

capture of many prisoners as well as securing Commando Hill from which good observation was obtained. On the night of the 3/4th May, Skinner's Horse and 51 Commando attacked strongly but met with stiff resistance and had to withdraw about midnight. Though this attack may have appeared to Fletcher Force to have been a failure, it did in fact achieve its object and the enemy was convinced, until too late, that our attack was coming from the direction of the Falaga Pass.

#### *Feint by 3/18 Garhwal Rifles.*

On the afternoon of 3rd May the carriers of 3/18 Garhwal Rifles debouched in the Enda Medani Alem valley, occupying it by 1730 hours as if anxious to make as much ground as possible before dark. The rifle companies occupied in succession the hills to the west of the village, so timing their movements that the last thing the enemy saw before dark was a steady advance towards his position. After dark vigorous patrolling was carried out and one patrol succeeded in scaling the precipitous Bald Hill. This bluff was successful. The enemy believed he had repulsed a strong attack. Behind 3/18 Garhwal Rifles noise, activity and the display of lights, all carefully controlled, gave added realism to the deception. The enemy was deceived by these manoeuvres, and placed his forces to repel an attack astride the road and from the direction of Falaga Pass.

#### *The Attack of 29th Indian Infantry Brigade.*

At 0415 hours on 4th May, 29th Indian Infantry Brigade moved forward to the attack supported by all available artillery. The attack went with great dash and speed, capturing Pinnacle and Elephant Hill. Beyond this the ridge narrows and is devoid of cover, all approaches being commanded by machine-guns from Bald Hill, and other prominent features. The maps had given no indication of the exceeding steepness and narrowness of the ridge beyond Elephant. Further advance in daylight was impossible. At 0415 hours on 5th May, the attack was resumed and Middle Hill was captured. Between Middle Hill and Little Alagi the ridge again narrows to a razor-back about 150 yds. wide, wired, flanked by precipices and under machine-gun fire. 1 Worcesters reached, and at one place went through, the wire, but became pinned and could not move in daylight. Middle Hill was consolidated and the Worcesters were withdrawn to this area on the night 5/6th May. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was now definitely checked.

#### *Operations by Patriots and South African Forces.*

In other areas Allied forces were closing in on Amba Alagi. A strong force of patriots under Ras Seyoum and accompanied by a small force of S.D.F. had advanced over the hills to Socota, 50 miles south-west of Amba Alagi. Here they had captured the Italian garrison and destroyed the fort. Proceeding eastwards across-country, they struck the main road about Quoram and Alomata on 2nd May and then advanced on Mai Ceu which they summoned to surrender on 6th May. Elsewhere patriot forces had been directed to cut the roads Debarech - Gondar - Chelga, Gondar - Dessie, Dessie-Assab and communications round Dessie itself.

#### *South African Forces.*

A detachment of 1st South African Brigade, which had captured Dessie, was sent forward from Dessie on 30th April. Advancing rapidly, in spite of road-blocks, by 5th May their advanced forces had reached Alomata, where they were delayed by a serious road-block. Their advance moved so successfully that the rest of the 1st South African Brigade Group, less one battalion, was ordered to join their leading troops and operate against Amba Alagi. G.O.C. East Africa signalled that he proposed to place this brigade group under command Troops in the Sudan on its arrival at Alomata. This offer was gratefully accepted. On 8th May 1st South African Brigade came under command 5th Indian Division. Difficulties of communication were considerable. Wireless was not working very satisfactorily in the mountains. Touch was made with the South African Brigade by liaison officers. Later the Commander 5th Indian Division flew to meet Commander 1st South African Brigade. From now on the enemy forces at Amba Alagi were closely beleaguered.

#### *Re-adjustment.*

Since 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was now held up, it became clear that more weight was necessary on the left flank and that Fletcher Force needed infantry. The advance so far had made the L. of C. much more secure and 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment could now be spared from L. of C. work. This battalion was sent to join Fletcher Force. 3/18 Garhwal Rifles, having accomplished their job of deceiving the enemy in the centre, were relieved by Skinner's Horse and also joined Fletcher Force, which became 9th Indian Infantry Brigade (less one battalion).

#### *Attack on 8/9th May.*

On 29th Indian Infantry Brigade front an out-flanking movement further to the south was carried out. 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles, with one company 1 Worcesters under command, descended by night some 2,000 feet into a narrow valley from which they climbed up to within assaulting distance of Castle Ridge. This was attacked silently at 0410 hours on 8th May, artillery concentrations being put down to simulate a dawn attack on Little Alagi and Bald Hill. All objectives except a small portion of Castle Hill were quickly captured. On the north end of Castle Hill a white flag was displayed but when 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles advanced to take over the position, they were greeted by a shower of bombs and suffered severely. A thick mist then came down on the hill-tops, under cover of which the Italians were able to assemble for a counter-attack. This was successful and Castle Hill was recaptured by the enemy. Owing to the need for achieving surprise and complicated by the mist, our artillery had not ranged on Castle Ridge and could not consequently give effective support to 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles.

In the centre demonstrations were kept up to play upon the enemy's nerves and keep him watching this sector. These demonstrations drew a most impressive amount of enemy fire.

#### *Operations of 9th Indian Infantry Brigade.*

During the night of 7/8th May 9th Indian Infantry Brigade had made ground towards the