

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 Marsabit. 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 Gumbo, while another column (24th G.C. Brigade) was to capture Bullo 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