

patrol actions along the Dabus River. On 21st April 2/6 K.A.R. were ordered to operate south and south-east towards Mendi and Ghimbi in co-operation with one Belgian battalion which, after the capture of Dembi Dollo, was directed on Yubdo. Thereafter 2/6 K.A.R. was to continue eastwards to Lekempti, and the Belgians towards Gore, as far as the administrative situation permitted. Patrol activity continued in this area, and various small actions were fought, but the enemy positions at Dembi Dollo were too strong for the Belgians to take. The enemy had air superiority in this area, the majority of our Air Force being engaged in Northern Ethiopia.

At the end of April the Belgians had six companies spread out from the Bortai River to Gambela. Throughout the month of May, 2/6 K.A.R. and the Belgian Contingent were thrown on the defensive. Initiative had passed to the enemy who threatened to retake Asosa and Afodu with his considerable garrison in the Mendi area. This necessitated the disposition of 2/6 K.A.R. to cover the approaches from Mendi over the River Dabus, and the temporary evacuation of Ghidame. The weakness of our forces must now have been apparent to the enemy.

The Belgians were subjected to regular air bombing. There was a considerable amount of sickness amongst them. Until the westward drive from Addis Ababa and the Lakes diverted the enemy's threat to Asosa, it was not safe to move 2/6 K.A.R. southwards from the Dabus River to co-operate with the Belgians.

In June 2/6 K.A.R. moved south to Ghidame, operating from there south-eastwards to cut the road Dembi Dollow-Yubdo. The road was attacked on 3rd July, and by the 4th July good progress was being made. On 2nd July the Belgian Contingent forced the River Bortai, attacking towards Dembi Dollo on the 3rd. At 0200 hours on 4th July General Gazzera asked for terms and surrendered the remnants of his army to the Belgians.

PART VIII.

Operations in the Boma.

During the early stages of the war operations on the Boma Plateau had been confined to patrol activity only. It was not until forces operating from Kenya along the west side of Lake Rudolph were ready, that the Equatorial Corps could undertake an advance into south-west Ethiopia. Maji was the centre of the Italian resistance in this area. The natives were friendly neither to the Italians nor the British and even before the war had been a constant source of trouble. Sudan forces in this area consisted of four companies of the Equatorial Corps and a nebulous force of patriots who, in this area, achieved very little. Time and resources did not allow the making of an all-weather road across the Boma Plateau towards the frontier. It was therefore not possible to maintain regular forces in active operations during the rains, which, in this area, begin early in the year. On 17th February these decisions were conveyed to the O.C. Equatorial Corps. He was instructed to take steps immediately to dump forward sufficient supplies to maintain at least one company of the Equatorial Corps and the patriots, who numbered about 500, during the rains.

The general outline of the plan was for companies of the Equatorial Corps to move on Maji via Zilmanu in co-operation with 25th East African Brigade. On 19th February No. 2 Company of the Equatorial Corps encountered a battalion of 18th Colonial Brigade. An action ensued in which the enemy left 150 dead, our casualties being 5 killed and 9 wounded including one British officer. The enemy battalion was driven off.

On 2nd April Maji was reported strongly held by the enemy and there was a considerable number of anti-British natives with a stiffening of regulars in the Zilmanu and Beru areas. Between these posts the country was in a state of semi-civil war. On 8th April a message was received from G.O.C. East Africa that Maji had been evacuated and expressing the opinion that the Merille tribe would not submit unless Maji was occupied by regular troops. He also stated that 25th East African Brigade would only be able to garrison Maji for a limited time as it was wanted for further operations. He asked if the Equatorial Corps could take over the garrisoning of Maji. This was agreed to and the Equatorial Corps moved forward to occupy Maji. The rains had already started and the state of the tracks was appalling. The country is covered with tropical jungle. Progress was slow and difficult. By 25th April the Equatorial Corps was still ten miles from Maji, having been held up by road conditions and flooded rivers. It was not until early in May that Maji was occupied. The only practicable route into Maji came from the north, and O.C. Equatorial Corps found it necessary to establish a garrison at Masci, nine miles north of Maji, where contact was made with 2/4 K.A.R.

On 13th May, O.C. Equatorial Corps reported that he was confident of being able to occupy Maji indefinitely but it was essential that one company should occupy Masci to cover the only practicable route which came into Maji from the enemy's direction. Owing to the rains his L. of C. was precarious. He had reached the limit of M.T. Beyond garrisoning Masci and Maji, only defensive patrols could be undertaken. At this time the whole Boma area was under heavy, continuous rain. The many rivers were rapidly rising and some were now twelve feet deep.

By 1st June, Advanced Headquarters of the Equatorial Corps was fully established in Maji. Irregular activities were directed from there, mainly in the direction of Shoa Gimira. During June the country was gradually cleared of enemy.

PART IX.

The Patriot Campaign—1940.

The month of November 1940, when a forward policy in Gojjam was decided upon, found the enemy and ourselves disposed as follows in the area of potential revolt:

Gojjam.

The enemy had three Colonial Brigades (sixteen battalions) concentrated on the three main strongholds, Dangila, Burye and Debra Markos, with four Blackshirt battalions in support.

We had Mission 101, consisting of Colonel D. A. Sandford, D.S.O., two other British Officers and three N.C.Os., accompanied by the Emperor's representative Azajh Kabada and