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ITALO-ABYSSINIAN WAR, 1935

Organization of the Theater of Operations
and Strategical Conduct of the Campaign

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Subject matter and source material of this campaign is limited and, with a few exceptions, is not very reliable. This is due to the recentness of the campaign coupled with the strict censorship exercised by the Italian Government. There is practically nothing on the Ethiopian side of the campaign except their actions as viewed from the Italian side.

The Army Quarterly
Vol 31 No. 3, January 1936
Vol 32 No. 1, April 1936
Vol 32 No. 3, July 1936
Published by William
Clawes & Sons, Ltd.
London.

"Italy and Abyssinia" by
Lt. Col. H. de Watteville.

The Army Quarterly is a British publication containing articles of the military profession. The articles by Col. Watteville contain brief running accounts of the operations in Ethiopia. The articles were written concurrently with the operations and therefore are not entirely accurate as to details or dates. However, they present some excellent deductions.

Review of Military
Literature, Command and
General Staff School,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Abyssinia. A military geographic study. Translated by Corporal F. W. Merten, U.S. Army.

This article is abstracted from the German publication "Wissen und Wehr", August, 1935. "Abessinien. Eine wehrgeographische Betrachtung" by Friedrich Papenhusen. The article gives a good historical background of past military operations in Ethiopia. It covers the geography from a military viewpoint. It touches on the present political circumstances and points out possibilities of the Italo-Abyssinian War. It does not deal with the actual operations.

Military Problems in
Ethiopia by Rudolf von
Kylander, Colonel, German
Army, Retired, extracted
from "Wissen und Wehr",
Berlin, Germany, December
1935. Translated in the
Translation Section, The
Army War College,
Washington, D.C., by
Corporal F. W. Merten,
U.S.A., February, 1936.

This article covers the following subjects:

1. Policy and Strategy.
2. The Organization of the Military Forces.
3. Improvements of the Concentration Area.
4. Strategical Problems.
5. Tactical Experience.
6. The Economic War.

These subjects are covered briefly but thoroughly. The information seems to be accurate as far as the actual campaign. However, it only covers the first two months of operations. Nevertheless, it serves to give a good background, but unfortunately there are no maps to go with the translation.

Report of Military
Observer with Italian
Armies in East Africa, by
Norman E. Fiske, Major,
Cavalry, U.S.A., Military
Observer.
Reproduced by the
Geographic Branch of the
Military Intelligence
Division, General Staff,
Washington, D. C.
Reports Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4.

These reports are excellent. They give both a general and detailed account of operations. They cover strategy, tactics, supply, geography and organization. However, it must be remembered that this was a large operation to be witnessed and reported on by one man. Nevertheless, I found it to be the best available information to date. One drawback to the report is the difficulty encountered in using the maps attached to the report. The important cities and rivers are obscured by a mass of unimportant cities and streams. Also they are not conveniently placed in the reports. These four reports cover only the first phase of the operations, but it is understood that the remainder of the reports completing the operation are now being completed.

FOOTNOTE ABBREVIATIONS USED

- RML Review of Military Literature, Vol XV, #59,
 Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.
- BAQ The Army Quarterly, Vol XXXI, #2
 London, England. Vol XXXII, #1 and #2
- RMO Report of Military Observer with Italian Armies
 in East Africa by N. E. Fiske, Major, Cav., U.S.A.,
 Military Observer. Reports #1, #2, #3 and #4.
- MPE Military Problems in Ethiopia by Rudolf von
 Xylander, Col., Germany Army, Retired. Extract
 from "Wissen und Wehr", Berlin, Germany, December
 1935. Translated by F. W. Merten, Corp., U.S.A.
 Translation Section of Army War College,
 Washington, D. C.

ITALO-ABYSSINIAN WAR, 1935

Organization of the Theater of Operations and Strategical Conduct of the Campaign

1. INTRODUCTION.--The subject of this monograph is "The Organization of the Theaters of Operation and the Strategical Conduct of the Italo-Abyssinian Campaign of 1935". The big Italian guns in Abyssinia have been quiet for nine months. The newspapers of the world have turned their attention to newer and more active campaigns. However, students of military science should be greatly interested in this war of a large modern army employing the newest weapons and tactics in a colonial war. As time goes on, more valuable and interesting information should become available to the student.

The subject assigned will be discussed in three general phases. First, a brief orientation will be given of past events and present circumstances concerning Italo-Ethiopian relations leading up to the present campaign. Second, the organization of the theaters of operations will be discussed. Third, the strategical conduct of the campaign will be covered.

2. ORIENTATION.--Italian forces invaded Ethiopia in 1887 and through the treaty of Ucialli, signed May 2, 1889, Italy virtually gained a protectorate over Ethiopia. The Ethiopians eventually rebelled against what they considered an unjust interpretation of the treaty and by means of the victory of Adowa (March 1, 1896) and the treaty of Addis Ababa (October 26, 1896) wrested her independence from Italian influence. (1) The general underlying cause of the Italian defeat was the lack of proper preparations especially those pertaining to supply.

(1) RML pp 27-28.

Italy, however, never gave up her idea of subjugating Ethiopia. With Eritrea to the northeast and Italian Somaliland to the southeast, the possession of Ethiopia would give Italy the large colony in Africa which she needed badly in order to accommodate her increasing population.

Italy was viewing, with increasing alarm, at the inroads being made into Ethiopia by the Japanese. (2) A strong Japanese influence in Ethiopia would be dangerous to Eritrea and Somaliland should Italy engage in hostilities with Japan. However, it was necessary for Italy to consider France and Great Britain before undertaking operations in Ethiopia. France had her commercial interests in the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railroad and her colony in French Somaliland. (3) Any operations which might endanger these interests might cause international entanglements with France. Great Britain, was interested in the headwaters of the Blue Nile which lies in Lake Tana, located in the northwestern part of Ethiopia. (4) The Blue Nile is considered the life stream of Egypt. Also Great Britain might object to a large, strong Italian colony in among her colonies of Egyptian Sudan, Kenya and British Somalia. Furthermore, Great Britain, by means of her influence in the Suez Canal, controlled the water route of communication from Italy to Ethiopia.

It appears, therefore, that in order to prevent any serious international crisis, Italy planned to go about her conquest of Ethiopia slowly and gradually with as little armed conflict, initially, as possible.

3. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THEATERS OF OPERATION.--

In 1933 the King of Italy visited Eritrea and in 1934 he

(2) RML p 36. (3) RML p 34. (4) RML p 31.

visited Somaliland. In January 1935 General DeBona, a prominent official in the Fascist organization, was appointed High Commissioner of these two colonies. In 1934, work was begun on the extension of the narrow gauge railroad in Eritrea that runs from Massaua, the principal seaport of Eritrea, to Asmara and Biscia which are inland cities. (5)

There were two principal theaters from which the Italians were to operate, Eritrea to the northeast of Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland to the southeast. Each of these theaters will be discussed separately.

a. The Eritrean theater.--On January 1, 1935, Italy had one Colonial Corps and one air squadron in Eritrea. About this time shipments of war supplies began to arrive in Massaua. In March, 1935, vast supplies and large bodies of troops began to arrive. Major N. E. Fiske in his report on the Italo-Ethiopian Campaign, says, "No preparations whatsoever had been made up to this time (January 1935) for military operations on a large scale. * * * The Italian General Staff had made a study of possible operations in Abyssinia several years before. It is said that the military authorities asked Mussolini for two years in which to prepare for this campaign. Evidently the political situation dictated otherwise, for in January, 1935, a decision was reached to carry out the operations without delay in accordance with the General Staff study." (6)

The northern theater was divided into three zones. On the northwest was the Western Lowland zone, in the center was the High Plateau zone and to the southeast was the Eastern Lowland zone. These three zones are shown on Map #1.

The main operations were to take place in the High

(5) BAQ, Jan. 1936, p 206. (6) RMO p 19.

Plateau zones. Reasons for the selection of this zone will be discussed later. The primary mission of the troops in the eastern and western zones was to protect the right and left flanks of the main force. (7)

By October 1, 1935, Italy had concentrated three army corps in the High Plateau. These troops consisted of three Italian regular army divisions, four native brigades, corps artillery and other corps troops. (8)

These forces were organized to permit flexibility and mobility. They were capable of delivering a maximum firepower due to the large percentage of automatic weapons. (9)

The three corps were disposed as indicated on map #2.

b. The Somaliland theater.--Italian Somaliland was to be the southern theater of operations. The shipping and dock facilities are generally poor along the entire coast. The principal port is Magadiscio. This is a large, modern well built city, but even here shipping must be carried in and out of the port on lighters. Large vessels cannot enter the harbor. (10)

Prior to January 1, 1935, the Italian forces in Somaliland were roughly 150 officers, 125 noncommissioned officers, 5000 native troops, 10 light, fast tanks and 7 airplanes.

In July 1935, General Rudolph Graziani arrived with an expeditionary force of one division, some light tanks and armored cars, and a few specially organized motorized machine-gun units. (11)

General Graziani was placed in command of this theater while Marshal De Bono, the commander-in-chief of the entire Italian forces, remained in the northern theater. (12)

(7) RMO p 2. (8) RMO p 19. (9) RMO p 9. (10) RMO p 44.
(11) RMO p 52. (12) MPE p 11.

Graziani's first task was to prepare a defense of the important coastal ports against a surprise attack by the Ethiopians. This was successfully accomplished prior to October 1935. (11)

By October 1, 1935, Graziani had available for his advance into Ethiopia the troops which he had brought with him and the native garrison which had been increased to 12 battalions of regular native troops and 12 battalions of emergency native troops called Bands. (11)

The southern theater was divided into the Guiba Sector and the Scebeli--Far--Ogaden Sector. This division was based on the two principal river systems: the Guiba and the Scebeli. (13) See Map #3.

By October the Italians had concentrated approximately 110,000 men, 230 guns, 2,300 machine guns and 92 armored cars in Eritrea from where the main effort was to be made. In Italian Somaliland, where the mission was primarily a defensive one, there were concentrated approximately 30,000 men with a large number of motorized and mechanized units. Initially, about 300 airplanes had been sent from Italy to be used in both theaters. Heavy reinforcements of men, supplies and planes were on their way from Italy. The bulk of these reinforcements were to be sent to Eritrea. (14)

It is interesting to note that in the Italian aerial maneuvers in 1934, the principal object was to train the air force to observe and combat an enemy widely dispersed over a closed terrain and to carry provisions to advance detachments. (15)

4. THE ETHIOPIAN FORCES.--The population of Ethiopia is approximately 12 million, but the number of fighting men

(13) RMO p 43. (14) MPE p 15. (15) RML p 52.

that could be placed in the field was highly uncertain. This was due to racial, religious and traditional differences among the various tribes. The only uniformed, well trained and equipped force was the Imperial Guard which numbered about 15,000 men. (16) Reports as to the remainder of the Ethiopian forces are varied and inaccurate. Estimates vary from 500,000 to 1,000,000 men. However, the arms and equipment, in no way corresponded with the number of men. (17) The mass of the Ethiopian force could be classed as tribes fighting under the command of their local chiefs. These forces had no regular uniform, marched barefooted, and carried rifles of various makes as well as shields, knives and spears. The Abyssinian is strong and can endure great hardships making long marches with little food and water. The families accompany their warriors while on campaign and the forces live, for the most part, off of the land in which they operate. This characteristic was a determining factor upon which the Italian's based their plan to operate in the High Plateau. This was the agriculture district and the only convenient district in which large Ethiopian forces could be maintained. One serious fault of the Ethiopian was their lack of discipline. (17)

5. THE STRATEGICAL CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN.--In order to accomplish their mission the Italians first had to locate and destroy any large, armed Ethiopian forces that might be raised. At the same time, all possible avenues of supply for the Ethiopians must be blocked. And lastly the capital and other principal cities must be captured, the government must be disrupted and, if possible, the Emperor must be captured.

(16) MPE p 15. (17) RML, Dec 1935, p 37.

Based on the characteristics of the Ethiopian fighting force, as has been explained above, the Italian plan was as follows: to hold defensively in Somaliland and in the Eastern and Western Lowlands while they advanced the major portion of their army directly south in the High Plateau country. (18) This permitted the movement of their troops in a climate that was not too severe. It was also far enough away from French Somaliland and the British Sudan to prevent any serious objection by either nation. The port of Massaua was capable of handling the vast amount of shipping that would be needed. Finally, this advance would be made through the chief agriculture districts of Ethiopia.

The advance began simultaneously in both theaters on October 3, 1935. (19)

a. The northern operations.--The northern army entered Ethiopia in three columns, the II Corps on the right, from the vicinity of Adi Ouala, the native corps on the left of the II Corps and in the vicinity of Ona Andom, and the I Corps on the left of the native corps and in the vicinity of Barachit. See Map #2. By October 7, the troops had advanced to the line: Adua--Entiscio--Adigrat, with little or no opposition. By October 16, the II Corps had extended its right flank to include Axum. This made a total advance of some 30 or 40 miles from the line of departure. (20)

Here it was necessary to call a halt in order to build and repair roads to the rear in order to facilitate movement of supplies. Major Fiske in his report says, "Evidently the war plan had not been very well prepared, judging from comments made about it by several corps and division

(18) RMO p 20. (19) RMO

(20) RMO p 20.

commanders and staff officers. One corps commander referred to it sarcastically as 'That famous study' and another corps commander told me that the war plan showed a good road from the frontier to Adua but absolutely no water to be had at Adua; instead we found no road and plenty of water! Available maps which had been prepared largely by officers who had gone into the country in the guise of traders were found to be very inaccurate and almost useless for the detailed disposition of troops." (20)

By the 2d November, the area Axum--Adua--Entiscio--Adigrat was fairly well fortified and roads to the rear in fair condition. Therefore the Italian high command decided to make its second move. This time the I Corps, a native corps, moved on Macalle while the II Corps, marching via Selaclaca, secured the fords of the Tacazze River. A small force moving via Aratali--Rendacoma--Asbu was to protect the left flank. (20)

The occupation of Macalle area and Tacazze area left a wide gap through which fast moving parties of Abyssinians could attack the lines of communication of both areas. Therefore, the native corps was withdrawn from the Macalle area and moved into the Tembien area occupying the important town of Abbi Addi. Map #4 shows the disposition as of November 30. (21)

Up to the middle of December, there had been no serious Abyssinian opposition to the Italian advance. By December 15, the Abyssinians had concentrated certain definite forces in opposition to the Italians. The Ethiopian Army Headquarters and the bulk of the Imperial Guard was at Dessa. A force of about 70,000 men under Ras Mulughieta was concentrated in the

(21) RMO p 21.

area south of Macalle (a Ras in peace time is a governor of a region or several provinces, in war he is a commander of a unit of the army). In the Tembien sector, opposite the native corps, Ras Cassa and Ras Seyum had concentrated about 35,000 men. Ras Imru had concentrated about 20,000 men in the district southwest of the II Corps. Degiacc Aialeii Burru had concentrated about 15,000 men in the district south of the Scire (a Degiacc is a chief of a province and commands the warriors recruited in the province). (22)

The Abyssinian command planned to attack and cut the Italian lines of communication. Ras Imru was to attack the II Corps and advance through Scire via Selaclaca to the Mareb River and cut off the II Corps at Adua-Axum from its base. Ras Cassa and Ras Seyum were to attack the native corps and cut the lines of communication in the vicinity of Haussien. When these two missions had been completed, Ras Mulughieta was to attack the I Corps in the vicinity of Macalle. See Map #5. (22)

The Abyssinian counteroffensive in the Scire district began on December 15th. It failed in its mission to cut the Italian lines of communication but it did manage to retake the country between the Tacazze River and city of Axum. Thereafter Ras Imru established his headquarters in Selaclaca and continued to harass the Italian lines of communication by means of guerrilla warfare. (23)

The second phase of the Abyssinian counteroffensive, with Haussien as its objective, began on January 17, 1936. The fighting centered around Addi Abbi and the Abaro Pass. The Italains were forced out of Addi Abbi but managed to

(22) RMO p 23. (23) RMO p 25.

hold the pass. The fighting lasted for three days and was very severe. The Italian losses were very heavy but the Italian automatic weapons and short-range artillery fire took a much greater toll of the Abyssinian forces and after three days they were badly shattered. The attack was discontinued and the Ethiopians established themselves along the line: Zeban--Kerkata--Melfa--Addi Abbi. This marked the end of the Abyssinian counteroffensive. The troops of Ras Mulughieta were not engaged. (24)

On November 28, 1935, Marshal Badoglio, the Chief of General Staff in Italy, relieved General Do Bono as commander in chief in East Africa. General De Bono left the regular army shortly after the World War and since then had been associated with the Fascist's organization. After the capture of Adua and Macalle it appeared that Fascism had accomplished its task as far as public spirit and propaganda were concerned. It was now time for the regular army to take command. It is certain that with the arrival of Marshal Badoglio the war took a more serious turn and things began to move swiftly than they had in the past. (25)

Marshal Badoglio reorganized the Italian forces in Ethiopia. The III Army Corps was organized from reserves and assigned to the Macalle area. The IV Corps was formed in January 1936 after the arrival of a division of troops from Libya. The IV Corps Headquarters was at Adi Ugra. (26)

Next, Marshal Badoglio began to strengthen the fortifications around Macalle and to mass huge supplies in this fortified area. By February, Badoglio was ready to start his big offensive action against the three Ethiopian forces that confronted him. The plan of this offensive was

(24) RMO pp 25-26. (25) BAQ, April 1936, p 77.
(26) RMO p 34.

to bring about a decisive battle. (27)

One Ethiopian force under Ras Mulughieta was entrenched on the mountain ridge of Amba Adaram, due south of Macalle. The second force under Ras Cassa and Ras Seyum was in the Tembien district south of Addi Abbi. The third force under Ras Imru was in the Scire district west of Axum. (28)

The first phase of Badoglio's plan was to move the I and III Corps against Ras Mulughieta with a double enveloping movement to pinch out Amba Adaram. After this had been accomplished the I Corps was to proceed southward while the III Corps wheeled to the left and moved in behind the forces of Ras Cassa and Ras Seyum. At the same time the native corps in the vicinity of Abaro Pass were to attack to the south, capture the Uarum Pass thus cutting off Ras Cassa's escape to the west. (29)

The attack began on February 10th and by February 15th, after hard fighting, the I and III Corps had gained possession of Amba Adaram and held the general line: Antalo--Anseba. The forces of Ras Mulughieta, completely disorganized and demoralized, withdrew to the south. They were in no condition for further offensive action. The I Corps continued its advance to the south and on February 28th occupied the important pass of Amba Alagi without resistance. (29)

On February 17th the III Corps made its wheel to the left to get behind the forces of Ras Cassa and Ras Seyum. On February 27th the native corps began its move to block the Uarum Pass. Ras Seyum seemed to have guessed the Italian plan and withdrew, but Ras Cassa resisted. Ras Cassa lost heavily but on February 29th, he succeeded in retiring to the Tzellemti region leaving his artillery and supplies behind.

(27) RMO p 34. (28) BAQ, July 1936, p 252. (29) RMO p 39.

His army was rendered unfit for further offensive combat but the Italian maneuver failed to effect its complete destruction. (30)

The second phase of Badoglio's plan was to have the II Corps advance to the southwest against Ras Imru while the IV Corps was to move from the northwest and strike him in flank. See Map #6.

The II Corps began its advance on February 29th. Ras Imru concentrated his entire force against the II Corps and there was heavy fighting on the 1st and 2d of March. On the 3d of March, Ras Imru's force, having lost heavily due to artillery and auto-rifle fire, began its retreat which proved to be the end of Ras Imru's forces. The IV Corps never reached the battlefield in time for the battle due to the difficult terrain over which it had to operate. The supply of IV Corps was entirely dependent upon aircraft. (31)

The pursuit of the Abyssinian Armies, except for aircraft action, was very slow due to the road construction which was necessary in order to help the ever-lengthening lines of communication in operation. The aviation present, however, was very effective. (32)

The II Corps occupied Gondar on March 30th. During the month of March, General Badoglio advanced slowly toward the south from Amba Adarum. (32)

On the 21st of March, Badoglio was informed that the last Abyssinian Army, under command of the Emperor himself, was advancing toward him. He, therefore, halted and fortified the ridge at Mekan Pass. On March 31st the Ethiopian Army attacked, and although they fought bravely, they could accomplish nothing. On April 2d, the Ethiopians began the

(30) RMO p 40. (31) BAQ, July 1936, p 254, & RMO pp 40-42.
(32) BAQ, July 1936, p 255.

retreat. Badoglio pressed on with his troops and on April 3d he capture the Ezba Pass which compelled the Emperor to withdraw. The Ethiopian withdrawal was slow but under the aerial pursuit the last Ethiopian Army finally melted away. (33)

No further opposition was encountered and by literally driving his men onward, General Badoglio entered Addis Ababa at the head of his troops on May 5, 1936. (33)

b. The southern operations.--General Graziani's first task in Somaliland was one of strategic defense. This he accomplished by preparing the important coastal towns for defense. His second task was the protection of the inland country from Ethiopian raids or invasions. This was very important for the morale of the Somali tribes who, by nature, are a very peaceful and unwarlike people.

To accomplish this defense, Graziani fortified Dolo, Belet Uen, Mustahil and Uardere. The Abyssinians had also fortified Dolo (the international boundary was through this town) and Oddo which is just across the river. Other Abyssinian garrisons held Dagnerrei, Corrahei and Gherlogubi. (34)

Water is scarce in this part of Abyssinia, therefore, by seizing the wells in this section Graziani could deny the Ethiopians any route of advance except down the Scebeli or Guiba Rivers. Graziani planned, therefore, on the outbreak of hostilities, to seize the following areas:

(1) Dolo and Oddo and by extending fortifications to control the upper Guiba.

(2) Callefo--Dagnerrei--Gheledi to control the upper Scebeli.

(33) BAQ, July 1936, p 256. (34) RMO p 53.

(3) Scillave, which contained wells, to assist further advance to Garrahei--Gabredarre.

(4) Gherlogubi--Afdub to complete the occupation of that group of wells.

Hostilities began on this front on October 3, 1935, simultaneously with the beginning of hostilities on the northern front. On this day, Dolo, Oddo, Gherlogubi and Afdub, were taken with little or no resistance. By October 18th, troops from Belet Uen had taken Dagnerrei, on October 20th, Callefo was taken and on October 23d, they took Scillave. On November 7th, the Italians occupied Garrabei and Gabredarre. (35)

Graziani did not have sufficient troops to carry on an active offensive campaign so he organized his present position for defense as shown on map #3.

The Italian troops in the Scebeli--Faf--Ogaden sector were opposed by the army of Ras Nosebu operating out of Harrar with strong garrisons at Sassabaneh and Dagamado. Troops in the Guiba sector were opposed by Abyssinian forces under Ras Desta. (36)

The forces of Ras Desta were receiving supplies from the Kenya Colony. In order to cut off this source of supply General Graziani organized a motorized and mechanized unit of about 10 battalions and ordered it to move generally westward from Dolo along the Kenya border in order to cut off the lines of communication between Ras Desta and Kenya. (37)

This force moved in three columns, the right column up the valley of the Canale Doria, the center column paralleled the march of the first column as far as Gogoru and then took the Neghelli Road, the left column moved up

(35) RMO p 53. (36) RMO p 56. (37) RMO p 59.

the Daua Parma along the Kenya frontier.

The movement of the main bodies got underway by January 12th and on the 14th, 15th and 16th, all three columns had met and overcome stubborn resistance by the forces of Ras Desta. The fighting of the right and center columns took place near Gogoru and that of the left column near the junction of the Bou Bou stream and the Daua Parma River. The Abyssinian forces were badly disorganized by the three days of fighting and withdrew toward Neghelli.

The right Italian column advanced to Bandar. The center column sent its motorized units forward on a dash to Meghelli which they occupied on January 20th. The left column moved on to M. Murri, from which point they harassed the retreating Ethiopians in direction of Galba Daua.

This operation practically destroyed the army of Ras Desta. General Graziani continued to pursue the remnants of the Ethiopian forces by means of motor units from Neghelli. (See Map #7) (38)

Graziani's next move was to strongly fortify all the points that had been captured in Somaliland. This was in keeping with his mission of Strategic Defense. He now had a series of positions which gave width and depth covering the principal avenues of approach to Somaliland. He also controlled the principal wells without which no large enemy force could operate against him. Furthermore, the main part of his defensive line was in enemy territory and this meant that the enemy must recapture these positions before he could do any serious damage to Somaliland.

About the end of March, 1936, preparations were being made for an operation against the Abyssinian forces in the

(38) RMO p 60.

vicinity of Harrar. At the present writing there is no information available as to whether or not this operation was ever carried out. (39)

6. CONCLUSIONS.--The Italian Government had profited by its former experiences in Abyssinia. This is clearly indicated by the fact that in this operation plans were made well in advance. A large, well trained and well equipped force was put into the field. Supply and lines of communication were given priority and all advances and movements were based on the speed with which the lines of communication could be pushed forward. The Italians proved that a modern army could use modern tactics to a good advantage against a force excelling in guerrilla warfare. The air force played an active part, especially in the later stages of the campaign. It took up the pursuit against the retreating Ethiopian armies and generally succeeded in scattering the forces so badly that they were never able to re-unite. It also was used to drop food and ammunition by means of parachutes to columns temporarily cut off from ground sources of supply. On one occasion from 16 to 20 tons daily were dropped for a division. (40) Great numbers of natives and imported civilians were employed in road building and repair. All in all, Italy went about the conquest of Ethiopia on a large scale.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that this war was one between a modern, well trained and well equipped force, and a poorly organized, unequipped, untrained semi-barbaric nation.

The Italians have caused the downfall of the Empire of Ethiopia and the abdication of the Emperor. They have

(39) RMO p 96. (40) BAQ, July 1936, p 261.

defeated the large armed forces sent by the Ethiopians to oppose them. They have captured and occupied the capital, Addis Ababa, and other large and important cities. However, will the Ethiopians be subjugated to Italian rule and gradually acclimate themselves to the change of things, or will they arise in revolt under some new and energetic leader? Time alone will see the answer to this question.