

145. It would be idle to close this report without reference to the assistance given by the Union of South Africa, without which the campaign could not have been undertaken.

Apart from the fighting troops, I was indebted to the Union for much of the mechanical transport which made the supply of troops over such great distances in front of the railheads and ports possible, and to them also I owed the provision of a large number of special technical units without which operations in the type of terrain covered could not have taken place. It was with remarkable forethought that these units had been formed before the war and furnished with the most modern equipment.

Through the personal interest of Field Marshal Smuts I was at the start able to knit the Force into a whole, and all the many resources which the Union placed at my disposal were pooled for the common good of the whole force. I knew that no appeal to them would go unanswered if it was humanly possible to meet it. The spirit of co-operation extended right down to the lowest ranks, giving me the greatest confidence in the South African troops, a confidence which was fully justified by the achievements of the South African Division and all other South African troops during the campaign.

(Sgd.) A. G. CUNNINGHAM;

Lieutenant General,

General Officer Commanding,
East Africa Force.

6 June 1941

SECOND REPORT ON EAST AFRICA FORCE OPERATIONS COVERING THE PERIOD FROM OCCUPATION OF ADDIS ABEBA ON 6TH APRIL, 1941, TO THE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES IN THE AREA FOR WHICH EAST AFRICA FORCE WAS RESPONSIBLE. ON 11TH JULY, 1941.

PART I.—INTRODUCTION.

My previous report dealt with the operations carried out by E.A. Force up to the entry of the troops into Addis Abeba on 6th April, 1941.

After this date my immediate responsibilities were both operational and political. It was most desirable to deal the enemy a knock-out blow as soon as possible, but at the same time it was imperative to release as many units and as much transport as possible for Egypt. On the political side it was necessary to place the administration of Ethiopia on a firm base, to re-establish the Emperor, and to lay the foundations of an Ethiopian administration so that full use of Ethiopian military resources could be made after the shortest time, with the eventual object of releasing more of my troops. The pacification of the occupied territories and particularly of the eastern border of British Somaliland where there had been considerable looting of cattle and rape was also imperative.

2. After the fall of Addis Abeba, Asmara and Massawa, the enemy withdrew into three centres or "ridotti" and into the province of Galla-Sidamo. The centres were Dessie, Amba Alagi and Gondar, whereas in the Galla-Sidamo his main forces of approximately 40,000 infantry and militia with about 200 guns, were

in three groups covering an area of about 400 by 300 miles, one group in the Uaddara-Alghe-Sciasciamanna-Soddu area, one in the Gimma area and one in the Lechemti area. The Civil Government had gone to Gimma, but the Viceroy himself went to Dessie.

3. The situation of my own troops was as follows: (H.Q.) 1st S.A. Division and 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade were in process of being transported to Egypt. 2nd S.A. Infantry Brigade had also been offered to Middle East and were at or near Berbera waiting for ships to take them north.

11th (A) Division, consisting of 1st S.A. Brigade, 22nd E.A. Brigade (less one battalion on the L. of C.) and 23rd Nigerian Brigade, were at Adama and Addis Abeba.

12th (A) Division were attacking northwards from Iavello with 21st E.A. Brigade. One Battalion 24th G.C. Brigade was garrisoning Neghelli and the remainder of the Brigade were employed in restoring order in southern Italian Somaliland. 25th E.A. Brigade, also under this division, was advancing towards Maji.

4. After the fall of Addis Abeba I felt my best chance of a speedy liquidation of the enemy in the south was to advance on Gimma, the seat of Government for Lea, and I commenced operations to this end. Before these had developed I received a message from the C.-in-C. to the effect that it was essential that the road from Addis Abeba north to Asmara should be opened as soon as possible so as to allow passage of troops to Egypt via Massawa or Port Sudan, and he wished me to attack Dessie which was 250 miles north of Addis Abeba. I therefore instructed Commander 11th (A) Division to undertake this task with 1st S.A. Brigade Group with the idea that they should fight their way northwards and eventually embark from Massawa or Port Sudan for Egypt. This Brigade Group commenced their advance from Addis Abeba on 13th April. I informed C.-in-C. Middle East that I felt I could not clear the road northwards of Dessie with my own resources, and asked that the Sudan forces should attack Amba Alagi which was the only important remaining defended position on the road. In due course I received notification that the Sudan Forces would carry out this attack but not until 3rd May.

5. It was now apparent to me that I had not enough troops to carry out my first intention of both advancing on Gimma and, by pressure from both divisions advancing north and south, clearing the enemy out of the area of the Great Lakes south of Addis Abeba. I considered that of the two objectives, if only one were to be carried out, the latter was the more important. The troops at Sciasciamanna were a constant threat to my L. of C. at Moggio and Adama, and it would be a great advantage to me also to have a through road via Neghelli from Kenya. I therefore ordered 11th (A) Division to concentrate on attacking Sciasciamanna, and 12th (A) Division to advance on Dalle and Hula. For this latter purpose I relieved the Commander and two battalions of 24th G.C. Brigade, who were restoring order in Italian Somaliland, by garrison battalions, and on 16th April sent them to 12th (A) Division.

The account of the action of 1st S.A. Brigade on Dessie and the operations of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions are given in paras. 54 to 62.