 (African) Division Signals.

H.Q. 21 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

- 21 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.
- 1/4 King's African Rifles.
- 1/2 King's African Rifles.
- 1 Northern Rhodesia Regiment.
- 53 (Gold Coast) Field Company.
- 21 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.
- 2 (Zanzibar) Field Ambulance.

H.Q. 24 (Gold Coast) Infantry Brigade.

- 24 (Gold Coast) Brigade Signal Section.
- 1 Gold Coast Regiment.
- 2 Gold Coast Regiment.
- 3 Gold Coast Regiment.
- 51 (Gold Coast) Light Battery.
- 52 (Gold Coast) Field Company.
- 24 (Gold Coast) Infantry Brigade Group Company.
- 4 (Gold Coast) Field Ambulance.

Divisional Troops.

- "A" Squadron 1 East African Armoured Car Regiment.
- 4 (South African) Field Brigade (10, 11 and 12 (South African) Field Batteries).
- 53 (East African) Light Battery.
- Three sections Anti-aircraft.
- One BREDAs Section Anti-aircraft.
- 19 (South African) Field Park Company.
- "A" Company 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-Gun).
- 2 (East African) Field Hygiene Section.
- 12 Divisional Ordnance Field Park.

*Force Troops.**H.Q. 1 (South African) Infantry Brigade.*

- 10 (South African) Brigade Signal Company.
- 1 Royal Natal Carbineers.
- 1 Transvaal Scottish.
- 1 Duke of Edinburgh's Own Regiment.
- 3 (South African) Armoured Car Company.
- 2 (South African) Anti-tank Battery.
- One section Anti-aircraft.
- 1 (South African) Field Company.
- 1 (South African) Infantry Brigade "Q" Services Company.
- 10 (South African) Field Ambulance.
- 1 (South African) Medium Brigade (less 1 (South African) Medium Battery).
- "A" Company 1 Northern Rhodesia Regiment.

APPENDIX "E."

Order of Battle of 11th (African) Division.

11th March 1941.

H.Q. 11 (African) Division.

- 11 (African) Divisional Signals.

1 (South African) Infantry Brigade.

- 10 (South African) Brigade Signal Company.
- 1 Royal Natal Carbineers.
- 1 Transvaal Scottish.
- 1 Duke of Edinburgh's Own Regiment.
- 3 (South African) Armoured Car Company.
- 2 (South African) Anti-tank Battery.
- 10 (South African) Field Ambulance.
- 2 (South African) Brigade "Q" Services Company.

22 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

- 22 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.
- 1/1 King's African Rifles.
- 5 King's African Rifles.

- 1/6 King's African Rifles.
- 22 Mountain Battery Royal Artillery.
- 1 (Tanganyika) Field Ambulance.
- 22 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade.

- 23 (Nigeria) Brigade Signal Section.
- 1 Nigeria Regiment.
- 2 Nigeria Regiment.
- 3 Nigeria Regiment.
- 52 (Nigeria) Light Battery.
- 51 (Nigeria) Field Company.
- 3 (Nigeria) Field Ambulance.
- 23 (Nigeria) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

Divisional Troops.

- 1 East African Armoured Car Regiment (less one Squadron).
- 1 (South African) Light Tank Battery.
- 1 (South African) Medium Brigade.
- 4 (South African) Field Brigade.
- 7 (South African) Field Brigade.
- 1 (South African) Field Battery.
- 1 (South African) Anti-tank Battery.
- 5 (South African) Anti-aircraft Battery (less one section).
- 17 (South African) Field Park Company.
- 54 (East African) Field Company.
- 11 (Divisional) Ordnance Field Park.

APPENDIX "F."

TERMS PRESENTED BY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING EAST AFRICA FORCES TO THE ITALIAN DELEGATE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN ADDIS ABEBA.

1. It is accepted that the Italians are responsible for the protection of women and children in Addis Abeba until such time as arrangements are completed for guarding them by British forces, and that the personnel provided by the Italians for the protection of women and children in Addis Abeba will remain in the city until relieved of their duties by the British. This personnel will remain in British hands.

2. All Italian troops between the Awash River and Addis Abeba or in the vicinity of the city, *except those particularly posted for protection of women and children and property* in the town, will be engaged, and treated as enemy forces if they are not withdrawn before the arrival of the British forces.

3. To avoid unnecessary suffering to the civil population, essential services will be left intact with sufficient personnel to maintain them in working order, and at least two months supplies of food and fuel will be left in the city.

4. The railway with rolling stock and track from the Awash to Addis Abeba to be handed over to the British forces intact with the necessary personnel to operate it. If this is not carried out it may not be possible to maintain the civil population, thus entailing unnecessary suffering.

5. It is accepted that there will be no pause in military operations which will continue notwithstanding any of the arrangements agreed to in the foregoing paragraphs, with the exception of paragraph 2.

3 Apr. 41.

(ii)

REPLY RECEIVED FROM THE ITALIAN MILITARY COMMAND

4th April 1941.

1. Il Comando Militare Italiano ha già provveduto per tutelare la sicurezze e il sostentamento della popolazione in Addis Abeba. I provvedimenti presi restano in atto anche dopo l'occupazione inglese.

2. La responsabilità dell'ordine e della sicurezza della popolazione sarà assunta in pieno dal comando Inglese dal momento in cui le sue forze entreranno in Addis Abeba.

3. Un incaricato del Governo della Città di Abeba si troverà ad Acachi, all'arrivo delle truppe inglesi, munito di bandiera bianca per dare tutte le indicazioni necessarie.

4. Il Comando militare Italiano non prende nessun altro impegno oltre quelli sopra detti.

Addis Abeba, Aprile 1941.

Translation.

1. The Italian Military Command has already provided for the security and maintenance of the population of Addis Abeba.

The measures taken will still remain in force after the British occupation.

2. The responsibility of order and security of the population will be taken over by the British Command *as soon as* the forces enter Addis Abeba.

3. A representative of the Government of Addis Abeba will be found at Acachi, on the arrival of the British troops, with a white flag. He will give the necessary information on matters.

4. The Italian Military Command takes no other duty apart from the above.

APPENDIX "G."

TROOPS LEFT IN BRITISH SOMALILAND BY A.O.C. ADEN FOR USE BY EAST AFRICA FORCE.

18 Mtn. Bty. R.A.

Four R.A.F. Armd. Cars.

G(R) Unit—Two Companies.

3/15 Punjabis—for protection Berbera Base.

A.A. Unit consisting of two 3" and two Bofors A.A. Guns, for protection Berbera Base and aerodromes.

1 Flight Gladiators for local reconnaissance. These were later transferred with the remainder of the Gladiator Squadron to East Africa Air Force.

Signals. Sufficient for the Base Sub Area.

Staff. Sub Area H.Q. and Staff pending the provision of personnel from East Africa Force.

APPENDIX "H."

Order of Battle of 12th (African) Division.

5th April 1941.

H.Q. 12 (African) Division.

12 (African) Divisional Signals.

21 (East African) Infantry Brigade.

21 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.

1/2 King's African Rifles.

1/4 King's African Rifles.

1 Northern Rhodesia Regiment (less one company).

One platoon 1 (South African) Armoured Car Company.

- 53 (East African) Light Battery.
 53 (Gold Coast) Field Company.
 2 (Zanzibar) Field Ambulance.
 21 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.
- 25 (East African) Infantry Brigade.
 25 (East African) Brigade Signal Section.
 2/3 King's African Rifles.
 2/4 King's African Rifles.
 One platoon 1 (South African) Armoured Car Company.
 3 (South African) Field Company.
 6 (Uganda) Field Ambulance.
 25 (East African) Infantry Brigade Group Company.

Divisional Troops.

- " A " Squadron 1 East African Armoured Car Regiment.
 1 (South African) Armoured Car Company (less two platoons).
 3 (South African) Field Brigade.
 3 (South African) Anti-tank Battery.
 4 (Rhodesian) Anti-tank Battery.
 One section 5 (South African) Anti-aircraft Battery.
 3 Gold Coast Regiment.
 3/4 King's African Rifles.
 1/3 King's African Rifles (Machine-Gun) (Less one company).
 19 (South African) Field Park Company.

- 2 (East African) Field Hygiene Section.
 12 Divisional Ordnance Field Park.
 12 Divisional Survey Section.
 12 Divisional Provost Company.
 One company 4 (Gold Coast) Field Ambulance.

APPENDIX " J."

*Allocation of Army Co-Operation Squadrons.
 (11th February to 5th April 1941.)**Feb. 11th.*

- 11 (African) Division—41 Squadron less 1 Flight.
 12 (African) Division—One Flight 41 Squadron.
 1 (South African) Division—40 Squadron.

Mar. 3rd redistribution:—

- 11 (African) Division—One Flight 41 Squadron.
 12 (African) Division—One Flight 41 Squadron.
 Under Force Control—41 Squadron H.Q. less 2 Flights.
 1 (South African) Division—40 Squadron.

Mar. 13th redistribution:—

- 11 (African) Division—41 Squadron.
 12 (African) Division—40 Squadron less 2 Flights.
 1 (South African) Division—1 Flight 40 Squadron.

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