

On 8th May I attended a meeting on board the flagship to hear the Combined Commander outline the conditions of surrender. A subsequent meeting took place at the Residency at 1100 hours presided over by:—

Rear-Admiral E. N. Syfret, and attended by

Major-General R. G. Sturges, R.M. (Military Commander)

Brigadier F. W. Festing (Assault Commander)

Brigadier M. S. Lush (Chief Political Officer)

Captain J. M. Howson, R.N. (C.O.S. to Commander-in-Chief)

Colonel Melville (O.C., S.A.A.F.)

Colonel Claerebout (French Officer Commanding Defence Diego Suarez)

Capitaine de Vaisseau Maerten (N.O.I.C. Madagascar)

Colonel Rouves (Commanding Infantry Regiment)

M. Bourguine (Administrateur-Maire of Diego Suarez).

The final terms of surrender were arranged at this conference.

Consolidation

32. On the 8th May I issued orders for immediate consolidation. 17 Infantry Brigade Group were to hold the Orangea Peninsula; 13 Infantry Brigade Group to reconnoitre and man a position facing South on the high ground about 3 miles South of the airport; 29 Independent Brigade to hold the immediate defences of and control the town of Antsirane. Detached companies were left at Red and Blue beaches, and arrangements were made for anti-aircraft artillery personnel to take over important coast defence batteries with improvised detachments. On the same day I attended Rear-Admiral Syfret's conference with the French Commanders at which the final terms of surrender were arranged.

GENERAL

Casualties

33. Total casualties were:—

	Died of			
	Killed	Wounds	Wounded	Missing
Officers ...	13	2	22	—
Other Ranks	64	26	262	4
	77	28	284	4

34. In assessing this operation, it must first be observed that it was conducted against opposition whose air power was weak and who was completely lacking in armour for a counter-attack. The French white and Senegalese troops fought with determination and, although their armament and equipment were below first-class standards, they undoubtedly hoped to repeat the story of Dakar. When after 48 hours, it was clear that this was not to be, they remembered that the true cause of their country lay with the United Nations and did

not continue a struggle which had become senseless as well as hopeless. Making due allowance for these facts, there is much of interest in this, the first of many probable amphibious assaults which remained to be carried out during the war.

The forces employed, naval, military, and merchant navy, were largely composed of units which had trained together in Scotland for a considerable time. If this had not been so, it would have been quite impossible to embark operationally at such short notice and to operate with such an extremely low scale of motor transport. The employment of the 13th and 17th Infantry Brigades, which had been embarked non-operationally before the operation was mounted, was an interesting expedient, only made possible by the adaptability of the troops concerned, by embarkation at the last moment of a small cadre of officers trained and experienced in this type of work, and by the great assistance given at Durban by the South African Government in limited restowing of Transports.

The number of landing craft available was small, as it was limited to what could be carried in the ships of the assault brigade. The effect of this in limiting the initial assault, was not important under the circumstances of this operation, but its effect in slowing up further landing was a most serious factor, both in planning and in the event. The build-up in vehicles on the first day was slow, yet it was a great improvement on what had been achieved in previous exercises and represented a very fine achievement by all those concerned.

The assault brigade advanced inland without delay, as soon as it had secured the beaches. This was a departure from usual practice and was most effective. The sudden arrival of the 29th Independent Brigade at the neck of Antsirane Peninsula, seized the initiative from the French and effectively prevented any properly co-ordinated defence. At the same time, it gained us 18 miles of road, which, given a few more hours delay, could and would have been stubbornly and effectively defended.

Finally, the use of a difficult, and therefore unexpected, line of approach, although in itself a risk, gained a degree of surprise which was largely responsible for the success of the operation. The ready acceptance of the approach by the Royal Navy and their skill in overcoming its difficulties and dangers, won the admiration and gratitude of all those responsible for the military part of the operation.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) R. G. STURGES,

Major-General,
Commanding 121 Force.

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