

Pass and Tug Argan Gap and the defences of Jibuti; and discussed the defence of Somaliland with General Legentilhomme, the French military commander at Jibuti, and with Colonel Chater. By agreement with the French, General Legentilhomme had been placed under my orders.

9. I came to the conclusion that with a comparatively small reinforcement it would be possible to hold both British and French Somaliland against any probable Italian attack, and that it was most desirable to do so, both for reasons of prestige and because Jibuti and Berbera and the railway and roads leading thence into the interior formed the best line of invasion of Abyssinia. It was likely that if Italy entered the war we should eventually attack the Italian forces in Abyssinia, when sufficient troops became available. The loss of British Somaliland would increase the difficulties of such an invasion. I recommended that the garrison of British Somaliland should be increased by one battalion King's African Rifles at once, and by another battalion and a battery if relations with Italy deteriorated, that two mechanised companies should be formed in the Camel Corps, and that money should be allotted for the improvement of defences and roads. The money authorised by the Colonial Office had already been expended and the defences were still very incomplete. I emphasised that my recommendations represented a minimum and might require to be increased. I also recommended that the passes at Dobo and Jirre, from which roads led down to Zeilah, should be occupied and defended by the French. This was a weak point in the Allied plans for the defence of Somaliland since the enemy by these passes could penetrate between Jibuti and Berbera and separate the French and British forces. General Legentilhomme had troops available to defend these passes, and was most anxious to do so, but had failed to obtain permission from the French Colonial Office. I decided in the event of war with Italy to place General Legentilhomme in command of both British and French Somaliland.

10. My recommendations were approved in principle by the War Office, but the French Colonial Office refused to allow General Legentilhomme to fortify Jirre, on the grounds that it was too far from Jibuti. General Legentilhomme placed a detachment at Jirre, but did not construct defences. Preparations were made to block the road through the Dobo defile by demolitions.

11. It was proposed to increase the garrison of Somaliland by the transfer of two battalions of the King's African Rifles and a battery from Kenya. These would hold the defensive positions, and release the Camel Corps to patrol the remainder of the Protectorate. But although the reinforcement of the garrison had been approved in principle in January, 1940, it was not till 9th March that authority was received to move one battalion, and owing to difficulty in providing the necessary shipping it was not till 15th May that the 1st Battalion Northern Rhodesia Regiment of the King's African Rifles, with certain administrative units, arrived at Berbera and began to disembark. Delay in giving authority for the move was apparently due to financial discussions between the War Office and the Colonial

Office, and to Foreign Office apprehension that this move might be considered provocative by Italy. The move of the second battalion and the battery was approved "in principle" on 20th April, but permission for the move was only given on 6th June. There was a further delay owing to the slowness of the move of the West African troops which were to reinforce Kenya, before whose arrival more troops could not be taken from Kenya. The battalion and battery did not reach Somaliland till 12th July, 1940.

12. It was impossible for many months to obtain financial approval for the expenditure of any further money on defences or roads; and essential equipment, which had been ordered by Colonel Chater many months previously, was not supplied by the Colonial Office, which was still responsible for the administration of the troops. It was not till 1st June, 1940 that administrative control of Somaliland was taken over by Middle East. It seemed difficult to persuade the authorities to consider seriously the possibility of war with Italy; and even as late as April I was still being refused permission, as the result of the Government policy of avoiding the provocation of Italy, to send any Intelligence agents over the frontier to obtain information of Italian dispositions, on the grounds that our relations with the Italians might thereby be impaired.

13. A further difficulty in dealing with British Somaliland was its distance of nearly 2,000 miles from Cairo. I had frequently asked for long-range aircraft for intercommunication in my wide-spread Command, but without success. It was difficult therefore for Commanders or Staff Officers to visit Somaliland at sufficiently frequent intervals. The A.O.C.-in-C. put an ordinary service machine at our disposal, whenever possible, but there simply were not sufficient aeroplanes for the many tasks in hand, and it was not often possible to spare one for intercommunication. There was no regular mail service and letters often required a month to reach Somaliland.

III. OUTBREAK OF WAR WITH ITALY.

14. At the outbreak of war with Italy on 11th June, 1940, the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, K.A.R., held the Tug Argan position, while the Somaliland Camel Corps held the Sheikh Pass, the Dobo defile, where certain demolitions were effected, and advanced positions at Hargeisa and Burao. There was also a force of Illalos (irregular native troops) which patrolled the frontier under the control of the District Officers.

15. Up till the end of July only minor military activities occurred. The Somaliland Camel Corps and the Illalos made a number of successful raids on the enemy's frontier posts. These raids were almost uniformly successful, in spite of the enemy's superior numbers, and reflect great credit on those who carried them out. There was a considerable enemy concentration in the Harar-Diredawa-Jijiga area but it remained inactive.

16. On 17th June news of the French armistice arrived. On 18th June Air Vice Marshal Reid visited Jibuti and was assured by General Legentilhomme that the French Forces there would fight on. Lieutenant-Colonel