

The fortifications of the Maginot Line in the sector concerned continued to be manned by French fortress troops, the British battalions being disposed in depth in advance of the fortified line. The enemy positions were on the average one thousand five hundred yards distant from our foremost posts.

The British Army contains to-day very few regimental officers and other ranks who fought in the last war; much that was common knowledge and accepted practice then, must therefore be learned again. Nevertheless, events on the Saar front have proved beyond doubt that the young officer and his men, once they have had experience of active service, will be in every way worthy of their predecessors.

#### *The Completion of the First Contingent.*

15. During October and November, 15th and 17th Infantry Brigades were sent from home, and placed under command of 1st and 2nd Corps respectively. 13th Infantry Brigade was also relieved on the Lines of Communication by 25th Infantry Brigade.

On 1st and 2nd December, the French 51st Division was relieved by 4th Division and 17th Infantry Brigade, and withdrawn from my command: I was sorry to part with them and with their commander, who at all times gave me loyal support.

The plans for the despatch of the Force had envisaged that two divisions of the Territorial Army would be sent from home as soon as they were sufficiently trained. Since three regular infantry brigades had by now arrived, however, I decided on 27th October to form the 5th Division under the command of Major-General H. E. Franklyn. On the night of 29th-30th December the division took over a sector on the left of the 4th Division.

At this time the five divisions of the British Expeditionary Force were all in the line.

During the month of January the 48th Division (Major-General A. F. A. N. Thorne) arrived in France, and by 23rd January had completed its move forward. It was placed under 1st Corps, but held in G.H.Q. reserve.

By the end of January the Force, therefore, consisted of two corps, each of three divisions, with corps and army troops. The first stage in the development of the Force was thus concluded.

The strength of the British Expeditionary Force at the end of January stood at two hundred and twenty-two thousand two hundred, all ranks, not including the men of the Air Component and of other units of the Royal Air Force for whose maintenance I am responsible.

#### *Air Forces and Anti-Aircraft Defence.*

16. Although development of the Air Forces and of the Air Defence organisations proceeded simultaneously with the despatch of the Force and with its subsequent moves, I have thought it convenient to describe this development separately.

The composition of the Force included a Component of the Royal Air Force under the command of Air Vice-Marshal C. H. B. Blount, Royal Air Force, consisting of two Army Co-operation Wings, one Fighter Wing and one Bomber Reconnaissance Wing.

The aircraft were flown to France according to plan at the outbreak of hostilities and came

under my command from the dates of the disembarkation of their ground units. Later other units were added, and the Air Component now comprises, in addition to Headquarters, one Fighter Group Headquarters, eight Wings, a Communication Squadron, and certain administrative and other detachments.

The ground echelons were moved in advance of 1st and 2nd Corps to the aerodromes in the region to be occupied. In the early stages they were largely dependent on the assistance given to them by the French Région Aérienne under the command successively of General Jeuneaud and General Armengeaud.

On 14th and 15th September, the anti-aircraft units disembarked at the base ports and, in conjunction with fighter units of the Royal Air Force, undertook the task of protecting the disembarkation of the two Corps and their forward moves.

Once the concentration was complete, the available anti-aircraft resources were divided between forward defences and Lines of Communication. Besides the normal provision for the defence of headquarters and railheads, arrangements were made to protect certain important French installations in the British zone and a searchlight zone was also established as a protection against enemy night bombing.

On all occasions, the Air Officer Commanding has been greatly helped by General d'Astier, commanding the French Air Forces with the northern group of French Armies.

During the period under review, enemy air activity has been almost entirely confined to reconnaissance flights at great heights.

#### *Air Reconnaissance.*

17. The strategical plans for air reconnaissance were worked out in conjunction with the Air Ministry and with General Mouchard, commanding the Air Forces with the French Armies of the North East.

In accordance with these plans many reconnaissances have been carried out both by day and night. Much photography has been undertaken with useful results, both in information obtained and in experience gained in photographic and survey methods.

The work of the units of the Royal Air Force engaged in air reconnaissance deserves the highest praise, since it has been performed, as a rule, in the face of enemy opposition. Pilots have often been called on to carry out flights to the full limit of the range of their aircraft, flying over long and circuitous routes to avoid neutral territory; this rigorous duty has been boldly and cheerfully undertaken.

#### *The preparation of Aerodromes.*

18. It had been decided, before mobilisation, that the maintenance and construction of all aerodromes used by the Royal Air Force in France, as well as their signal communications, should be the responsibility of the British Expeditionary Force.

Many aerodromes and landing grounds had been placed at our disposal by the French authorities, but it soon became evident that the problems of construction and maintenance were far greater than had been contemplated before the war. A new policy had, therefore, to be formulated and comprehensive plans prepared. In most parts of France, permanent pasture does not exist, and this fact, in view of