

28th March; 44th Division, on disembarkation, moved into 3rd Corps reserve in the St. Pol area, and 50th Division into 2nd Corps reserve, south-west of Lille; 42nd Division, on arrival, moved to the area south-west of Amiens, in G.H.Q. reserve.

5. The German invasion of Denmark and Norway on 9th April created a new situation; leave was stopped in the British and French Armies on 10th April, and 15th Infantry Brigade of 5th Division was despatched to England, *en route* for Norway, on 15th April; certain units of 42nd Division were also retained at home, but with a few exceptions despatched later. The remainder of 5th Division was left in France, but in War Office reserve, and was accordingly relieved in 3rd Corps by 42nd Division. Reports of enemy intentions to invade Holland and Belgium were received from different sources and at different times, and between the 11th and 22nd April certain troops were placed under short notice to move. Intensified air reconnaissance was ordered in the zone allotted to the Air Component which included part of the Ruhr and the area to the west of it, but apart from small bridging activity no positive results were observed.

The Saar Front.

6. During this period the detachment of one infantry brigade on the Saar front was maintained; at the outset the severe cold interfered considerably with the work of improving the defences in the forward area. Much required to be done, as regards increased protection, provision of alternative fire positions, covered approaches and improved communications; the wire required thickening and its tactical lay-out improving; the thaw, when it set in, was rapid and energetic steps had to be taken to maintain a proper standard of sanitation.

The tour of duty of each infantry brigade was raised in March to three weeks, and a pioneer battalion was included in the detachment.

At the end of March it was decided to increase the Saar force to a total of one division, with attached troops, including cavalry, machine guns, and pioneers. 51st Division was selected. The Division had concentrated in the Metz area by 30th April and by 7th May had relieved 7th French Division, thus extending the British front on the Saar on either side of the front originally held to a total of 12,000 yards from Guerstling exclusive to Remeling inclusive.

51st Division remained in the Saar area and took no part in the operations in Northern France. From 10th May therefore, it ceased to be under my effective command; the Saar Force was later moved to the Rouen area, where it took part in subsequent operations.

Patrolling, both by our own troops and by the enemy, grew steadily more active during this period; early on the morning of the 5th March, the enemy carried out a successful raid, supported with a box barrage of a type familiar in the war of 1914-18, on one of our front line positions in a wood known as the Hartebusch, then held by a battalion of the 4th Division (2nd D.C.L.I.). In this and subsequent encounters the enemy regularly suffered casualties, many of them at the hands of battalions of the 144th Infantry Brigade of the 48th Division, the first Territorial Army formation to meet the enemy in this campaign.

The sub-machine gun was taken into experimental use by patrols in the Saar front: its value had already been recognised and I trust that a weapon of this type will be permanently included in the armament of the infantry.

Preparation for Further Expansion.

7. In the meantime I had been preparing for the arrival of further troops, and, in particular, for the formation of Army Headquarters which were due to arrive in the latter part of June. On the assumption that the positions held by the B.E.F. were to remain the same, a lay-out had been prepared involving a move of G.H.Q. The construction of the new G.H.Q. and of the two Army headquarters was put in hand; this involved the laying of about 150 route miles of heavy armoured cable. Negotiations were in progress regarding the extension of the front of the B.E.F. on arrival of a fourth Corps, the French being anxious that this should be southwards rather than northwards.

Development of the Defensive Positions.

8. The development of the successive defensive positions and switch lines behind the Belgian frontier was continued steadily till 10th May. By this date over 400 concrete "pill-boxes" of varying size had been completed with over 100 more under construction, while work on the improvement of field defences, wire and other obstacles proceeded continuously on the original front and in the sector north of Armentières recently taken over from the French.

Chiefly by the use of excavator machinery over 40 miles of revetted anti-tank ditch had been added to that prepared by the French army in time of peace. Machines had also been used to assist the troops in constructing earth-work defences, mixing concrete and burying signal cables.

Training.

9. Training areas were being prepared to accommodate the Armoured Division and other formations; base reinforcement depôts were rapidly taking shape in their new locations near Rouen, and their training staffs had assembled. Corps schools had been established, principally for the training of junior leaders, and a sniping school had been set up. Practice camps, both for field and anti-aircraft artillery had been developed with the help of the French and steps taken to continue the weapon training of selected units.

The practice undertaken with anti-tank weapons, to which special attention was given, was amply to prove its value when the time came.

The Equipment Situation.

10. The situation as regards equipment, though there was latterly some improvement in certain directions, caused me serious misgivings, even before men and material began to be diverted by the needs of operations elsewhere. I had on several occasions called the attention of the War Office to the shortage of almost every nature of ammunition of which the stocks in France were not nearly large enough to permit of the rates of expenditure laid down for sustained operations before the War.

There was a shortage of guns in some of the anti-tank regiments of the Royal Artillery, while armour-piercing shells for field guns had not, by 10th May, been provided.