which any observation could be got on to the top of the plateau. The enemy has command of movement in the valley. His guns and mortars are placed out of range of anything smaller than 25 pounders. The country round Debivar is such that Battery positions for field artillery, within effective range and under cover from enemy fire, are difficult to find. One battery of 25 pounders is about the limit that can be fitted in.

The only other way on to the escarpment so far discovered is by a mule track which winds eighteen miles through the hills and comes up on to the plateau at Bosa, fifteen miles west of Debarech. This track is only fit for mules, and at times in the rains is impassable even by them. The plateau itself reaches 10,000 feet. Conditions on the top in the rainy season are uncomfortable and cold. The country on top is rolling. As far as is known, no great physical difficulties exist between Wolchefit and Gondar. The road Wolchefit-Gondar is an all-weather M.T. road. Up the pass it is mined and blocked by demolitions. The exact extent of these demolitions are not yet known but it is believed that they are not unduly serious and that a Sappers and Miners Company with power tools could probably clear a way in a few days uninterrupted work.

Operations.

Up to date it has been impossible to force a way up the Wolchefit Pass. Operations have been confined to assisting patriot forces already on the plateau. These consist of a force operating from Bosa, commanded by Major Ringrose with one company of 3 Ethiopian Battalion under command. Nearer Gondar a party of patriots under el Bimbashi Sheppard came across from the Chelga direction and occupied Amba Giyorgis on the road Wolchefit-Gondar. The third party are the patriots who assisted in the capture of Debra Tabor under Major Douglas. These three parties, all of which vary daily in numbers, have been the only forces directly threatening Gondar since the fall of Debra Tabor and the withdrawal from Chelga.

Capture of Debarech.

By 28th May el Bimbashi Sheppard was occupying Amba Giyorgis and the whole road from inclusive Amba Giyorgis to exclusive Debarech was in patriot hands. Between 28th and 31st May severe fighting in the Debarech area resulted in the capture of Debarech. The enemy suffered more than 400 killed and over 150 deserters. Three small forts to the west of Debarech were also captured and the enemy was penned into the tongue of land immediately round the Wolchefit forts.

Night Attack 17th June.

Nothing further was undertaken until 17th June when Major Ringrose made a successful night attack on one of the forts at the Wolchefit. His troops were allowed to enter by unsuspecting sentries and the Italians were caught sleeping. The enemy casualties were over 100, several places were burnt and mines laid. Our casualties were three slightly wounded.

Loss of Debarech.

On 23rd June the enemy counter-attacked strongly against Ringrose's patriots who were dispersed and defeated. Ras Ayalu and his son, who had loyally supported Ringrose, were captured. Major Ringrose himself was slightly wounded and barely escaped with a small bodyguard and his two British wireless operators. The enemy recaptured Debarech and advanced some distance westwards towards Bosa.

Formation of Necol.

On 27th June one battery 28 Field Regiment was sent down to the Wolchefit and "Necol" was formed consisting of 28 Field Regiment less one battery, No. 2 M.M.G. Group, S.D.F. less one company, 51 Commando and 20 Field Company, Sappers and Miners. This force was ordered to assist the patriots by every means in their power with the object of securing a bridgehead on the top of the pass, and thus allow the road-blocks to be cleared for an advance on Gondar. On 6th July a plan was made to attack the Wolchefit Pass with regular troops, the patriots co-operating. In outline the plan was as follows:—

Plan to attack Wolchefit.

3/14 Punjab Regiment was to start from Zarema, the village where the mule track to Bosa leaves the main road, and march to Bosa. From there a reconnaissance was to be made, it being left to the discretion of the Officer Commanding 3/14 Punjab Regiment to decide whether or not the operation was feasible. He alone could decide, after having seen the country. A gunner O.P. with a wireless set accompanied 3/14 Punjab Regiment. The supply of regular troops on the top of this pass was a matter of difficulty, and the success or failure of the operation depended upon very close timing and the maintenance of wireless communication with the troops on the plateau. The R.A.F. guaranteed 30 sorties by Wellesley aircraft for the purpose of dropping ammunition and supplies. It was realised that a full scale of rations for Indian troops could not be maintained until the road was opened. Major Ringrose was confident that sufficient fresh meat and vegetables could be obtained locally, and would be supplied by the patriots to ensure that this battalion had enough to eat. There was no organised mule transport but patriot volunteers were plentiful, though, in the event, proved themselves extremely unreliable.

Course of the Operation.

3/14 Punjab Regiment arrived at Bosa on 13th July. On 14th July a reconnaissance in strength was made. The enemy had been fully informed of these operations and launched an immediate counter-attack against the leading companies of 3/14 Punjab Regiment. The gunner O.P. was over-run within 15 minutes of being established. A cloud descended, making observation difficult. Patriot forces had become mixed with the enemy native troops, and it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. There were undoubted cases of treachery. Patriots supposed to be friendly were seen firing on our officers and men. Commander 3/14 Punjab Regiment was killed. Surprise was lost, and, there being no further chance of renewing the operation, 3/14 Punjab withdrew.

In these operations time again was the limiting factor, not only on account of supplying 3/14 Punjab Regiment but also because