

personnel of which eventually surrendered in great numbers or dispersed into the bush.

64. The rapid advance beyond the Giuba of some 300 miles was met by bringing the port of Chisimaio into use as an advanced base. Stores and supplies were brought by sea from Mombasa. Difficulty encountered at the port due to damage and destruction carried out by the Italians was overcome through the excellent work of the staff attached to the port both ashore and afloat which enabled the main requirements of the Force to be landed. Even so, it was necessary to maintain the 300 miles of road L of C in addition.

65. At a conservative estimate the number of the enemy made non-effective by operations up to the fall of Mogadiscio by killing, prisoners or dispersion was 31,000. This accounted for the whole 102nd enemy division and more than half 101st.

Great quantities of war material, so much that it had not been assessed at the time of writing, was captured, and in Afgoi and Mogadiscio main ammunition dumps, engineer and ordnance stores, etc., were found complete. The amount of war material and military supplies captured did not support the theory that the enemy were short of essential stores, and later captures also confirmed that he still had considerable military means.

Although we were informed in Mogadiscio that no petrol had been left, the offer of rewards resulted in the disclosure of 350,000 gallons of motor spirit and 80,000 gallons of aviation. This enabled the advance to be continued with light forces before the ports of Mogadiscio or Merca were opened.

*C. Operations of 11th (A) Division from fall of Mogadiscio to fall of Addis Abeba.*

*(26th February to 5th April, 1941.)*

66. When I asked the C.-in-C. Middle East for permission to advance to Harrar, I also asked him if the port of Berbera could be reopened, to enable me to transfer my L. of C. using that port as a base. From Mogadiscio to Giggiga is 744 miles by road while from Berbera to Giggiga is only 204 miles; hence this transfer would effect a reduction of the road L. of C. of 540 miles. Consequently A.O.C. Aden was ordered by C.-in-C. Middle East to prepare a plan for the retaking of Berbera by sea in co-operation with the advance of my forces northwards.

67. Some difficulty occurred at this time in regard to the opening of the port of Mogadiscio. On 2nd February magnetic mines had been laid by Naval aircraft in the entrance of the harbour. Apparatus for successfully sweeping these mines was not immediately available. Consequently I decided to establish temporarily a base port at Merca using lighters and tugs which had been found at Mogadiscio. Some 200 officers and crews of the British Mercantile Marine had been discovered as prisoners on capturing that port. My thanks are due to a number of these who, in spite of having suffered the privations and hardships of 6 months of prison life, with great self-sacrifice volunteered to assist in the reconditioning of the damaged tugs and the opening of Merca as a port.

As soon as Mogadiscio was declared safe ships were diverted there and it was brought into use as the Advanced Base. Damage to cranes, jetties and decauville railways had been done

by the Italians and lighters had been sunk. In a very short period of time, however, thanks mainly to the good work of the S.A. Harbour Construction Company and the 24th Workshop Park Company, over 500 tons were being unloaded daily, and, as excellent storage sheds existed, Depots were soon established.

68. As no shipping for M.T. was available, the road L. of C. from Kenya—now some 800 miles in length—had still to be kept open for use by M.T. convoys; a large portion of it had broken up into dust pans and this journey was becoming increasingly difficult.

69. The administrative arrangements of the advance from the Tana River had been based upon the previous establishment of dumps of supplies, petrol and ammunition as far forward as possible. This avoided heavy daily convoys from railhead, and had the effect of reducing the length of the L. of C.

For the advance north from Mogadiscio no such facilities were available. There was no respite for the accumulation of reserves, for the reorganisation of transport units, by now much dispersed and in need of servicing, nor for the regrouping of staffs to establish new depots. Improvisation and individual initiative followed by much hard work on the part of lorry drivers, depot staffs, and others too numerous to mention, alone made it possible for the flow of supplies to keep pace with the advance. The line of supply to the 11th (A) Division increased at a rate of 40 miles a day to a distance of 750 miles from Mogadiscio and that to the 12th (A) Division to over 450 miles.

With the sole exception of the 70 miles narrow gauge railway from Mogadiscio to Villaggio d'Abruzzi which the 38th S.A. Railway Construction Company very soon had working, maintenance over these distances had to be effected entirely by M.T. convoys over roads which could at best be said to be good only in parts.

70. After the fall of Mogadiscio my information was to the effect that the remnants of the Italian Giuba forces were withdrawing on Giggiga and, except for these, no other serious enemy forces existed south of this place. The enemy in the northern area consisted of three fresh brigades between Giggiga and Harrar and one in British Somaliland.

71. After a pause of only three days, thanks to the petrol captured from the enemy and the possibility of using the port of Merca, the 11th (A) Division was in a position on 1st March to resume the advance on Giggiga with a mobile column from the Nigerian Brigade.

The strength of this column varied with the ability to supply it. Thus Dagabur, 590 miles north of Mogadiscio, was attacked on 10th March by a column consisting only of some armoured cars and two companies of the 2nd Nigeria Regiment, with the remainder of the battalion 100 miles behind. I consider the courageous advance of this column under the command of Lieut.-Colonel J. A. S. Hopkins, unsupported for many miles back, is worthy of special mention. At Dagabur a small Italian rear guard was surprised on the point of withdrawing in lorries, and Lieut.-Colonel Hopkins was able to cut off the retreat of the rear lorries with some loss to the enemy in killed, prisoners and transport.

The average distance covered daily by the leading troops after leaving Mogadiscio was 65