

were left in British Somaliland when the evacuation took place.

The troops left under my command by A.O.C. Aden are given in Appendix "G."

#### *E. Operations of 12th (A) Division*

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

98. On 25th February 12th (A) Division consisted of the 21st E.A. Infantry Brigade at Wajir and the 24th G.C. Brigade which was at Gelib. The 22nd E.A. Brigade had been put under 11th (A) Division for the advance on Mogadiscio, and 1st S.A. Brigade had come into Force Reserve. 12th (A) Division had been instructed on 24th February to reconnoitre towards Bardera and, if it was found unoccupied, to make demonstrations towards Iscia Baidoa.

On 26th February I met the Commander 12th (A) Division at Gelib and explained the scope of future operations and emphasised the limitations imposed by the existing supply situation. Commander 12th (A) Division anticipated that if Bardera was occupied he could capture it by 2nd March and Iscia Baidoa by 5th March. To assist in the capture of Bardera and subsequently to garrison that place it was arranged that one battalion of 21st E.A. Brigade from Wajir should move there direct. Considerable apprehension was felt at the time about troops getting caught by the rains in Bardera and Iscia Baidoa with insufficient supplies. The same day a report was received that a patrol of the 24th G.C. Brigade had entered Bardera which was found to be unoccupied. Reports were also received that Iscia Baidoa and Dinsor had already been evacuated as a result of a message from the Duce ordering the evacuation of Italian Somaliland for Abyssinia. This was confirmed by patrols which occupied Iscia Baidoa on 27th February and captured 200 native troops and large quantities of ammunition, supplies and petrol.

99. At this period 12th (A) Division was given a call on 1st S.A. and 22nd E.A. Brigades to assist in pacifying the large area of country for which it was responsible. The right boundary of this Division was brought right up to the Mogadiscio-Belet Uen road so as to free 11th (A) Division of pacification tasks.

100. On 3rd March patrols reported Lugh Ferrandi unoccupied except for a few civilians whom they collected. H.Q. 24th G.C. Brigade moved to Iscia Baidoa and further patrols were sent to Dolo and Oddur. The patrol to Dolo found it unoccupied. The Oddur patrol reported Uegit evacuated and looted, and then proceeded on 4th March to occupy Oddur which was also found deserted.

On 6th March a patrol was despatched from Dolo to Mandera on receipt of information that Mandera had been evacuated and that the nearest enemy were at Neghelli. This patrol reported Mandera deserted on 15th March. A further patrol was despatched from Iscia Baidoa along the road Belet-Uen and found this route to be impassable in wet weather.

101. In anticipation of the projected transfer of 1st S.A. Division to the eastern sector to take Harrar, 12th (A) Division H.Q. moved on 7th March to Bullo Erillo so that it would be more conveniently placed to move into 1st S.A. Division area. When this project was abandoned owing to early rains hampering

movement, 12th (A) Division H.Q. opened on 11th March three miles north of Giumbo to facilitate the supply of Division H.Q. and Divisional troops from Chisimaio.

102. During the whole of this period both the 1st S.A. Infantry Brigade and the 22nd E.A. Infantry Brigade which, for reasons of supply were located at Brava and Merca, had been rounding up a considerable number of prisoners left over from the Giuba battle and locating large quantities of ammunition, supplies and petrol in the area Bur Acaba-Afgoi-Modun. Active patrolling by these brigades resulted in hundreds of Italians, Colonial Infantry and Banda surrendering with their arms and equipment, and much was done to restore order in this area. Patrols of 2nd Gold Coast Regiment from Iscia Baidoa to Bur Acaba collected further prisoners.

As a result of desertions, armed bands in considerable numbers were engaged in banditry and looting all over the occupied territory. From this time onwards troops were in constant demand by the Political authorities for the restoration of order and this state of affairs still exists.

103. On 11th March 22nd E.A. Brigade reverted to command 11th (A) Division and 1st S.A. Brigade together with the 22nd Mountain Battery, 4th S.A. Field Brigade, and 2nd S.A. A.Tk. Battery were also placed under command 11th (A) Division.

104. A column consisting of 3rd G.C. Regiment, 51st G.C. Light Battery and a troop of armoured cars left Dolo at 0630 hours on 17th March to reconnoitre to Neghelli. Progress was slow owing to minefields and road-blocks. Four miles east of Neghelli opposition was met and overcome, and Neghelli itself was occupied at 0830 hours on 21st March. No administrative arrangements could be made at that time to maintain troops in Neghelli, so the column returned to Dolo on 26th March. On 23rd March the Commander 12th (A) Division had been ordered by me to do what he could to keep the enemy forces north of Neghelli engaged. By making a show of force in this area it was hoped to delay the withdrawal of enemy forces on the route Neghelli-Addis Ababa and thus to contribute to the success of operations being undertaken by 11th (A) Division in the Harrar-Auasc River area. Unfortunately this message was delayed and before receipt the Neghelli columns, which had never been intended to stay, had been withdrawn. Accordingly, re-occupation was decided upon provided the necessary administrative arrangements could be overcome. A column of 3rd G.C. Regiment less two companies, one troop of E.A.A.C. Regiment and a section of 51st G.C. Light Battery left Dolo early on 30th March and reached Neghelli on 1st April. In the meantime, however a patrol of 1/2nd K.A.R. from the 21st E.A. Infantry Brigade at Iavello had already re-occupied Neghelli on 30th March. The 3rd G.C. Regiment remained in Neghelli and the 1/2nd K.A.R. patrol returned to Iavello. No enemy were reported near Neghelli but local riots were taking place between Boran and Somali tribesmen and punitive patrols had to be sent out to round up offenders. The enemy were believed to be holding a position in the area Uaddara and a patrol was accordingly sent out to investigate. The patrol returned on 5th April