

Our troops occupied Massawa on 8th April. The capture of this Port, combined with the destruction of the enemy naval forces, greatly reduced the potential threat to our Red Sea communications.

The successful progress of the campaign, coupled with the almost complete destruction of the enemy air force on all fronts of Italian East Africa, now enabled the greater part of the Squadrons previously contained in the Sudan to be released to other theatres. Thus, during the early part of April the remaining forces operating there were reduced to No. 47 (B) Squadron (Wellesleys), No. 237 (B) Squadron (Hardys, Lysanders and Gladiators) and the Free French Flight (Blenheims). Other units, consisting of No. 1 Squadron, S.A.A.F., No. 14 Squadron, No. 223 Squadron, "K" Flight and No. 1430 Flight were moved with what aircraft remained to them to Egypt where they arrived about the middle of April. Nos. 14 and 223 Squadrons took part in the action against enemy naval forces described below before their departure.

54. In the subsequent advance from Asmara towards Dessie the greater part of the offensive effort against objectives in the Dessie area was made by aircraft from Aden and East Africa. These operations are referred to later. Wellesleys of No. 47 Squadron and Gladiators, Lysanders and Hardys of No. 237 Squadron nevertheless made attacks on a light scale on objectives in the vicinity of Amba Alagi where our advance from the North was held up. Bombing and machine-gun attacks were made on enemy troops and M.T. at Mai Ceu, Alomata and Amba Alagi and on the aerodromes at Alomata, Cercer and Sifani. The scale of attack in this area was considerably increased after 27th April when our column from the South captured Dessie, Nos. 47 and 237 Squadrons making over 80 bomber and fighter sorties on enemy positions around Amba Alagi between 28th April and 3rd May to break down the remaining resistance. The enemy was still holding out, however, at the end of the period under review, although the forces there, under the Duke D'Aosta, subsequently capitulated on 16th May.

Operations at Gondar and in the Lake Tana area were continued throughout this period, 27 medium bomber sorties being made by Free French Flight Blenheims and Wellesleys of No. 47 Squadron, the former providing more than half the total effort. The main weight of this attack was against enemy positions and M.T. at Gondar, while other attacks were made on similar objectives at Bahr Dar South of Lake Tana, at Chelga, Gorgora and on the Gondar-Adowa Road.

It appeared likely at the end of this period that, with our troops held up in the Volchit Pass, Gondar would be the last serious military objective in Italian East Africa.

55. Great credit is due to the A.O.C., Air Commodore L. H. Slatter, O.B.E., D.S.C., D.F.C., for his most efficient handling of the R.A.F. and for his excellent team-work with the Army. No praise can be too high for the pilots and aircrews for their accomplishments. Many were flying in obsolescent single engine aircraft. The country was difficult, and much of the flying had to be done at low heights over hostile positions. Great devotion to duty and a high standard of skill were needed to achieve success under these exacting conditions.

56. In Kenya, under the command of Air Commodore W. Sowrey, D.F.C., A.F.C., the Air Force consisted of six South African Squadrons and one Flight of Glenn Martins, No. 2 (F) Squadron—Furies and Gauntlets, No. 3 (F) Squadron—Hurricanes, No. 11 (B) Squadron—Battles, No. 12 (B) Squadron—J.U.86's, Nos. 40 and 41 (A.C.) Squadron—Hartebeestes; a total of 94 aircraft all told.

During January the establishment of advanced landing grounds was completed as far forward as possible on the fronts facing Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. The advance of General Cunningham's Force started on 10th February and met with some opposition from Italian aircraft operating from Afmadu and Gobwen, but the destruction of 7 C.A.133's and 3 C.R.42's in the first two days went a long way towards establishing the complete air superiority eventually achieved, and which, without doubt, affected the whole course of future operations.

57. On the 11th February, Afmadu was captured and after a further rapid advance Kismayu was occupied on 14th February.

After the fall of Kismayu our aircraft assisted the turning operations which resulted in the forcing of the River Juba and the dash on Mogadiscio. Gobwen, Afmadu, Jelib, Bardera and Dolo were among the targets attacked, also Ischia, Baidoa and Bur Agaba further North.

By the middle of March the forces had reached Gabredarre, having advanced 755 miles in 39 days.

During the remaining operations in March against Harar and Diredawa intense air attacks were made on these places, on military targets in the Jijigga area and on the railway and stations of the Addis Ababa-Djibuti line. Direct hits by bombs were scored on several trains as well as on M.T. on the roads, and traffic was largely immobilised.

Hurricanes of No. 3 S.A.A.F. Squadron "ground-strafted" Diredawa aerodrome on 15th March, damaging 2 S.79's and 5 G.R.32's. Other enemy fighters were shot down in the air over Diredawa.

At this time enemy bombers made a number of attacks on our forward troops at Marda Pass near Jijigga, but did no damage.

On 28th and 30th March enemy fighters machine-gunned Jijigga aerodrome, damaging four of our aircraft on each occasion. Two of the raiders were shot down.

Glenn Martins of the S.A.A.F. did regular long distance reconnaissances in the Addis Ababa direction. Further South in the Boran Area the rains set in early in March, hampering operations. Our bomber aircraft attacked enemy positions at Yavello, Neghelli, Moyale and Mega in support of the Army, and Neghelli was occupied in March. Thus, by the end of March, our forces were firmly established within the Southern boundaries of Abyssinia and further North were already threatening Addis Ababa along the railway.

On this front alone did the enemy show any activity in the air, but it was only spasmodic, and in no way hindered the advance of the Army.

58. After occupying Diredawa on 29th March our forces resumed their advance and after a brief check at Awah moved on to Addis Ababa which surrendered on 6th April. From