

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 Gumbo 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.