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No. 001 Eritrea Police Force - 1951: Extracts from a discussion between Supt. of Police L.M. Braine and shifta leader Ghebry Tesfazien

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No. 001

Eritrea Police Force - 1951 Extracts from a discussion between Supt. of Police L.M. Braine and shifta leader Ghebry Tesfazien

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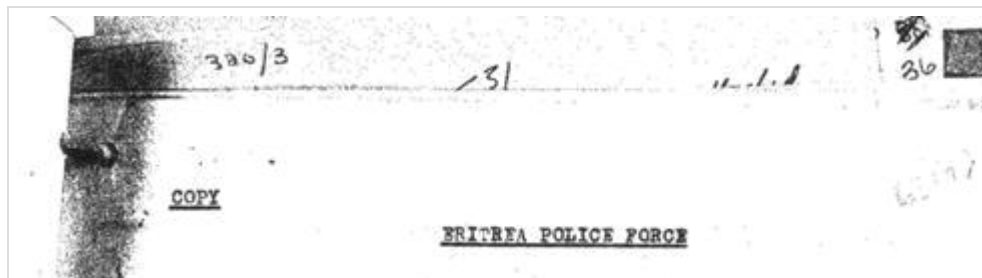
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Supt. of Police,
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Subject: Extracts from a discussion between S/A.S.P. L.M. Brans and shifta leader GHYBRF TESFAGIEN, which took place on the 15th May, 1951, in the country near the village of AMI RASI.

G.T. I am very glad to see you; we have all heard so much about the work you are doing; when will you bring us the good news from the British Administration that we are free?

Self Nothing has been decided yet, but discussions are going on now. If you are given a free pardon, will you come in?

G.T. Yes, of course, but I would not consider it a pardon, but my Demob. from the British Army. I have always served the British because you gave us back our country.

Self You did not serve the British when you killed a British officer at AMADER recently.

G.T. I expected you to bring this up. If you had not done so, I would have done. Firstly, I must ask you to express my deepest regret to the family of this brave officer, also to the Comando Truppe in Asmara. Let me tell you what happened.

I, with my band of about 50 shifta, came to the village of AMADER to pray. We were in the village and the priests were bringing out the cross for us to kiss. There were four guards in the hills. Suddenly I heard firing and saw British troops moving towards us. I gave an order for my men to withdraw and not to engage unless absolutely necessary. If you need proof of this, the villagers of AMADER will give it to you. I noticed your soldiers in their action were very young and

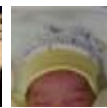
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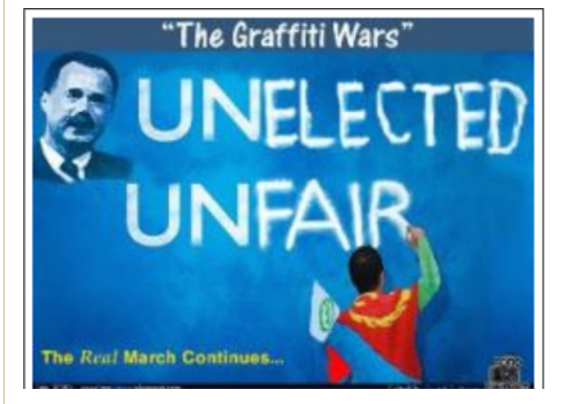
				
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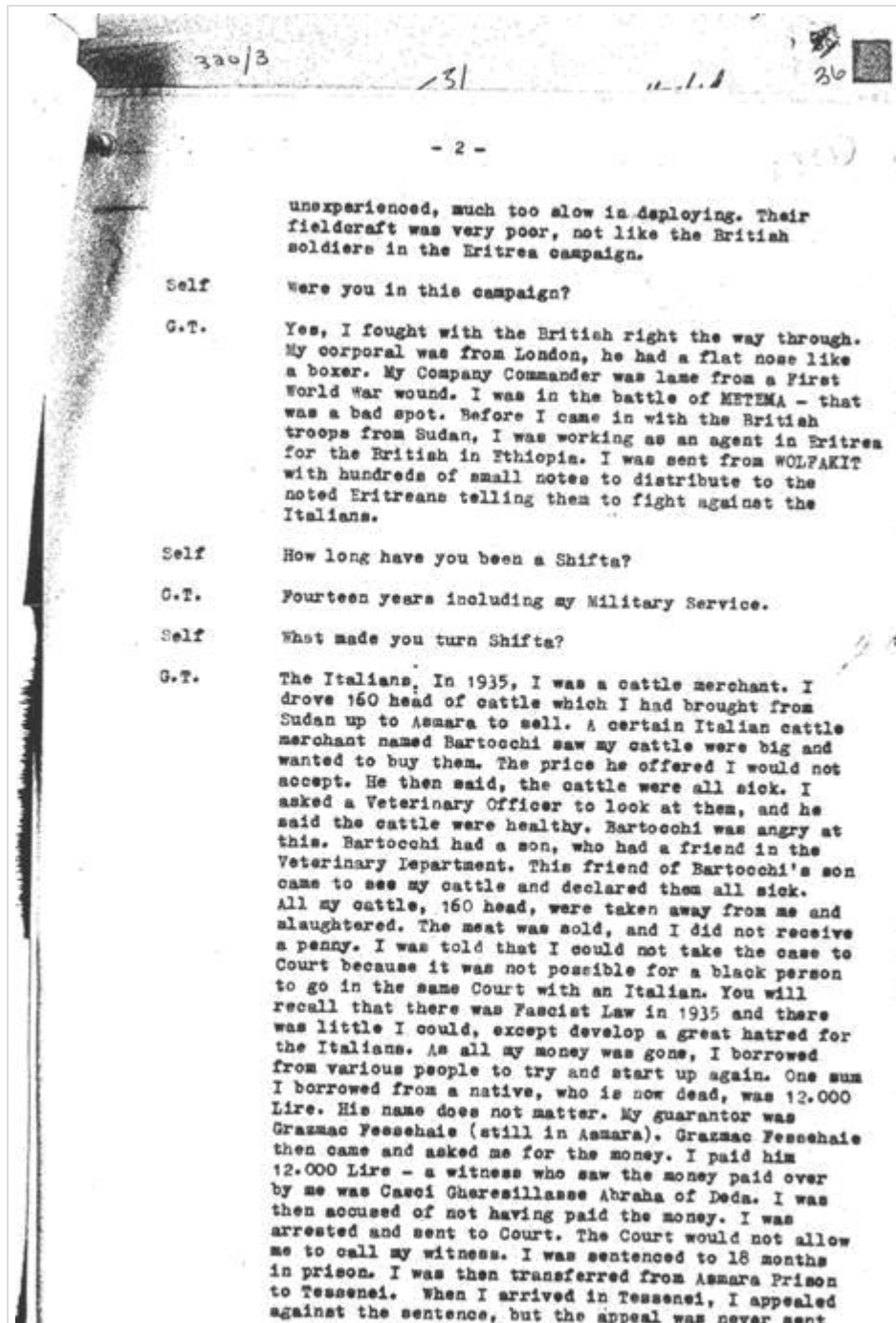
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forward. After serving six months, I escaped from Tessenai and joined the British in Sudan. I was sent out as an agent to Ethiopia where I did the work already mentioned. On one occasion, I waited six days in ambush in the Western Province to kill GASPERINI - GASPERINI did not come, but instead I shot the Veterinary Officer who had declared my cattle all sick. Unfortunately, I only broke his leg with a bullet from my rifle.

Self How many Italians have you killed, Ghebre?

G.T. I have not kept count; they are not worth it.

Self Didn't you kill an Italian woman in 1941 on the Keren road?

G.T. Yes, Italian women breed Fascists.

Self Are you still bitter towards Italians?

G.T. Now that Britain has united Eritrea with the mother country, I will not kill any more, but I still want back the money the Italians stole from me. Let's not talk any more about Italians because I am beginning to tremble.

Self What do you want to talk about?

G.T. How is Field Marshal Montgomery?

Self Well at the moment, I believe.

G.T. How old is he now?

Self About 70 years, I believe.

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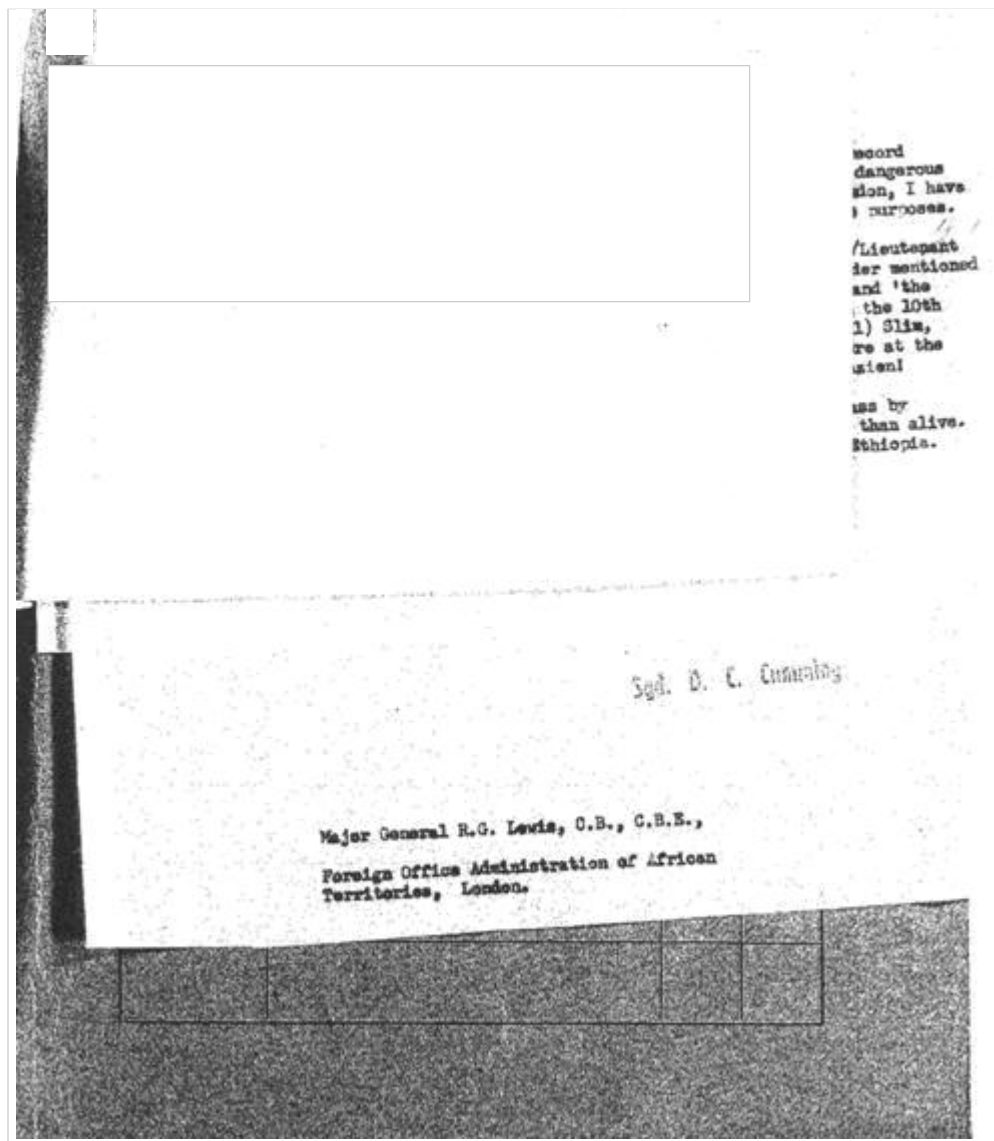
G.T. Great tactician, Marshal Montgomery.
Self Yes, he is.
G.T. So am I, he is a religious man, too, isn't he?
Self I believe he is.
G.T. So am I, I pray twice a day in village churches.
I never go near women. If I am pardoned, I may
become a priest or a hermit.
Self If all Shifta are pardoned, do you think they will
all come in?
G.T. Yes, I think so. A few thieves may stay out, but we
can deal with them. You should be much stricter with
your District Chiefs. They can help a lot if they
want to.

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Do not commit any offences until you hear from
the British Administration.
That is easy, too easy, I will go to Korea and
fight with the British, if I am sent.

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