

any enemy A.F.V.s located either from the air or by the ground troops.

The heavy bombers and Hurricanes were stationed in Addis Abeba during the whole period of these operations and in spite of very bad flying conditions they were used extensively to attack targets farther afield and to drop pamphlets.

28. On 11th May the 5th K.A.R. advancing west of the lakes captured Bubissa, taking some prisoners and guns, but were counter-attacked by six medium and three light tanks and a Banda group. The C.O. decided that he would be unable to hold the position and conducted an orderly withdrawal behind the Gidu. The armoured cars covered the withdrawal and acted as a decoy to the enemy tanks. Unfortunately three armoured cars got bogged following the infantry over soft ground and had to be abandoned after all weapons, etc., had been removed. (In point of fact all these armoured cars were eventually recaptured.) Meanwhile on 13th May 1 N.M.R. attacked the positions covering Sciasciamanna. This energetic attack was completely successful and resulted in the capture of 800 prisoners, two batteries of artillery and nine tanks. The advance was continued to Sciasciamanna which was entered on 14th May, and to Dalle which was occupied on 17th May. A further 650 prisoners, some guns and armoured cars were captured.

29. The enemy now appeared to be in a state of great confusion. Their 21st Colonial Division was on the road between Algehe and Dilla, and the 24th Colonial Division between Afrara and Hula, and it seemed that with the occupation of Dalle these two divisions were completely cut off. Our patrols from 12th (A) Division operating northwards towards the very strong Giabassire position north of Algehe found it abandoned, with wounded and heavy guns left behind.

30. I therefore arranged to meet Commanders of 11th and 12th (A) Divisions at the former's Headquarters near Alatu on 17th May, to concert further plans.

At this time I was of opinion that if I occupied Gimma very little more resistance would be made in the Galla Sidamo. Amba Alagi had fallen and the Viceroy was captured. The Supreme Command had been taken over by General Gazzera who had his Headquarters at Gimma which was also the seat of Government. The women and children there, amounting to 2,000, would no doubt be an added embarrassment but were not a very great addition to the large numbers already in our hands. It appeared to me that the great military and political advantages to be gained from the final liquidation of the enemy in Italian East Africa far outweighed any embarrassment the added civilians and prisoners would give us. Finally there appeared every likelihood of cutting off or destroying four of the six enemy divisions left in the Galla Sidamo by the occupation of Soddu, and therefore Gimma could not be very strongly defended. I placed this point of view before the C.-in-C. concurred.

It was my plan therefore to stage an attack towards Gimma as soon as possible. In order, however, to make the Neghelli-Addis Abeba road absolutely secure, and to complete the cutting off of the enemy 21st, 24th and 101st Divisions, I considered that Soddu should be my immediate objective. This place stood at

important road junctions which would preclude any enemy movement either north or east against my forces except from Gimma itself.

I had hoped to carry out this attack with a formation of 12th (A) Division and to transfer the pressure of 11th (A) Division from the Sciasciamanna area to the all-weather Addis Abeba-Gimma road where 3rd Nigeria Regiment was holding the left bank of the River Omo, so that Gimma could be attacked from two directions. 12th (A) Division had however been experiencing very heavy rain all over their L. of C., and the advances they had been making against very strong positions had of necessity been slow. I could not count on getting them up quickly. The enemy were clearly straining every nerve to form a defensive front east of Soddu, and I considered therefore that I must attack them as soon as possible and not give them time to do so. I therefore ordered 11th (A) Division to advance on Soddu as soon as possible. I told General Godwin Austen, however, that he was to make every effort to concentrate one of his brigades as soon as possible with the object of relieving 11th (A) Division, either at Soddu if it was captured, or to continue the attack against it if it were not. It was my intention only to leave one brigade of 12th (A) Division and all the supporting arms in the north and to withdraw the remainder to the Kenya frontier so as to ease the supply situation, and release more transport for Egypt.

31. The enemy 21st and 24th Divisions were still continuing their weary march northwards to Dalle which, it will be recalled, was in our hands. The only road by which withdrawal in M.T. could take place branched left from the Uondo-Sciasciamanna road some 10 miles north of Dalle. If this road could not be opened up the only alternative was for these divisions to abandon their equipment and take to mule tracks. Contact had been made with the rear of 24th Division by the 1st Gold Coast Regiment which was leading the eastern column of 12th (A) Division, and the Brigade Commander and the greater part of the rear Brigade was captured at Hula. The 21st E.A. Brigade had now reached a stage where it was impossible to advance further with M.T. owing to the state of the roads. 1/2 K.A.R. was therefore placed on an improvised pack basis and continued the advance northwards on foot with the object of driving 21st Division into the hands of the South Africans at Dalle. The remaining two battalions of 21st Brigade returned to Iavello.

32. General Gazzera was issuing a constant flow of orders to 21st and 24th Divisions to attack our forces at Dalle who, he thought, were in very small numbers. He was obviously quite out of the picture as to the real state of affairs. Desertions of Colonial troops were becoming wholesale, and it was only a short time after this that, having become aware of the true state of affairs, Gazzera issued an order that only nationals were to continue the retreat, and all Colonial troops were to be abandoned. I cannot say I was enamoured of the internal security prospect with which I was almost certainly to be faced in the future as the result of this order.

33. 11th (A) Division had now available the 22nd E.A. Brigade in which 1/1 K.A.R. (who were still on L. of C. duties north of