

demolition parties. One raid by three aircraft was made in the evening, and bombs fell close to Hobart.

On 19th August H.M.A.S. Hobart finally sailed after destroying the principal Government buildings.

V. SUMMARY OF THE OPERATIONS.

42. Our total casualties were 8 British officers killed, 4 wounded, 4 missing; 8 British other ranks killed, 18 wounded, 17 missing; 22 Indian or African other ranks killed, 80 wounded, 99 missing: a total of 260, or little more than 5 per cent. of the force. Almost exactly half of these casualties were in the Northern Rhodesia Regiment of the King's African Rifles, who held the Tug Argan position. The great majority of the missing are believed to have been killed.

That the casualties were comparatively light was due to the fact that most of the troops who were heavily attacked were in strong defences; and that the withdrawals, which were skilfully carried out under cover of darkness, were not interfered with or followed up by the enemy, presumably owing to the heavy casualties he had suffered during the day.

43. Four 3.7 Howitzers, the only artillery with the force, were lost. These guns, owing to their comparatively short range, were placed in forward posts where they undoubtedly did great execution. Two were lost when the post on Mill Hill was overrun; and it was impossible to withdraw the other two when the main position was evacuated, as transport could not be brought up to the front line. All four guns were rendered useless before being abandoned.

The amount of equipment lost by the fighting troops was not abnormal, and was mostly incurred in the posts that were overrun by the enemy. A considerable proportion of the stores at the base and practically the whole of the transport of the forces was lost. This was due to the poor facilities of Berbera as a port. All embarkation and disembarkation had to be done by lighter, of which very few were available, or by ships' boats. Work is only possible at all for two hours each side of high tide. At the season of the year when the operations took place a strong wind, which blows for a number of hours during every twenty-four at irregular times, makes embarkation impossible. It was therefore rightly decided to concentrate on making certain of embarking all personnel. In daylight the ships would have formed a very vulnerable target for the enemy air force. As it happened, the enemy did not follow up to Berbera at once, but by the time that this was evident, the transport had been damaged to render it immobile. Its destruction was therefore completed by naval landing parties.

44. The conduct of the troops, as may be judged from the above account, was in every way excellent in very testing circumstances. They had to face greatly superior numbers, to endure continual heavy artillery fire, often at close range, and to withstand constant attacks from the air. The weather was hot and the climate of Somaliland induces extreme thirst. The steadiness and discipline of all units was very noticeable and there was no failure of resistance or premature retreat. The qualities of the African and Somali troops, on whom the brunt of the fighting fell, are not usually best

shown in static defence and they had not previous experience of shell-fire, yet they showed remarkable stubbornness and bravery. The Indian battalions fought with the skill and tenacity expected of them. The action of The Black Watch on 17th August was worthy of their best traditions.

45. The enemy attacked on many occasions with great dash and determination, and undoubtedly suffered very heavy casualties. After all allowance has been made for the tendency to exaggerate the losses suffered by the enemy, it seems certain that the enemy's casualties were not less than two thousand.

The enemy on several occasions failed to take advantage of his superior numbers and the favourable tactical positions he had obtained, and thus allowed our forces to escape from more than one very dangerous position.

46. An outstanding feature of this short campaign was the wholehearted co-operation afforded to the Army by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.

The work of the Royal Navy in disembarkation and embarkation of the force under the most difficult conditions was most remarkable and deserves the warmest thanks of the Army. I desire to express its appreciation to Rear-Admiral A. J. L. Murray, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., and to all those under him.

The Royal Air Force afforded the utmost possible assistance that their resources permitted, and took very considerable risks in doing so. The Army is deeply grateful to Air Vice Marshal G. R. M. Reid, D.S.O., M.C., and to the Royal Air Force at Aden. I attach as Appendix A a short report by Air Vice Marshal Reid on the work of the Royal Air Force.

47. The temporary loss of the Somaliland Protectorate was due to four main causes:

(a) Our insistence on running our Colonies on the cheap, especially in matters of defence.

(b) The slowness of the War Cabinet, in the first eight or nine months of the war, to allow proper precautions to be taken against the possibility of Italy joining the war against us. This resulted in long delays in the arrival of reinforcements, the withholding of the money necessary for defences, the non-arrival of essential equipment, and a refusal to allow of measures to be taken to establish a proper Intelligence service for fear of impairing relations with Italy.

(c) The collapse of French resistance at Jibuti after a long period of uncertainty. It was this that allowed the full weight of the Italian concentration in the Harar area to be directed against British Somaliland.

(d) The almost complete lack of facilities in Berbera as a port. This was one of the chief reasons why it was impossible to send reinforcements rapidly. A full report of this had been made in 1936 by Colonel Hornby, but no steps were taken to carry out the recommendations made. It may be noted that it took a 3,000-ton ship ten days in normal conditions to unload at Berbera.

48. The reinforcement of Somaliland was piecemeal and hurried. The original delays in sending reinforcements have been explained in paragraph 11 above. That further reinforcements could not be sent earlier was due mainly