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THE BELGIAN CAMPAIGN IN ETHIOPIA

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THE ITALIAN STRONGHOLD OF SAIO

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THE BELGIAN CAMPAIGN IN ETHIOPIA

A trek of 2,500 miles
through jungle swamps
and desert wastes

by

George Weller

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Belgian National Flag, bearing the name of Tabora, a town captured by Belgian troops in the African campaign of 1914-18

I. In jungle and mountains

BLITZED at close quarters in Europe, Belgium has crossed the entire continent of Africa to take revenge on the Axis. In a tropical campaign whose like for continuous and varied hardship has not yet been witnessed in this war, Belgium has bested Italy in Ethiopia.

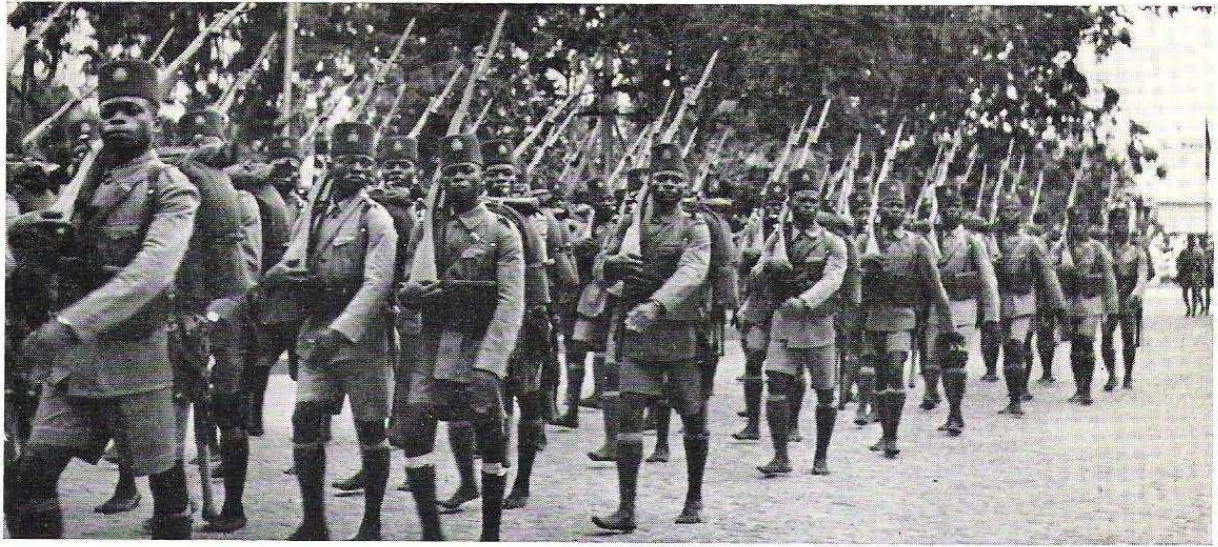
Starting as a nucleus with the Force Publique, the equivalent of the American state constabulary, Belgium has taken her black police force of the Congo and hewn it into a modern army.

To strike at Germany's partner, that army with another army of patient porters to bear food and munitions up Ethiopia's dizzy mountain trails, has traveled from the damp groves of the Congo jungles, homeland of gorillas and pigmies, across the watershed lying between the Congo and the Nile, down the other side into the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan along the waters of the White Nile and, finally, across the salty wastes of western Sudan to the mighty rampart of mountains guarding inner Ethiopia.

The two Niles

To attain the Italian stronghold the Belgians had to surmount heavy tolls of dysenteric and pulmonary diseases. In face of an Italian army superior in numbers, fire power, strategic positions and not inferior in personal bravery, the Belgians have seized for the British—with whose campaign their own was co-ordinated—the natural mountain fortress.

Britain's ascendancy in Egypt depends on her maintaining control of the two Nile watersheds which remained insecure as long as Italy was master of the Ethiopian mountains. The



Colonial troops leaving for Ethiopia

British, now besieging the last Italian forces near Gondar, aim to recover control of the Blue Nile's Ethiopian headwaters in Lake Tana.

Thanks to tiny Belgium's daring expedition, England no longer needs to worry about the White Nile's headwaters, the other source of Lower Egypt's indispensable annual supply of fertile topsoil and life-giving water. Congolese troops under the direction of Maj. Gen. Auguste Gilliaert, Belgium's solidly built, six-foot general, and commanded by Lt.-Col. Leopold Dronkers Martens, have delivered to Britain the watershed, with a corresponding effect on London's bargaining power with regard to Egyptian government.

Dispatch rider



Nine Generals asked peace

The Italian Army under Gen. Pietro Gazzera had its headquarters in this mountain town of Saio. Saio is up 5,621 feet and commands a matchless view of the mountains in the direction of Addis Ababa as well as of the broiling Sudanese swampland which the Belgians conquered before assaulting the chain of Italian garrisons directed by Gen. Gazzera.

An idea of the magnitude of the forces met by Belgium's hand-made army may be derived from the fact that Gen. Gilliaert's two lieutenant-colonels and three majors, heading three battalions of colonial troops, received overtures of peace from nine Italian generals and 370 ranking officers. To these were added 15,000 Ethiopians, headed by Eritrean non-commissioned officers.

In every one of the bitter engagements culminating in the siege of Saio, the Belgians were outnumbered three and four to one. For periods of as long as