

protected by the patriot leaders, Dedjasmatches Mangasha and Nagash, who had received about 1,000 rifles from us.

#### *Armacheho-Begemedet.*

Excluding the forces gathered at Metemma to meet our offensive there, the enemy had one Colonial Brigade, twelve Blackshirt battalions and two Cavalry Groups in the area.

We had Major Arthur Bentinck of Mission 101, accompanied by the Emperor's representative, Tsahafi Tazaz Haile, as a result of whose efforts only one chief, Gerasmatch Redda of Chelga, took armed action against the Italians. In addition Captain Foley, R.E., was operating on the Gondar-Metemma road with a small band and supply of explosives.

#### *Walkait.*

The enemy had three Colonial battalions and one Blackshirt battalion in the area.

We had no representative but had armed two chiefs, Dedjasmatch Adane and Fitaurari Misfin, who caused the Italians a certain amount of trouble.

#### *Shoa and Wollo.*

We had no communication with these areas, which contained some important patriot leaders, Ras Ababa Aragai, Fitauraris Gerasu Duke and Shakka Bakale.

#### *The Plan.*

One convoy had reached Mission 101 in the Gojjam since its departure from the Sudan in August, 1940. The R.A.F. based on the Sudan had begun deep raiding on Dangila, Bahrdar Giyorgis and Enjabara. This had stirred the patriots to some activity of a minor nature, and the Italians to counter-activity, raids and cross-country marches. Some of the irregular Banda leaders on the escarpment of Gojjam were thinking of transferring their allegiance to the Emperor. The Italian command, anxious about the potential threat in Gojjam, appointed their most distinguished colonial commander, General Nasi, to the new Western Command, which included the three first zones mentioned above. They further agreed (on a financial consideration) with the hereditary leader of Gojjam, Ras Hailu Tekla Haimanot, that he should return to the province, and by their concentrations at Metemma and in Beni Shangul were clearly hoping to forbid our arms traffic into Gojjam, limited though that was by the lack of animal transport and the poverty of our own resources.

In November, following the visit of the Secretary of State for War (Mr. Anthony Eden), a new G(R) staff for the rebellion was appointed in Khartoum. Major O. C. Wingate, D.S.O., took charge of operations. They were given considerable resources in finance and weapons, and the first step in the forward policy now initiated was a flight on 20th November by Major Wingate to Colonel Sandford's Headquarters in central Gojjam, where the principles of the forthcoming offensive were discussed.

At this and later conferences the following plan of action was evolved.

The Emperor Haile Selassie, with his bodyguard, was to enter Ethiopia as soon as possible and to make his first camp on the massif of Belaya, a patriot area detached from the escarpment and lying 90 miles north-west of Burye.

For this purpose, one company of the recently formed Sudan Frontier Battalion was to

occupy Belaya, and later was to be followed by three of the remaining companies.

1 Ethiopian Battalion, which had just begun its training in Khartoum, was to be distributed into Operational Centres under British Officers and N.C.Os., and these were to march into Gojjam via Belaya and attach themselves to various patriot chiefs.

2 Ethiopian Battalion and 4 Eritrean Battalion were to be brought from Kenya to form the nucleus of the Emperor's Bodyguard, which would, however, have a fighting role.

Further members of the Bodyguard were to be found by Colonel Sandford in Gojjam and sent to Belaya for training.

Up to 25,000 camels were to be raised in the Sudan to transport the necessities for a nine months' campaign as far as the escarpment.

Colonel Sandford was to raise up to 3,000 mules in Gojjam for the escarpment haul.

The supply of arms and ammunition to the quarrelsome and ineffective chiefs north of Gojjam was to cease, but the section of Mission 101 was to remain there to keep the population sweet with money and food.

The ultimate object of this plan was to seize an Italian stronghold in Gojjam, preferably Dangila, instal the Emperor nearby, and from this centre to widen the area of revolt and desertion.

For the rest of 1940 and until 20th January, 1941, work to put the plan into operation went steadily ahead. 2 Ethiopian Battalion arrived in the Sudan from Kenya and began its training, though 4 Eritrean Battalion arrived too late to participate in warlike activity. Three Operational Centres were formed and by 20th January, one had already gone forward. By the same date four companies of the Sudan Frontier Battalion, who were to be the spearhead of the movement, reached or were marching for Belaya, at whose foot an aerodrome was nearing completion. Thousands of camels with volunteer drivers had been collected from all over the Sudan, and were on the move to Belaya. Difficulties, however, were experienced in getting the Abyssinian end of the scheme to keep pace with the Sudanese. It was found that the patriot chiefs did not take kindly to the idea of releasing men from their own forces and so weakening themselves in order to increase the Imperial Bodyguard. They were also very slow in collecting mules. In the end it was found necessary to drive the camel transport up the escarpment into Gojjam, and this, in combination with the arduous approach over lava soil to Belaya, was responsible for the large animal mortality (12,000 out of 15,000 camels) of the Gojjam campaign. First attempts to break a route for M.T. to Belaya failed.

Meanwhile the R.A.F. continued to drop bombs and propaganda on the Gojjam strongholds, and included Burye and the main frontier Banda posts of Guba and Wanbera in their programme. Exploiting the rout of Colonel Rolle's Banda in October, we armed the negroid Gumz people near Guba, and this, associated with the intensification of our propaganda and a series of heavy air attacks, led to the panic abandonment of Guba in the first days of January. This constituted the first Italian territorial loss in the campaign, and, by removing the threat to our lines of communication from the south, greatly simplified our penetration of Gojjam.