

72. *The Provision and Loading of Ships.*

The provision of suitable shipping for an overseas expedition has always been difficult because our merchant shipping in peace is designed either for passengers or for cargo. Neither of these types is suitable for the carriage of the large number of motor vehicles now in use by the Army.

The result, so far as the expedition to Southern Norway was concerned, was well-nigh disastrous. Guns were landed without their detachments and with little or no ammunition; vehicles arrived without their drivers. Even the essential first line transport of infantry battalions was divorced from its units.

Again I realise that this was due to a certain extent to a change of plan which aggravated an already difficult shipping situation, but we cannot accept a situation which admits of no strategical and tactical elasticity.

I am convinced that, if troops are proceeding overseas to land at a point where they may go directly into action, units must be embarked complete with their weapons, ammunition and equipment, and accompanied in the same convoy by their M.T. with its drivers.

This object could be achieved in various ways:—

- (a) By constructing new ships.
- (b) By altering existing shipping.
- (c) By loading available ships tactically.

I realise that it is uneconomical to keep shipping idle or available at short notice for a hypothetical operation, and that at present our resources are inadequate; but I am quite certain that we must find some way out of this difficulty. It will almost certainly be necessary to use existing ships with little alteration and in that case personnel may have to travel under conditions of extreme discomfort for short periods. We must be prepared to accept such conditions. To put our troops ashore under any other conditions is to court disaster if on arrival they are required to go straight into action.

73. I would further emphasize the grave consequences which may arise if a change of plan is made after troops and stores have been embarked. Even had the air situation in Southern Norway been favourable to us, the order of arrival of troops, weapons and vehicles at Åndalsnes and Namsos was based on plans prepared for an unopposed entry into the country.

In the event, the order was such that the force that arrived ashore was deficient of supporting arms and was in no condition to engage an enemy properly organised and equipped as was the German Army to which it was opposed.

74. *Military Doctrine.*

These operations have confirmed the correctness of the principles, laid down in our training manuals, which should guide us in the varying phases of warfare. The principles of war remain, though occasions have undoubtedly occurred where we have not been sufficiently quick to grasp their application to new and somewhat unexpected conditions.

75. *Morale and Discipline.*

Finally I desire to draw your attention to the generally excellent behaviour of the British troops and their leaders, especially their junior officers. Brigadier Morgan's 148th Infantry

Brigade were young soldiers or Territorials to whom these operations were their first experience of war. These quite inexperienced troops were rushed into action in an effort to stem the German advance, when the Norwegian forces were already withdrawing. With their flanks turned owing to the fact that the exhausted Norwegian troops had been obliged to withdraw, and their centre pierced by armoured vehicles to which they had no adequate reply, owing to the loss of their anti-tank guns at sea, it is not surprising that their casualties in missing were heavy, and heavier than would have been the case with more experienced troops under more experienced regimental officers' leadership.

76. The behaviour of Brigadier Phillips' 146th Infantry Brigade has been reported as excellent. When this Brigade, quite unsupported as it was, was shelled and practically cut off by superior enemy forces, it proved only too clearly that man for man the British soldier is far superior to his German counterpart. By skilful handling, good discipline and good fighting qualities the battalions of this Brigade extricated themselves from a position which might well have been conceived as disastrous. The only occasion when confusion and needless casualties were caused was one which was due to an error of judgment on the part of an inexperienced company commander. The fighting qualities displayed in both these Brigades was excellent. The great importance that these young troops should be given the advantage of the best leadership that we can provide cannot be over-stated. To ensure this a strong nucleus of regular officers in every unit is essential.

77. The 15th Infantry Brigade gave an account of itself which is in accordance with the highest traditions of the British Army. Though bombed, shelled and machine-gunned without the means of adequate reply, it repulsed a series of enemy attacks supported by tanks with heavy losses in men and tanks to the enemy, at the expense of comparatively few casualties to itself. In its final withdrawal it proved that it had nothing to learn in cohesion and marching power from its predecessors, the old contemptibles of 1914.

78. The Demi-Brigade of French Chasseurs under the command of General Audet who were landed at Namsos were only engaged in patrol combats with the enemy. I have received, however, the highest reports of their efficiency, their cheerfulness and generally excellent bearing, and their hardihood under conditions of extreme discomfort which might well have shaken the morale of less highly trained troops. I have no doubt but that they would have been, and indeed yet will be, far more than a match for the finest troops the Germans can bring against them.

79. I am not delaying this report to include in it the names of the many different officers and other ranks whose services I desire to bring to your notice and whose names I will forward at an early date. I do, however, desire to put on record now the services rendered by Major-General B. C. T. Paget, for the skill with which he conducted operations on the southern front from the time he took command until the final evacuation. Major-General A. Carton de Wiart proved that he still possesses the energy and dash for which he has