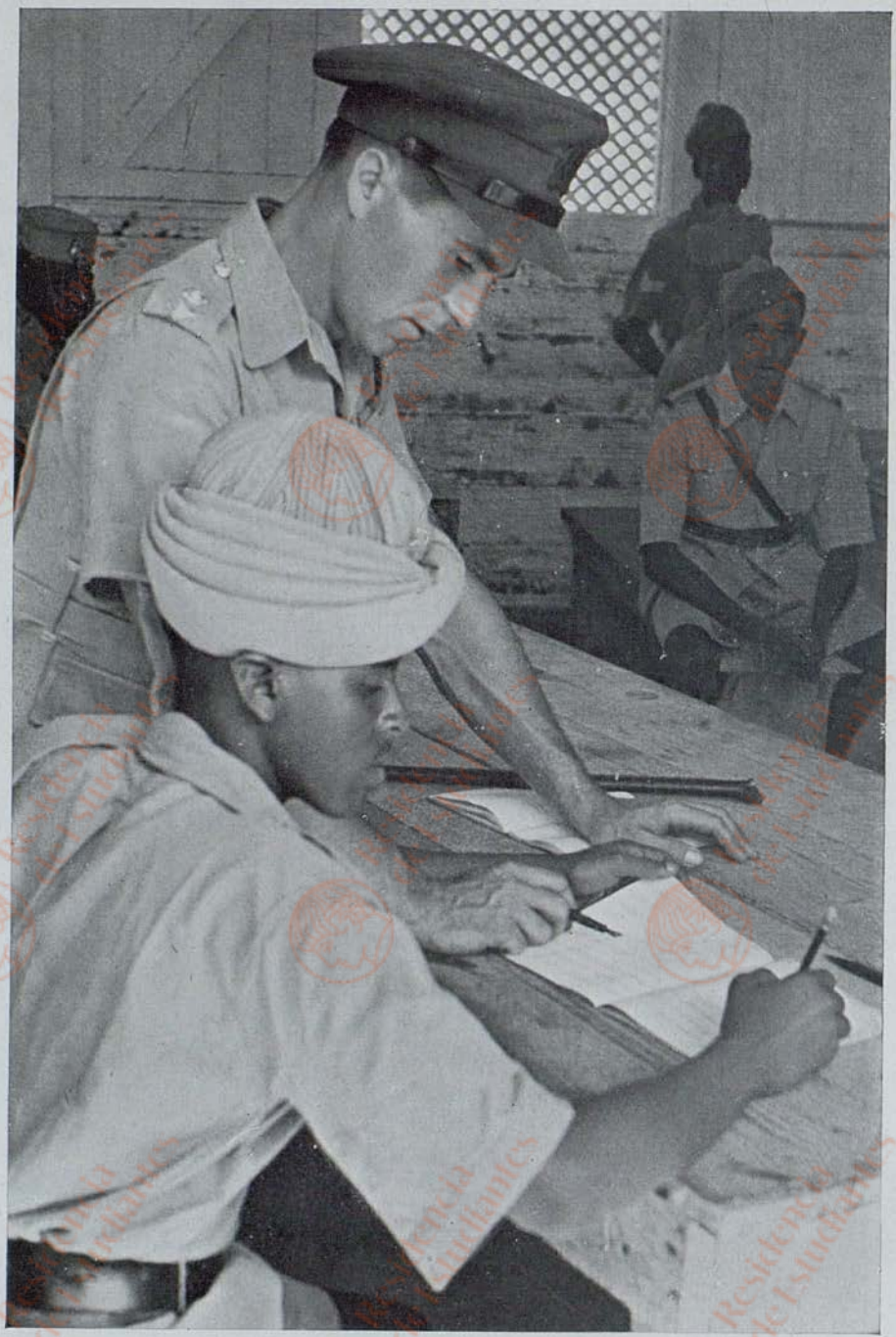
THE FIRST TO BE FREED

1/- Net.

BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION IN ERITREA AND SOMALIA

OLD EMBLEMS. *Fascist monument on the equator*

THE FIRST TO BE FREED



THE ENGLISH LESSON. A Somali gendarme is taught by a Civil Affairs officer.

The First to be Freed

THE RECORD OF BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION
IN ERITREA AND SOMALIA, 1941–1943

Issued by the Ministry of Information

LONDON: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1944

ERITREA AND SOMALIA. "*Two of the world's less promising deserts.*"

Contents

I. DESERTS IN DISORDER

II. RECOVERY IN ERITREA

III. RECOVERY IN SOMALIA

The text of this book was written by the late K. C. Gandar Dower, who also took nearly all the photographs.

To be purchased from H.M. Stationery Office at York House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2; 13a Castle Street, Edinburgh, 2; 39-41 King Street, Manchester, 2; 1 St. Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff; 80 Chichester Street, Belfast; or through any bookseller. Price One Shilling net. S.O. Code No. 70-447*.
Printed in Great Britain by Alabaster, Passmore & Sons, Ltd., London and Maidstone.

I

Deserts in Disorder

1. THE LIE OF THE LAND

Early in 1941, when the army of General Platt was fighting its way up the precipices of Keren and the army of General Cunningham was racing across Somalia's desolate flats, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland were headline news. Now the war has rolled many thousands of miles away, and "nothing much has been happening there since then". Yet all the while, in these remote lands, events were taking place which gained greatly in significance as the Allied armies took North Africa and swept into Europe. For British administrators in Eritrea and Somalia were learning lessons which should stand in good stead on the wider, more brightly lit European stage. The knowledge gathered and the methods followed in these distant desert colonies are not, of course, all applicable to European problems. But here at least in Italian East Africa, British administration had its first recent experience of Occupied Enemy Territory, and Occupied Enemy Territory its first recent experience of British administration.

In this book we are not concerned with Ethiopia, for Ethiopia was never an Occupied Enemy Territory in the true sense of the term. As soon as conditions permitted, in accordance with Mr. Eden's statement of February 1941, the Emperor Haile Selassie returned not only to his throne but to his power. Britain had redeemed the first of her many pledges to free the conquered and to cast down the proud. This book therefore describes only the two and a half years' work of the Administration in Eritrea and Somalia—two of the world's less promising deserts which Mussolini had decreed should blossom with at least an imported rose.

The eastern lowlands of Eritrea stretch for 500 miles or so down the western shore of the Red Sea from the Sudan in latitude 18° north to 12° north and the French Somaliland border. This coastal plain consists of a narrow strip of featureless, boulder-strewn scrub, never more than fifty miles wide, rail-less, roadless, waterless and, for the most part, port-less too.

Far to the south Assab sweats in its solitary shimmer, isolated from the rest of the colony. Behind Assab are the salt pans of the Danakil desert, 300 feet below the level of the sea. But, if the war takes you to Eritrea, you will see nothing of Assab. You will land at the unattractively impressive port of Massawa, amid the humidity and the prickly heat of what is said to be one of the hottest towns on earth. If you are able, you will move on forthwith in one of the Administration's cars. After driving awhile through thorn trees and crumbling barrenness, you find yourself climbing the towering wall that has loomed at you dimly out of the haze of heat.

Immediately you are confronted with Italian engineering at its best. The hills give place to mountains, and the mountains to greater mountains. Up them, always at an easy gradient, the road winds inevitably, majestically on. Every now and again you catch glimpses of the mountain railway or the dizzy stretches of the aerial ropeway that are likewise breasting this tremendous precipice. At more than one place you can stop your car and look down on a scenic-railway constructor's dream. The view is full of drops and stretches of track that vanish round corners or into the black blobs of tunnel mouths, minute and far below. And if the brown-grey-red of the landscape is temporarily tinted green by Eritrea's short rainy season, you reflect that deserts—if they are vertical enough—can be very beautiful.

Suddenly, without warning, you find that these mountains have a top. Before you know it, you are trundling through Asmara, wondering how this European city of broad boulevards, super cinemas, super Fascist buildings, cafés, shops, two-way streets, and a first-class hotel ever came to get there. This is the partly cultivated and densely populated high plateau, the 8,000-foot altipiano, on the mountain backbone that stretches away right into Ethiopia, and the only region of Eritrea high or healthy or cool enough for white settlement. This altipiano is of no tremendous width ; if you drive a further sixty miles to the pretty little unwarlike town of Keren, you will have already dropped a considerable height, and you have yet to cascade down the 2,000 feet of semi-precipice up which General Platt's troops so miraculously fought their way. Down at the bottom you are again in Africa. The people are the shock-headed Beni Amer, the streams are bordered by thick fringes of dum-palms, and most of the year have so little water in them that they justify the saying that "if you fall into a river in Africa, you get out and dust yourself".

And so you reach Agordat, with its white glare and its arched government buildings, and its settlement of West Africans stranded on the course of their pilgrimage to Mecca, and beyond that the camel country and the steadily growing heat, till you come at last to Tessenei and the borders of the Sudan. By then your memory of Eritrea is a jumble of heat and camels and goats and engineering, spectacular bridges and frizzed hedgehogs of black hair, the ruined forts of Dologorodoc, great scrub-covered mountains, piled, tumbled boulders, and granite rocks. Asmara, with its cinemas and quick-trotting pony carts, has receded into the improbable world from which it sprang. And even now you have not seen the most Walt Disney country of all that stretches its fantastic hundreds of square miles southward into Ethiopia. "Magnificent", you say, if you have a taste for grandeur rather

than beauty. If you are merely economically, agriculturally or industrially minded, you murmur "what a hole".

Somalia, like Eritrea, is a desert, but of a more normal kind. Eritrea is small, spectacular, and vertical. Somalia is vast, dreary and flat. Of all its 274,000 square miles, only in certain small portions of the South-Eastern Province can it be called productive. For the rest, it is a featureless expanse of nothing in particular. There is not a single farm in the thousands of square miles of Mudug Province which, in the words of one political officer who had cause to know it well, is "a worthless desert of sand and low scrub which does not grow to the height of more than about three feet. In general the view of any part of it, as from the bridge of a ship at sea, is perfectly flat—a featureless plain with an equidistant horizon in all directions. Great numbers of stock subsist on the scrub, and on the stock subsist the people, their diet being confined to milk and meat". The North-West Province is much the same, save that here the ground rises slowly to the Ethiopian border, while the remote red mountains of the North-Eastern Province stretch interminably to the lighthouse of Gardafui. Nature has combined with Somali grazing practice to render desolate this perhaps once-watered land. Apart from the wandering tribesmen, no one lives there now save a handful of political and gendarmerie officers, whose duty it is to keep order. These men are practically cut off from their fellows, for Dante, for instance, lies far from Mogadishu at the end of 1,200 miles of boulder-strewn roads, covered twelve inches deep in friable dust in the dry weather and impassable during the rains.

Of Somalia's four main rivers, only the Juba flows all the year round or contrives to find the sea. The Webi Shebeli, after a promising start, loses its sense of purpose, runs parallel to the coastal dunes for the last 150 miles of its curious course, and just fails to reach either the Indian Ocean or the Juba. It is along these rivers that the only cultivable part of Somalia lies, with the exception of the Iscia Baidoa area, a country of many natural springs and the centre of native millet production.

For the rest Somalia is a land of distances and heat, wells and camels and gathering desiccation, of interest only to the policeman and the administrator. No one, however much of an eye he has for grandeur, will say "magnificent" and anyone industrially minded will still say "what a hole".

The Italians established themselves in Eritrea in the second half of the nineteenth century. The railway, begun in 1898, topped its precipice only after thirteen years of effort, but years earlier the name of Asmara, in those days the sensible little highland capital of an unpretentious colony, was appearing on maps of Africa that still knew no Nairobi. Somalia, originally part of the Empire of the Sultan of Zanzibar, also dates from the end of the century, when the Italians landed on the beach at Mogadishu, just below the point where the club now stands. Here, and on the Webi Shebeli plantations, and later on the Juba river, which was ceded to Italy after the last war, 250 colonists lived for many years quiet, unpolitical, unostentatious lives.

It was not until 1930 drew near that expansion fever came over these two deserts. About that time, Mussolini decided to build them up as the twin

PRECIPICE. Under black peaks the road coils from Asmara, capital of Eritrea, to Keren. Except for a strip of coastal plain, Eritrea is a tumble of mountains.

PLAIN. Monotonous as the near-desert on either side of it, the Strada Imperiale stretches from Somalia into Ethiopia. These flat wastes are typical of Somalia.

bases for a pincer attack on Ethiopia. From that moment their economy went crazy, and their history during the next five years makes some of the strangest reading of our time. By 1940, both Eritrea and Somalia were suffering from that political and economic over-development which rendered their collapse inevitable under the stress of war. Then came the blockade, the exposure of inefficiency and corruption, the wandering thousands of armed and lawless banda, the looting and the helplessness ; and finally the arrival of the British to face all the problems of reorganisation, the solutions of which were very far from clear.

Fortunately, however grave the problems, the general principles along which their solution must be sought were precise and free from doubt. They were not novel or devised in a hurry to meet the situation ; they formed part of public international law, founded upon conventions to which all the belligerents had set their seals. That these principles had from the first been disregarded by the Germans in Poland, Norway, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, and France could be no excuse for similar behaviour. It was a duty to administer the occupied territories at as little cost to the British war effort as might be ; and it was a duty to maintain in them as much of the Italian way of life as was compatible with the interests of the Eritreans and Somalis and with Allied conceptions of decency and justice. The story of how this was attempted and carried out is the theme of the following chapters.

Every newspaper reader is familiar with the spectacular history of the German-occupied territories—the massacres and the violent resistance, the dead-weight of fear under which alike the subject peoples and the German garrisons live. It is perhaps to the credit of the British Administration in Eritrea and Somalia that this book is lacking in melodramatic adventure or blood-curdling events.

2. THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

The British Military Administration, then called the Occupied Enemy Territories Administration, came into being early in 1941, and it came into being in a hurry. If Britain had been Germany, doubtless a body of men would have been training for this particular task ever since 1935—but Britain is not Germany. Moreover, there was another excellent reason why steps had not been taken earlier. No one familiar with the military situation in East Africa at the end of 1940 could have dreamed that the fall of this part of the Italian Empire would come about so swiftly. Even in January 1941, when the state of Italian morale was becoming apparent, General Cunningham believed that he could do no more by May than clear Kenya's Northern Frontier Province and capture Kismayu. Instead, so complete

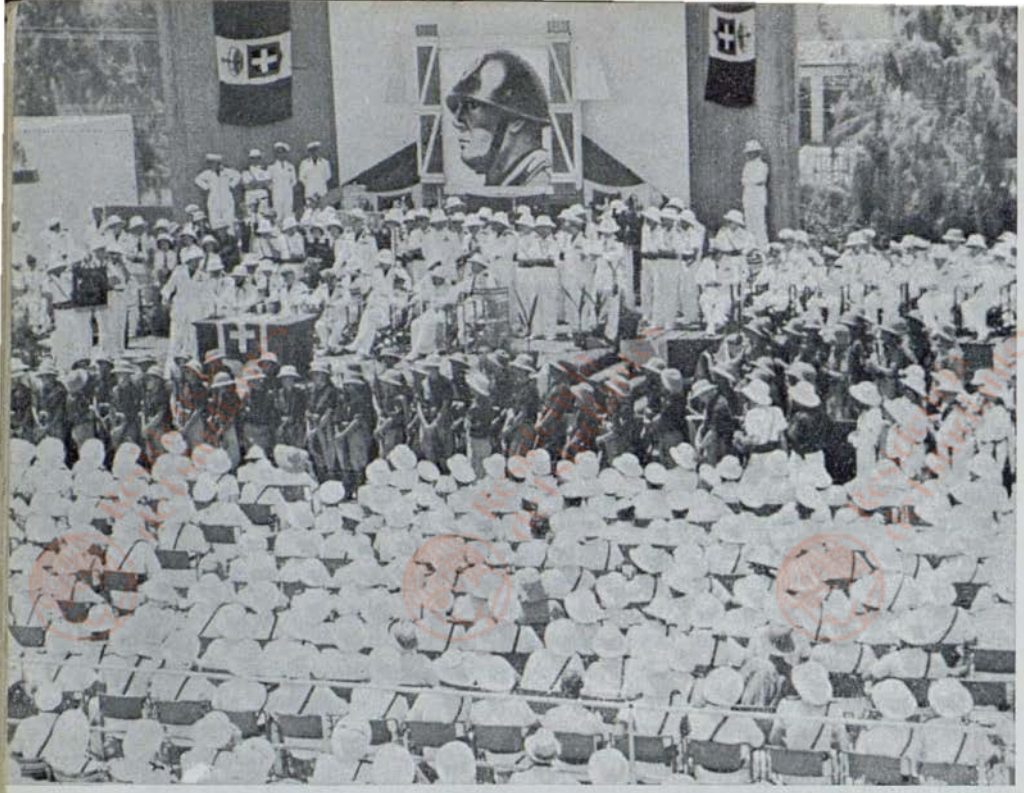
was the Fascist collapse that by February almost all Somalia was in our hands ; by the first week in April General Cunningham was in Addis Ababa and General Platt was in Asmara.

"Within five months of my assumption of duty", the Chief Political Officer wrote of the new responsibilities both in Eritrea and Somalia, and in Ethiopia, "administrations had to be established for a territory about 720,000 square miles in extent, containing 119,000 European civilians and about 12,000,000 Africans. At no time was there more than a handful of trained staff available for the purpose, particularly for administrative, legal, financial and political duties, and even by the end of June 1941 the total number of officers employed under me, in occupied enemy territories and at my headquarters, amounted only to 268, which is almost the exact strength of the European Italian staff of the Post Office at Asmara."

Yet the way in which this organisation, founded hurriedly and late and collected under the gravest difficulties, tackled its problems makes one of the most remarkable tales of the war. Men from the neighbouring African dependencies of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and the Sudan, some from as far afield as Rhodesia, Egypt and Palestine, some with previous administrative or specialised experience and some without, many of them unable to speak more than a few words of Italian, let alone Somali, Tigrinya or Amharic, but all of them alike in their adaptability, plunged cheerfully into the seas of chaos before them. In a few months they had rescued Eritrea and Somalia from complete totalitarian collapse, and were running them with smoothness and efficiency. And they were doing so in the middle of a war in lands through which war had passed, populated not only by Africans but also by an allegedly hostile European race.

The handful of administrators who entered these territories found themselves faced with problems less colossal, but no less difficult, than those likely to be met in Europe. They had on their hands two over-capitalised, bankrupt semi-deserts, which had never been self-supporting and which had never been intended to be self-supporting. These territories had developed no industries and little agriculture, their imports for years had greatly exceeded exports, they had been maintained hitherto only by enormous grants-in-aid from Italy. Their native populations consisted chiefly of Somalis and Eritreans, of which the former had earned a well-deserved reputation for turbulence, while the latter had recently developed a marked disrespect for the Italians ; and both had at their disposal quantities of rifles, hand-grenades, ammunition and machine-guns beyond their wildest dreams.

The Italians also were of a difficult type. Although, particularly in Eritrea, there were intelligent and able men among them, there were large numbers of government officials for whom nominal jobs had been ingeniously created, unwanted men who had left Italy for the good of their political health, and Fascists who had left Italy to line their pockets. This surplus European population was concentrated in Eritrea, mostly in Asmara, that remarkable levitated white elephant, which Fascist grandiosity and engineering skill had conjured into existence at 7,800 feet, in the midst of a country that lacked the means to support it. In this strange city, which will be



CEREMONIAL IN MOGADISHU. This is the annual Fascist celebration in the capital of Italian Somaliland in 1939. *There are no Somalis in the picture.*

described more fully later, lived 45,000 Italians, who could not obtain enough fresh milk for their small children and imported their vegetables from Rome, and 100,000 natives, largely crowded into latrineless native quarters, which lacked enough water even for their unambitious needs.

To quote from official reports, at Massawa, at Asmara and elsewhere, the Italians had "established factories and engineering shops. . . . There is an impressive transport equipment, there are airfields, aircraft engineering shops, and electric light and power. But there is nothing for which all these facilities can be used except to supply the needs of an army, campaigning southwards against Ethiopia. The elimination of that army brought to an end the only purpose of the greater part of the organisation and equipment of the Italian colony, with the resultant problems of unemployment, supply and subsidy which have caused us and are continuing to cause us the gravest difficulties".

In Somalia, too, the conditions found were similar in the main, though different in detail. True, Mogadishu had never suffered from the elephantiasis that had overtaken Asmara. True, the Italian population of the colony was only one-tenth of that of Eritrea ; but they were more violently Fascist, incorrigibly corrupt, and cordially hated by the Somali, who is difficult to deal with even at his friendliest. Here in Somalia there was some agricultural development, but the crops grown had always been uneconomic and were practically useless save for export to protected monopolistic markets. In any case, production had broken down, for the labour had run away, and

the farmers seemed unwilling to help either themselves or each other. Here, too, to a greater extent than in Eritrea, the natives had armed themselves with sufficient weapons to give vent to their love of tribal feuds and their hatred of the Italians, or, if they felt so minded, to start a Jehad under a new Mad Mullah. Neither in Eritrea nor Somalia did circumstances seem propitious for a quickly collected, under-staffed, largely inexperienced and somewhat experimental scratch administration.

3. THE PIONEERS MOVE IN

On 19th January 1941, having been appointed Chief Political Officer, Major-General Sir Philip E. Mitchell arrived in Cairo to begin his work. He was at that date a general without an army ; his command consisted of precisely one staff officer. The first Deputy Chief Political Officer for Eritrea was appointed a week later, on 26th January, while the army was advancing towards Keren. On 9th February he crossed the frontier and next day set up his headquarters at Agordat. He had with him at this stage only one officer, the Secretary to the Administration, and twelve native policemen borrowed from Khartoum.

Fortunately, the situation was not complex. There was no Italian population to help or hinder, and the tribes had a structure similar to that of their relatives in the Sudan. Problems mostly centred around the mysteries of the lira and piastre, the restarting of trade despite these mysteries, the question of what to do with the Tessenei cotton crop, and of getting in supplies. For these matters he was, at this stage, directly responsible to the General Officer Commanding, Lieut.-General Sir William Platt. The entry into Asmara was a very different business. So far the only Italian civilian encountered had been a 74-year-old, bankrupt ex-contractor, who had stayed behind at Tessenei. But now the Administration was confronted with an Italian population of 40,000 or 50,000, with the entire governmental and municipal staffs from which not one clerk was missing, and with rows of ornate and armed Italian police, ten to every British soldier.

The first Deputy Chief Political Officer for Somalia was appointed on 11th February 1941, while the armies were tearing their way through Jubaland. Four days later he flew to Kismayu, the little Indian Ocean port. It had been captured only the day before. He found everything in chaos. The Italians had fled before the British came, sanitary services had broken down, and the natives had spent two days in an ecstasy of looting. He appointed a Senior Political Officer who had previous experience of Somalis in Kenya's Northern Frontier Province, and then returned to Nairobi to organise. Almost before he got there, Mogadishu had fallen and the army was racing for the Ethiopian border. Vast new

GETTING THINGS STRAIGHT. Enemy weapons are collected in Kismayu. The first task was to keep abandoned equipment out of the hands of the restless tribes.

tracts of country were conquered from day to day, and were duly handed over to the Administration. The D.C.P.O. returned forthwith with such assistants as he was able immediately to muster. A few of these were flown direct to Mogadishu but the main party of sixteen British officers, three British other ranks and twenty-nine motor vehicles, left Nairobi by road on 7th March and after a thousand miles of hard driving reached the capital in a week.

These new Political Officers were distributed as rapidly as might be through the vast square mileage of Somalia's less barren wastes. Within a week of their arrival they were in Kismayu, in the white little coastal towns of Brava and Merka, along the great stretches of the Juba river at Gelib, Bardera and Lugh, on the meandering Webi Shebeli at Afgoi and Villaggio D'Abruzzi, on the road to Ethiopia at Bulo Burti and Belet Uen. Here, isolated from the world and from each other, often unaided by so much as a native clerk (the average Somali being ignorant alike of English and of typing), each wrestled with the particular brand of chaos he found in his own allotted district.

Administrative duties were not the only tasks that fell to these officers in the early days. The army had advanced so swiftly into Ethiopia that it had left behind it whole tracts of untouched country, especially to the north-east between the Mogadishu-Jijiga road and the Cape of Gardafui. These vast, desolate stretches of rock and sand might have given scope for prolonged resistance in the hands of a more determined enemy ; as it was, they were

swiftly reduced to order by a handful of Political Officers. An aircraft was sent to drop pamphlets on Rocca Littorio, the administrative centre of Mudug, with instructions for surrender, and next day an Assistant Political Officer, an officer of the King's African Rifles, and eight tough South African troops arrived in a Junkers 88. The stipulated white flags could not be seen, but the party decided to risk it. The Resident of Rocca Littorio duly made his submission. This process would have been repeated at Obbia if the dilapidated condition of the Valencias, the only available aircraft, had not led to a series of forced landings up and down Somalia. In the end this tiny port was occupied by forces travelling by lorry from Rocca Littorio.

Only the north-east corner of Somalia remained. The exploration of this area fell to the same Assistant Political Officer, accompanied now by six Tanganyika police. On 19th April he landed at Gardo, found it deserted, and got into touch with the local chiefs. Meanwhile, units of the Camel Corps, with a number of semi-commando units, were pushing in from British Somaliland still farther to the north. Bender Cassim and Dante fell, and the Italians grouped themselves for a first and final stand near the lighthouse at Gardafui. Unfortunately for their stand, however, a British officer, his orderly and one other rank walked by mistake into the Italian position before an attack could be launched. The garrison, having now retired to the final limits even of Somalia, had no alternative save to surrender on the spot.

Thus the occupation of the greater part of Somalia had been completed with the use of the fewest possible troops, and the British officials had to settle down to less exciting days: to thinking out what was to be done with the wrecked tunny fishery at Bender Cassim and the always uneconomic £3,000,000 salt works at Dante. Above all, it was necessary to deal at once with the large-scale raids which were now being launched by well-armed Somali tribesmen against their cousins in British Somaliland in an unprecedentedly totalitarian manner, including rape and the theft of water-carrying camels, two practices which were quite contrary to the traditional protocols governing Somali looting.

4. SETTLING DOWN

It may be easier to capture a capital than to administer it successfully. If the capital is surrendered without actual fighting, as was the case in Mogadishu, Addis Ababa, and Asmara, then there is usually in the streets a large-sized crowd, drawn by a mixture of curiosity and the desire to witness the making of history. Normally, that crowd can be relied on to applaud, partly from the human instinct to clap the conqueror, partly from policy, partly in all sincerity. But behind the front of enthusiasm and excitement,

opinion is not yet formed ; for every man and woman in the streets, ten are waiting doubtfully behind their shuttered windows. In these early critical hours or days, a single incident of impatience or exasperation, a confusion arising from the clash of languages, an accidental omission, may put an end to understanding for years to come.

This phase is even more difficult for the Administration than for the troops, for the troops have but to behave patiently and punctiliously, whereas the Administration has to deal with complicated governmental machines and solve the personal equation of the frequently touchy individuals who compose those machines. It is so easy, to put it at its simplest, to intern too many or to intern too few ; to create a situation which broadens the temporary humiliation of the inhabitants into years of silent misery and requires from the occupying Power a larger force to garrison the land and a larger body of administrators to run it. If, on the other hand, no mistakes are made and confidence is gained, the occupied territory may largely run itself. In a week or two, the public may realise that the dreaded catastrophe was no catastrophe at all, that things have not changed for the worse. In a matter of months, they may feel they have changed for the better.

In Asmara, on 2nd April, it was especially vital that confidence should be gained ; the Administration was still so understaffed that it is hard to see how it could have carried on without co-operation. By now, some half-dozen new officers had arrived, the twelve police had grown to about eighty, and sixty partly trained irregulars swelled their nominal if not their effective strength ; but the time had not yet been reached when the Administration could begin to think of itself in terms even of separate one-man departments. Co-operation was secured, however, and Eritrea did not tread the unhappy path of conflict and oppression.

In Somalia, though the European civilian population was less than 7,000, both international law and common sense demanded that the Administration should as far as possible work in with the Italian authorities. Such a policy would keep both the native and European population in employment, would reduce the danger to security, and reduce to a minimum the British staff which it was necessary to employ. Here, however, the Italians proved less unreservedly co-operative, more Fascist and more corrupt, than those of Eritrea. In Mogadishu immediate co-operation of a kind was obtained from the municipio, whose mayor, despite pronounced Fascist sympathies, for which he later had to be interned, saw the necessity for organising relief. The staffs of the various government departments, who had already received three months' pay in advance, found it difficult to make up their minds. In the end two parties emerged—a Fascist minority which consisted of the more recent immigrants, minor officials and a few hot-headed, diehard leaders, and the government party, including the civil servants and residents of long standing, who recognised that co-operation was in the best interests of their country.

In the end, however, even their assistance proved more trouble than it was worth. To quote from a contemporary report, "the Italian officials we have retained in office pursue their corrupt and idle course. They do little and care less for the welfare of their fellow countrymen. Italians in difficul-

ties inevitably come to British officers for help and advice, and openly expressed contempt for Italian officialdom is growing in volume''. In the end, after five months' trial, the experiment had to be abandoned and the majority was removed. But the municipio is still functioning today. Not one serious act of sabotage occurred, and Somalia, like Eritrea, was spared the misery of hating its masters.

Gradually, in both Eritrea and Somalia, things steadied down to normal administration. Little by little, the natives learned that the overthrow of the Italians did not mean the enthronement of anarchy, while the Italians, realising that after all the world had not come to an end, settled down to a provisional acceptance of the British occupation.

It was easy to understand this attitude. Fascism had suffered a crushing local defeat, but in the eyes of Italians, the most wishful thinkers in all Europe, there was no reason why a German triumph in Egypt should not at any moment reinstate Mussolini in the howdah of his White Elephant. Serious attempts at sabotage or risings were not to be expected from a people who had failed to fight to the end, even when the dice was loaded in their favour. But in such times as the months before El Alamein there were signs that they would become restive, and even dangerous, if German troops approached. However, the chief occupation of even the more enterprising Fascists never got beyond rumour-spreading and black-listing, threatening Italians who co-operated too readily with the castor-oil they would be made to swallow one day, and photographing co-operators at their work.

On the whole, the extreme Fascists cancelled out the extreme anti-Fascists, who were neither numerous nor very influential. Their weakness was only to be expected. While Italy was still at war, pro-British or pro-democratic activity was easy to denounce as unpatriotic treachery. On the whole, therefore, the Administration decided that it was best to regard the Italians in Eritrea and Somalia as neither Fascist nor anti-Fascist, but just Italian ; not to attempt to build up an anti-Fascist party, since in so doing one would automatically stimulate a pro-Fascist party ; to take the line that would keep the colonies quietest and enable them to be administered with the minimum of fuss. Therefore, while all Fascist propaganda was suppressed in schools, for many months no attempt was made to remove the emblems and slogans with which Mussolini had so plentifully and entertainingly bestrewn the arid country-sides of Eritrea and Somalia. They were left as crumbling monuments to a crumbling Power. Until quite recently, as you drove through what was then called the Viale Mussolini, you might still be exhorted somewhat anachronistically to ''believe, obey and fight''. All this, however, has now been changed at the request of the Italians themselves ; Fascist names have disappeared from the streets of Asmara and the one-time Viale Mussolini now rejoices in the name Corso d'Italia.

So far, in order to sketch the broad general picture of how the Administration came to Eritrea and Somalia, events in both colonies have been dealt with side by side. This method is necessarily abandoned in the succeeding twelve chapters, seven of which are concerned with developments in Eritrea, five with developments in Somalia. In the last chapter of the book the work of the British Military Administration is considered as a whole.

THE SUNNY DAY. Eritrean children gossip with a Civil Affairs officer. On the mountains in the background, two years before, was fought the Battle of Keren.

II

Recovery in Eritrea

5. KEEPING THE PEACE

Of all the important duties of an Occupied Territory Administration, the first is to maintain security. The officers of the Administration need to be able to go about their work without fear of interference, and the army must know that its lines of communication are safe. In Eritrea it was necessary, too, that Italians should not feel themselves in danger of molestation from their armed and by no means orderly ex-subjects. The collapse of a regime is the ideal time for paying off old political and personal scores and for the acquisition of sudden wealth by rapid, illegal means.

In this chapter, which describes how order was restored and maintained in Eritrea, it is essential to remember that throughout the British occupation there has existed in the territory a military garrison which in time of emergency would take control. That emergency has never arisen, but it should not be forgotten that the garrison was always there, and that its presence was a constant source of discouragement to the lawless. Had no garrison existed, the Administration could certainly not have carried on with the scanty personnel at its disposal. Equally, but for the skill, determination and tact of the Administration, a very much larger garrison would have been required than the small force which was distributed here and there throughout the land.

In Italian times there were in Eritrea two kinds of police—Mussolini's Polizia Africana Italiana (known as the PAI) and the royalist Carabinieri. The PAI were employed for police work of every kind, but quite half of their duties was to make Italians good Fascists. They corresponded in fact to the German Gestapo, and in the towns, which is where they mostly operated, their powers were unlimited. The Carabinieri, on the other hand, were an old-established gendarmerie, who came directly under the King and figure at the head of the Italian army list. They had, of course, existed long before the PAI, and though they had found it wise to become good Fascists there

was little love lost between them. The Carabinieri operated more in the out-districts than the towns.

There were innumerable other groups of Italians, such as the glorious customs officers of the Guardia di Finanza, who walked about Asmara in riding boots and striking uniforms. It was by no means easy to tell at first sight who was a policeman and who was only an impressive imitation ; and in the end all had to be issued with armbands to ensure identification.

Since the Administration as yet possessed no adequate police, it was essential to make use temporarily of the existing Italian force, or such members of it as were not positively disaffected. The PAI were considerably overstaffed—their ranks included 1,200 white men—and it proved practicable to dispense with the services of the more dangerous, chiefly the younger men and the more influential officers, and to accommodate them in the P.O.W. camps to which the whole force could correctly have been relegated. At one time it appeared that the fifty per cent. remaining might refuse to carry on, but in the end they decided to co-operate, realising that, if they did not, the Carabinieri would. Every effort was made to avoid interning the chief of the PAI. He was a charming, harmless gentleman, with such intriguing and melodramatic devices as a button on his desk which automatically locked his office door ; but in the end he became too much of a nuisance and had to be removed.

With this large but untrustworthy force, salted by a handful of Sudanese Police, the Administration set to work to tackle as varied a collection of potential threats to security as can easily be imagined. The following weeks were marked by no single attempt at political assassination and by only one doubtful case of serious sabotage, but they cannot be classed as dull. There was, for instance, the tendency of tribesmen to use the arms and ammunition they had acquired, not against the government, but against each other and for highway robbery. There was the need to explain forcibly to the sedentary indigenous population of the altipiano that the time had not come to repudiate all obligations to concession owners and to loot occupied as well as unoccupied farms with the threat and occasionally the use of violence. There were the attacks by natives on Italians living in shacks on the outskirts of Dekamere. And, throughout the country, there were the vast numbers of strong, unemployed young men of military age, who wore civilian clothes and had never, never, never fought against us.

In Asmara, in spite of the curfew, there was a great deal of petty crime, chiefly in the native quarter. The town was full of ex-soldiers, who had returned from the war without work, support or principles, of excited locals, and of Sudanese and French Equatorial Africans, who at the best of times are good workers but doubtful citizens outside their own countries. In the end it was decided to attempt to remove from Asmara the vast extraneous native population, and by the end of July law-abiding citizens had little of which to complain.

But perhaps the worst problem of all was presented in Massawa, where from 5th May to the middle of August only one British Lieutenant of Police was available to struggle with a town which combined all the potentialities of a distressed area, a recently blockaded port, an abominable climate, and

a mixed population of all the Red Sea races, in addition to 2,000 Italians, many of whom were Fascists.

Here occurred the concealment of the municipal funds by Italian officials, which led, after many false trails had been followed, to the digging up of 2,250,000 lire in the local churchyard. Then there was the cleaning-up of the islands of the Dahlak archipelago and the capture of a number of prominent Fascists who were trying to escape in a small boat, not only with their ideology, but also with large sums of money and goods. There was the case of the Resident of Nocra, whose luggage seemed to contain most of the cutlery of Massawa. There was the impossibility, even with such help as the military could provide, of guarding the vast open-sided goods shed of the Campo di Marte, in which a great quantity of inadequately catalogued goods had been dumped from German vessels before they were scuttled. There was the indiscriminate looting, which, unchecked by the police, was at first carried on even in daylight, and which led at length to the shooting of four offenders and the internment of the PAI. There was the almost simultaneous arrest of Massawa's two most prominent religious leaders on serious charges —Father Avarodo, the parish priest, for being in unlawful possession of a revolver, and the Moslem Cadi for holding written communication with the enemy.

THE VERTICAL DESERT. Most of Eritrea is mountainous. Only the narrow 8,000-foot plateau on which Asmara is built is suitable for settlement. The coastal plain is a strip of scrub, and west of the capital are jumbled unpromising hills.

THE PARADE OF THE MOUNTED MEN. They belong to the Eritrean Police Force. Put into the field six months after the occupation, the Force keeps order throughout the territory.

At this time, too, broke out a serious fracas between the Eritreans and some unruly Sudanese of a Pioneer company, which came eventually not only to sticks and stones but to bayonets and hand-grenades. The Italian police failed to put in an appearance while this riot was going on ; it was finally checked by the courageous action of two young British officers, who managed to put a sudden stop to fighting in which fifteen people had already been killed and upwards of fifty injured. Finally, on 7th August, occurred the great fire at the ammunition dump, in which 8,000 Italian shells and 1,200 Italian landmines went up. The fire rendered 4,000 natives homeless. Sabotage was suspected, but never proved.

At the same time, there were continuous thefts from the railway and even heavier ones from the aerial ropeway, which drops 8,000 feet in forty-eight miles down some of the remoter stretches of Eritrea's lawless mountain-sides. Some of the criminals were undoubtedly baboons, which learned how to swarm up the pylons and help themselves, but the unearthing of caches totalling £3,000 in value and the conviction of thirty-five employees proved that a human element was concerned as well.

At this stage, when the British officers numbered only four or five, there was no hope yet of taking charge ourselves, but in August 1941 the situation was changed by the arrival of an adequate number of trained officers from Southern Rhodesia. Six months after the occupation, the Eritrean Police Force began to take the field. It consists today of 3,000 Eritreans, under ninety-seven British officers and inspectors. It has a strong C.I.D. branch, with finger-print, record and photographic sections ; four armoured cars, which once belonged to the Italians ; a half-squadron of some sixty mounted men ; and a striking force 250 strong for repelling raids from beyond the Ethiopian frontier. There has never been any lack of volunteer recruits, who receive pay, uniforms, and three months' training, and come from a

great variety of tribes. Those chosen for Asmara are mainly Copts, but in the lowlands the rank and file are recruited from the tribesmen, less literate but less timid than the town-bred Eritrean.

Today Eritreans do every job for which they can be trained. They control the traffic ; they man the armoured cars. The Italian members of the force have been gradually reduced from their original multitude to 165 PAI, most of whom are technical experts, photographers, investigators and prosecutors, and 185 Carabinieri, who work in the country under British officers in scattered twos and threes. Italians are never employed in native areas or for political matters, but for straightforward police-work in districts in which Italians reside.

Police-work in Eritrea has lost its early glamour. There is, of course, petty crime in Asmara and Massawa, there are occasional minor tribal scraps in the remoter lowlands, and there are occasional raiding parties from Ethiopia. But whereas in Italian times a policeman would never dream of going about unarmed, today he never carries a weapon unless he is engaged on some special task.

For the last two years in Eritrea, the Administration has maintained as high a standard of security as was ever reached in Italian times, despite the arms in the hands of natives and the presence of a nominally enemy community. This has been achieved by a very much smaller police force, of whom only a hundred are British or Allied white personnel.

ERITREAN VOLUNTEERS form the body of the Eritrean Police Force of 3,000 *men. The number of British officers and inspectors in it is less than one hundred.*

6. COURTS OF JUSTICE

When you occupy a territory, if you are not an Axis Power, you do not requisition all you see regardless of humanity and individual rights. You do not shoot people out of hand or imprison them at will. Instead, you issue a number of proclamations. One of these announces that you have occupied the territory, that personal property will be respected, and that you propose to interfere with the rights of the populace as little as you can, provided they refrain from acts calculated to hinder the occupying Power. In another, you state what you regard as war crimes, and name the penalty for sabotage. In another, you set up courts, describe how these courts will be composed, and what classes of offence they will try. For the correct procedure for occupying territory is laid down carefully and clearly by international law.

In an occupied territory, you do not judge yourself, especially if your legal department consists of one lawyer from Uganda. Instead, you invite courts to continue. Thus in Eritrea it was pointed out to the Chief Justice and the Public Prosecutor that, unless they co-operated, justice would have to be a rough and unsatisfactory affair administered by those not qualified ; but that if they agreed to carry on, Fascist legal principles must be dropped. In the case of five men, including the President of the Tribunal and the Attorney-General, love of Fascism at first proved stronger than love of Justice, but two or three days after the occupation the Italian courts reopened. They have administered justice satisfactorily ever since, and no case of corruption has had to be brought against an Italian magistrate. At first, it is true, they did not appreciate our bustling methods or see why a man must be tried within a week or two of arrest instead of a year or two. A prisoner, they assumed, was guilty unless he could prove himself innocent (otherwise how could you ever get a conviction ?), and so, if a man was going to get five years, a wait before trial of a year or two did not seem to them so bad.

From the very beginning Italian courts, wherever possible, tried all cases under Italian law ; but in many places the Italian courts had disappeared. Where this had happened, the British Military Courts, which had been set up mainly to try offences against proclamations, took the place of the Italian courts, and tried cases under Italian law. The British Legal Officers and the Italian lawyers have co-operated successfully in the administration of justice.

Only two innovations were introduced, one of which was a new form of native court. During the early stages of the advance from Eritrea, it was necessary, since the Italians had withdrawn, to set up native courts which operated on the Sudan model to everyone's satisfaction. Later, as Italian courts functioned only in areas where Italians lived, native courts were set up elsewhere. This caused something of a stir among the Italian judiciary, who feared that the acquisition of new powers by Eritreans would create a difficult situation should Eritrea be handed back to Italy as part of the Peace Treaty. The step was, however, permissible under international law.

The other new departure concerned the Appellate Court. In Italian times it had been possible for appeal to be made from the High Court to the Court of Appeal of East Africa, which sat in Addis Ababa. With the return of the Emperor this had naturally ceased to function and a new court had to be created. Eritrean opinion to some extent resented the fact that the dispensation of justice still seemed to lie largely in Italian hands ; the Administration therefore decided that on this occasion it would manifest its authority and that one British officer should sit with two Italian judges. The Italian judiciary objected very strongly, but was finally talked round. The court was duly opened and has proved a complete success, administering justice expeditiously and working on simple procedure.

One peculiar problem, not met with in previous wars, was the para-statal concern, which had come into being too recently for its status to be clear. In international law, government property may frequently be seized, but private property may not be seized. What was one to do when one found that the Fascist State had gone into partnership with a grocer ? How were you to regard a corporation in which the government owned some (but not all) of the shares, appointed the managing director, and audited the balance sheets ? Exactly what proportion of such a combine was one entitled to seize ? This problem gave the Administration many a headache, until the War Office ruling was received by which any concern in which the Italian Government had had an interest or over which it exercised control might be regarded as being fully statal ; private interests were, however, to be paid out immediately in case of hardship and after the war in other cases.

In the early days the Administration was concerned with more urgent matters than the creation of courts of appeal or the complexities of para-statal combines. Many prisoners were awaiting trial, and the number of new arrests that followed the occupation was flooding the unhealthy prisons. Every effort was made to cope with this situation. In the midst of their multifarious other duties, the Senior Political Officer and the Political Officer at Massawa tried 847 cases in two months, while in Asmara three special Italian administrators were appointed to deal with nothing but court work. The pace of Italian courts was speeded up, with the result that 1,099 cases were heard and settled in the same period in which, in 1940, 278 cases had been tried. In the native districts, too, Eritrea went through an orgy of litigation. The courts of chiefs and headmen and the Sharia Court of Appeal were all of them fully occupied ; Eritreans are naturally litigious and the arrival of a new administration was regarded as a magnificent opportunity for defeated parties to attempt to reverse previous verdicts.

The prisons of Eritrea were found to be in a lamentable state. Prisoners were herded in vast, dirty, foul-smelling wards, with tightly closed doors and windows. They slept with no protection but their rags on cement floors, whether in the moist heat of Massawa or in the cold of Asmara. These wards each contained as many as 160 to 200 men. They were infested with vermin which carried typhus and other diseases. There was little provision either for bathing or for washing clothes. Minors were not segregated from adults. Rations were inadequate, poor in quality, badly cooked. Europeans were given one meal of soup a day and two small

THE VERDICT. A case is settled quietly in the new Court of Appeal. A judicial innovation, the Court sits with one British between two Italian judges.

CHIEFS OF KEREN. These two chiefs have come into Keren, now a centre of native administration, to hear cases, and settle common problems.

loaves of bread ; natives had a bowl of vegetable soup and two flat cakes of meal. Many of the prisoners had been committed on political or trumped-up charges ; some had been awaiting trial for two or three years, because "witnesses were away at the war".

The most damning indictment was that the defects of any one prison, save Nocra, applied to almost all. Fascists were in charge in every case, and the warders were of a low type, ill-paid, and despised by the clerical and administrative staff, who were relatively well-paid and snobbish.

Such a state of affairs could hardly be allowed to continue. The Administration promptly arranged that prisoners should get three meals a day, and provided them at a cost to public funds for which the Fascists, after rake-offs, had contrived to provide only one. Sanitation was made tolerable. And whereas, before the British came, prisoners had been allowed to stay behind bars till they rotted, it was decided to start prison industries, which were provided for under Italian law, but had never been introduced. At first, the men nearly rioted at what they thought an infringement of their right to be bored to death. Now they volunteer to learn new trades which will help them to make a living when released.

Nocra has already been mentioned as an exception among Eritrea's prisons, not because it was better, but because it was far, far worse. In this disgraceful penal settlement off the coast near Massawa, 105 people were awaiting trial, with no sanitation and practically no water, in one of the hottest spots on earth.

This island was inspected on 6th May. The 465 civil prisoners found there were re-classified either as criminal or political. It was decided that 133 were criminals in the first instance and must be sent to Asmara prison, while 332 were entitled to immediate release. But immediate release was out of the question ; they were all too ill. Skin diseases were rampant, venereal disease was so common and so advanced that the spectacle was terrible to behold ; all were starving. Some could not survive even the voyage to the mainland. Nine died in hospital on arrival and 114 cases had to be admitted for treatment, of which, after two and a half months of decent living, all save fifteen were cured. "I met them all when they came off the boat", said the legal adviser. "They were a horrible sight. I'm told Devil's Island was a paradise compared with Nocra." "I have never in my life imagined one could see such classical cases of vitamin deficiency", said the Chief Medical Officer. "Of those in hospital, thirty per cent. could not walk because of it. The scale of diet was absolutely appalling. They could not have expected anyone to live."

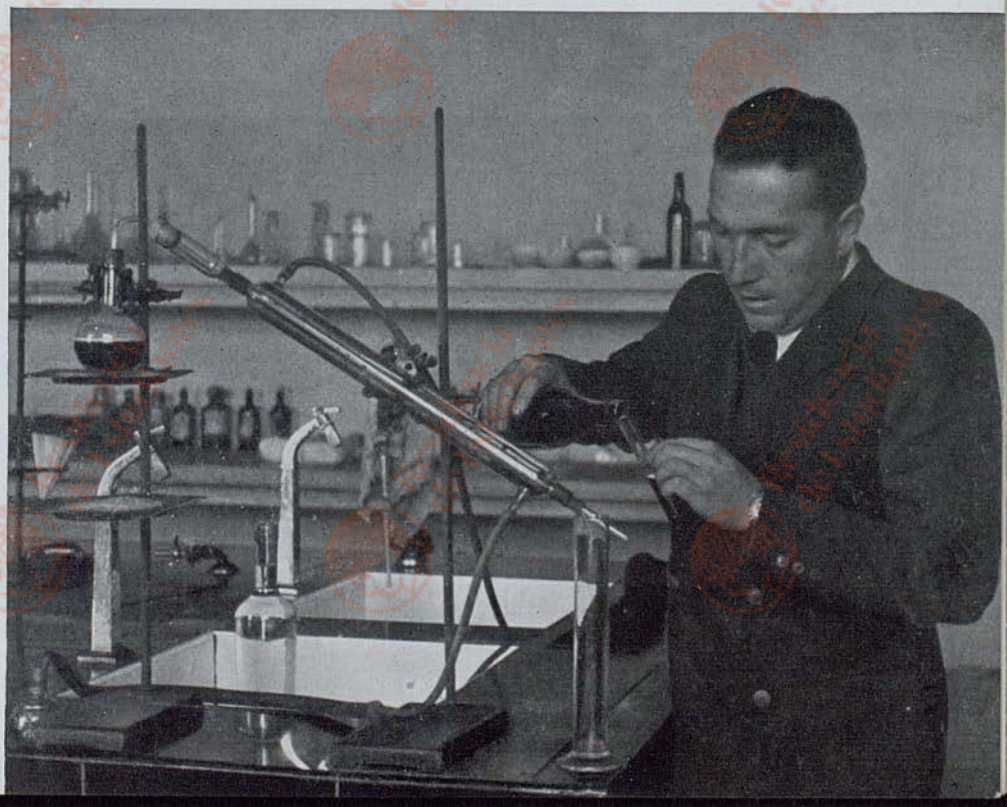
Nocra had been in existence for five years as a penal settlement, during which time it had held an average of 300 prisoners, mostly young men. In these five years 250 had died—a death-rate of one-sixth of the prison population every year. Today the settlement no longer exists. Nocra is just a little island, seldom visited, off the coast of Eritrea in the hot Red Sea.

7. HEALTH COMES TO ERITREA

In a book which aims at giving a fair and balanced picture of the work of the Administration in Eritrea and Somalia, it is difficult to describe the medical conditions found there without threatening the atmosphere of objectivity. In Asmara, which by virtue of its cathedral, boulevards and super cinemas must be judged by the standards of a modern European city, sanitation was deplorable. The chief means of obtaining drinking water was to purchase it from the carts of a monopolistic company in which Teruzzi, the Italian Minister for Colonies, had a private interest. Such water as the taps provided was undrinkable, and there was not enough of it even for washing. As for the sanitation, it suffered from the fact that the Italian genius for engineering comes to a sudden stop at plumbing.

To quote from the medical officer's report, "Asmara has three public latrines, for Italians only. There are none for natives, either public or private. Air-raid shelters form a substitute for the modest. Main drainage runs into the now notorious Mai Bela, in which sewage floats past the garden suburbs of the inaptly named Villaggio Paradiso. Mai Bela received a tributary from the pond formed by the washings of the municipal slaughter-house. Thirty market gardens are watered by pump and main line from the Mai Bela". No drainage at all would have been preferable to this drainage.

PEACEFUL VICTORIES. One of Eritrea's Italian doctors in the Asmara laboratories co-operates in the brilliantly successful drive against tropical diseases.



Everywhere in Eritrea, enteric fevers and dysentery were endemic. In Massawa, conditions were indescribable. Here dengue fever was so common that it was known as "Massawa fever". Malaria could be contracted throughout the country, with the possible exception of Asmara and some of the higher settlements on the altipiano. Flies were regarded as inevitable natural phenomena. Conditions in the prisons have already been described, but it is perhaps not out of place to record here this description by the Senior Medical Officer of Adi Ugri jail, which he visited in the middle of a typhus epidemic. "I saw it in May, just after I arrived. When they opened the first prison cell, I thought I had become dizzy. The whole floor and walls were moving with lice and bugs. We took all the prisoners out, disinfected the prison, and left it uninhabited for thirty-two days. When I went back, the bed-bugs were still alive. After that, I pulled down the walls."

In the western part of Eritrea, the hospitals and dispensaries had closed down when the doctors withdrew to Asmara, while elsewhere throughout the country they had been taken over first by the Italian army and later by the British forces. So, at the time of the occupation, practically no civil hospital was still functioning in Eritrea.

Into this frightful chaos plunged the Medical Department of the Administration. He (for the Medical Department consisted of one man) at once secured the co-operation of most of the sixty-eight Italian doctors on the ground that medicine was international, and recovered and reopened the hospitals one by one. But local Italian doctors seemed to have no conception of the running of public health and they had been trained to regard hard work in out-districts not as an opportunity but as a form of punishment. Some increase of staff therefore was necessary. When it was obtained, a health campaign was begun in Eritrea which in two and a half years has achieved quite startling results.

In all the main centres of population a mosquito-control service was begun with the help of two military anti-malarial units. It is now carried on by Sudanese inspectors and a trained Eritrean staff. Today, except in Tessenei, it is possible to sleep safely without a net in any of the main towns and villages. In Agordat, only three cases were known to be contracted during the last malarial season, though in Italian times no less than eighty per cent. of the population, black and white, went down with this disease.

Then there was dengue, which in the first May of the occupation had incapacitated every officer of the Administration and almost every officer of the Massawa garrison. This disease is spread by the aedes mosquito, the carrier of yellow fever, which breeds in houses, gutters, old tins, or wherever it can find a trace of moisture. As part of the yellow-fever campaign, a house-to-house inspection is carried out weekly by a British major, three British other ranks and forty Eritreans. As a result, the aedes mosquito has been practically eliminated, and with it dengue fever. In the spring of 1942 there was a small epidemic. In 1943 there was none.

Asmara, too, wears a new face. The refuse and debris of aerial bombardment have been removed. The noisome trenches and air-raid shelters have been filled in. The contract with the town cleaning service,

STREET SCENE. Life is sociable in Asmara's native quarter. The town cleaning service now covers it, main water has been laid on, and a milk supply arranged.

SHE SITS IN THE SUN, her life before her. In a nearby street a child welfare centre has been opened, with permanent Eritrean and voluntary British staff.

which in Italian times had not included the native village of 100,000 people, has been rescinded, and a new one issued. Milk pasteurisation has been started, and hundreds of miles from the capital lorries collect milk from Eritrea's herds and bring it into Asmara for small children and the sick. A child welfare centre has been established in the native quarter, as it was painfully obvious that the Eritrean mother had no idea how to look after or bring up her infants. The clinic is staffed voluntarily by unpaid British women and paid permanent Eritrean staff. Two lectures a week are given, and the mothers are handed pamphlets written in Tigrinya and illustrated by Italian artists, which they can take back home and have read to them by their husbands.

An orthopædic workshop, once located in Addis Ababa, has been set up for the manufacture of artificial limbs. This was very necessary in view of the multitudinous red "money-box" grenades, which were bestrewn all over the country-side and had, for instance, injured twenty-two children who played with them near Keren. By general hygiene and greater cleanliness the fly population has been reduced to one-fiftieth of its old multitudes. It is still too great, measured by English standards, but the comparison is remarkable to anyone who remembers the country as it was.

The water shortage in Asmara has been very largely ended. Though the Italians had constructed in the native quarter a number of water points, each with perhaps a dozen taps, they were in a filthy condition, fed by mains

MOTHERCRAFT IN ERITREA. This is a page from a pamphlet in the Tigrinya language used in the Asmara welfare clinic. It means :—" How to bath a baby : 1. The water must not be too hot ; 2. Be very careful that no soap gets in its eyes ; 3. Keep it out of a draught while still wet ; 4. Rub it well with a towel at once."

choked with accumulated sediment and supplied from a source which periodically dried up. In the dry season, natives were compelled to seek water from beyond the city limits. A few of the wealthier bought it from Teruzzi's carts, but for the most part long strings of women and children made their way to the reservoirs many miles outside the town, scraped muddy water from shallow wells sunk under the dams, put it in petrol tins, and staggered home.

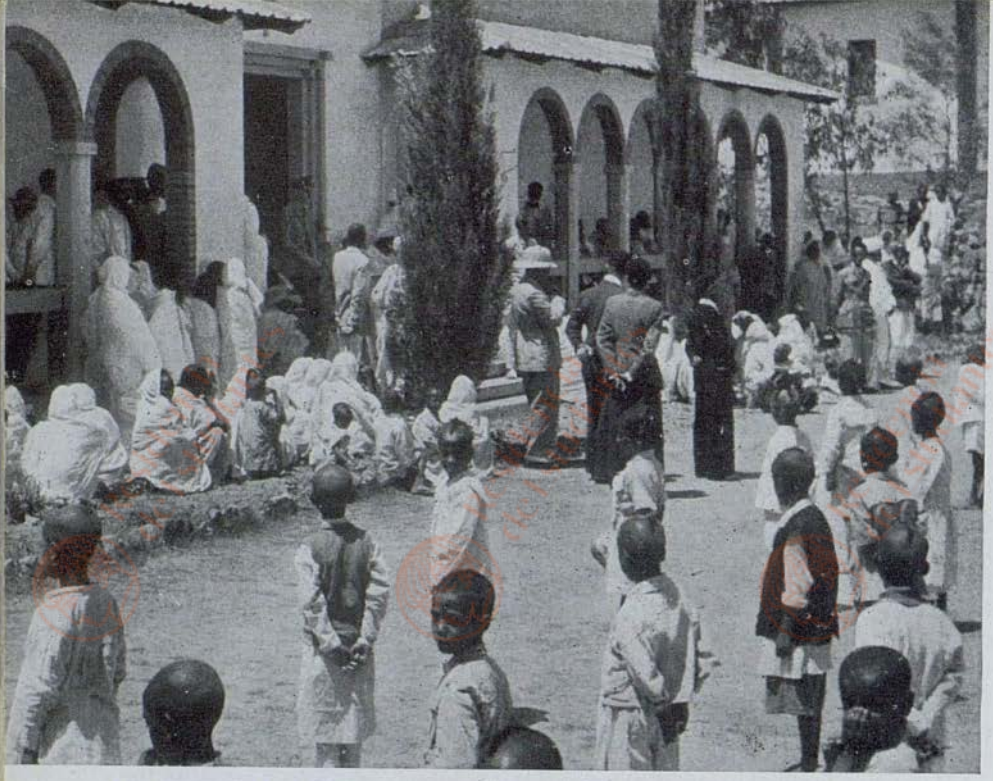
When the British came, the situation was met partly by means of a number of tanker lorries. Since then, Lake Delia, a great new reservoir, has been completed ; the mains have been torn up and relaid to serve the native quarter ; filter wells have been sunk under the dams, and old fountains have been restored with healthier conditions. Water shortage in the European quarter is now almost a thing of the past, while inhabitants of the native quarter can count on three gallons a day instead of the quart or so which was all they could get in the dry season of 1942. In most of the other towns of Eritrea the water supply has been increased, though nowhere was the shortage so acute as in Asmara.

This chapter closes with an inglorious confession. The iniquitous Mai Bela remains. It cannot be covered in, as it takes storm water as well as sewage ; and, if it were covered, it would become not only blocked but uncleanable. The only solution is an entirely new system of drainage for the whole of this fantastic capital, where so much money was squandered by the Fascists on the unessentials of life. Such a monumental work cannot be afforded in the middle of a war by an Administration whose terms of reference were "care and maintenance".

8. EDUCATION FOR YOUNG AND OLD

Native education under the Italians was by no means ignored. Excluding the Tigre province, which was really part of Ethiopia, there were in Eritrea fourteen government and three mission schools. There were also twenty-five village schools, run by uninstructed Eritreans, which figured in reports but were never inspected and were of doubtful value. These schools between them were irregularly attended by some 6,000 pupils.

Under the Italians, native education served a political purpose. All instruction in the government schools was given in Italian, and such mission schools as were not repressed in 1932 survived only by agreeing to limit their teaching of Tigrinya and Ge'ez to religious instruction. The text-books, expensively produced, were written in Italian and glorified the Duce on almost every page. Military service was lauded. Boys were encouraged to become "little soldiers of the Duce", the Fascist salute was compulsory, and at the morning hoisting of the flag Italian songs were sung.



SPEECH DAY. Parents and notables, encouraged to take an interest in the children's education, attend the Asmara school for the distribution of reports.

When the Administration took over Eritrea, it was not found possible immediately to create an Education Department but, since January 1943, schools have been opening fast. Including the mission schools there are twenty-eight today, eleven more than there were in Italian times, unless one counts the twenty-five village schools, which were considered of too dubious a value to reopen. Only half as many boys are being taught, however, for it was decided this year to enrol 3,000 pupils for a satisfactory planned first-year course and increase these numbers next year when present pupils pass into the second year. Fifty pupils, taught daily in two classes of twenty-five, are now the limit of a teacher's responsibility. The days of a hundred boys to a class are done.

Teachers, as in Italian times, must be recruited rather from the highways and by-ways, but some attempt is made to see that they know their job ; every year they undergo a three weeks' course of lectures and demonstration lessons. Their status has been immeasurably improved. They are entrusted with running government schools, which was not permitted in Italian times ; their salaries have been doubled to £6 a month ; and they are given a special ration card, which puts them on the same basis as ''notables''. Everything possible is done to make them feel that an interest is taken in their work. The Education Officer and his Eritrean Inspector, though they have no magic carpet, contrive to tour the schools once every month—which at least compares favourably with the achievement of the Italian inspector who found time to visit the school at Agordat once for half a day in five years.

Eritrean schoolmasters are responding to this treatment with a sense of responsibility, initiative, and enterprise, and parents and notables, now encouraged for the first time to take an interest, serve on committees which spend time, thought, and money on the betterment of the schools.

Books have proved a problem. It did not seem suitable that the general education of Eritreans should be confined to an ability to recognise the features of Il Duce; the Administration is anxious to produce better farmers and agriculturists, not government typists and soldiers. The Moslems could be provided with books from the Sudan, but Tigrinya presented a more difficult problem, as the available Mission books consisted largely of prayers and evangelical hymns, which did not figure in the curriculum. Use is therefore made of the Medical Department's pamphlets on hygiene while new Tigrinya books are being produced. An "arithmetic", an illustrated A B C, and a simple book on hygiene are already in existence and other books will soon be ready. The Department is determined that Eritreans, both Moslem and Christian, shall not forget their mother tongue in learning Italian—or English. In the matter of female education, the Administration has gone beyond the Italians, who had no counterpart to the newly opened girls' school in Asmara.

The Education Department has paid more attention to Eritrean education than to Italian, for Eritrea is predominantly a native colony, and moreover repatriation has now removed most of the Italian children. The European schools were closed for eight months following the occupation, after which they were permitted to reopen privately on condition that Fascist methods were abandoned. But eventually the Administration shouldered the responsibility, recovered the buildings which had been requisitioned for many forms of war work, and enabled Italian schools to open properly in January 1943. Their syllabus remains unchanged, but all militarist teaching and Fascist doctrines have been rigorously excluded.

Although the Ministry of Information in Eritrea is not connected with the Education Department, its activities have so marked an educative value that this is perhaps as good a place as any to give some account of its work. Under the Administration and the Ministry, the population of Eritrea, both Italian and native, is experiencing for the first time in many years the lesson of objectivity in the presentation of news. There has been no attempt to doctor facts or to build up an anti-Fascist party by vigorous propaganda. Italians, even in the dark days before El Alamein, have been permitted to listen to Radio Rome, and in the *Eritrean Daily News* the *Globereuter* service has been printed both in English and Italian. Thus Axis enthusiasts in Eritrea have had the opportunity to listen to both sides of every pronouncement and make their own deductions.

The history of the *Eritrean Daily News* is interesting. At the time of the occupation there existed a Fascist-controlled paper called the *Corriere Eritreo*, which had a sale of 8,000 copies daily. This paper was immediately suspended. In response to the public demand for news, *Informazione* was started about the beginning of May, a gunner officer taking the news down from the B.B.C. Later, he was joined by two British other ranks. The *Eritrean Daily News* was born on 17th June 1941 and,

EDITOR. The "Eritrean Daily News" is published by the Administration in English and Italian. It has 12,000 *Italian and* 2,000 *British readers a day.*

READER. This Eritrean is reading the new weekly newspaper—the first in history in Tigrinya, his own language. It costs 5 *cents, and sells* 5,000 *copies.*

despite incredible problems of personnel, paper supply, and conditions generally, publication has continued ever since. Its sales, which have reached as many as 17,000, have stabilised around the 14,000 mark ; and it has thus eclipsed in popularity the *Corriere Eritreo*, even when its 2,000 British readers are deducted.

The steady production of the *Eritrean Daily News* is all the more remarkable since it is printed on a Swiss Duplex machine of 1900 vintage. The Fascist management had purchased another machine in the spring of 1940, but unfortunately it left Italy in two ships, one of which had a brief argument with the Royal Navy. One half of the machine is therefore lying useless in the premises of the paper ; where the other half is lying is still a naval secret. Italian readers are also catered for by two Italian weekly newspapers, the one non-Fascist and the other rabidly anti-Fascist in tone. Both started late in 1943 under the censorship of the Administration.

An innovation which could never have been introduced in Italian times is the Ministry of Information's weekly newspaper in Tigrinya, which is sold at 5 cents a copy and has a sale limited only by lack of paper to 5,000 copies. Eritreans are thus provided not only with objective news, but also, for the first time in history, with a newspaper in their own language. In addition to these two papers, the Ministry arranges photographic displays, keeps Asmara's cinemas supplied with films, and broadcasts the news in Italian and Tigrinya in the one-time Viale Mussolini, where large crowds gathered to hear and applaud the news of the resignation of Il Duce.

9. ITALIANS IN DISTRESS

The economic state of Eritrea at the time of the occupation would be incomprehensible except in the light of Fascist colonial policy during the previous six years. Until 1935, the colony was a normal African territory, supporting perhaps 5,000 Europeans : by 1941 it was containing but not supporting 60,000 civilians, in addition to the armed forces.

This large-scale immigration had its basis neither in agriculture nor in normal industry. Italians were certainly invited to come out and take up land, but once they arrived it was made so difficult for them to do so that in the end they would rather do anything else. They filled in forms in triplicate and returned them to the political offices, which eventually refused their applications. These difficulties were not due to inefficiency or red tape. As a part of deliberate policy the Government was reluctant to alienate native land, not because it hoped to make Eritreans good farmers but because it feared that the granting of concessions would discourage recruiting.

Similarly, Eritrea's few potential industries had never been developed, not through inefficiency or idleness, but because the colony was required as an outlet for manufactured goods. Captured correspondence included a letter

from the Duke of Aosta to a man who wished to start a tannery, in which the Viceroy said : "As you are well aware, it is contrary to the policy of the Italian government to encourage industries in Eritrea". Thus it came about that if you happened to be a normal Italian colonist, you did not farm, you did not attempt to produce ; you worked in a garage or an engineering shop or one of a hundred minor businesses that catered for army needs, and you imported your fruit, your vegetables, your tinned milk and your every necessary of life from Italy.

It was a remarkable fact that, even after ten months of blockade and war, Eritrea had failed to take the most elementary steps along the road to self-sufficiency. Agriculture and industries had not been stimulated, with the result that in the last weeks before the British came conditions were appalling. The shops were empty, people had killed off their chickens and eaten every tin of preserved fruit, and when the Fascist chief for Eritrea put in his occasional appearance at the market place in order to pacify the women he was sometimes received even with jeers and catcalls. In the end the authorities, hoping to reduce the booty, threw open the military stores, but the resulting congestion and disorganisation were so complete that hardly anyone got in, and those who did could not get out again. Women describe other women, in fur coats and jewellery, trying to shoulder sacks of maize too heavy for them, sprawling in the mud, and getting nowhere. As a result little was taken away, and the captured military stores helped the Administration to feed the population during the first difficult six weeks. This unexpected haul proved exceptionally fortunate for the Administration and Eritrea, as the destruction of ships along the quays and across the mercantile harbour-mouth at first limited the usefulness of Massawa. The respite gained gave time for the channel to be swept. On 27th May 1941 the first dhow arrived with a cargo of dhurra, and others followed swiftly in its wake. A famine was successfully averted.

Because of the scarcity of supplies, the depreciation of the lira and the loss of very many of the male breadwinners by war casualties or captures, relief was an urgent necessity for the majority of the Italian population. The natives presented no such problem, for the Eritrean had always contrived to keep himself in all necessaries of life save dhurra. Though those who had worked for the Italian military authorities had now lost their jobs, it was possible to support them at least on a bare subsistence level by reducing by a third the price of imported sorghum by means of a subsidy. The European problem was far more serious. A relief organisation had to be set up. The American Red Cross generously placed at the Administration's disposal large stocks of essentials and, in an attempt to supply fresh milk for women and young children, the army even imported some by air.

Two factors which increased the need for relief in Eritrea were the depreciation of the currency and the insolvency of the banks. The lira, now robbed of artificial protection, was pegged at 480 to the £, which was only one-fifth of its nominal value. It was, moreover, no longer a fully negotiable currency except between Italians ; notes of a higher denomination than fifty lire were not officially recognised as legal payment. The banks were not insolvent through any fault of their own ; on direct orders from Rome, all

save fifteen per cent. of their cash assets were destroyed. As in the circumstances obligations could only partially be met, it was decided that holders of credit balances of 5,000 lire or less should be entitled to draw the full amount, but that beyond that figure ten per cent. was all that the banks could pay.

By October 1941 no less than 12,000 Italians were receiving relief, partly because of genuine unemployment, partly because some families, having expended their private means, had now come on the dole. The establishment of this service on a more efficient basis was only one of the tasks of the new Department of Labour, which, unlike its predecessors in Italian times, aimed at finding work without reference to politics. Fortunately it was greatly assisted in its task by the arrival of the American Projects (described in Chapter 11), which absorbed a great deal of Italian and Eritrean labour in 1942. For about eighteen months, while Eritrea was being built up into an Allied arsenal, more than 10,000 Italians were employed either by American military or civilian undertakings, the British Military Administration or the British fighting services. Even now that Eritrea's value as a base for war has largely passed away with the expulsion of the Germans from North Africa, unemployment has not reared its ugly head again, partly because of evacuations and repatriations, but mostly because of the ingenuity with which Italians, encouraged by the Administration, have embarked on new industries and enterprises.

Housing presented a difficult and immediate problem. Asmara was overcrowded when it first surrendered, owing to an inflow of women and children, mostly from Gondar. During the summer of 1941 available space in other towns was filled by Italians from Dessie, while a steady trickle continued to arrive from other parts of Ethiopia. It was not easy to fit into this congestion the British personnel of the Administration, the staff of British Airways, and the forerunners of the great American Projects, with which the history of the next year or two is closely interlinked. Construction of new buildings was hampered by lack of material, and the situation was only partially met by putting in order houses at Keren. It was finally solved by building accommodation camps outside Asmara, where impoverished and unemployed Italians could be economically supported while looking for new jobs, and by the removal of one-sixth of the population through repatriation and evacuation.

The difference between these two terms is important. Repatriates were women, children, and sick or infirm men who were unlikely to be of use to the enemy's war effort. The evacuees were able-bodied males whose presence in Eritrea was for one reason or another considered undesirable. Again, most repatriates were volunteers who wished to return to Italy, while evacuees had to be kept under British control for the duration.

The tale of the repatriations is very different. When registration took place in 1942, 8,000 volunteers asked to be sent home, though the vessels the Italian Government was sending could take only 3,700. The selection and movement of so big a body proved no minor task ; the railway could take no more than 350 people a day, and only eleven buses were available for the job. Nevertheless, nine British officers, three N.C.O.s, and women welfare

workers competed successfully with the problems of collecting, accommodating, searching, disinfecting and embarking 900 fit women, 1,300 children and 500 sick, all in a shade temperature at Massawa of 100° Fahrenheit.

The last and largest flight took place in the midsummer of 1943, when three Italian ships took on board not only volunteers but also some thousands of women and children who, in the opinion of the Administration, were better returned to Italy. Without a single casualty of any kind 7,152 people were embarked. There were others embarked at Mogadishu.

Both the Italian Red Cross and Signor Caroselli, ex-governor of Somalia, who was in charge of the Italian ships, approved the manner in which this move was handled, and the International Red Cross delegate reported: "Everyone in Asmara and Massawa expressed their satisfaction with the good organisation, and especially with the treatment received from British officials".

Italian enthusiasm for these repatriations had waxed and waned with the fortunes of Rommel in Libya. When things went well with him, they wished to stay; when things went badly with him, they wished to go; and finally, when the invasion of Italy became imminent, they again preferred to remain in Eritrea. The children took repatriation as a picnic, but on the whole the women showed up poorly. Egoism, class-consciousness, and quarrels between the wives of soldiers and civilians led to jealousies, scratched faces and torn clothes. Quite a number of women tried for various reasons to avoid repatriation, while to the credit of the Italians a number of young and fit men were keen to get back to Italy by any illegal means.

These young men were "prepared" and coached by Italian doctors. They breathed sulphur to give the impression of tuberculosis; they practised throwing fits. Attempts to swim out to the boats were frequent; two men who swarmed up an anchor chain were produced only when two senior Italian officials, who had denied all knowledge of their presence, were told that they would be taken as hostages pending the delivery of the stowaways. Masquerading, too, was not uncommon, and one young man was so well made up that he deceived female searchers and got as far as the jetty where he presented a false identity card. An officer making the last check on the lighter noticed prominent veins on his hands, and sent him back to the body-searching pen. The masquerader, with a smile, said it was "just too bad", and handed to the women searchers as souvenirs the two soft sponges that had provided him with a youthful bosom.

The official report excellently sums up the trials and achievements of the evacuation branch. "In spite", it says, "of the lack of trained Italian-speaking staff, of inexperience in moving populations of these magnitudes, of the necessity of building up a new organisation from bedrock in three different territories in a very limited time, of the temperament of the population to be handled, of the scarcity of transport and equipment, of varying climatic conditions, of delays in the arrival of the various flights of Italian ships and other shipping, and of the consequent upsetting of plans, movements and tempers of all concerned, the ultimate results were successful, due to the ability of the British race to ensure that, however unsatisfactory rehearsals may appear to be, everything goes off all right on the night."

MORE LAND FOR THE PLOUGH. This Eritrean farmer is levelling land on the estate once owned by the ex-Governor. Since 1941, *cultivated land has doubled.*

10. NEW FIELDS AND FACTORIES

Eritrea had never been self-supporting ; it had never produced enough food to feed even its native population. It was obvious that the Administration would have to launch a great agricultural drive if the colony were not to prove an embarrassment to Britain's war effort. This could be no easy task. Apart from such areas as Pendici on the eastern slopes of the altipiano, and Tessenei, where the ex-governor Gasparini owned a considerable estate, the country was largely semi-desert. Italian agriculture was in its stifled infancy ; native agriculture had made little progress despite the Fascist government's six experimental farms. The situation was not made easier by the fact that some of the best agricultural land around Agordat and Tessenei was uninhabited save by nomadic herdsmen, or that the system of native communal tenure discouraged improvements by the periodic redistribution of land.

However, the Department set to work to stimulate agriculture, both European and native. Italians with a little capital and sometimes less experience have been encouraged to take up holdings ; they are instructed by more experienced Italians. The Administration gives all the assistance it can by political and economic action. It has stopped speculation by buying

ERITREAN PASTORAL. Village children tend one of the herds of cattle now providing fresh milk for the capital. Few parts of Eritrea are as pleasant as this.

up agricultural material. A farmer's co-operative society has been started, which helps to buy essentials at reasonable prices and to market produce at reasonable profits.

Results have been encouraging. Though Eritrea can never hope entirely to feed itself in time of war, it is true to say that in 1942 four times as much wheat was produced as in 1941, five times as much barley, six times as much dhurra, and eight times as much maize. The area of land under cultivation has been doubled, from 60,000 to 118,000 acres. These figures compare very favourably with previous production figures, even those for 1938.

Today it is no hardship to live in Eritrea, for much has changed since 1941. Then, fresh milk was unobtainable ; today, as has been told earlier, its collection and distribution have been arranged. Then, potatoes and fresh vegetables did not exist, but the prisoners' camps started growing them for hospitals and refugee centres, and today enough is produced to supply the European population of the country. Then, despite Eritrea's natural wealth of animals, the distribution of meat was poorly organised ; today, goats, sheep, chickens and excellent native cattle reach the markets in quantity, while pig-keeping has led to the start of a bacon factory. It has been necessary to call for outside help only for tea, sugar and tinned milk from the Middle East and grain from Ethiopia. For the rest, Eritrea is self-supporting.

The rationing system in Eritrea applies chiefly to Italians. It covers flour, bread, macaroni, oil and sugar. A subsidy ensures that they are

provided at a reasonable price. Other main foodstuffs such as fish and meat are price-controlled but not rationed, while neither rationing nor price-control has proved necessary for tea, coffee, rice, margarine or tapioca. Thus every Italian gets the necessaries of life at constant prices and in the case of certain commodities at a price below the cost to the Administration. To meet the needs of the Medical Department the Administration holds its own stores of the rationed foodstuffs, maize, tinned milk, jam and olive oil, and dhurra to feed part of the Eritrean population should emergency arise. It has, however, been necessary so far to ration only sugar among Eritrean foods.

The Department of Trades and Industries controls export, import and trade, as did its predecessor, the old Italian Chamber of Commerce ; but it does so in a different spirit. Instead of putting a damper on enterprise, the policy of the Administration is to encourage both Italians and Eritreans to start new businesses and industries. These industries, which are multiplying rapidly, are already raising the standard of life in the colony, and saving shipping space. They may in time produce an exportable surplus of manufactured articles, which will take their place beside the old Italian exports of hides and skins, salt, mother-of-pearl, beeswax and cement. Factories are given assistance in finding sites, machinery and labour, and their requirements of imported raw materials are obtained as far as is possible in the middle of a war. British funds are not used. In all cases, the capital is provided by the Italian community, a development which illustrates the co-operation that has proved possible with the ordinary Italian of Eritrea.

Some of the things now made for the first time are soap, margarine, buttons, flour, refractory bricks, boot-polish, a little tinned food, pickles and tomato sauce, fish-oil, pottery, lampshades, glass tumblers, retorts and glass for laboratories. Ingenuity has produced caustic soda from the ashes of sea-plants found near Massawa, soya oil from soya beans found in the German ships scuttled in the harbour, wine from Yemen raisins, alcohol as a by-product of the dum-nut industry. For sheer enterprise and persistence, the brewery deserves special description. After the occupation an Italian was found in Eritrea who had wanted (but had been forbidden) to start a brewery under the Fascist government. He was given permission to go ahead. Incredible as it seems to anyone acquainted with the intricate process of brewing, he constructed his brewery solely from diagrams in a small book on the subject and without any sort of expert assistance. Less incredibly, his product, while good to look upon, proved at first undrinkable. A brewer was obtained for him, a Czech, and £10,000 was spent in alterations. The product is now an adequate English beer. It tastes excellent, but still keeps too short a period to be exported. When this last problem is solved, it is hoped to provide beer for all troops and civilians in Eritrea and the Sudan. Few imports are so vital to the morale of men stationed for long periods in the thirsty tropics—and few occupy more shipping space, since ninety-eight per cent. of the weight of a bottle of beer consists of glass and water.

Under Fascism, all trades and crafts were closed to Eritreans if they offered employment, however humble, to workers from Italy. The surplus

of Italian labour was so great that Europeans were employed on stone-breaking on the roads. The only occupations open to Eritreans outside their own community were those of office messenger, porter, stevedore, house or outdoor servant, odd-job man, and—of course—soldier in the colonial forces. During the Ethiopian war, they found their way on to the lowest rungs of the motor-transport repair and building trades, but no farther.

Since the British occupation, the Eritrean has made big strides as a qualified tradesman and craftsman. About four-fifths of the total number of workers in the new local industries are Eritreans. In addition to performing the simpler manual tasks, they are working as mechanics, machine-minders and machine-operators, bricklayers, masons and fitters. All these occupations were formerly closed to them. They are also driving all types of vehicles and plying for hire with taxi-cabs and donkey-carts. Thus the Eritrean is living today at the highest level he has ever reached.

The control of civilian transport in Eritrea has been closely linked with almost every development discussed in the present chapter, for, in an African territory, motor lorries are a basic need of both agriculture and industry. Early in 1942 every vehicle that could be spared had to be released for military requirements in the Middle East ; a complete survey was therefore made ; it revealed the existence of 2,000 vehicles, most of them rather old. It was decided then that the domestic needs of Eritrea could be served by some 850 vehicles, 250 of which would be kept as a reserve, and forty-two tanker units provided they were strictly controlled. The Road Transport Scheme was therefore devised, by which licensed vehicles were formed into groups and no vehicle was allowed to circulate except under permit. Applications for transport had to be addressed to the supervisor in Asmara, without whose permit no car could pass the road blocks. On the whole, after teething troubles, the scheme has proved successful—empty running has been reduced to a minimum and a large pool of vehicles is permanently available for any essential task.

The industrial achievements of Eritrea were demonstrated in the exhibition held in Asmara at the close of 1943. Unique in the history not only of Eritrea but of military occupations, it was organised by leading Italian industrialists under the patronage of the Chief Administrator. It was a remarkable display of Allied, Italian and native enterprise ; 400 firms exhibited their products in nineteen halls, forty pavilions and 16,000 square metres of showground. The exhibition was opened by speeches in four languages—English, Italian, Arabic, and Tigrinya. Its effects have been considerable. It has helped materially in solving the problem of unemployed Italians. It has increased manufactures for home consumption and export ; it has stimulated individual effort both among the isolated Italian community and those natives who have broken away from the pastoral or agricultural way of life ; above all, by showing what can be done through peaceful collaboration of races for a non-political aim, it may prove to be a milestone in Eritrea's history.

11. AFRICAN ARSENAL

So far this book has been concerned only with matters of internal administration, with the restoration of law and order, with the social services, the problem of relief, and the encouragement of agriculture and industry. We have not yet considered what steps were taken by Britain to utilise the conquered colonies for purposes of war.

Here the possibilities of Eritrea were great. The Italians had deliberately neglected both agriculture and industry, but they had militarised the territory with efficiency, imagination, and disregard for expense. Eritrea was suited geographically, too, to play an important part in Allied strategy. The capital, Asmara, lay on the main air-route from West Africa, by way of Khartoum and Aden, to the East. Secondly, Massawa was capable of considerable expansion as a port. Thirdly, had Egypt fallen, Eritrea was the nearest place to the south at all suitable for a base.

For reasons of security, it would be a little difficult even yet fully to go into all the steps which were taken to make the most of Eritrea. It is also rather outside the scope of this book. Just as it is not our task to describe the very important, unsung work of the military garrisons, so we are not concerned with detailed discussion of the naval developments by which

AIR BASE. Kittyhawks and Liberators are overhauled at Gura. In the foreground are remains of Italian aircraft smashed by the R.A.F. in the 1941 *campaign.*

Massawa was adapted to her part in Red Sea and Indian Ocean strategy at a time when the Germans were threatening Alexandria and the Japanese striking at Ceylon. We can also only hint at the work of United States Ordnance, which took over the running of the great Italian C.I.T.A.O., Fiat, Pirelli, and Feltrinelli organisations and a number of other works, and expanded them into what became known as Asmara Arsenal. Here tyres were reconditioned and retreaded, quantities of accumulator plates were made, spare parts of every kind were manufactured, including thousands and thousands of pistons, and lorries were reconditioned on an American scale. In short, third-line maintenance of British Army transport was undertaken for Eritrea, the Sudan, and for part of the Middle East. The full story of their adventures must be told at a later date, but partly because Johnson, Drake and Piper, and Douglas Aircraft were both civilian firms, it is within the scope of this book to give a sketchy picture of the part they played in the American Projects, which not only affected conditions in Eritrea, but directly and indirectly employed some thousands of Italians. In assisting this concern the Administration was largely occupied throughout 1942.

The main activities of "J.D. & P." were in Massawa, in Ghinda, and at the airport at Gura. Of the many ships that had been scuttled with different degrees of efficiency in Massawa harbour, a number had been salvaged by the British, but others had remained beneath the water. At the beginning of 1942, "J.D. & P." got to work upon these ships with expert divers and excellent equipment. They succeeded in raising a number of vessels that had been believed irretrievably lost. Their greatest triumph was the recovery of the dry dock, in each of the air compartments of which the Italians had blown a hole.

Massawa's climate did not correspond with American ideas of what a climate should be, and "J.D. & P." set to work to recondition it. It was not long before they had constructed refrigerators, improved machine shops, and air-conditioned barracks. At Ghinda, the nearest point in the mountains where the climate was cool enough for Europeans to live in reasonable comfort, this civilian firm built a transit camp for the army; the camp has also served as a rest camp for Royal Navy personnel and employees of the firm. It proved especially useful when thousands of Italians were being moved to Massawa for repatriation to Italy in April and May 1943.

Meanwhile, at Gura, "J.D. & P." were converting a large Italian airport into what was to become the great American air base of the Middle East. Here the Italians had established a large flying field with a two-mile runway, twelve large hangars, shops for the repair and assembly of aircraft, and wooden barracks big enough for 2,000 men by Italian standards. The climate at 6,000 feet promoted efficiency, the water supply was good, and the damage which the R.A.F. had done to the buildings was extensive but not irremediable.

On this site, under Lend-Lease, Douglas Aircraft was to establish a complete supply and maintenance organisation. It was one of the tasks of "J.D. & P." to prepare for their arrival an African edition of Byrd's "Little America"—a small city complete in every detail. "J.D. & P."

therefore set to work, rebuilt about fifty of the old Italian barracks, and installed new plumbing features, including a sewage system to dispose of a problem the Italians had contentedly ignored.

Meanwhile, Douglas Aircraft was collecting technicians from all sections of the aircraft industry in the United States, together with a small army of men versed in everything from handling X-ray machines to waiting at tables, from showing motion pictures to running a telephone switchboard, from operating a power-plant to making ice-cream sodas. Recruitment of personnel was complicated by the high physical, technical and moral standards required of men who were to be transplanted into a strange piece of occupied enemy territory in the heart of Africa. It was not easy to procure supplies for such an undertaking. High priorities naturally helped, but they by no means solved the difficulties. Yet despite all complications and setbacks, men and materials were ready for shipment by 15th February 1942, only ten weeks after the decision to go ahead had finally been announced.

Although the enemy and chance joined forces to disrupt the stream of material from the United States, Gura opened up and carried on. When aircraft hydraulic equipment did not arrive on time, the Douglas workers adapted and improvised or else invented what was required to get sorely needed planes in the air again. When the need for an optical instrument arose, the Project's instrument shop, one of the largest and best equipped in the world, designed and manufactured ninety per cent. of the parts required. Gun-sights, bomb-sights and cameras presented no problems that could not be solved at Gura. In one emergency the parachute shop repaired, dried, refolded and packed 137 parachutes in twenty-four hours. When propeller blades were damaged, the propeller shop made their return to America unnecessary by straightening them out on the spot even in the period before the arrival of the proper parts. The engine shop began by repairing the shrapnel-torn sheet metal walls and roof of their hangar. Then its staff ransacked Asmara and Massawa for equipment for their machine shop. They had it installed only two days before the first thirty-four Allison engines arrived for repair. When the famous B-24 Liberator, "Shanghai Lil", the first American bomber to blast Naples, crashed in the desert, a repair crew from Gura flew to the spot, patched it up with angle iron, and got it safely home. It was in the repair shops, too, that the innovation of "distorted perspective" drawings of B-24 Liberators was first invented and adopted. This series of incidents, taken from the records of many departments, gives some idea of the conditions at first encountered and the type of work on which Gura was engaged. Unfortunately, as in the case of U.S. Ordnance, military secrecy prevents a full description of all that was done in the short period during which the organisation was working at full blast.

Today the American Projects are no more. U.S. Ordnance has vacated its arsenals, Johnson, Drake and Piper have returned to the United States, and Douglas Aircraft's "Little America" will soon be an almost empty city. The tide of war has rolled away from Egypt and from Africa, and the days when the United Nations needed a great base in Eritrea are happily now past.

SOMALI GENDARME. *"The growth of the Somalia gendarmerie makes one of the most fascinating stories that have come from the occupied territories."*

III

Recovery in Somalia

12. LAW AND ORDER

Most people are inclined to think of Eritrea and Somalia as twin wastes of uninteresting desert land lying respectively to the north-east and south-east of Ethiopia. Many might assume that the British Military Administration had met identical problems in both territories. Yet, just as Somalia does in fact differ from Eritrea in size and shape and flatness and fertility, so do the stories of their occupation differ in many ways, though they both take the same general course towards tranquillity. The similarities as well as the differences will appear in this and the following four chapters.

In Somalia, at the time of the occupation, there were only 6,000 to 7,000 Italians compared with 55,000 in Eritrea, but they were more violently Fascist, more corrupt, and quite a number had criminal records. Moreover, Eritrea's 750,000 natives retained to some degree their respect for the Italians, but Somalia's 1,500,000 natives had a positive hatred for their ex-masters, and while professing their loyalty to Britain they retained a greater loyalty to their tradition of raiding, looting, and tribal fighting. In addition to this inherent lawlessness against which the Italian police struggled ineffectively, the wholesale desertion of the banda and colonial infantry, equipped with their rifles, pistols, hand-grenades and even machine-guns, together with large quantities of ammunition, had turned the whole territory from Kismayu to Dante into an armed country-side. The efforts of the Administration and the army had at first to be concentrated on keeping open the lines of communication between Ethiopia and Kenya; the tribes in the remoter districts took advantage of this opportunity. Old tribal feuds were renewed, new ones were started, and there was grave danger of the outbreak of a Jehad, which would have inevitably created a military commitment of some magnitude.

The chaos did not arise from hostility to Britain. "Everywhere", said an early report, "the advent of the British is welcomed, but that is not to say

that the Somalis are prepared to obey our orders or to live at peace with neighbouring tribes unless made to do so by armed force. In the areas within immediate reach of authority some slight abatement of lawlessness is discernible, but elsewhere the country is in a state of wild and uproarious disorder in which it is bound to remain till adequate numbers of political officers and gendarmerie can arrive on the scene.''

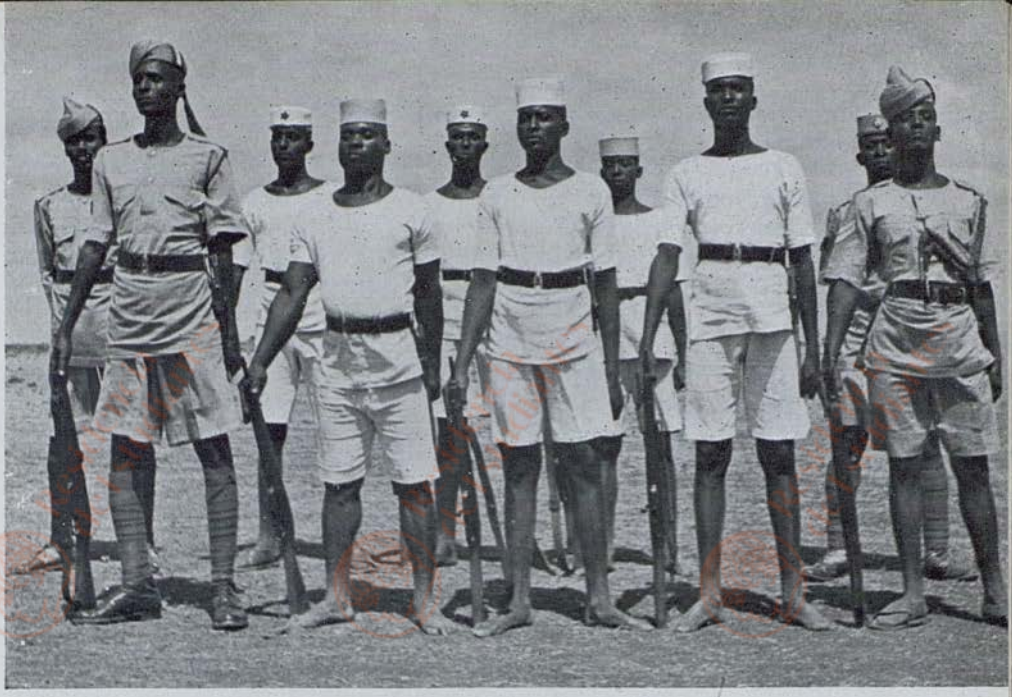
The following description of early conditions by a political officer gives an insight into the Somali character and some conception of the problems facing the British Administration in dealing with this handsome, unreliable race.

''It is unfortunate'', he writes, ''that the worst characteristics of the Somali are those which manifest themselves most obviously to the administrative officer in his daily dealings with them. Outstanding are his treachery, his inability to speak the truth, his love of intrigue. These people sit in a group in the evenings, out of earshot of all other tribesmen, in secret conclave. It is extraordinary that any of them, so well aware of their own characteristics, should imagine that these deliberations could remain secret, for the temptation to ingratiate himself with authority is so great that the individual cannot prevent himself from gratuitously reporting the subjects under discussion the following morning. These include schemes to conceal looted stock, to gain some advantage over some other tribe, plots to ensure the dismissal of some subordinate official on manufactured evidence of corruption, schemes to spread mischievous reports and rumours.''

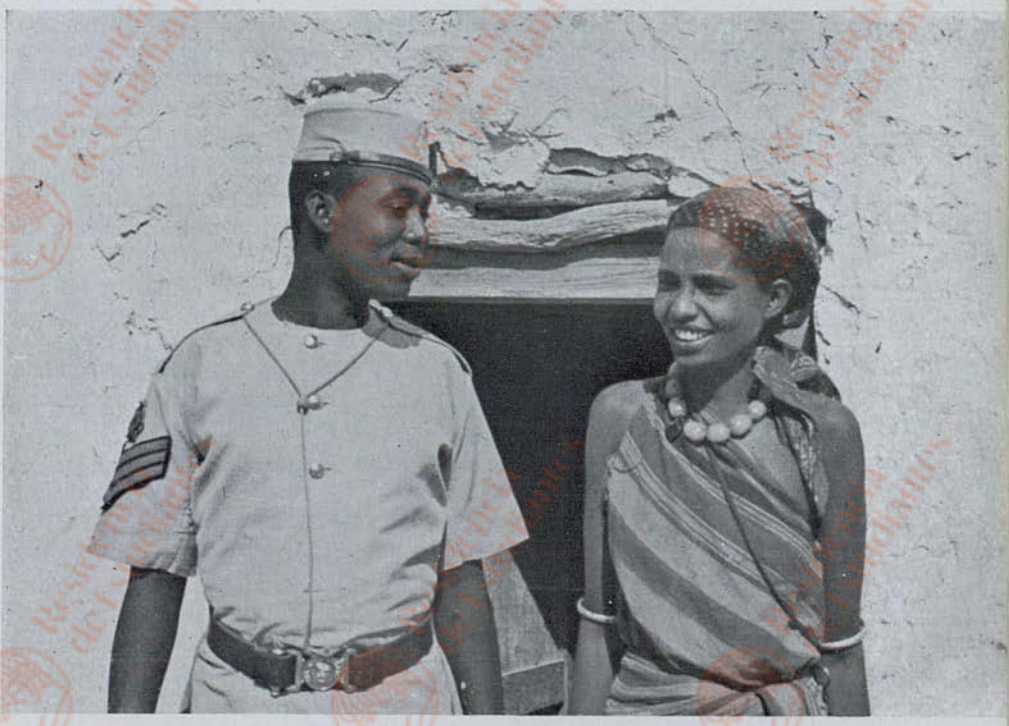
If security was to be restored in the out-districts, it was clear that the first and most pressing task must be the recovery of arms and ammunition. This was no easy matter. Orders were certain to be disobeyed unless they were backed by force. In March 1941, therefore, the General Officer Commanding gave authority to raise a force of 1,500 men, to be known as the Somalia Gendarmerie.

In Mogadishu, by contrast, security suffered less from the turbulence of the Somalis than from the inefficiency and extreme Fascism of the Italian police. For some weeks after the occupation these men had to be left at their posts, for there was no means by which they could be replaced. During this time they proved themselves to be a useless body, ineffective, given to intrigue, and corrupt in their dealings both with natives and fellow Italians. Soon their attitude deterioriated even towards the British. On 16th April they all had to be interned. This step was made possible by the timely arrival of ninety-six Tanganyikan police who rose to the occasion in a manner which earned high praise not only from British officers but from Italians as well. As the Italian police stepped off their ornate traffic-control stands to surrender themselves, the Tanganyikans took their places and carried on with this and other duties as if they had been doing them all their life. Soon more Tanganyikans arrived. They led gendarmerie patrols and by their example played a great part in the formation of that expanding force.

The growth of the Somalia gendarmerie makes one of the most fascinating stories that have come from the Occupied Territories. It was realised from the first that the Administration had neither the time nor the means to create a fully trained police such as existed in neighbouring British territories. The



FROM MANY TRIBES, ONE FORCE.



THE SERGEANT AND HIS WIFE.

most that could be attempted in the early stages was to build up a loyal and disciplined body of men with *esprit de corps*, fighting efficiency and a knowledge of the methods of Somali looting, and so to restore and maintain more peaceful conditions under the control of British officers. In the beginning it looked as if even this limited ambition might be impossible to achieve.

The first hundred men had to be recruited from among the released political prisoners of Mogadishu gaol. The subsequent behaviour of some of them proved that their imprisonment had not in all cases served merely a political purpose ; they were familiar enough with Somali looting but less so with loyalty or *esprit de corps*. Once, when a guard was placed on the Italian police garage, a patrol found donkey carts drawn up at 3 a.m. in front of the building, large-scale looting taking place, and the gendarmerie assisting their friends to load the carts. That kind of thing did not continue long. Undesirables were quickly weeded out, the arrival of 500 Nyasas and 40 Uganda police raised the standard, and before long the force was doing useful work.

There was never any lack of applicants to join the force but most were unsuitable. The Ethiopians proved unsatisfactory, while men who had already served for any length of time under the Italians were idle, dirty, and undisciplined. There were also formidable difficulties of training and equipment. Officers were hard to find, and for uniform recruits had to make do with Italian grey canvas shirts and shorts (one pair per man) and a limited number of belts, bandoliers, haversacks, and water-bottles. The gendarmerie were armed with Italian carbines, some of which were serviceable, some not. Yet even in the early days this force was able to collect 7,000 rifles and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition from tribesmen of the South-Western province alone by the end of 1941.

No one seeing the smartness and keenness of the gendarmerie on parade today would credit the lowly chaotic origins from which it sprang. Young recruits have responded readily and show great eagerness to learn during the five months' training they receive before they join their units. Every endeavour has been made to get recruits from all the leading tribes, and today the force is representative of almost all Somalia. The original confusion that arose from the use of no fewer than five languages—Somali, Swahili, Italian, Arabic and Chinyanja—was overcome in the early days by concentration on Italian and Swahili ; now universal instruction in English is proving both popular and effective.

Since 1941 the officers of the gendarmerie have had plenty of opportunity to display their readiness to accept the oddest and most varied work without turning a hair. Many have acted in a political capacity ; they have sat on courts and even had to assume magisterial responsibilities ; they have had unexpected experience of customs, sub-accountancy, barrack-building, anti-locust control, agricultural work ; they have run prisons ; they have tackled the complex and thankless task of Custodian of Enemy Property. And they have done all this in addition to their dual duty of enrolling, training, organising, and administering a force, and taking part in active operations at one and the same time. In the Somalia gendarmerie, as in many of its

departments, the Administration has had cause to be grateful for British versatility.

Today the gendarmerie is divided into two wings. The police wing deals with ordinary crime. The field force, operating with mules, ponies, camels, and armoured cars, is responsible for restraining the lawlessness of the tribes. It has now been in action many times. In January and February 1942, 2,600 rifles and 14,000 rounds of ammunition were collected in two months from the wild, waterless, sparsely inhabited Ogaden. It was called upon in September 1942 when organised raiding parties came over the Ethiopian frontier, and again in May 1943 when the Mijertein tribes embarked on a gala month of looting and inter-tribal fighting.

In these actions the Somali has given ample proof of his unquestioned courage. In none of them has he ever hesitated to go forward to the attack. He has shown himself capable of marching long distances and enduring the toughest conditions. He has shown loyalty, too, though like other African races his loyalty is to the leader rather than to the cause. One final striking point, most unexpected in a body of men so assorted and so hastily improvised, is that there has yet to be a case of desertion from the Somalia gendarmerie.

13. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Just as in Eritrea, so in Somalia the Administration found the prisons in a condition which no British authorities could tolerate. In the main jail at Mogadishu 400 prisoners were confined in overcrowded cells and wards, of which the walls had been periodically whitewashed until they were inches deep in half-concealed filth. The sanitation was such that the prison could be smelt 200 yards away ; a senior official of the Administration who inspected it was promptly and literally sick. The prisoners were supposed to wash, but no washing water was provided. The regulations prescribed a shower-bath every day, but the key could not be found when a British officer asked for it, and the condition of the lock made it clear that it had not been used for months. The prisoners were supposed to have breakfast, and a midday meal of stew; but no breakfast was served, and the midday meal consisted of a bowl of watery rice. Health conditions were shocking, as was only to be expected, and most of the inmates suffered from running sores.

The warders were the merest turnkeys, despised, despising, illiterate and somewhat sadistic. They dispensed with normal disciplinary routine, yet there were stocks in which the ankles of victims had been fastened for days at a time. One prisoner was still under treatment for wounds inflicted on his chest ; he had been held down and jumped on with long-nailed climbing boots.

Many of the 400 men in Mogadishu jail were political prisoners from

SOMETHING TO DO. Prisoners make sandals for the gendarmerie. Prison industries were part of sweeping reforms introduced in Somalia's once appalling jails.

Ethiopia. An attempt was made to investigate all cases. It emerged that some seventy of the inmates had not been tried at all, while others had completed their sentences some time ago and were awaiting repatriation. But in more cases than not it proved quite impossible to ascertain the facts at all. No proper records had been kept of the crimes for which prisoners had been sentenced. Up-country commissioners and residents, it seemed, had frequently conducted cases in the most arbitrary manner, merely writing a letter to the director of the jail asking him to imprison natives for various terms. Convicts were not told that there was any right of appeal, and often did not know that it existed. In some cases neither the crime nor the punishment was recorded ; where both were known it was clear that sentences had been vicious. Ten years for failing to hand in arms was as light a sentence as most of the Ethiopians had received. Of twenty men committed in 1940 for taking part in a tribal fight in which two men had been killed by unknown hands, the majority had been sentenced for life, and none for less than seven years. It is an illuminating comment on the conduct of the prison that by the spring of 1941 two of these twenty men had died, three were in hospital, and eight had escaped.

Despite the difficulty of obtaining an accurate account of cases, the Administration had no hesitation in releasing a considerable number of prisoners on the spot and in greatly reducing the majority of the remaining sentences. Undoubtedly some genuine criminals were released ; in the circumstances it was better to lean on the side of generosity.

As in Eritrea the faults of one prison were found in most of the others. At Kismayu and Iscia Baidoa the jails were little more than lock-ups, while Denane, a few miles down the coast from Mogadishu, had been planned to rival the notorious Nocra. Occasionally investigation revealed the existence of a humaner regime ; the resident at Dante had asked Rome for permission to issue sun-glasses to native prisoners working in the blinding glare of the salt-mines. But the stocks at Villaggio told a more normal tale. To this prison had been sent one hundred Ethiopian political prisoners of whom only forty were still alive when the British arrived ; the rest, the Administration learned, had died of "malaria".

Today in Somalia's prisons everything is changed. Reasonable standards of sanitation have been attained. Juveniles have been segregated from adults, and sent to the reformatory started at Afgoi. Prisoners are properly fed. They no longer spend their time drearily milling round in a central court-yard, but take regular exercise and work at a variety of prison industries ranging from the hard labour of building askari lines or stone-breaking to the lighter tasks of making soap, cloth, brushes, brooms and more recently, sandals for the gendarmerie. Almost all the old warders have been dismissed ; their successors are of a better type, and their salaries are high by previous standards.

On the occupation of Somalia it was intended that the Italian courts should continue to function, as in Eritrea ; in the first proclamation of the General Officer Commanding they were invited to do so. It seemed best that the civil courts should reopen as soon as conditions became more settled, while the criminal courts should resume duty at once. Before they could do so, however, inquiry revealed a situation as intolerable as the condition of the prisons. The examination of the records showed that at the worst prisoners were convicted without trial, and that at the best they were tried according to principles repugnant to British conceptions of justice. To the Fascist judges of Somalia, a prisoner who was an Italian was regarded as guilty unless he could prove himself innocent ; if he was a native, he was convicted anyway, merely receiving a lighter sentence if he did not happen to be guilty.

It also became clear that the non-Italian population, and especially the Somalis, would not willingly submit to the continuation of Italian jurisdiction in any form, either judicial or administrative, and that attempts to make them submit would simply puzzle them. The original scheme was therefore abandoned. Offences against proclamations were tried by the military courts of the Administration, while the native courts of the Cadis were re-established to deal with those cases relating to marriage, inheritance and personal status which it was customary for such Moslem courts to try. There is an appeal from these courts to Sharia tribunals, and in the last resort to the Chief Administrator, who takes advice from the Legal Adviser.

The court of the Italian civil judge reopened in October 1941, but relations with the Italian law department staff have never been as harmonious as in Eritrea. The present chief Italian judge was number four on his departmental list at the time the British arrived, number one being in Italy while numbers two and three had immediately to be interned. Though the

penal code has still to be enforced by British military courts, it is possible for Italian civil cases to be tried by him under Italian law, purged of Fascist conceptions and in certain respects simplified. Even so, procedure was at first much too dilatory by British standards. Only six cases out of twenty-two had been finished by the end of 1941, and though improvements have been effected the position has never been entirely satisfactory.

In the early days Mogadishu suffered from crime of a gangster type—there was a particularly brutal assault on a sick South African nursing sister—but the situation was soon under control, and during the last three years crime in the towns of Somalia has happily been unspectacular. In the out-districts, from which large quantities of weapons have probably still to be recovered, there have been isolated cases of ineffective pot-shots by bandits at passing lorries, but there has been little murder or homicide apart from the tribal affrays which have always formed a normal part of the Somali's abnormal life. When these occur and the individuals responsible cannot be traced, the penalty of a collective fine is imposed on the tribe.

In the towns there has been no political assassination or serious sabotage. The Italians have behaved peacefully towards each other ; so, within wider limits, have the Somalis. There have been five murders, three at Brava, one at Afgoi, one at Mogadishu. At Mogadishu an Italian was executed for murdering a Somali. At Afgoi six Somalis led by three ex-convicts attacked a house in which were four male Italians. One Somali was hit on the head with a bottle and another with an axe, and one Italian was shot and killed as he made off into the bush. Three of the Somalis have been arrested and were awaiting trial at the time of writing this book. This incident, actually unique, has been mentioned because it illustrates the kind of crime that one might have expected to be frequent during the last three years.

Thefts have been mostly of an extremely petty nature. There was an incident of a Somali who stole electric light bulbs from an Italian's veranda and sold them back to him next morning. There were the frequent cases that arose among 150 juveniles who lived precariously in empty houses and scraped an existence by carrying parcels, disposing of stolen tins of paint, and selling grease to donkey-cart owners from a 25-gallon drum abandoned by a unit ; but such juvenile crime has been reduced considerably since the opening of the approved school at Afgoi. Perhaps the commonest cases now can be classified under the head of cheating. Thus a native interpreter was convicted of collecting not only legal fines but extra cattle for himself ; tolerably well-to-do Italians, declaring that they were poor and workless and taking advantage of the careless supervision of the Italian Commissioner, were detected drawing relief from the municipio. These are petty cases. In Mogadishu it can in fact be claimed that crime is by no means abnormal by the standards of large African cities, a situation which compares satisfactorily with the stormy future predicted for Somalia's capital at the time of the occupation.

STARTING UP AGAIN. Tractor and disc harrow bring the holdings at Genale back into cultivation. Agriculture in Somalia's small fertile area had collapsed.

14. SOMALIA LEARNS TO FEED ITSELF

Of the 274,000 square miles of Somalia almost all is desert, but along the meandering course of the Webi Shebeli, on either side of the Juba, and around the springs of Iscia Baidoa there are rich areas capable of being made to bloom. Iscia Baidoa is the centre of native millet production. On the lower Juba and especially at four points on the Webi Shebeli, the Fascist Government had set to work with irrigation and machinery and had achieved impressive and nearly useful results.

The chief products were cotton, bananas, and sugar. True, the bananas could be made to pay only by selling them as a monopoly in Italy at four times the world price, and the cotton made to pay only by selling it similarly at twelve times the world price ; true, the sugar was so expensive that while it was possible to export it to the State-provided market in Italy, Somalia found it cheaper to import sugar for its own consumption from Yugoslavia. During the war none of the crops grown could be of use even for export and only sugar for local consumption. But all the same the canals had been dug, the fields were watered, and in these areas lay the only hope of making Somalia self-supporting.

Unfortunately, when political officers first visited the farms soon after

the occupation, they found a state of chaos. Most of the farmers had fled to the towns and were unwilling to return. Only a handful of brave men, regardless alike of Somali revolt and Fascist instruction, had refused to leave their land and had successfully protected their property from the orgy of looting. Elsewhere destruction was so great that compensation claims were filed to the total of 25,000,000 lire (probably an exaggerated figure).

A tour of inspection revealed that the least collapsed of the Italian concessions was the Società Agricola Italo Somala plantation at Villaggio. It had been founded as long ago as 1920, had plenty of skilled labour, and having probably treated its manual labour better than other farms was suffering less acutely from lack of manpower. Elsewhere the picture was not encouraging. At Afgoi, of fifteen holdings totalling 2,000 hectares, only nine were being worked at all and only three intensively. At Genale, where a main irrigation canal had been dug as early as 1926 and 27,000 hectares had been fertilised, thirty-two of the 136 holdings were totally abandoned, thirty-six others were idle, on thirteen a moderate amount of work was being done, and only on six was there extensive cultivation. Worst of all was the situation on the Juba where, in an area of 10,000 hectares, five of the thirty-four concessions were working well, five more were kept going only on the basis of partnership with natives, and the rest

MARKET DAY. Iscia Baidoa's springs make it a centre of native agriculture and Somalia's second town. Somalia now produces almost all the food it needs.

were abandoned or idle. Here the president of the Consorzio was living in a state of unbelievable squalor, while many of the farmers had settled down most philosophically to do absolutely nothing, had grown no vegetables, and had allowed houses and machinery to fall into disrepair.

It was decided that the best thing to do was to get the farms going again by hook or by crook. Apart from many other considerations, it was better both for security and Italian self-respect that farmers should be supporting themselves, even uneconomically, than that they should be drawing relief in Mogadishu. Yet the difficulties were immense. The customary crops were useless under existing conditions. Even after some weeks' effort at Genale, only 500 of the required 8,000 labourers were reporting for work. Much of the machinery had been wantonly damaged. It appeared that if production was to begin again petrol and lubricants would have to be supplied for transport and for the irrigation pumps at special rates below cost. Lastly, many of the farmers were afraid to return.

One by one most of these problems have been solved. The new value of the lira is accepted. The machinery has been repaired. The dangers have proved to be less than the Italians had feared. Petrol and lubricants have been provided, though not at special prices, and a marketing board helps farmers both to buy what they need and sell what they produce. The

THE MAIZE IS GATHERED. Sugar, sesame, groundnuts and beans are also grown successfully. These Somali land workers were slaves under Fascist rule.

Agricultural Societies have been switched over almost entirely to sugar cane ; though they are working at only half capacity, they are able to supply Somalia with the sugar it requires. Five thousand hectares at Genale and 2,500 on the Juba produce useful crops such as maize, sesame, groundnuts and beans, while Afgoi concentrates on fresh vegetables for Mogadishu. The only limits to development lie in the inevitably high production costs and the still largely unsolved problem of native labour.

This labour shortage, which at one time threatened to stop production altogether, was caused by the wholesale refusal of the Somalis to continue to work for the Italians. This was hardly surprising. For when the circumstances under which labour had been recruited were investigated, a situation was disclosed even less tolerable than the state of Mogadishu jail. Under the ''colonia'' system, men, women and children had been taken by force from remote places and condemned to an indefinite period of servitude on Italian farms. To quote from an official report, ''rations were grossly inadequate both in quality and quantity, and pay varied from one to three lire a day. Bachelors were forced to marry women who had been born and bred on the estate. Punishment, inflicted by the resident on the *ex-parte* representations of the employer, was brutal and excessive. For a first offence of disobedience or indiscipline fifty lashes with a hippopotamus-hide whip was a common award, and for a second offence the victim was strung up for several hours on a gallows, with his toes just clear of the ground, suspended by chains attached to wooden billets under his armpits, and with his hands handcuffed behind his back. It is not unnatural that the native labouring population regarded our coming as a deliverance from their Italian oppressors and that they resolutely and determinedly refused to return to work for them, in spite of our efforts to persuade them to do so''. They had had enough of slavery.

This labour problem is still only partly solved. British officials, never using compulsion of any kind, have persuaded nearly a third of the natives to return to work, but it is difficult to see how the situation can be improved beyond this point. Firstly, there is still an immense natural hostility to the Italians to be overcome ; secondly, the Somalis are more interested in the development of their own native agriculture, which it is also the policy of the Administration to encourage. Fortunately the picture of native agriculture is brighter. Many of the natives, particularly the Goshas of the Juba valley, are good farmers ; the millet growers of Iscia Baidoa are doing well, and some of the Italian concessions are being worked by natives on various agreements. This is of course true only of the riverine tribes. The nomadic Somalis still prefer to lead their fine, free life, eating only meat and milk (or to remain parasites on the camel, according to the point of view), than to go in for such a laborious pursuit as agriculture, which is, they say, fit only for slaves. Yet, in spite of all, Somalia has almost achieved the remarkable feat of being able to feed itself. Even during the recent East African shortage, its supplies of grain, judiciously handled, proved nearly equal to the situation. The balance was made up by imports from Ethiopia, and Somalia did not have to call on shipping space for help. The day may yet come when Italy's over-capitalised desert is able to export to stricken Europe.

15. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Though agriculture had been developed in Somalia under the Italian administration, industry had been neglected. The six or seven thousand Italian civilians were mostly loyal but unwanted Fascists who swelled the numbers of the civil service. With the British occupation, it was clear that the numbers likely to come on relief, while absolutely fewer than those in Eritrea, would be relatively higher. In Somalia, moreover, no American projects looked like coming on the scene to provide work for the workless.

The problem of European poverty was tackled in much the same way as in Eritrea and a similar relief organisation was set up. The medical authorities worked out a scale of diet, a number of other items such as clothing and rent were taken into consideration, and in the end forty-five shillings a month was arrived at as a reasonable payment. This has since risen in partial conformity with the cost of living index. Owing to the comparative smallness of Somalia's Italian population, there have never been more than 1,400 on public assistance ; the vast majority of these were the wives and families of prisoners of war. Today, with the repatriation of colonists and the start of industries, the number receiving relief has shrunk to the moderate total of 380.

Housing was a problem in the early days though it was never as acute as in Asmara, for Mogadishu was almost the only part of Somalia where Europeans had lived in any numbers. The shortage was dealt with by various measures, including rent restriction.

Food supplies were soon supplemented by Somalia's agricultural drive. By June 1941, Italians living in and around Mogadishu were rationed on a basis that ensured them adequate supplies of fresh vegetables, fruit and milk, while the ending of the salt monopoly had reduced the price of this commodity. Today they receive bread, pasta, rice, flour, sugar, coffee, olive oil, tea, jam, alcohol and wood. Food is more plentiful and better distributed than before the occupation. A tale is still told in Mogadishu of how in the old days a doctor, unable to get milk for the hospital, wrote a letter exposing the scandal and was held in prison until he had retracted—this at a time when a prominent administrator was getting 35 lb. of grapes flown out to him from Italy. In 1940 the Italian population lived largely on black bread ; nowadays consignments of flour are imported from Ethiopia.

Concerning one of these an illuminating story is told. Doubting its quality, the Administration had samples taken for analysis ; doubting the quality of the Italian analyst, the Administration doctored some of the samples, introducing in one instance fifty per cent. of soda. The result was declared by the analyst to consist of practically pure, unadulterated flour, containing only a small percentage of rice flour, and to be fit for the consumption of his fellow Italians.

The native Somali's way of life has been little affected by shipping restrictions on imports and by rationing. His demand for imports is limited to cotton piece goods, while his only food passion is satisfied by the sugar production of the Agricultural Society. The nomad's diet consists of meat and milk, which he gets from his herds of stock ; the native farmer

lives on millet, ghee and vegetable oils, with an occasional goat. All of these he can provide. He probably finds his tea and sugar more expensive and harder to get than before Italy entered the war, and owing to restrictions on transport he is obliged to confine himself more to local markets. The town Somali is more affected by the times ; he has not so many opportunities of earning now, for he lived by the European population, now so much smaller.

It was clear that Somalia must work out her own salvation not only through agriculture but through industry. Italians, to give them their due, proved enterprising in starting trades, once they found individual enterprise was really to be encouraged ; 2,609 trading licences were issued in 1942 compared with 243 in 1941. This, of itself, did not imply prosperity, but it did mean that the population was showing a determination to improve conditions for itself.

Today, an extraordinary number of ingenious trades have sprung up. Petrol and Diesel lorries have been converted into charcoal burners called "gasogenos" ; spare parts are cast, and rubber hosing for radiators is made from stocks of scrap. Cars are kept on the road by bolting together sections of quite worn-out tyres on to nearly worn-out tyres, while the unimportable but vital plates for car batteries are made locally from scrap lead. Somalia makes its own vegetable oils, paints, enamels and solvents, white pigments being obtained from magnesium carbonate and colours from rusty flakes salvaged from derelict lighters in Mogadishu harbour. Crown corks for bottles are made from scrap petrol tins plus cloth and beeswax lining. Wine and rum, obtained as a by-product of the locally produced sugar, are greatly appreciated—at least by the Italians. Oxygen for welding and transport repair, ropes, brooms, fibres, matches, cheroots, candles and cloth form a typically heterogeneous selection of Somalia 's new products. The old skin industry goes on, but hides have been put to new purposes ; from them is made a special sort of upper half for shoes which, by an ingenious though simple device, can be screwed on to an existing pair of rubber or aluminium soles.

As a result of its own efforts, Somalia has never worn an air of destitution or suffered as much as might have been expected from the limitation of imports and the general breakdown. Even in the worst times, amid the shortage of cosmetics and clothing material, Italian women always managed to dress very well. Before the evacuation, they would take their afternoon dress parade at 4 o'clock each day, looking a thoroughly prosperous community.

Although the repatriation of July 1943 has greatly alleviated the problems of housing and relief and so been of direct benefit to the British Administration, the initial request for repatriation came from the Italian Government itself. The Royal Commissioner in charge of Repatriation Ships, with his racial genius for multiplication, stated that there were in Somalia more than 1,500 permanently sick and infirm Italians whereas in fact there were rather less than one hundred. A complete registration of enemy aliens was undertaken ; 2,298 persons were found, consisting of women, children and elderly men, who wished to return to Italy and were unlikely to be of any

use to the Axis war effort. These were safely embarked in four days at Mogadishu despite the deficiencies of the harbour and the threat of the monsoon. They duly arrived at their destination just in time to witness the Italian collapse and surrender.

16. THE SOCIAL SERVICES GROW

When the public services of an occupied territory are taken over, there is always a great gap between what one would like to do and what one can do. By international law, one is bound to continue the existing system except in so far as the necessities of war may dictate, while the need to remember that perhaps the occupation is only temporary prevents new long-range enterprises which will prove expensive, however attractive they seem. To do as well as the Italians or better, and yet not to place excessive new burdens on the British war-time taxpayer—that has been one of the Administration's aims from the beginning of the occupation.

The medical problems encountered in Somalia were nearly as shocking as those of Eritrea. When Mogadishu was declared an open town, the mayor came out to meet the advancing British troops and announced that public services were continuing as usual. This statement, unfortunately, was literally true. Water-borne sanitation had broken down, and the accumulation of many months' refuse lay piled between the houses. One hundred tons of dust-bin rubbish were removed by the British hygiene staff from the dock area alone ; even the well-equipped Italian hospital had disposed of its garbage and the soiled dressings of 400 patients by throwing them over its boundary wall. Flies swarmed through the streets and buildings of the town.

Even worse conditions had been encountered in Kismayu, for the Italian population had fled before the British arrived, and the Somalis had taken advantage of the intervening period to loot and wreck. Practically every town in Somalia was found in the condition of either Mogadishu or Kismayu.

As in Eritrea, the British medical authorities sought the co-operation of the Italian doctors, thirty of whom had remained behind in the 600-bed de Martino hospital. They were pressed into service at once as protected personnel, and within a few months several of the outlying hospitals had been restored to normal activity. Thirty other doctors of the Italian Civil Government services were more reluctant to co-operate, but difficulties were eventually smoothed out, and they too resumed their work.

Medical achievements in Somalia, though not so spectacular as in Eritrea, have not been insignificant. In Mogadishu, as in Massawa, the campaign against the aedes mosquito has resulted in the practical elimination of dengue fever. The greater part of the fly population has met with an overdue fate, and a sanitary market has replaced the square of sand on which

SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPH. The headmaster of the new Somali school takes a class of boys. Their ages are from 7 to 14. Reading and writing in Arabic and Roman are taught.

natives sat and sold their wares. Water supply has proved a considerable worry, as the three excellent but elderly distilleries which the Italians had constructed are beginning to break down. The discovery and development of a new supply, four kilometres out on the Afgoi road, has greatly eased the situation, however.

All over the country, similar improvements in hygiene have been made wherever they were possible. The remark of the Italian doctor who declared of Villaggio D'Abruzzi, in which he had lived eight years, that "the native village is cleaner now than it ever was" is equally true of most small towns and villages throughout Somalia. No answer has yet been found, however, to the scourge of malaria. Mogadishu and the little coastal ports derive an immunity from the sandy soil of Somalia's long, narrow line of dunes, but it will be many decades before this disease can be eradicated from the Juba valley, the springs of Iscia Baidoa and, above all, from the canals and waterways of the Genale settlements.

Veterinary services are important in a country which at the last census was found to hold more than 1,000,000 cattle, 1,000,000 camels, 1,000,000 sheep and more than 3,000,000 goats. Although the majority of the Italian veterinary officers had retreated with the troops, the Department has been able to maintain the Merka Institute, which was engaged in research and the production of sera and vaccines. It has continued, too, the inoculation of camels against trypanosomiasis and of cattle against rinderpest and pleuropneumonia, two services introduced by the Italians, which the natives had already learned to appreciate. The Department has also had a hand in ensuring supplies of meat and milk for Mogadishu. It also collects and treats horses and mules for the Somalia gendarmerie. Those few members of the Italian veterinary staff who remained behind have shown themselves to be enterprising, reliable, and conscientious, and their relations with the Administration have been based on mutual respect.

In Italian times there used to be in Mogadishu an Italian elementary school and a co-educational secondary school. At the time of the occupation the buildings were requisitioned, but the masters remained behind. The Administration decided that as soon as possible these schools should reopen under the supervision of the political officers. New accommodation was

STUMPED.

obtained, and the salaries of the teachers were paid from official funds. Education was free in the elementary school ; the fees of the secondary school more or less cover its cost.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the children's certificates should not be repudiated later in Italy. With this in mind, the Italian code and syllabus have been followed. When the old headmaster was repatriated to Italy, it was arranged that he should send messages through the Red Cross or by radio to announce any changes in Italy's educational curriculum. Only in one respect were changes introduced—the Administration anticipated by two years Badoglio's abolition of the teaching of Fascist principles.

Today, Italian education in Somalia is not so large a public service. With the repatriation of 900 children to Italy, the need for the elementary school largely ceased. The mission school has taken over its work, aided by a government subsidy. The secondary school remains, with 180 pupils.

Native education had been deliberately neglected in Italian times. A government school was built in 1939, but it was soon closed down as a matter of policy. Here, therefore, it was necessary for the Administration to innovate. Two schools were started—an Arab school, attended by 300 children, and a Somali school, where 220 learn to read and write in Roman as well as in Arabic characters. Perhaps, as in many Moslem schools, too much emphasis is laid on religious teaching, for the Arabs and Somalis learn to read and write solely from the Koran. The headmaster has been imported from Mombasa ; the assistant masters are locals.

Finally, there is the approved school, which combines the functions of an orphanage with those of a Borstal institution. When the Italian armies fled, the Somali soldiers found time to take with them all their financially valuable girl children, but forty boys got left behind. These are now cared for at Afgoi, in company with many of the juveniles who, as told elsewhere, caused trouble in Mogadishu. They are taught Swahili, arithmetic, Arabic and Roman writing, and Islamic religion. While the Arab and Somali schools are a cost to the British taxpayer, this approved school is paid for ingeniously by a voluntary contribution imposed on the sale of sugar. A committee of local traders buy the sugar from the Agricultural Society, and sell it to retailers, who in turn distribute it to the tribesmen. The slight profit shown on these transactions is used to finance the native orphanage.

17. BALANCE SHEET

At the beginning of 1941 the British Military Administration came to Eritrea and Somalia unprepared, with next to no staff, and, in the circumstances, quite an ambitious policy. Its aims, briefly defined, were these: to govern Eritrea and Somalia in accordance with humanity and international law; to make and then keep the peace; to preserve the rights of individual Italians, Eritreans and Somalis; to ward off starvation and destitution; to develop agriculture and industry; to assist in the legitimate use of these territories for war; to restrain their traditional insolvency; and for the rest to keep things ticking over on a "care and maintenance" basis.

Looking back over the brief years of occupation, the Administration can claim that these aims have been achieved in a surprising degree.

The Administration has conformed with international law and common humanity. The peace has been kept. The rights of individuals of all races have been preserved. There have been no oppressive restrictions (unless one counts as such the continuance of a mild curfew which the Italians had imposed), no attempts at political assassination to record, little serious political crime, no open lawlessness apart from Ethiopian raiding parties and the normal incidence of Somali tribal fights. For the happy uneventfulness of the last two years we must thank not only British policy and conduct but also the attitude of the Italian population. If no people in this war has governed enemy territory so unostentatiously and unoppressively as have the British, no people has submitted to occupation more unresentfully and even cheerfully than has the bulk of Italians in Eritrea and Somalia.

Today the Italian population finds little of which to complain. Those who wished to return to Italy have been enabled to do so, provided they were unlikely to be of use to the enemy's war effort. Those who have chosen to stay are an advertisement for British rule in Eritrea and Somalia. Of those who remain few now are unemployed. Under a non-Fascist economy they

CLUB ROOM. Two members of the Somalia Association, still not quite at home, sit in their new reading room. Such bodies were not allowed in Fascist times.

have gained the right to give rein to their very high qualities of individual initiative. Their industrial and farming ambitions in both territories are backed by the British Administration to the maximum degree consistent with economy in shipping space and the rights of the native races. Free discussion and objective news have come to Italians again after many years ; they are free to listen, as they prefer, to Radio London or to Radio Rome, and to exercise their as yet ill-developed judgment in distinguishing truth from falsehood. Co-operation with the Italian administration has been attempted everywhere and achieved where possible. The multitudinous Italian government servants have been reduced in number, and there has been some simplification of the machinery of government, which was unnecessarily complicated. But co-operation has always continued, partly through lack of British staff, primarily because international law demands that, where possible, the Occupying Power must make use of existing administrative machinery.

Much of this book may have read like an indictment of Italian incompetence in East Africa between 1935 and 1941. But Eritrea and Somalia were in many ways little developed according to British standards not because Italians tried and failed, but because they did not try. They were far more interested in another purpose, which plays little part in British administration—the development of these territories as a base for war. Similarly, in describing the Italian attitude to natives, this book does not intend to give the impression that Italians were without exception brutal.

There were disgraceful abuses, certainly, especially in Somalia. Such were the status of agricultural labourers, the condition of the prisons, and the administration of justice. But on the whole their administration was rather friendly and lax. They aimed at creating soldiers and government clerks, not farmers and industrialists. In education, they may have felt sincerely that Eritreans should learn to salute the Duce from the cradle and for the duration of their lives. It probably did not occur to them that the Duce himself might have a duration.

Today, under the British, the Eritrean is certainly better off. He receives a more thorough, less alien education. He tries himself in his own native courts, and he has more private rights. The urban native holds better paid and more responsible posts in industry and trade, and the tribesman, though perhaps he does not regard this as an unqualified blessing, receives more official attention than he did. In Somalia, the riverine tribes are free at last, and native agriculture is now encouraged. The nomad, on the other hand, is neither better off nor worse. Nothing can change his way of life, and he probably regrets the newly imposed blessing of relative security and curtailment of tribal fights.

There is no need here to recapitulate in detail the advances in trade and agriculture that have done so much to maintain Italian self-respect, to diminish the need for relief, and to provide both Europeans and natives with adequate food. The industrial drive has been so successful that Italians in these territories are living at no lower standard than are their fellows in Italy, and the agricultural drive so successful that there has been no serious shortage, even at times when famine has threatened more fertile parts of East Africa. Nor is there need to recapitulate the use made by the British of these territories for war. Somalia had no such possibilities and was therefore disregarded. Eritrea had definite possibilities, and these were used to the full as long as this was warranted by geography.

The maintenance of the elaborate and costly system of communications which the Italians had constructed has provided the Administration with one of its biggest problems, especially in Eritrea, where in addition to the railway and the ropeway there were roads which were said to have cost £20,000,000 to build. The railway and the ropeway provided in themselves no insoluble problem. The former proved of the greatest use in bringing up passengers and goods from the port of Massawa, and in saving petrol, tyres and lorries ; it therefore was maintained. The latter, despite its ingenuity of design, proved an uneconomic proposition from the first, due to thefts, breakdowns and insufficient traffic ; therefore it was closed down. No such straightforward solution could be applied to Eritrea's roads. Of their 653 miles 353 miles were bitumenised, 204 were macadamised, and only 96 were gravel. With the maintenance of this magnificent but rather whitish elephant, the Administration was inevitably involved ; this task has been tackled as inexpensively as possible, but at a cost that would startle the Public Works Departments of most British territories in Africa.

Since the foundation of the Administration in 1941, a number of changes in nomenclature have occurred which should be recorded in this book. Thus what we have called the Administration throughout this book was

known for most of the period as the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration. The title of Chief Political Officer no longer exists, for Major-General H. R. Hone, and Major-General Lord Rennell of Rodd, who took up their duties as the C.P.O.s of Mid-East and East Africa respectively, became later known as Chief Civil Affairs Officers. In Mid-East, Major-General Hone was succeeded as C.C.A.O. by Major-General Sir Arthur Parsons. In East Africa, when Major-General Lord Rennell left to form the Allied Military Government which was later to administer Sicily and Italy, the G.O.C.-in-C., General Sir William Platt, reassumed powers which had been delegated to the C.C.A.O.; Colonel F. R. W. Jameson, who had been Chief Secretary in Eritrea, became his Chief Civil Affairs Staff Officer. The title of Deputy Chief Political Officer has likewise been dropped, for Brigadier Stephen H. Longrigg, who succeeded Brigadier B. Kennedy-Cooke in Eritrea in May 1942, and Brigadier Denis H. Wickham, who succeeded Brigadier William E. H. Scupham in Somalia in May 1943, are now not known by this title, but as the Chief Administrators of their respective Territories. The administrative members of their staffs have also changed their titles: they are known no longer as Political but as Civil Affairs Officers.

It is interesting to note that General Platt has been responsible for the military Government of both the territories with which this book is concerned: for Eritrea in the early days after the occupation, and for Somalia since he assumed command in East Africa.

Today the military character of the Administration's work is fading. The organisation tends more and more to resemble a normal, though uniformed, Colonial Administration. Civil Affairs officers in out-districts find themselves leading increasingly the lives of District Commissioners in Kenya and the Sudan, interviewing chiefs, going on trek to settle the same arguments, drafting, secretaryless, the periodic reports. The budgets of the territories, too, are based on Colonial budgets, which, by a perhaps old-fashioned British tradition, the Administration must make every possible attempt to balance. To make these two over-capitalised semi-deserts pay their way is proving no easy task, for both Eritrea and Somalia are specialised hothouse orchids and parasitism is in their blood. They lack the natural potentialities of most British colonies; the grants-in-aid from Italy are cut off. Yet at the same time finance has to be found for abnormal departments such as Relief, the Office of Labour, and the Custodian of Enemy Property, whose task is the thankless and complicated one of keeping track of individual enemy property the owners of which are abroad. Notwithstanding, the two colonies are run on a far smaller subsidy from British funds than they previously received from the Italian treasury.

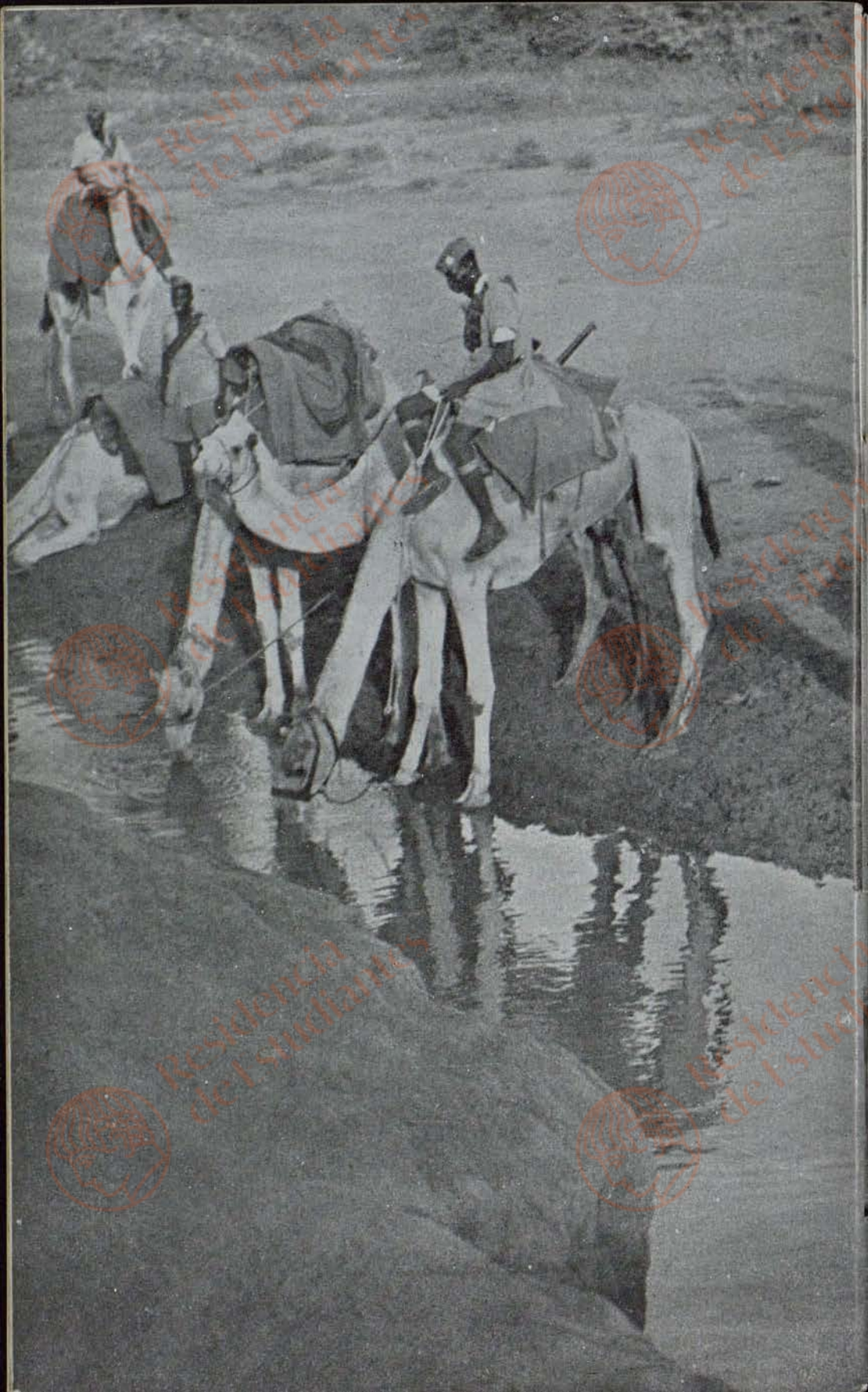
In one respect and in one only has the British Administration failed to adhere to its original principles: it has gone beyond mere "care and maintenance". Although large-scale or long-term designs are ruled out by the need for economy and by the uncertain future, the Administration has felt that several tasks beyond its legal obligations must be undertaken. The educational reforms in Eritrea, the cleaning of the canals at Genale in Somalia, and many parts of the medical department's work are examples.

What is to come? It may seem strange to close such a book as this

FATHER AND SON. The leader of the Mogadishu Arabs and his son are among the Administration's guests at the feast of Id Ul Fitr. The father is to make a speech.

without reference to the future of Italian East Africa. But speculation is useless; no man knows. This inevitable uncertainty has been a great handicap to the Administration in forming policy. The Administration can never know how long it will continue to function, or for what destiny it should prepare these lands. It has never been possible to tell an Italian, "After the war you will be here again", or "After the war you will have no status here"—an attitude that has puzzled Eritreans, who have primitive conceptions of conquest and none whatever of international responsibility. The future of Italian East Africa will finally be decided around a conference table, and it is no part of the duties of this book to attempt to anticipate what that settlement will be.

It is sufficient to record that the traveller who visits Eritrea and Somalia now sees little trace of the hardships, the excitements, or the filth of early 1941. His impression is one of security, tolerable comfort, and almost intolerable remoteness from the war. British administration carries on in such an atmosphere of calm that, although Political Officers still wear uniform, one feels one might be visiting a not very exciting British colony. The Italians, Eritreans and Somalis one meets seem intent only on living their daily lives, which the war does not colour. There is no sense of tension, no elation, no depression, no hidden undercurrents. If one hears an explosion, one assumes the report comes from a rifle-range, duck-shooting, or a burst tyre. It all sounds very normal—and this is in itself the final comment on the Military Administration's work.



THE PEACEFUL LAND. *Eritrean police patrol.*