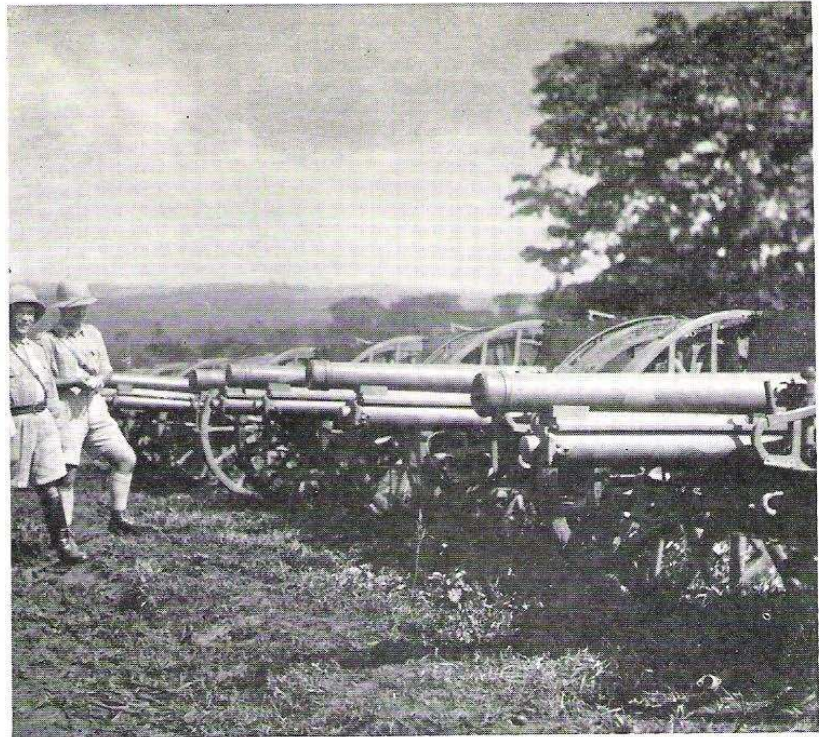


quently they moved their cannon and machine guns even before the Italians' artillery found their range in order to give the impression of multiple points of fire. Meantime the alarmed Gen. Gazzera tripled the Mogi garrison bringing it to 9,000 men.

As the Belgians grew bolder the Italians grew more discreet. The South African Air Force began to send daily patrols of three Fairey-Hartebeest biplanes which bombed Saio and machine-gunned the roads.

Then Maj. Gen. Auguste Gilliaert arrived from the Congo. Known to his men as "Kopi," meaning leopard, he is a big quiet and catlike man.



Artillery captured from the Italians after the conquest of Saio

Concentrate on Saio

It was decided that the plan for taking Mogi should be dropped and the meager forces entirely concentrated upon Gen. Gazzera's headquarters at Saio.

While preparing for a broad-scale attack across Bortai Brook, Gen. Gilliaert, with Col. Martens, was several times under fire in the front lines. An Italian machine-gun officer, when told that his fire had almost wiped out the Belgian general staff, expressed astonishment that the Congolese commanders should be in the front-line trenches.

"With us nobody above the grade of captain comes that far up," he said.

The 3,500 Italian white troops occupying Saio Heights alone, outnumbered the total Belgian force. The Fascists also had the 45th, 181st, 187th and 188th battalions of Eritreans whose battle pennons were covered with honors conferred by Mussolini.

While preparing a master plan for storming Saio, Gen. Gilliaert kept in touch with British headquarters in Khartoum. The Italian officers and men retreating from Addis Ababa and Jimma under British pressure were coming daily into Saio. It was apparent that the small Belgian anvil was preparing for its test under blows by various hammers such as was being used elsewhere by Gen. Sir Archibald P. Wavell, British commander-in-chief.

'Aggressive activity'

"I based our chances of success upon continuously keeping aggressive activity along Bor-

Belgian ambulance en route to Ethiopia



tai Brook against Mogi," Gen. Gilliaert told me, "and applying Kitchener's maxim that you can try anything against an enemy who refuses to budge himself."

On July 1 the British radioed the Belgians that they had cut the 450-mile-long Shio-Addis Ababa road at the Midessa River, 25 miles west from Lechenti and about 200 miles from Haile Selassie's capital. Then Gen. Gilliaert prepared to close the mouth of the Belgian bag into which the Italians were streaming.

Believing that the British pursuit was closer than it was, Gen. Gazzera blew the bridge over the Indina River, 40 miles east of Saio, thus buttoning the eastern mouth of his own bag himself. But the Congolese offensive was still a dangerous gamble because the Italians were better armed and fed, held superior positions with more fire power, and outnumbered the three Belgian battalions between three and four to one.

When the first battles of Bortai Brook had been launched they had been preceded by three days of rain and cold which took bitter effect on men and officers. This time a morning sun warmed the Congolese and put them in battle mood. At dawn on July 3 the Belgian advanced posts opened fire and half an hour later all the batteries of artillery entered into action. The Italians replied with the full intensity of their superior cannonading power.

The battalion under Maj. Duperoux went forward with orders to take the two dumpling hills flanking each side of the road. The Italians had gained the hills in the second battle of the Bortai in April. Duperoux's men crept through the brush and high grass for the dumplings which were heavily infested with machine guns.

A surprise operation

The battalion in reserve, commanded by Maj. Boniface Robyn, crawled forward behind Duperoux's left. Simultaneously Gen. Gilliaert sent the third battalion under Lt.-Col. Edmond Van der Meersch upon the assignment that was the key to the entire operation: a long, swinging movement around the right, through grass higher than a man and along a goat path that had been carefully plotted by scouting parties over a fortnight.

The entire surprise operation was successful. The Italians, after falling back from the two dumplings, found themselves flanked upon their left by Col. Van der Meersch's forces and unable to hold the ravine of the Bortai between the dumpling and the Italian secondary line of fortifications strung across the top of Saio Mountain. They melted away down hill toward the Sudanese plain upon their right. They dared not use the road for direct retreat for it was under continuous Belgian artillery fire.

At 1:40 p.m., the encircling battalion was preparing an assault upon the Italian heights. Two Mitalia motorcars were seen descending the serpentine road toward the newly-won Belgian positions bearing white flags. In the cars were the Italian generals, Guasco, and Col. Damico, Gen. Gazzera's chief of staff. They carried the former war minister's offer of surrender.

Gen. Gilliaert met the enemy a short distance from the Belgian side of Bortai Brook. The Force Publique of the Congo had crossed Africa to gain Belgium's first victory against the Axis. Sweet revenge for the invasion of the faraway homeland!



Part of the booty taken from Italians after the conquest of Saio

6. "Enough," said 9 of Italy's Generals

GEN. GAZZERA'S surrender to Maj. Gen. Gilliaert, following the Duke of Aosta's surrender to Gen. Wavell of the British Middle East command, leaves the Allied arms in Ethiopia today with mastery of the situation as far as Benito Mussolini is concerned.

Final liquidation of the Fascist empire will come when the Italians holding out around Gondar decide to give themselves up to the British troops that have been surrounding and starving them since July.

Vastly outnumbered by the Italians, even after surrender, the Belgians have been hard put to handle 15,000 prisoners in the whole province of Galla Sidamo. At Saio alone nine generals, 370 lesser officers, 2,575 Italians and 3,500 native soldiers surrendered to the Congolese force which, with 2,000 porters, aggregated hardly 5,000 men. The first Congolese officers who entered Saio alone to complete the negotiations, told your correspondent today:

"We literally waded in Italians. We were embarrassed to find how many enemies had fallen into our hands. The Italians were chagrined to find that we numbered only three battalions instead of three divisions with South African reinforcements, as their intelligence service had led them to believe."

Belgians prevent looting

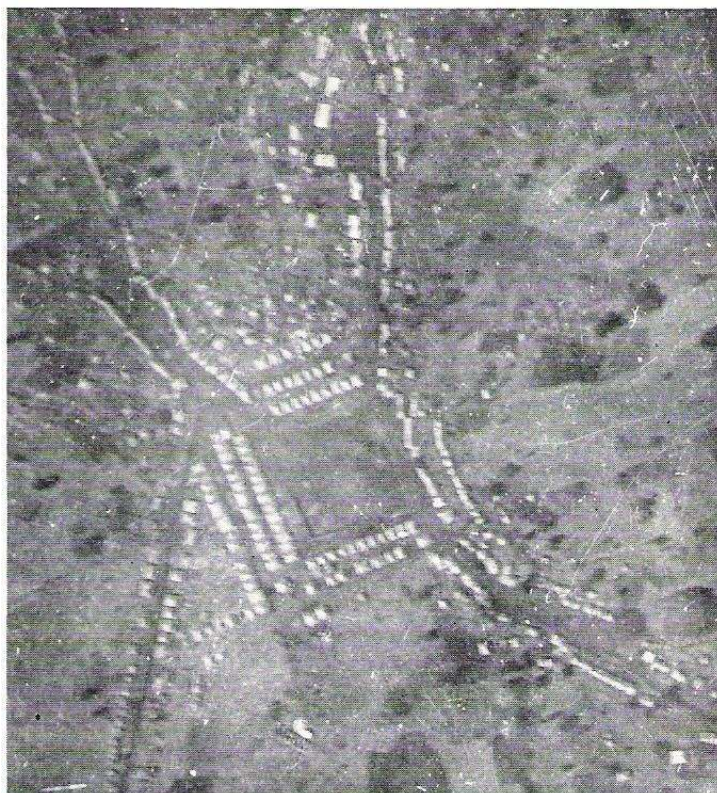
The proudest achievement of the Belgian general staff is that the public market in Saio has been functioning normally since three days after the fall and that no looting whatever has occurred. At near-by Mogi, when Eritreans numbering 900 found that all but 50 of the 250 Belgians originally besieging them had been withdrawn, they wished to start fighting but were dissuaded by their Italian officers.

Belgian deaths were 462 men, both white and black, four-fifths of whom died of disease. The Italians probably lost about three times as many, although casualty figures are not available.

The younger and more belligerent Italian officers taken prisoner by the Belgians seem to blame their defeat upon the inertia and fear of the older generals. Although sympathetic with Il Duce's imperialist ambitions, they have an intense dislike for the Fascist party coterie around Mussolini, who are considered parvenus. Officers of all ranks seem to reserve their chief loyalty for the members of the Italian royal house.

Ask escort for Eritreans

In surrendering, Gen. Pietro Gazzera asked safe conduct for the Eritreans across Ethiopia



Aerial view of Saio fortress

to British prison camps. This request, granted by Gen. Gilliaert, was a necessary precaution because the Ethiopian "patriots" who fought at Bure and Gore under British officers considered the disarmed Italians fair game. The 650 Italians who surrendered at Bure came into the Belgian lines almost completely naked, their garments having been purloined by the Ethiopians.

The Italian governor at Gore requested that the Belgians provide an escort of at least two of the feared Niam-Niams for each truckful of prisoners in order to prevent molestation. An Italian priest, who, contrary to Belgian advice, insisted on going out into the countryside, is still missing.

7. Secrets of jungle war

AN ATTACK upon the Belgian Congo, no matter from what quarter, can be made only at great cost to the invader, now that the Belgian forces have behind them the experience of their successful campaign against Italian strongholds in Ethiopia.

Soldiers of the Congolese Force Publique fought under the most difficult conditions in their first foreign war. They have learned the secret of resting through days of the most terrific heat, scouting strange territory under protection of the cool night and attacking at dawn. They have learned the laborious routine of constantly recamouflaging positions with bundles of elephant grass changed daily because it yellows in the tropical sun, revealing critical points.

Through Maj. Gen. Gilliaert's and Lt.-Col. Leopold Dronkers Martens' tactic of continuous aggression, the Belgians have learned how a small but mettlesome force, even in a strange land, may keep a large and irresolute army upon its own territory permanently in a state of uncertainty and self-defense.

Maj. Antoine Duperoux, leader of the battalion now administering Saio, told your correspondent today:

Stronghold of Saio. Upper right, hill captured by Belgian troops



"Colonial warfare is the only form of encounter in battle remaining where the forces are sufficiently small that the meaning of conflict is comprehensible to the participant. Whatever else fails, a flanking movement is always possible. In such a campaign you feel the clashing wills of the opposite leaders directly instead of remotely. Colonial warfare retains here what has been lost in the mass conflict of Europe."

Explains weak strategy

In view of the relative weakness of the British Sudanese defense force when the Italians first launched their Kenya campaign, much curiosity has been felt in Belgian quarters as to why Gen. Gazzera failed to descend from the Ethiopian highland and invade the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan before the arrival of the Belgians made attack impossible. When Gen. Gilliaert addressed the question to Col. Damico, Gen. Gazzera's chief of staff, Col. Damico replied:

"Gazzera did want to attack the Sudan but received contrary orders from the Duke of Aosta, who preferred that the expedition be withheld for political reasons."

The Italians then possessed ample provisions but when they hoisted the white flag they had hardly two months' supplies left.

Being without political aspirations and responsibilities in Ethiopia the Belgians are withdrawing as fast as possible, leaving the police problem between the British and the Negus.

Gradually the rows of round grass huts, constructed in Congo fashion by Belgium's soldiers from elephant grass, will cease to be alien features of the Ethiopian highland. The eight 77's waiting by the Sobat River will soon be added to 10 cannon which already have made the trans-African journey to the Congo. Seventy machine guns, 122 automatic rifles, 6,900 rifles, 15,000 hand grenades and 20 tons of radio equipment, and substantial medical supplies, most in excellent condition, make up the total booty.

Repair mountain highway

Belgian road crews are preparing the dizzy Gambela-Saio highway which still bites mouthfuls from the tires of their American trucks. About a dozen Italians are at large here and their claims for recovery of property seized by Mussolini are being heard.

The British have sent two officers with subordinates to take charge of western Ethiopia, in cooperation with Maj. John Morris, administrator of the British territorial concession at Gambela, where the Union Jack now floats. They are Capt. Sohn of Kenya, who bears the title of senior political officer of Wallega, and Capt. Kaumann of Rhodesia.

At Bure, which was taken jointly by Belgian cyclists and the King's African Rifles, a chieftain named Licht Lakau holds authority, reportedly for the Negus. At Gore the famous Ethiopian patriot, Gen. Mosfin, a refugee in the mountains throughout the Italian occupation, has emerged from hiding, and, with numerous of his followers already gathered, will probably take a leading role in any eventual stabilization of the region. The western Ethiopian situation will continue to count much in British policy towards Egypt.

In summary of this hitherto unwritten fragment of the history of World War II, it may be said that while the King of the Belgians is prisoner among his own people, honored pictures of Leopold III and his tragically deceased Queen Astrid are hanging today above the officers' mess table here in the remotest part of Ethiopia—symbols that Belgium in Africa remembers Belgium in Europe and has begun to exact the prices of invasion from the Axis.

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Daily News* in October, 1941.

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