

covering Gelib. In addition enemy communications in Gelib itself were kept under fire by 60 pdrs. This ruse was entirely successful. Many casualties were inflicted by this bombardment and the enemy had to change his L. of C. in this area.

By the morning of the 20th pontoon bridges of improvised bridging material had been established both at Ionte and at Mabungo and I was in a position to bring up the 11th (A) Division, and place them close up behind the bridgehead at Mabungo preparatory to advancing on Mogadiscio should the attack across the river be successful. Before this advance could take place it was essential that Gelib should be taken, and I instructed the Commander of the 12th (A) Division to carry out an operation with this in view. Meanwhile the 1st S.A. Brigade had crossed the river at Ionte and were directed to cut off Gumbo. This operation was carried out with considerable skill, and entailed an arduous march across the peninsula to the sea. Practically the whole of the garrison at Gumbo capitulated, those that did not proceeded on foot along the sea coast towards Modun, and were taken prisoner later.

55. The plan of the Commander of the 12th (A) Division for the capture of Gelib was as follows. The 22nd Brigade Group was ordered to proceed from Mabungo along a track which was marked on the map, but of the condition of which nothing was known, to cut the road to Mogadiscio some 18 miles east of Gelib. Meanwhile the Gold Coast Brigade Group was to advance south from Mabungo, and the 1st S.A. Brigade Group north from Ionte. This operation was carried out with complete success on 22nd February. All three brigades completed their tasks in an exemplary manner, but I must particularly mention the march, practically across country, of the 22nd Brigade Group, which called for the greatest endurance and skill, and also the rapid manner in which 1st S.A. Brigade was able to fight its way north in the face of opposition, and be the first to enter Gelib at 1000 hours on the 22nd February.

56. I wish to commend Major-General Godwin Austen for the skilful plan which he made for the crossing of the river, and the careful instructions he gave for its implementation. The battle of the Giuba undoubtedly dealt the enemy a blow from which he never recovered, and laid the foundation for subsequent successes.

57. During this day enemy forces from Bardera counter-attacked the bridgehead at Mabungo which was held by the 2nd Nigeria Regiment of 11th (A) Division. The counter-attack was not pressed home, was easily beaten off, and did not interfere with my plans of passing the 11th (A) Division across the bridge.

58. At this time I became aware that the enemy had committed practically the whole of the forces facing me to the defence of the river, and very little was left between the river and Mogadiscio. Some thousands of prisoners had been taken; it was known that whole units were dispersing into the bush, and the orders and counter-orders given by the enemy were indicative of extreme confusion. I felt sure, therefore, that in view of the disorganised state of the enemy, I would have little difficulty operating northwards to Harrar after Mogadiscio had been captured. Although the distance by road from Mogadiscio to Harrar was 804 miles,

I found that by denuding the troops left on the Kenya front of transport, I would just be able to use a force of three brigades against Harrar. I therefore cabled on 22nd February to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, pointing out that as the rains in this area arrived later than in Kenya, I would be able to continue operations, and that I thought I could capture Harrar by the end of the first week in April. Permission to continue was duly received.

59. At 0600 hours on the 23rd February the 11th (A) Division with the 23rd Nigerian Brigade and the 22nd E.A. Brigade under command, began their advance from Mabungo to Mogadiscio, and that evening after a sharp fight, elements of the 22nd Brigade occupied Modun, and the next morning Brava. The 1st S.A. Brigade was placed in Force reserve and directed to Brava, and it was my intention that the 12th (A) Division should move northwards via Bardera and Ischia Baidoa. Unfortunately owing to administrative difficulties connected with the amount of supplies which could be landed at Chisimaio, I was not able to advance in this direction till a few days afterwards. The revised Order of Battle is shown in Appendix "D".

60. On 24th February the Nigerian Brigade Group which was destined to lead 11th (A) Division passed through 22nd E.A. Brigade at Modun and Brava. Merca was captured on 25th February after encountering some opposition. That same evening some light forces of the 11th (A) Division entered Mogadiscio, having been unopposed for the final 20 miles.

The distance covered by the Nigerian Brigade Group between 0600 hours 23rd February and 1700 hours 25th was 275 miles.

61. H.M.S. Shropshire carried out a most effective bombardment of enemy camps and dispositions near Modun cross roads on the day previous to its capture. Observation for the bombardment was undertaken by an S.A.A.F. Glen Martin aircraft, the observer of which had fortunately been previously instructed in spotting for naval gun fire. That a large number of casualties were caused during this bombardment was confirmed subsequently on the capture of Modun.

62. About this time all indications showed that the enemy had left Bardera and that 101st Division was withdrawing northwards. I was still not able to operate strong forces from 12th (A) Division, but ordered the Commander to move light forces to Bardera, Dolo and Lugh Ferrandi. These operations were undertaken quickly. Bardera was occupied on 26th February, Ischia Baidoa on 28th February, Lugh Ferrandi on 3rd March, Dolo on 5th March. A further number of prisoners were taken including the commander and staff of 20th Colonial Brigade. It transpired that the whole of the African personnel of this brigade, some 3,000 men, had dispersed into the bush.

63. The policy of breaking the crust and then motoring straight on, regardless of what was happening in rear, was fully justified in the result, though in face of a more determined enemy, counter-attacks against our rear and communications would doubtless have been troublesome.

Shortage of water and difficulties of supply in the hot bush country over which our advance took place worked their effect on the Italian units which had been left behind, the