

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by 2nd S.A. Brigade to contact friendly natives, entered Moyale without opposition, the garrison having hurriedly withdrawn to Neghelli on the day Mega fell. 2nd S.A. Infantry Brigade following up the Irregulars occupied the town the next day and found that the enemy had abandoned a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