

have surrendered north of the Blue Nile crossing. As it was, twenty-eight enemy lorries and two armoured cars were ambushed and destroyed by the forces left in the lurch by Lij Belai, and a large number of Italian Colonial troops were killed. Azaj Kabada's men co-operated creditably in this action, which, apart from one bomb raid on the Debra Markos forts, was the first in which Ethiopian irregular patriot forces had played a prominent part since the entry of Gideon Force into Gojjam. From now on a striking characteristic of the patriot irregulars came into evidence. Unwilling to sacrifice themselves when the issue of the war was in doubt and providing nothing more concrete than a camouflage to the small number of our forces, from henceforward to the fall of Addis Ababa they risked themselves more and more in open battle and were largely responsible for the eventual surrender of the Maraventano column at Agibar east of the Blue Nile on 22nd May. Operations carried out beyond the Blue Nile were under the direction of Lt.-General Cunningham, G.O.C. East Africa, and therefore are not described in this report. It is sufficient to say that Maraventano surrendered 7,000 men, with 7 guns and nearly 200 automatics, heavy and light, to 140 Sudanese and Ethiopian regulars and 2,000 patriots under Ras Kassa, after a three-day battle in which the Sudanese showed their customary address, discipline and coolness and the Ethiopians a new reckless courage. This quality may partly be attributed to a desire for loot and partly to the removal of the haunting fear of Italian reprisals on their families and villages.

The Emperor entered the citadel at Debra Markos on 6th April. As Ras Hailu (believed to be in communication with the enemy) remained in the town with 6,000 Banda, and as relations between him and the Emperor were frigid, the bulk of Gideon Force was kept in Debra Markos until 28th April, when they accompanied the Emperor across the Blue Nile to Addis Ababa. By this time some of the Frontier Battalion M.T. had been skilfully driven across the difficult country of Belaya and hauled by rope and manpower up the escarpment, and the pontoon bridge across the Nile at Shafartak had been repaired. The last remaining Italian force in eastern Gojjam, 69 Colonial Battalion at Mota, had also been reduced by the usual combination of deception and harassing force, after a strenuous march by the Sudanese plainsmen of the Frontier Battalion in their cotton uniforms through a blizzard in the 14,000 foot Chokey Pass. At Mota 400 Italian Colonial troops surrendered to sixty Sudanese and stores and ammunition were captured. Similarly big stores of foodstuffs had been saved from looting at Debra Markos.

Thus in a campaign which lasted for six weeks and in which the sole regular force had been 50 British officers, 20 B.O.R.'s, 800 Sudanese and 800 Ethiopian troops, with four 3-inch mortars and without air support after the Italian evacuation of Burye (when the Sudan's limited resources of aircraft had to be concentrated on Keren) the whole of Gojjam had been cleared of sixteen Colonial battalions, two regular Banda groups and four Blackshirt Battalions, with pack artillery appropriate to three Colonial brigades (six batteries) and with considerable aircraft. Half of this force was

eventually captured by the regular troops described above, the other half was evacuated across Lake Tana to the neighbourhood of Gondar. This remarkable achievement in guerilla warfare was due to the far-sighted and determined organisation of transport from the Sudan base, to the skill of the Frontier Battalion, the drive of the command and the patient preparation of the Gojjam countryside by Mission 101 and the Emperor's representative. Gideon Force was broken up at the end of April 1941, but elements of the Frontier and two Ethiopian Battalions formed the guard of the Emperor when he re-entered Addis Ababa on 5th May.

Operations at Bahrdar Giyorgis and in Beghemder.

Major A. C. Simonds, M.B.E., G.S.O.2 to Mission 101, had been appointed to the command of "Beghemder Force" in February, with the special role of investing the Italian Force under Colonel Torelli in Bahrdar Giyorgis and later marching across the Blue Nile into Beghemder where he was ordered to cut communications between Gondar-Debra Tabor-Dessie and to force the evacuation of all small enemy forts in the province. The forces under his command were 3 Company Frontier Battalion, No. 2 Operational Centre (180 Ethiopians) and Fitaurari Birru, the Imperial nominee as Governor of Beghemder, who arrived with 500 Beghemder peasants at Bahrdar Giyorgis and lost 450 of these to desertion the following day.

Bahrdar was closely and successfully invested by this small force, whose main role of securing the rear of Gideon Force was thus achieved. On two occasions, on 19th March and 26th April, Torelli made determined sorties to the south from Bahrdar Giyorgis with greatly superior forces, but failed with loss to break through. On the first occasion he came out with five Colonial battalions, pack artillery and mortars against 250 Sudanese and 75 patriots but was stopped after losing 175 men. On the second occasion he lost 150 killed and wounded, our losses being two killed and three wounded. As usual the Sudanese soldier set a high example of coolness and discipline. Torelli was himself wounded, and on 2nd May he evacuated Bahrdar Giyorgis, which was occupied by 3 Company Frontier Battalion.

Meanwhile the commander of Beghemder Force, with No. 2 Operational Centre and the stores of No. 3 Operational Centre, Fitaurari Birru and 74 Ethiopians, was ordered to cross the Blue Nile into Beghemder. The province was entered on 28th March.

In Beghemder two patriot chiefs, Dedjasmatches Danyo and Bellai, with 7,000 men, exercised a nominal control over about a quarter of the province. Another quarter was found to be neutral and the rest actively hostile. Immediate action was taken on the Gondar-Debra Tabor-Dessie road which was blocked and mined. A sharp engagement was fought against an enemy force some 300-400 strong on 13th April by No. 2 Centre and Dedjasmatches Danyo, who blew up four enemy lorries and killed 52 Italians including the commander of the column as well as about 100 Banda. Reinforcements were sent in about 90 M.T. from Gondar but the new column was halted and a relieving force of one battalion, sent out from Debra Tabor,