

in the Abyssinian war for nearly a year. Both these positions had been prepared by the Italians a long time previously and were strongly held and fortified.

22. 24th Gold Coast Brigade commenced their initial moves for the attack on the Uaddara position on 19th April and finally captured it on 10th May. The country in that area is precipitous, intersected with deep ravines and covered with impenetrable forest. During the period up to 2nd May extensive patrolling was carried out in the thick bush to determine the enemy's strength and to locate his flanks. The enemy's position was found to extend to a depth of 5 miles on either side of the road. The nature of the country almost entirely precluded the use of A.F.V.s. The position was held mainly by Eritreans who, as it proved, had apparently not been shaken as were the other Colonial troops. The conditions of wet and mud were appalling and the Gold Coast troops were feeling the cold. In spite of all these difficulties the attack was begun on 3rd May when the 2nd Gold Coast Regiment made a wide flanking march cutting their way through the belts of thick forest with their pangas. On 4th May 1st Gold Coast Regiment supported by artillery attacked two prominent hills which were strongly held by the enemy. A.F.V.s were sent up an old Abyssinian track to support the flank attack by 2nd Gold Coast Regiment but could make little progress. Later in the afternoon 2nd Gold Coast Regiment came in on the enemy's left rear and by 5th May had cut the road behind the position. The enemy however still held his main positions and it was not until 10th May that he was finally driven from them on the two hills. In capturing this very formidable position the determination shown by the Gold Coast troops sustained the fighting reputation which they had gained in the first phase of the campaign.

23. During this period 21st E.A. Brigade on the Iavallo road was advancing towards Giabassire. On 5th and 6th May they attacked with success the forward position at Budagamo and continued their march under almost impossible road conditions.

It must be remembered that the whole of the operations of 12th (A) Division round Neghelli and Iavello were being carried out during the period of the heavy rains of which the peak period in that area is the month of April. As the advance of 12th (A) Division proceeded the rains proceeded with them; the peak period in the Addis Abeba area is August, and month by month the volume of rain in this area was increasing while decreasing in the south. I had been told before leaving Kenya that no operations could be carried out in Southern Abyssinia after March. Yet operations were in fact undertaken right up to the present time (July). It would be idle to pretend that the rains were not the greatest hindrance, but the conditions were conquered by grit and determination, and in this connection I particularly wish to mention the march of 21st E.A. Brigade over practically non-existent roads. Brigadier A. McD. Ritchie, D.S.O., was never daunted and his cheerful tenacity was echoed right through his Brigade. To the columns in the north I had added caterpillar tractors, which had been captured, carried in lorries, to salvage vehicles which got stuck, but I was unable at that period to get them round to 12th (A) Division.

24. About this time I received a wire from the C.-in-C. suggesting that operations should now cease against the Italians left in Italian East Africa as there appeared little chance of liquidating them before the heavy rains. I was asked for minimum garrisons on the defensive, and told to be prepared to release everything else for Egypt. I replied to the effect that I was extremely anxious to clear the Neghelli-Addis Abeba road of the enemy so as to remove all threat to Moggio and Adama, which I considered very vulnerable points on my L. of C., and to get a through road to Kenya. That if General Wavell wished it I would put a term to the operations. The C.-in-C. wired back I could have until the end of May.

25. For the whole of this period 2nd S.A. Brigade had been waiting for shipping and I had very regretfully been unable to use these troops. I now pressed Middle East to give me the earliest date by which shipping could arrive, to which question 3rd June was given in reply. On 21st and 29th April respectively I therefore decided to place 1st Natal Mounted Rifles and 1st Field Force Battalion from this brigade under General Wetherall with instructions that they would have to be released on 27th May.

26. Meanwhile 12th (A) Division had captured Alghe and the Uaddara position, and Bertello's threat had not materialised, so I instructed General Wetherall to continue his advance southwards, capture Sciasciamanna, and join forces with the 12th (A) Division. If this attack was successful there appeared every prospect that the considerable enemy forces on the two roads leading south from Dalle would be trapped.

His plan was to advance with one battalion west of the lakes, by a track running through Bubissa to cut the Sciasciamanna-Soddu road, while another column of two battalions advanced direct on Sciasciamanna across the Auada and Dadaba Rivers.

27. The Air Force had nullified the enemy air opposition after attacks on Dessie aerodrome on 6th April and on Gimma aerodrome on 10th April, and as the aircraft were therefore available I arranged with Air Headquarters for the formation of a close support group in order to give the divisional Commanders additional air support for their operations. During the advance of the 1st S.A. Brigade towards Dessie 4 Hartbees and 4 Gladiator aircraft had been put under the operational command of the Brigade Commander and the value of their close support had been proved. Accordingly a Close Support Group consisting of two flights of Battle bombers, one flight of Gladiator fighters and two flights of Hartbees co-operation aircraft, was formed on 20th May and put under command of 11th (A) Division.

This arrangement worked with considerable success as the close support group could be stationed on an advanced landing ground in close proximity to the advanced divisional headquarters. Considerable time saving was effected by having the bombers and fighters standing by ready to take-off to attack targets located by the army co-operation aircraft. With the remnants of the Italian divisions attempting to escape across country the quick results thereby achieved were invaluable, especially in the way in which offensive action could be taken against