

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 Iavello 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.